

Evanston History Center: Guide to Woman's Suffrage Materials

By Erin Hvizdak, EHC Intern

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Introduction and Getting Started

Home to suffrage activists Elizabeth Boynton Harbert and Catherine Waugh McCulloch, the town of Evanston was a center of early movements and organizations that sought political and social equality for women and the community and nation's most vulnerable. Illinois was awarded woman's suffrage in 1913 as a result of the efforts of women around the state, and these women continued to fight for political equality of women on a national level until full suffrage was achieved in 1920. The guide that follows lists clipping files, names, and archival and photograph collections that may be of interest to the study of suffrage in Evanston and Illinois in general.

If entering into research with little to no knowledge of this movement, it is best to start with the clipping file of Woman Suffrage to obtain basic information about the names of individuals and organizations that led the way. From here, one could move on to the Women's Suffrage archival collection (#214), which includes materials from the Evanston Political Equality League and Illinois Equal Suffrage Association, to gain a more thorough picture of the movement with primary sources. Specifically, one will find pamphlets, speeches, a play, and other literature from these and other organizations, in addition to record and treasurer books.

The other archival collections listed include individuals and organizations that either fought for or discussed women's equality. Of note is a small collection of the papers of Catherine Waugh McCulloch, lawyer and suffrage activist. Literary groups listed did not make suffrage a primary focal point, but political discussions were sometimes included in the programs, and one might find more if looking at the collections more closely. These lists also include political organizations and individuals that worked in the political realm after suffrage, for example the League of Women Voters. These organizations and individuals demonstrate women's ongoing commitment to ensuring that political equality remains intact.

Access to the files and collections listed below is through the Evanston History Center (EHC) Research Room. For more information about doing research at EHC, go to <http://evanstonhistorycenter.org/> and click on the Research tab.

Relevant Subject Clipping Files

- Biographical files – by last name
- Bryant Circle
- Clubs – Conference Club
- Clubs – Democratic
- Clubs – Fortnightly
- Clubs – Pierian
- Clubs – Progressive
- Clubs – Republican
- Clubs – Woman's
- Colleges – NW Female College

- Elections – Municipal 1894-1899; 1900-1939
- Elections 1890-1959
- Evanston Political Equality League
- League of Women Voters
- National Organization of Women (NOW)
- Republicans
- Temperance
- Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU)
- Woman Suffrage
- Women
- Women pre-1950
- Zonta Club

Evanston Women’s History Project Research Files

Individuals:

- Mary Bartelme
- Helen Beveridge
- Myra Colby Bradwell
- Elizabeth Boynton Harbert
- Lillian Hartman Johnson
- Mary Livermore
- Eleanor Ellis Perkins
- Lucy Fitch Perkins
- Emma Rogers
- Daisy Sandidge
- May Wood Simons
- Lucy Shelton Stewart
- Alice Bunker Stockham
- Frances Willard
- Mary Bannister Willard

Organizations:

- IL Equal Suffrage Association
- League of Women Voters
- Northwestern Female College/Evanston College for Ladies
- Evanston Political Equality League
- Woman’s Club of Evanston
WEAA
- Zonta

Relevant Archival Collections

Name	Collection Number
Bryant Circle	31

Fortnightly Club	36
Legensia	40
Catharine Waugh McCulloch	59
Progressive Club	122
Women's Suffrage (Includes Evanston Political Equality League and Illinois Equal Suffrage Association)	214
Frances E. Willard	301
Woman's Christian Temperance Union	422
Evanston League of Women Voters	432
Pierian Club	458

Summary of Archival Collection Contents and Relevance

#31 Bryant Circle:

Organized Sept 21, 1885, the Bryant Circle was a cultural and literary study group for women. This group was based off of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Study Society formed by Dr. John A. Vincent and Lewis, who thought that all should continue with their educations after college. Started in 1874. Men and women flocked to this, but mostly women. The group announced its first meeting in the Evanston Index "to all women who might be interested in forming a circle for the purpose of regular reading and studying the Chautauqua course." They first met at Mrs. L.R. Carswell's cottage. Their constitution (1899 – Box 4) indicates that their purpose was to "Promote the intellectual culture of its members." While focusing much on art, literature, music, culture, history and philosophy (including political), they also heard talks on "Woman's Influence in Municipal and Legislative Reform" (McKinnie – 1985/96), Studies in Illinois History (1910/11). Others might be found by more closely looking at the programs. Records span 1885-1998.

The materials include three boxes of meeting minutes (describing the business of the club and the presentations given), correspondence, obituaries, and yearbooks (listing the programs for the year)

#36 Fortnightly Club

The Fortnightly Club formed in 1891 for women to gather to discuss literature, which through the years evolved into yearlong programs of presentations to include topics on art, literature, history, culture, philosophy, politics, and reform issues. The Fortnightly seemed to focus more on these reform issues than other women's literary societies of the time (Legensia, Bryant Circle), as they often discussed topics on local moral and municipal reform (education, crime, sanitation). According to the constitution, its object was to "promote mental and social development of its members." The records of the Fortnightly Club include handwritten speeches, programs, and scrap/minute books (these were combined into the same thing). The records span 1892-1947.

Relevant topics to suffrage included: January 29, 1895: "Woman's Influence in Politics"; October 28, 1913: "Woman's Suffrage: Would it Purify Politics?" (Mrs. George Thomas) and "Woman's Suffrage: Would it Help Solve the Temperance Question?" (Mrs. Crawford).

#40 Legensia

Legensia was organized on January 30, 1880. A new topic was chosen each year, and the records indicate that meetings were held with a format including the reading of the previous minutes, the readings of papers, and discussion. A man was generally president while a woman was vice-president. The records include yearly program schedules, program invitations (including menus and speakers), and ledger books, which includes some minutes. This group occasionally discussed political and philosophical topics, but it seems to be focused on art, history, literature, culture, etc. The records span 1880-1894.

Relevant presentations include: 1/1 85-86 "Topics of Our Times" was the theme of the year; Mrs. Elizabeth Harbert - Is the Enfranchisement of Women Desirable?" (Oct 23, 1885); "Should our Present American Suffrage be Restricted?" April 8 and April 22, Judge Corbin and Mr. William Harbert.

#59 McCulloch Family Collection

Catherine Waugh McCulloch, lawyer, was an ardent activist for women's rights, specifically wage-earning, the right to own property, and suffrage. Her records span the years of 1862-1945. Folders of writings include two copies of the play *Bridget's Sisters or The Legal Status of Illinois Women* from 1868, about Myra Bradwell (Evanstonian), whose situation inspired the law to be changed to make women's wages her own and not her husband's. The same women that pushed for this law also were active in organizing the Illinois Equal Suffrage Association. Various pamphlets and writings on the legal status of women and women's suffrage are held in this collection, including: a postcard showing women watching disheveled men going in to vote, titled "Why Not Let Mother Vote?"; sampling of suffrage pamphlets includes *Shall Men Have the Ballot, Northwestern University and Woman's Suffrage*, and *A Haunting Dream*, read to the Chicago Woman's Club; legal status of women pamphlets includes *Woman's Wages*, and *Mr. Lex or The Legal Status of Mother and Child*.

The collection also includes a number of biographical clippings files on McCulloch and materials related to her husband.

#122 Progressive Club

The Progressive Club was formed around the Progressive Party in Evanston. The club was comprised of men, but it appears women were involved to some extent. A letter, not dated but presumably 1913, encourages those affiliated with the Progressive Party to encourage women to vote ("Don't forget the women voters") and names the seats that the women are able to vote for. Only one record book is included, dating from 1912-1914; it is very fragile and very sparse, but gives minutes of the meetings.

#214 Women's Suffrage

This collection, spanning 1885-1936, contains various materials related to Woman Suffrage in the Evanston area and statewide. Includes minutes, membership lists, receipts, treasurer's reports for the Evanston Political Equality League and the Illinois Equal Suffrage Association. Also includes various pamphlets and booklets related to Woman's Suffrage in Illinois and nationally. Folders include: Evanston Equality League officers and minutes (n.d.); Membership pledge cards and constitution; Illinois Equal Suffrage Association Enrollment Lists; Pamphlets, essays in support of suffrage; Support and recommendation pamphlets; Question and answers booklets; Information sheets; Fact sheets; Advertisements; Programs; and the Evanston Political Equality League Treasurer's Book.

#301 Frances E. Willard Papers

While Frances Willard was involved in the suffrage movement, these materials do not reflect her involvement. The materials do however include clippings, correspondence, and biographical materials, so this collection would be useful for anyone wanting a broader perspective on her life or a snapshot of her work as a whole. Here it would also be useful to look at the collections of the Northwestern Female College/Evanston College for Ladies (#491) and Women's Christian Temperance Union (#422). The records span 1874-1992.

#422 Woman's Christian Temperance Union

The records span the years of 1840-2003 and include various copies of the Union Signal, booklets and pamphlets of the history of the WCTU, correspondence, a temperance certificate, programs and invitations, and other miscellaneous materials. While the WCTU was early years in early years affiliated with the suffrage movement as one of their reform efforts, these materials do not reflect that. Earlier editions of the Union Signal could contain suffrage articles, and the biographies might hint at it. They would however be useful in gaining an overview of the WCTU. Related collection would include #301 Willard.

#432 Evanston League of Women Voters

This collection is comprised of 16 boxes, including meeting minutes, correspondence, financial records, newsletters, yearbooks, reports, promotional and communications materials, publications, and programs, in addition to other various materials from the club. The materials date between 1923-2000. Photographs can be found in the photograph file. The League was of course founded after suffrage but demonstrates an ongoing commitment to women in government and policy.

#458 Pierian Club

Pierian Club is an all-woman's literary club that was started on February 27, 1891, meeting in the home of Celestia McKinnie. Minutes prior to 1934 are lost, but we do have programs from 1903-1906 and a listing of the program topics each year in 2/1. The club focused on literature, art, and culture, save for a couple of years where the topic was "Glimpses of American Progress" (1910-11) and "The Changing Age" (1922-23), amongst others. Mrs. Harbert was a member of the Pierian Club. This club seems to be an outgrowth of the Bryant Circle and Legensia. Other materials include meeting minutes, membership books, officers, treasurer's reports, correspondence, receipts, and speeches. The collection spans 1891-2003.