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Putting the Ill in Illinois: How the Suffrage and Antisuffrage Movements in
Illinois Transformed Themselves and the Nation

BY

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Putting the Ill in Illinois:
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the Nation.

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Written in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an undergraduate honors thesis in the
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Introduction

Illinois proved to be a turning point in the battle for woman's suffrage. Prior to the victory in Illinois, all suffrage states were west of the Mississippi. Illinois stood out from the other states because of its large population. Some historians argue that suffrage was passed in the west as an attempt to draw women westward to help balance out the disparate woman-to-man ratio. In Illinois, however, the vote was not an attempt to lure women anywhere it was the product of the hard work of numerous suffragists.

The success of the Illinois suffrage movement helped to reinvigorate the national movement. Within a few years the state of New York won suffrage and ultimately in 1920 the whole nation. Though 1913 served as a victory for numerous women, a second group of women were outright defeated. These antisuffragists consistently argued that women did not want or need the vote. So, while the Illinois suffrage victory helped spur the national movement, the antisuffragists' movement was equally motivated. The state of Illinois was not some brand new state, it was nearly a century old, home to the second largest city in the United States, and twenty-nine votes in the electoral college. Despite the influence that Illinois held over the national movement, the state movement has been rarely studied by historians.

The Illinois victory carried great weight. Women on both sides of the argument took notice, and were motivated to action. From 1915 to 1920 the National American Woman Suffrage

Association grew from 100,000 to 2,000,000 members.¹ The National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (NAOWS) did not even form until 1911, but according to president Josephine Dodge had more than 100,000 members, of which seventy percent were “composed of women wage earners.”² Within three years of being formed the organization formed branches in sixteen states. And their “The Woman’s Protest” became a direct competitor for the “Woman’s Journal” of the NAWSA.

Historian Aileen Kraditor argues that the “doldrums” of woman suffrage ended in 1910 when western states reformed suffrage, and further in 1913 when woman suffrage made its way east of the Mississippi River. Illinois was the turning point for suffrage because as it enfranchised women to vote for most offices, it broke the stronghold of antisuffrage in the East. The nineteenth amendment passed seven years after many Illinois women celebrated a hard fought victory. Other women were thoroughly disappointed with the outcome. But to fully understand how Illinois transformed both suffrage and antisuffrage nationally requires an examination of its own transformation.

The simple existence of antisuffrage women make it clear that women were not united over the idea of woman suffrage, but even further the suffragists also debated among themselves. Enfranchisement meant different things to different women. The various opinions led to varying tactics and much debate. Illinois woman suffrage may have been a woman’s movement, but it was not one that all women viewed equally.

¹ Aileen, Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965) 7.

² *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, February, 14, 1912.

Notably, both suffragists and their antisuffrage counterparts centered their efforts around Chicago. Urban environments fostered independence among women. Furer argues the American city was “of equal importance as a contributor to national life and growth,”³ particularly in regard to the woman’s rights movement. The industrialization and subsequent urbanization of America helped to create an environment where women could communicate and organize grass-roots movements. Origins for women’s social clubs and philanthropy organizations like the YWCA all come from city centers. The sheer number of individuals living close together fostered an environment where people could communicate and organize. For the first time, some women became invested in matters outside of the household, allowing them to form opinions about the state of women and politics in general.

Historian Anne Boylan insists that because women began forming charitable organizations in the early 1800s and began joining abolitionist efforts in the 1830s, the women's rights movement began long before the Seneca Falls Convention, which in 1848 marked the official beginning of the national woman’s suffrage movement . Both of these forms of organization introduced women to the male dominated world of politics, and showed them the inequality between the sexes. As Boylan explains early in her essay, "to most Americans of the early nineteenth century, ‘women’ and ‘politics’ were mutually exclusive categories."⁴ Though the movement began officially began in 1848, the first real victory in Illinois came in 1891.

³ Howard B. Furer, “The American City: A Catalyst for the Women's Rights Movement,” *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 52, No. 4 (Summer, 1969): 285.

⁴ Anne M. Boylan, “Women and Politics in the Era before Seneca Falls,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 10, No. 3 (Autumn, 1990): 363.

Women chose to lobby, petition, and organize charitable organizations slowly becoming active participants in the male dominated world of politics. Though these women dared to challenge their traditional role, only some of them actively pursued suffrage. Other clubwomen thought that their activities in these organizations represented precisely what women should do. Women were focused on specific reforms, but if they entered politics wholly, they would forfeit this narrowed vision in order to encompass the broader view of the world. Though these women were “not seeking specifically to emancipate themselves,” as Furer argues, “the effect of their endeavors was to lead in this direction.”⁵ Clearly, the move towards woman’s rights was borne from increased involvement outside the home, which was possible only among the upper middle class and elite women. Working women are noticeable absent from both movements because they could not afford to spend time in politics because they were too concerned with day to day problems than the state of womanhood.

Cities may have served as a catalyst for women's rights, because rural areas had what Furer deems an “agrarian myth” that labeled women as inferior, unintelligent cornerstones of American families. However, rural America also underwent sweeping change that led to women's suffrage organization forming throughout the nation. My research demonstrates that in Illinois, many cities in southern and central parts of the state organized suffrage clubs as well. Centralia had a fairly active organization; Champaign and Urbana shared a suffrage club where Catharine McCulloch, one of the most prominent Illinois suffragists, spoke April, 1913.⁶ Cities all across the

⁵ Furer, 293.

⁶ *Daily Ilini*, April 30, 1913.

state had organizations. They were simply smaller. Rural Illinois was not the origin of the state's suffrage movement, but an "agrarian myth" did not prevent them from becoming involved.

Instead, it seems that women organized from Chicago simply because that is where a bulk of the population lived. After all, Seneca Falls, home to the first Women's Rights Convention, was itself a small town in rural upstate New York.

Rural women, like many working women, did not have the luxury of escaping domesticity to explore education and recreation like middle class urban women had. Cities clearly allowed women to explore roles outside of the home, and as they formed social groups women became more aware of their place in society and began challenging traditional roles. As these women began to organize and write, their ideas spread; newspapers provided a powerful outlet for their suffragist message. In many cases their ideas spread beyond the nucleus of Chicago, branching out into the rest of the state.

Chicago served as a jumping off point in the Illinois suffrage movement because the leaders of both suffrage and antisuffrage lived there, but it is clear that the city's influence spread throughout the state. From there the Illinois movement excited both national movements. Through my research I have found that the Illinois movement is one with a rich, deep history of conflict and progress. The 1913 Municipal and Presidential Suffrage Bill rejuvenated suffrage sentiment, while simultaneously outraging antis. To see how the impact spread beyond Illinois, first one must see how the movement evolved within the state.

Forming the Movements: Before 1891

The suffrage movement in Illinois began in much the same way as the national movement did. Educated women began forming women's organizations, leading toward independence. These educated women quickly formed opinions on causes. Some women instantly aligned with the organized suffrage movement, others took the opposing stance, and many women simply made their decision on suffrage based on how it could be used to further other goals such as prohibition and better working conditions for women.

The most visible origin for the woman suffrage movement in Illinois is the formation of the first state organization dedicated to the cause. In 1869 Mary Livermore organized the Illinois Woman Suffrage Association (IWSA). Livermore had been decidedly antisuffrage in the years preceding the Civil War, however, her experience in the sanitary commission drastically shaped her views. She began to see that women could only exact change if they had the vote at their disposal.⁷

The IWSA was formed at a convention that Livermore carefully put together by inviting prominent individuals such as national suffrage leaders Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and local renowned women like Myra Bradwell, who wrote and published the *Chicago Legal News*.⁸ The early years of the IWSA brought forth some of the most impressive change that the Illinois woman suffrage movement would see until the twentieth century. Mary Livermore

⁷ Steven Buechler, *The Transformation of the Woman Suffrage Movement: the Case of Illinois, 1850-1920* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1986): 67.

⁸ Bruce D. Janu and Wendy Hamand Venet, "Mary Livermore and the Illinois Women's Suffrage Movement" *Illinois History Teacher* Volume 3 (1996): 2.

began a newspaper entitled *The Agitator* that brought the issues of woman suffrage to numerous readers.

Livermore moved out of Illinois to help the American Woman Suffrage Association write for the *Woman's Journal*.⁹ She led the organization for a very brief period, but her actions in Illinois set in motion the events that eventually win woman suffrage for the state. She did not abandon the suffrage cause, instead she pursued the national movement with the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) and their premiere newspaper. When Livermore left the IWSA, the Illinois suffrage movement had to turn to a new leader.

In 1870 the Illinois General Assembly held a constitutional convention. The convention saw women very nearly gaining the right to vote, which would have made a brief history indeed. When the question of woman and African American suffrage came up in the convention, initially the issues were going to be presented to voters, but before the topic came up, the convention withdrew the woman suffrage possibility. The reversal of sentiments seems to have occurred as a result of antisuffrage petitions that mirrored the prosuffrage signatures that suffragists had been collecting.¹⁰

While women did not win the vote in 1870, the decade following saw a dramatic expansion in Illinois women's rights. Married women's property restrictions were dissolved, Myra Bradwell took Illinois to the Supreme Court, and mothers won the right to equal guardianship of children in the case of divorce. These gains were made quickly, and brought about the end of

⁹ Wendy Hamand Venet, "Agitating for Woman's Rights in Illinois," *Journal of Illinois History* 8 (2005): 48.

¹⁰ Buechler, 103.

gains for women's rights of this era. The middle era of the woman's suffrage battle in Illinois was relatively tame.

The second leader of the IWSA was Elizabeth Boynton Harbert. Unlike Mary Livermore who aligned herself closely with Lucy Stone and the AWSA, Harbert felt a stronger connection to the NWSA. She thought that the NWSA was less divisive than its counterpart, and the AWSA was hurting the suffrage movement because it separated rather than united the men and women working towards the suffrage goal.

Under Harbert's leadership the Illinois movement suffered from a period of disinterest. Women were becoming increasingly involved in goals outside of suffrage. The temperance movement really came into its own - thanks in large part to Frances Willard, a hard-working suffragist and founder of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Women also began forming distinct professional organizations like the Illinois Social Science Association, causing women to develop their own unique goals. Working class women also had their own organizations dedicated to finding higher wages and better working conditions.

Although the suffrage movement was put on hold, the women's club era did allow a larger number of women to become more involved in the world outside of the home. And when the suffrage movement picked up for the last leg of the race, these club women were eager to win the vote for reasons often related to their individual goals, rather than the justice for women cause that dominated many views of earlier suffragists.¹¹ When Harbert's relatively dull twenty year rule of the IWSA came to an end, Ella Seass Stewart became president of the organization. Though

¹¹ Mark Sorcnson, "Ahead of Their Time," *Illinois Heritage* (November 2004): 11.

she began in 1906, her obituary in 1945 does not mention her role; perhaps because even when she was president, she was not really the voice of woman suffrage. Instead her close friend and legislative committee chair, Catharine Waugh McCulloch, gave voice and personality to the movement.

Catharine Waugh McCulloch was born in New York in 1862, but grew up in New Milford, Illinois. As a child, her peers mocked her family's suffragist views. McCulloch resolved that she would never marry, instead dedicating her life to law and suffrage.¹² She attended Rockford Female Seminary beginning in 1878. She met Jane Addams, who became a lifelong friend. McCulloch graduated first in her class. She began studying law at Union College of Law (today's Northwestern Law School) in 1885. She was among only two women in her class. There she met Frank McCulloch who "never smelled of alcohol or tobacco."¹³ At first she rejected him because she had decided never to marry as a young girl, but eventually the prosuffrage, first-in-class lawyer to be won her heart by encouraging her interests in helping young, single women. After they married the two opened a joint law practice and raised four children together.

McCulloch first entered the suffrage fray in 1890. She joined the Illinois Woman Suffrage Organization and made such a bold impact that "Antisuffragists charged that McCulloch was 'the guy who put ill in Illinois.'"¹⁴ Stewart served as president of the Illinois Equal Suffrage Association from 1906-1911. Throughout that time she worked closely with McCulloch. Stewart

¹² Adele Hast, *Women Building Chicago 1790-1990* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001) 560.

¹³ *Boston Globe*, August 11, 1913 reprinted in *Women Building Chicago*, 562.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

managed organization while McCulloch worried about legal matters and rousing public sentiment. Together these new leaders of the organization and changed the name to the Illinois Equal Suffrage Association, and their time was far from dull.

The organization of the Illinois antisuffragists is less easily identifiable. Throughout the entire nation, antisuffrage organizations tended to form only when suffrage legislation came up. Of course, suffragists faced opposition since the origin of the suffrage issues. Political cartoons dating back to the Seneca Falls Convention depict these suffrage women as “aggressive, overbearing shrews who neglected their children and forced their men folk into domestic drudgery.”¹⁵ Early suffrage opposition came primarily from men who had a louder voice in the public arena.

One such man, Francis Parkman, raised the “Woman Question” in 1879. He examined the difference between man and woman, declaring that they are “two separate halves of human nature.”¹⁶ This idea that Parkman wrote about seems to be the crux of the antisuffrage argument. Men and women were inherently different beings, and as such should have different roles in society. Women who sought the vote were “instead of claiming for them what is theirs, in nature of their own, with laws of its own, and a high capacity of independent development, the propose, as the aim of their ambition, the imitation of men.”¹⁷

All of these early arguments that Parkman makes are echoed throughout the anti-

¹⁵ Elizabeth Perry, *Cartooning for Suffrage*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994.): 3.

¹⁶ Francis Parkman, “The Woman Question,” *The North American Review* 129 no. 275 (October 1879): 305.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, 311.

literature and art. They also added to the argument the woman's perspective, which is, of course, indispensable in a woman's movement. The women tended to keep out of the public arena because of their belief that women belonged to their own sphere, while politics and grandstanding belonged to men, or else the mannish, militant suffragists.

The ideas of antisuffragists underwent massive transformation during the course of the Illinois Woman Suffrage movement. Women who opposed women entering politics actually had to work in politics to accomplish their goals. Staying out of the public eye, was impossible for women fighting a battle on behalf of other women. Mambretti points to 1886 as the origin of organized women's antisuffrage in Illinois. She suggests that "it may have been formed in reaction to several visits to Chicago by Susan B. Anthony and the National Woman Suffrage Association."¹⁸ The Women Remonstrants of Illinois had little presence until 1891 when suffrage legislation found its way to the General Assembly.

The Battle Heats Up: 1891-1897

Eighteen ninety-one turned the tide of the suffrage movement in Illinois through two different events. The first woman in Illinois voted and the first suffrage legislation passed in the forty years that the movement had been around. This year also allowed for the first antisuffrage response to the reinvigorated movement.

Ellen Martin was a successful woman lawyer working in the city of Lombard,

¹⁸ Catherine Cole Mambretti, "The Battle Against the Ballot: Illinois Woman Antisuffragists," *Chicago History* 9, no. 3 (Fall 1980): 168.

Illinois. In 1891, Martin used her knowledge of the law to analyze the city's ordinance on voting, determining that because the town's charter did not explicitly state the word male, she and all other women were allowed to vote. The town specified that "all citizens twenty-one years or older were entitled to the vote."¹⁹ She was so determined to vote that she had prepared a to challenge the entire election if anyone denied her the opportunity to vote. After successfully casting her ballot, Martin led fourteen more women to the polls, making her the first woman to vote in the state.

Martin told the *Chicago Tribune* that "the vote is on record now and cannot be changed. Women will continue to vote in town elections henceforth unless the charter is changed. This can't be done without the majority of voters. There are about as many women as men in Lombard, and they'll all vote against incorporating under the general law. Many of the men hold the same view, and we will sweep the polls in any contest. We have no purpose in voting except a desire to assert the principle."²⁰

Unfortunately, Miss Martin's assertions proved untrue, and the city of Lombard passed provisions that kept women from voting in any more elections. In one swoop woman suffrage won a great victory and suffered a great loss. Lombard women voted, but without promise of ever reaching the ballot box again. Ellen Martin was the first woman to vote in the state of Illinois, long before the battle subsided.

The voting incident in Lombard did not help Lombard women continue to vote, but Adade

¹⁹ Hast, 537.

²⁰ "Illinois Women at the Polls: The Town of Lombard the First to Start the Suffrage Ball" *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Apr 15, 1891.

Wheeler argues that the incident did help the Women's Christian Temperance Union build momentum for a school suffrage bill. In 1891,²¹ two suffrage bills were introduced to the General Assembly. The first was an amendment to the state constitution. George Curtis and Charles Bogardus pushed the bill in each of their respective houses, but ultimately failed to secure the success of the amendment. Their work did help to weaken resistance to suffrage as a whole, allowing the much less offending WCTU's school suffrage bill to pass.²²

Even school suffrage was highly debated. Who exactly women were able to vote for, had to be decided by the state's supreme court. The decision left women able to vote only for offices that the assembly had created. This decision was very significant in later suffrage legislation. For most though, the bill was of little consequence. When signed into effect the Chicago Tribune said curtly: "Gov. Fifer has signed the bill enabling women to vote for all school officers. Twenty-six of the forty-four states, a considerable majority of all, have now given women some form of suffrage."²³

Steven Buechler explains that "in actual impact the bill was extremely limited."²⁴ Because the supreme court limited the votes to legislatively created positions, women had very few offices to vote for, especially when considering how many school offices are appointed positions. This victory for Illinois women was almost an entirely symbolic one. Eighteen other states had already granted women voting rights for school elections, despite the mere symbolic nature of this right,

²¹ Adade Wheeler, *The Roads They Made* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1977), 106.

²² Susan B. Anthony and Ida Husted Harper, *History of Woman Suffrage IV* (Indianapolis: Hollenbeck Press, 1902) 600.

²³ "Fifer Signs the Woman Suffrage Bill," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jun 24, 1891.

²⁴ Buechler, 149.

women registered and began voting.

The bill also, very significantly, gave Catharine Waugh McCulloch an idea of how to use the newly created legal wedge to suffragist's advantage. Catharine Waugh McCulloch was a lawyer and avid suffragist. She involved herself greatly in the Illinois Equal Suffrage Association. At the time that the School Suffrage Bill passed she was, along with Zerelda Wallace and Mary Holmes, holding suffrage conventions throughout southern Illinois. They were trying to help the movement appeal to a broader base than the clubwomen of Chicago.

McCulloch recognized that because of the way that the Supreme Court decided the school suffrage case, the legislators could easily make any legislatively created offices available for women. The chances to vote for a much larger range of offices opened up for women. Before the 1891 bill women would require an amendment to the state constitution. The bill opened the way to change the voter requirements without the more intense measures required for an amendment. McCulloch quickly wrote a bill that was introduced to the House and Senate at each General Assembly from 1893 to 1913.

The antisuffrage movement was a reactionary movement, a response to the growing suffrage movement. Antis only organized to refute suffrage claims that women wanted the vote. That generalization did not apply to all women, clearly a large body of women did not want the vote, and fought desperately to keep it away. Their work proved to legislators that at least some women did not want the responsibility of political participation. Antis claimed that they were a "silent majority" of women. As historian Susan Marshall points out "they would later realize, a self-proclaimed 'silent majority' was of little use if it remained silent. And while the inclination to

stay within their relatively homogenous circle made some inroads among students at elite women's colleges, it also cost them missed opportunities among working women."²⁵

While suffragists campaigned, protested, paraded, and spoke publicly, antis "held teas and set up booths at county fairs."²⁶ They emerged in response to the 1891 school suffrage legislation in their first visible action. According to the *History of Woman Suffrage* a petition against the bill was sent to legislation with twelve signatures.²⁷ Along with the petition from Chicago Antisuffrage Association, the Woman Remonstrants of Illinois sent some literature to the legislators. The antisuffragists explained to the "honorable" Senate and House of Representatives that suffrage leaders "waylay the men of other households than their own upon the streets and public places. They have even the effrontery to claim they are speaking in our behalf, and uttering the counsels of our secret hearts, which we, said mothers, sisters, daughters, wives, have neither the intelligence nor the courage to urge for ourselves."²⁸

The argument that women did not want the vote was one of the most persistent antisuffrage argument. Francis Parkman's earlier arguments were incorporated into the antis' ideas. The Illinois antis' also presented many arguments which were incorporated into organizations across the nation as individual states began their own antisuffrage organizations. The Remonstrants first argue that women do not need the vote because "if a wrong existed, we have seen again and again that our just claims were urged upon these, our natural representative

²⁵ Susan Marshall, *Splintered Sisterhood* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 54.

²⁶ Catherine Cole Mambretti, "The Burden of the Ballot" *American Heritage* 30, no. 1 (December 1978): 24.

²⁷ Anthony and Harper, *History of Woman Suffrage* IV, 602.

²⁸ Women Remonstrants of the State of Illinois, "To The Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Illinois" (Chicago: 1891)

rights have been used.”²⁹ They also advocated that suffrage would oppose the Christian religion. God created men and women differently, with the idea that they would function separately. Women had “home interests, which are dearer to us than our very lives; for which many a time and oft we cheerfully put out lives in peril.”³⁰

The Remonstrants asked the General Assembly to carefully consider that the voices of the suffragists were not the voices of all women. Many women, they argued, believed “that while men find their appropriate sphere of activity in the out-door world of wage-labor, commerce, enterprise, and the administration of civil, judicial, and ecclesiastical law, women have a no less exhaustive and honorable field of usefulness in the administration of domestic and social affairs.”³¹

One antisuffragist from Massachusetts explains her views between the competition of politics and the home in this quote: “It seems to that it is a bigger feather in a woman’s cap -- a brighter jewel in her crown -- to be the mother of George Washington than to be a member of Congress from the thirty-second district.”³² Though she was not from Illinois, many of these early arguments against suffrage were universal. Women did not want the vote, women did not need the vote, women did not deserve the vote, and the vote would hurt women, not help.

Suffragists worked to argue against each of these claims about what women want, need, deserve, and whether the vote could hurt women. In the *History of Woman Suffrage* one suffragist points to California for proof that women wanted to vote:

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ *ibid.*

³² Jeannette L. Gilder, “Why I am opposed to woman suffrage” (Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women, 1894)

You have had one California woman here who claimed that woman suffrage there does not work well. California adopted the initiative and referendum at the same time with woman suffrage. The antis immediately started an initiative petition for the repeal of woman suffrage. They said that 80 percent of the women of California were opposed to it and that they would repeal it. Both men and women were eligible to sign the real petitions; but out of the 1,591,783 men and women they were unable to get the 32,000 signatures necessary.³³

Antis believed that the vote could potentially turn life upside down for mothers. They would be forced to embrace politics to be responsible citizens. If they ignored the vote, then the good, moral women would forfeit their voice, while the only women voters would be mannish, suffrage women. Antisuffragists perceptions of suffragists were persistent. In many political cartoons suffragists were depicted as masculine. In one cartoon entitled “The Masculine Woman” a woman has a strong jaw, bulbous nose, blazer, and bow tie. The text of the cartoon says:

“The Masculine Woman
 She is mannish from shoes to her hat,
 Coat, collars, stiff shirt and cravat,
 She’d wear pants in the street
 To make her complete,
 But she knows the law won’t stand for that.”³⁴

Another cartoon entitled “Emancipation” is a cartoon of several women standing around in pants with boots, hats, and cigarettes.³⁵ Suffrage created a new type of woman. Antis were traditionalists. They held on to the image of women as mothers and wives, but suffragists claimed that picture of womanhood as well. In prosuffrage cartoons, the women are depicted as gentle, kind loving mothers.

³³ Blackwell, NAWSA National Convention 1913, reprinted in *History of Woman Suffrage V*, p 393.

³⁴ H.H., “The Masculine Woman,” Postcard, 1905.

³⁵ “Emancipation,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, August 1851.

Suffrage cartoonists also introduced Columbia, a woman equivalent of Uncle Sam. In many cartoons she is “given realistic features and a heroic aura” and then used as a serious decision making woman.³⁶ In one artist’s depictions, Columbia has a “downward gaze, long neck, and angular profile” that “provide her with the features of Pre-Raphaelite model.”³⁷ She wears traditional Greco-Roman dresses with sandals, representing an ideal and classic beauty that counteracted the antisuffrage claim that suffragists were unladylike. Columbia was often paired with Lady Justice to help justify enfranchisement.

These early sentiments both for and against suffrage tended to remain the same throughout the duration of the movement, but the both suffrage and antisuffrage developed new tactics and organized more thoroughly to help expand their message. Literature became more widely circulated by both sides, which lends to a fuller understanding of both sides of the issue.

Getting Down to Business: 1897 - 1913

Antisuffragists were initially very opposed to the methods that suffragists used. The suffragists were engaging in politics through petitioning, lobbying, and public demonstrations. To the antis their behavior was already a departure from woman’s sphere. The antis were trying to cling to a Victorian ideal of womanhood. Often referring to themselves as a silent majority, these traditional women were much too private to voice their competing opinions publicly. They condemned the suffragists’ “campaign of noise” with the idea that they could remain dignified

³⁶ Sheppard. 45.

³⁷ Sheppard. 46.

ladies. Unfortunately for the antis, legislators and the public were unaware of how - as they claimed - most women really felt.

Ironically, the women of the organized antisuffrage movement were almost exclusively well-educated, wealthy women. They were not representative of average women. They could not know what most women wanted because they were not most women. Though the organization did not record members because “it might have seemed vulgar to the elite ladies whose names appear in the organization’s pamphlets,”³⁸ some of the known members of the organization include: Mrs. Oglesby, Mrs. Blackstone, and Mrs. Nickerson. Their husbands were former governor, Union Stockyard Company president, and First National Bank president, respectively. These women were not representative of an average women.

In 1897 the Illinois Women Remonstrants became the Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women (IAOESW). While the group restructuring has no clear point it was reacting to, Marshall explains that the mobilization may have been cause by “increased attention by suffrage leaders. In 1897 a series of meetings was held throughout the state by the NAWSA.”³⁹ Mambretti suggests instead that the move to restructure countered the numerous township suffrage bills that came to the General Assembly from 1893-1895.⁴⁰ Regardless of their motivation, this new group emerged in support of both the Massachusetts and New York groups of the same name. Around this same time, literature from the organization is credited to one author, Caroline Corbin, instead of the group as a whole. She explains how the antis came into the

³⁸ Mambretti, “The Battle Against the Ballot.” 169.

³⁹ Marshall, 27.

⁴⁰ Mambretti, “The Battle Against the Ballot,” 169.

public spectrum with this from her retrospect of the woman's suffrage movement :

But a new force was preparing to enter upon the field. For forty years the quiet, home-loving women of America had been silently but closely watching the course of events to see what was likely to be the outcome of all this agitation in behalf of woman. In that time, they had formed deep and decided convictions upon the subject. They could see in the demand for woman suffrage only an attempt to thrust upon them, in addition to their own most important and exhausting duties, those labors and responsibilities of which they had hitherto been relieved by the men of their households, under that specialization of the work of the two sexes which they believed to be of divine ordination. They were averse to public action, unaccustomed to conventions and platforms, but their moral sense was aroused, and for their conscientious convictions they were ready to make some painful sacrifices.⁴¹

Similar to suffrage leaders, antis were among the elite. Caroline Corbin, for instance, was educated at the Brooklyn Female Academy after studying everything from trigonometry to theology. She graduated in 1852, and her interests settled on writing. She met and married Calvin Rich Corbin, a merchant's agent in Chicago. She met him while visiting family in Alton, Illinois. They married in 1861 and by 1862 they had their first child.⁴² Corbin only related to the masses through her position as a wife and mother, not in status. Corbin continued writing, publishing her first novel *Rebecca, or a Woman's Secret*. Corbin's novel was dedicated to John Stuart Mill for his "noble efforts in behalf of the Enfranchisement of Women."⁴³

At some point, though, Corbin's views on suffrage shifted. She wrote publicly to Frances Willard in 1888 and again in 1889 where she mentions that "twenty years ago I was tolerant of

⁴¹ Caroline Corbin, "Woman's Rights in America: A Retrospect of Sixty Years" (Chicago, IL: Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women, 1908).

⁴² Hast.

⁴³ Caroline Corbin, *Rebecca: Or a Woman's Secret*, (Chicago: Clarke and Company, 1868).

woman suffrage because I felt the need of something to open a wider door for woman, and lift her to a better comprehension of her own powers or worthiness.”⁴⁴ Her views shifted when she realized that “false ideals were luring women from the natural and holy ministries of the home, and promoting a coarse and selfish individualism.”⁴⁵

Historian Catherine Cole Mambretti argues that the Corbin “might have called themselves feminists had the term not been associated with suffragists.”⁴⁶ Corbin, like many of the suffrage leaders had been well educated and heavily involved in women’s organizations, like the Association for the Advancement of Women, another organization she founded.⁴⁷ She thought that women should carry their political clout through social reform and education rather than through the vote.

Corbin’s life is not as well documented as the lives of suffragists. Her antisuffrage opinions developed sometime before 1886, when she began publishing antisuffrage literature. The fourth book that she published, *Letters from a Chimney Corner: A Plea for Pure Homes and Sincere Relations Between Men and Women*, demonstrates how her opinion of the suffrage movement changed. Instead of praising the movement for empowering women, she criticized the movement for threatening “the foundation of what is highest and purest.”⁴⁸

Being a woman did not make these women inferior, it made them different. The argument that the Remonstrants make in this early pamphlet is the same argument that antisuffragists

⁴⁴ Corbin, “A Rejoinder to Frances Willard.” reprinted in Jane Camhi, “Women Against Women: American Antisuffragism 1880-1920,” (*PhD Diss., Tufts University, 1973*), 439.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ Catherine Cole Mambretti, “Battle Against the Ballot.” 170.

⁴⁷ Camhi, 438.

⁴⁸ Caroline Corbin, *Letters From a Chimney-Corner* (Chicago : Fergus Print. Co., 1886.), 28.

continued to make and the same argument that people opposed to Equal Rights Amendment and later antifeminists. Women were granted certain protections based on the law, and “to confound and ‘equalize’ these functions would be to undermine and subvert the whole order of society and introduce anarchy.”⁴⁹ If men and women were equal as voters, then where does the equality end? Would women have to become more and more like men.

One might think that the antisuffragists were sexist against themselves. Instead, antisuffragists were decidedly pro-woman. They saw suffrage as a way to take away from the sort of mythic quality of womanhood. The idea of “feminism” or “equality” undermined the idea of woman being special. They also worried that the move towards equality would make women more mannish. Camhi explains the antisuffrage opinion of women in this way:

In order to give greater significance to woman’s role as civilizer, they emphasized the awesome nature of the beast she had to grapple with and ended up in many cases with a view of man that was far from complimentary. Here, in what was intended as an attack on the suffragist is more than a potshot at man.⁵⁰

The antis were also very concerned with the anarchy of the suffrage movement. In one *Antisuffrage Bulletin*, the organization wrote that “when the suffragists forsake sound argument and betake themselves to a campaign of noise and spectacular demonstration, do they not lay themselves open to the change of being allied with the elements of decadence and misrule, rather than with those of good sense and sound government?”⁵¹ In addition to national anarchy, the

⁴⁹ *A Remonstrance* (Chicago, IL: Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women, 1906).

⁵⁰ Camhi, 43

⁵¹ Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women, “Campaign of Noise,” (Chicago, IL: IAOESW, 1909).

group suggested that women voters would cause chaos at home. The same *Bulletin* concludes with the question “What then becomes of marriage and the home? Is there any escape from the conviction that the industrial and political independence of woman would be the wreck of our present domestic institutions.”

If women are out voting and running for office, alongside men, then no one would be at home raising well-educated sons and daughter. Antisuffragists believed that the whole population would suffer from removing mothers from their home.

Corbin is unique from many other antis because of the argument that she most wholeheartedly embraced in her pamphleteering. She incorporated, along with the usual arguments against suffrage, an argument that suffrage “is not only a tenet of socialism, but one of its fundamental principles; the one, indeed, that is most indispensable to its success, since any ‘revolution’ that affects one-half the race, must of necessity be futile – abortive.”⁵²

Corbin understood that “every suffragist may not be a socialist” but argued that “every socialist is necessarily a woman suffragist.”⁵³ One fundamental cornerstone of socialism is a classless society. Eliminating suffrage limitations was a vital step towards class removal.

Furthermore socialism de-sexed women, crumbling societal standards in favor of the individual:

Our Fathers founded this Republic, the best the world has ever seen, upon the family as the unit of Society. Socialism declares the individual, without reference to sex, to be that unit thus ignoring the dual nature of humanity and making the birth of the child, which is in reality the crowning event of human life, a matter of

⁵² Caroline Corbin, “Woman’s Rights in America: A Retrospect of Sixty Years” (Chicago, IL: Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women, 1908).

⁵³ Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women, “Socialism vs. Legal Marriage,” (Chicago, IL: IAOESW, 1910).

no account; an incident to be ignored so far as the individual is concerned. The men who founded this Republic believed that the relations between men and women were of the first importance to the welfare of Society that they were as much the subject of law as any other propensity, which wrongly indulged, leads to acts that are prejudicial to Society.⁵⁴

While Corbin's pamphlets seem like grabbing at straws trying to keep women from voting, her fear of a suffrage-socialism alliance was not unfounded. In fact, numerous socialist leaders endorsed suffrage, including Frances Willard. Lena Morrow Lewis a journalist, woman's activist, and socialist wrote in 1911 a pamphlet entitled "The Socialist Party and Women Suffrage" that the "disfranchised woman is at the mercy of laws which she never enacted." She points to suffrage as a "way to justice and comradeship in the future."⁵⁵ In fact, in Illinois socialists had been allied with suffragists since the 1880s when suffragists began work with the Working Women's Union and Knights of Labor.⁵⁶

Suffragists were not put off by this antisuffrage sentiment. In the same years that antisuffrage got its big break, so too did suffrage. Since the formation of the state suffrage association, women had won victories in lots of legislation; property rights were dissolved, women were allowed entrance into the Bar Association, women could hold office, age of consent rose from 10 to 14, Child Labor Law passed, and the first female served on a Board of Trustees at the University of Illinois.⁵⁷ But the only offices that women could vote for at the turn of the

⁵⁴ "Socialism vs. Legal Marriage,"

⁵⁵ Lena Morrow Lewis, "*The Socialist Party and Women Suffrage*" (Chicago, IL: National Office of the Socialist Party, 1911).

⁵⁶ Buechler, 128.

⁵⁷ Catharine McCulloch, "Chronology of the Women's Rights Movement," (Chicago, IL: Illinois Equal Suffrage Association, 1913).

century were those of school boards. Even so, women were not interested in voting for such menial offices.

Corbin used low voter turnout in school elections to justify her opinion that women did not want the vote. In a 1913 pamphlet she wrote the “indifference with which [school suffrage] has always been received by women is another evidence that it was not that sex which first claimed it, but it was thrust upon them without their desire or consent.” Knowing how successful the Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women is exceedingly difficult because they did not record their members, and their claimed successes could be caused by other factors. For instance, the antis pointed towards the diminished number of women who participated in the school board election of 1898 - the number of voters plummeted from 29,815 to 1,488.⁵⁸ Obviously the antisuffragists could have a role in the shrinking numbers, but so too could the worn off novelty of voting for a relatively menial office.

Suffragists fought on throughout the first decade of the twentieth century. Few victories could be pointed to, but they were still toiling away. Antisuffragists took credit for suffrage stagnation, claiming that “Up to this time, that is, about 1850, woman suffrage was the subject of denunciation and ridicule, in every one of these states, nor has it since achieved a notable victory in any one of them, although persistently urged, except in the experimental matter of school suffrage, which has done more than any other one thing to prove that women as a sex do not wish the ballot.”⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Mambretti, “Battle Against the Ballot,” 170.

⁵⁹ “The Campaign of Noise”

The IAOESW claimed to have membership of 15,000 in 1908 when they sent a petition to the National Republican Convention.⁶⁰ They went on to say that “during these ten years the suffragists have not gained a single important victory, while legislative records show against them more than one hundred and fifty defeats, covering the ground of municipal, State and presidential or national suffrage.”⁶¹ If time would have stopped there in 1908, surely, history would remember antisuffragists as the victors of this battle, but within the next five years, the Illinois Suffrage Movement underwent sweeping changes, that shaped the movement’s last years. The transformation of the Illinois suffrage movement occurred in 1910 when a new suffrage leader came into the limelight, challenging the standard methods that the IESA had employed.

Born in Maquoketa, Iowa in 1864, Grace Wilbur Trout attended public school with tutoring in a number of subjects. She married in 1886 and moved to Chicago 1893. By 1900 Trout immersed herself into numerous clubs. She pushed clubwomen into the suffrage movement and became one of the state’s foremost suffrage leaders by 1910. Trout was elected president of the Chicago Political Equality League (CPEL) and quickly revitalized the somewhat stagnant movement.⁶² Trout became president of the IESA in 1912 and led them until 1920 when the group disbanded, except for the year 1915-1916.

Trout embraced attention grabbing stunts that would bring suffrage news to the press. Within her first few years of leadership, Trout organized suffrage floats for parades, automobile

⁶⁰ Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women, “Anti-Suffragist Petition to the National Republican Convention,” (Chicago: 1908).

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² Hast, 888.

tours, and membership drives. The membership of the CPEL swelled from 143 to over 1,000.⁶³

While traditional leaders of the movement, McCulloch and Stewart, opposed the militancy of the lobbying and loudness of these new methods, they could not oppose the results that Trout secured.

The automobile tours were particularly effective. Grace Wilbur Trout, Catharine McCulloch, Ella Seass Stewart, and Grace Nichols traveled across the northeast part of the state stopping in sixteen cities within five days. The *Chicago Tribune* wrote that “all aspects of suffrage will be presented at each stop.”⁶⁴ The speakers “spoke usually from the automobile, driving up into some square or stopping on a prominent street corner which had previously been advertised in the local papers and arranged for by the local committees in the various towns visited.”⁶⁵ The IESA had previously engaged in railroad tours, where the women would ride the railway from Chicago to Springfield, speaking at the stops along the way, but the automobile tours were able to draw a huge amount of attention to the cause. In each of the sixteen cities that the tour stopped in “the local newspapers gave front page stories about the Suffrage Automobile Tour, which helped greatly in arousing interest.”⁶⁶

When one tour concluded, the suffragists surmised that they had accomplished these goals: “Organized or received promise of organization of suffrage club in every town where one did not exist. Raised the issue to a place of importance alongside legislative graft. Made the

⁶³ Buechler, 174.

⁶⁴ Women Off on Second Tour." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 11, 1910.

⁶⁵ Grace Wilbur Trout. "Sidelights on Illinois Suffrage History," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 13 no. 2 (July, 1920): 147.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

suffrage question understood as never before, incidentally winning over hundreds of outright opponents. Obtained promises or virtual promises of support from a half a dozen candidates. Stirred leading citizens of towns to pledge they would vote for no candidate who would not promise to put the suffrage question before the people of the state for their vote.”

Trout spoke highly of the experience explaining that “the receptions, both socially and politically, exceeded anything I have ever seen.”⁶⁷ Trout also focused a great deal of her efforts on attracting new people to the suffrage cause. She appealed first to legislators, who she knew were absolutely necessary to win the vote. The IESA began sending out letters to potential politicians to gauge their support for suffrage. She wrote letters to candidates in the Chicago area, and her letters to and from Otto Krampikowsky are particularly interesting. He wrote that he did not know much about suffrage, but since the IESA “has over 200,000 women as members,” he would be “willing to go fifty fifty” and he “could be depended up onto stand for upholding of the said law, that is by furnishing workers in my district on primary day for two or more hours, to be paid a good salary for their time. As you know any candidate that comes out for woman suffrage loses many hundreds of votes and must have some way of making up his loss.”⁶⁸

Trout did not appreciate the implication that the man’s vote would be traded for political favors. Instead she responded bleakly that the IESA stands “absolutely for a square deal to everyone, for that reason it seemed only fair to give you the opportunity to express your sentiments the same as many other candidates have already done. If you stand for political

⁶⁷ "Suffragist Tour Ends in Triumph." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jul 16, 1910.

⁶⁸ Otto Krampikowsky, letter to Trout, Aug. 21, 1916.

equality regardless of sex, which is one of the fundamental principles of a democratic form of government, we would very glad to file you opinion in this office.”⁶⁹

A year before Mr. Krampikowsky implied that women held suffrage meetings in taverns to which Trout answered: “We have never heard of any suffrage meetings being held in the back of saloons, and neither has anyone else.”⁷⁰

Trout searched for legislators that the IESA could build a relationship with. The organization kept records of the responses, using them in pamphlets, to help educate suffrage allies about politicians’ opinions on women’s issues. Alongside these alliances with politicians, Trout built relationships with more men and women of clubs.

Women had been divided by the clubs they joined and the causes they pursued, but now it became clear that the vote could be a means of accomplishing these goals. As such, women’s organizations began forming federations. Trout was determined to attract both women and men, who ultimately had established political power that would be needed to win; she also thought that the suffrage cause would do better if it worked to be as inoffensive as possible, so as to avoid alienating potential support.⁷¹ She worked to unite many of the Chicago area women’s clubs such as the Woman’s City Club (WCC), Chicago Woman’s Club (CWC), and Jane Addam’s Women’s Trade Union League (WTUL).⁷² Bringing women together and using less abrasive ideas of social independence helped strengthen the woman’s suffrage movement in the last years of the struggle.

⁶⁹ Grace Trout, letter to Krampikowsky, Sept. 6, 1916.

⁷⁰ Trout, letter to Krampikowsky, Sept. 9, 1914.

⁷¹ Carolyn O. Poppett, and Mary Ann Porucznik. *The Woman Who Never Fails: Grace Wilbur Trout and Illinois Suffrage*. (Chicago: The Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest, 2000): 15.

⁷² Buechler 158.

As historian Steve Buechler explains “ By recognizing, emphasizing, and appealing to the differences that separated women, suffrage became the only common thread that tied together these diverse interests and goals.”⁷³

Her prominence as an upper-middle-class clubwoman greatly shifted the goals of woman suffrage. Where McCulloch and other middle-class working women saw suffrage as a means to affect the political system, this new class of suffragists saw suffrage as the end goal. This division among suffragists led to a very heated relationship between Trout and McCulloch.

McCulloch and Trout worked closely to organize lecture circuits, gather signatures, speak to legislators, and devise clever new ways to push the movement forward. Though McCulloch remained leader of the IESA, Trout quickly became the center of the Illinois suffrage universe. The CPEL had more members than the statewide organization, and her automobile tours attracted up to 2,000 people. In 1912 McCulloch was replaced by Trout by the IESA as their leader. Trout was determined to educate women and men rather than attack them. Trout carefully approached each political party and asked for their support. Under Trout’s leadership a full suffrage bill was introduced to the General Assembly; the bill passed in the House, but failed in the Senate. Trout was undoubtedly disappointed, but McCulloch, who had been trying to win the fight for twenty years, was excited to see the progress that Trout had made.⁷⁴ Trout began quickly reorganizing the IESA, she made a permanent headquarters in Springfield to monitor the progress, and she called for even more women’s clubs to join the fray.

⁷³ Buechler, 171.

⁷⁴ Buechler, 174.

Trout kept pushing new alliances and connections so that when in 1913 the IESA, would reintroduce suffrage legislation. Trout made certain that Governor Dunne would support the legislation before she created it, because his veto could quickly undo all the IESA's hard work. When he agreed to support suffragists, Trout and McCulloch began creating a bill that would be introduced to the General Assembly. McCulloch's personality once again threatened the progress, when she introduced an amendment rather than a bill to the assembly against the wishes of the IESA. The amendment was quickly rejected, and McCulloch was able to salvage the situation. On June 11, 1913, Grace Wilbur Trout guarded the doors inside the State Capitol building from anti-suffrage lobbyists, while pressuring prosuffrage legislators to remain in the chamber.⁷⁵ The IESA finally saw its long sought victory, when the Presidential and Municipal Voting Act granted women the right to vote for "all national offices and virtually all municipal, county, town, and village offices."⁷⁶

Buechler wrote that "on the Eve of its victory, the suffrage movement in Illinois had become an upper-class movement, at least as measured by the social-class background of the movement leadership."⁷⁷ The movement no longer belonged to Stewart and McCulloch. Instead of being a means to an end, Trout and her brand of suffragists saw the vote as the end. This fundamental disagreement among the two camps of women ultimately separated the two groups in the wake of the suffrage victory.

Unfortunately in the aftermath of the legislative victory, the former suffragists did not

⁷⁵ Popplett and Porucznik, 1.

⁷⁶ Buechler, 178.

⁷⁷ Buechler, 176.

remain united. The members of the IESA and CPEL were higher class women with educations and free time who wanted the vote to accomplish goals related to charity, education, and positive moral changes to policy, but women of the WTUL were much more interested in practical issues that affected their own lives. Like McCulloch, the Women in the WTUL were working women who needed the vote so that they could get manageable work hours for a reasonable pay. They wanted to use the vote as a means to achieve greater equality for women. They needed the support of women to achieve these goals at the voting booths. But class divisions, which had been overlooked during the movement, quickly became apparent in the aftermath. Trout and other higher class suffragists believed that suffrage was the end goal. Suffrage allowed women equal citizenship, and for many of these elite clubwomen, status is all they really wanted. The suffrage leaders split over disputes about the national movement, proving perhaps how very necessary the fight for suffrage had been in creating a network of women working towards a single goal.

Despite the suffrage victory in Illinois, women still couldn't vote for every office. They were allowed to vote for any office that was created through legislation, but not for certain other offices. After 1913, the organized effort to get suffrage in Illinois was not nearly as strong as before. The antisuffrage threat disappeared, but was quickly replaced with the conflicted interests of Grace Wilbur Trout and Catharine McCulloch.

The New Battle in Illinois: 1913 - 1920

Buechler describes the period of 1913-1920 as an "identity crisis in the interim period until

national enfranchisement.”⁷⁸ Trout became an increasingly polarizing figure as she made decisions that openly defied the wishes of other Illinois suffragists. The organization refused to send them to the NAWSA 1913 convention. The two were supposed to present at the national meeting. The relationship between Trout and Stewart and McCulloch was not a pleasant one. Trout refused to work towards a suffrage amendment, which would grant complete suffrage to women, but McCulloch went on to form the Suffrage Amendment Alliance, breaking her ties with the IESA.

Because women won partial suffrage in 1913 in Illinois, the narrative seems to end there. Buechler explains that “Extending movement history beyond [1913] implies that the movement ended not with a bang but a whimper. The manner in which the movement split indicates how fragile the alliance had been all along.”⁷⁹ The relationships among leaders broke down entirely in the seven years from state to national suffrage. Trout explains her quarrel with McCulloch saying that:

While this work was going on Mrs. Catharine Waugh McCulloch, who disagreed with the policy of the Illinois Equal Suffrage Association, organized what she called the "Suffrage Amendment Alliance" and sent lobbyists to Springfield to work for a direct suffrage amendment to the Constitution. She had such an amendment introduced and it was defeated in the Senate where it received only 6 votes and in the House it was defeated by a vote of 100 Nays to 18 Yeas. This action showed moral courage on the part of the Legislators because many of those who voted against the measure had been the loyal, valiant friends of suffrage for years. They believed as we all believed - that a suffrage amendment, under the difficult-to-be-amended Constitution of Illinois, would be doomed to certain defeat if submitted to the men voters of the State, and furthermore that a resolution calling for a Constitutional Convention had already passed and would adequately take care of the suffrage question. In urging Mrs. McCulloch to withdraw this amendment, Governor Lowden and other prominent suffragists pointed out to her

⁷⁸ Buechler, 180.

⁷⁹ Buechler, 182.

that the defeat of the suffrage amendment at the polls would mean that a suffrage article would not be incorporated in a new Constitution, for the members of the Constitutional Convention would feel dubious about incorporating an article in a new Constitution that had just been defeated at the polls.⁸⁰

She believed that an amendment to the Constitution could compromise everything that the suffragists had already achieved, but McCulloch who had already dedicated twenty-two years to the suffrage cause was unwilling to waver in the sprint to the finish line. She wanted complete suffrage for women, and the only way that was possible was through a constitutional amendment.

Trout thought that the best way for women to get full suffrage was through a new state constitution. She wrote “Our state will be shackled and held back in the great onward progress of the world unless Illinois has a new Constitution.”⁸¹ She continued on to say that:

The question of equal suffrage certainly no longer needs to be discussed in Illinois. The women of this state have now all the suffrage that the legislature has power to give them. Full suffrage in Illinois can be secured only through a Federal Suffrage Amendment or by amending our present state constitution. It is obvious, however, from explanations herein previously made, that it would be utterly impractical to strive to pass a Suffrage Amendment under the present restrictions of our constitution. The surest way to secure full suffrage for the women of Illinois by state action is through the medium of a new constitution.⁸²

Trout directly contrasted McCulloch’s approach and undermined her methods by dividing the interests of Illinois suffragists. *The Chicago Tribune* commented on these different approaches in a 1917 article, where they spoke with McCulloch who said that “the idea that there is a vicious interest in backing this movement is ridiculous... No one is backing me except Frank McCulloch

⁸⁰ Trout, “Sidelights,” 172-173.

⁸¹ Grace Wilbur Trout, “Illinois’ Great Need -- A New Constitution A Vital War Measure,” 1918.

⁸² *ibid.*

and the women who want the vote.”⁸³

The division of these two suffrage forces stalled any forward progress in Illinois. The only progress came in 1919 when Illinois was the first state to ratify the nineteenth amendment.

Beyond Illinois

The victory of partial suffrage in Illinois was significant for both the suffrage and antisuffrage movements. Among suffragists, the victory in Illinois was the first concrete victory east of the Mississippi. The line had been crossed, allowing suffrage to have a real chance along the Eastern seaboard. The leaders of the Illinois Suffrage movement split, but they were both still very dedicated to the suffrage cause. Trout embraced Congressional Union, an offshoot of the NAWSA working toward federal enfranchisement, while McCulloch stayed closely aligned with the NAWSA and Dr. Anna Howard Shaw. Both women took with them new methods and tactics that helped spread the movement. Suffrage parades took place in major cities like Washington D.C., New York, and even Chicago, where women with the vote marched on behalf of their less lucky, disenfranchised sisters.

In 1920 the IESA took credit for the New York victory in a pamphlet: “the leaders in New York State said they could never have won their great victory in 1917 if Illinois had not opened the door in 1913, and the winning of New York opened the door for the passage of the Federal suffrage amendment. So the work in Illinois was fundamental and as vitally important to the

⁸³ “Woman’s Club Argues Method Of Winning Vote.” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb 22, 1917.

women of the entire nation as to the women of our own state.”⁸⁴

Illinois broke down the wall that contained suffrage in the West. As Kraditor argues early in her *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement* the doldrums of the suffrage movement ended as suffrage crossed into the East.⁸⁵ A new hope for suffrage was restored, and the movement underwent the sort of transformation necessary to attract women from diverse social backgrounds. Suffrage became a tangible goal, and by 1920 a reality.

Antisuffragists realized that their plans and methods were not sufficient to stop the progress of woman suffrage. Marshall describes antisuffrage activities by saying “Common opposition activities included fund-raising balls and luncheons at major downtown hotels, junior auxiliaries in women's colleges, and even a Junior League in New York.”⁸⁶ She goes on to argue that antis embraced a persona of “ladies,” which helped support their stance, but critically hindered their ability to compete with the suffrage movement. The National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage formed in 1912, only one year before the suffrage battle in Illinois ended. The late national organization suggests that the antisuffragists only saw suffrage as a viable threat after 1912. Buechler describes earlier efforts as “ad hoc.”⁸⁷ Antisuffragists only organized when suffrage legislation needed defeating.

Though the organization began only in 1912, in 1916 they claimed to have 350,000

⁸⁴ “Annual Report of Lou M. McGraw Legislative and Congressional Chairman of the Equal Suffrage Association given at the Last Convention of the State Association held in Congress Hotel,” Chicago October 7-8-9, 1920.

⁸⁵ Kraditor, 6.

⁸⁶ Susan E. Marshall, “Ladies against Women: Mobilization Dilemmas of Antifeminist Movements.” *Social Problems* 32, No. 4 (Apr., 1985)

⁸⁷ Buechler, 172.

members. Just as Grace Wilbur Trout claimed that suffrage sentiment doubled overnight with the Presidential and Municipal Suffrage Bill, so too did antisuffrage sentiment. The Illinois law broke past the Mississippi River, and suffrage was not some distant notion, it was knocking on the doors to millions of housewives' homes.

The Woman's Protest, the NAOWS official newspaper, ran a story on the Illinois suffrage victory in July of 1913. They claimed that the suffragists in Illinois employed deceitful methods to win the vote. The suffragists, they argued worked too quietly; the article states that "In fact their practice has evolved the axiom: Every evil lobby works in secret. A righteous lobby works in the open --- and covets publicity."⁸⁸ They implied that the vote had been won using deceptive, even sneaky methods. The fact that the public did not get to directly vote for suffrage, as they would have to in the case of an amendment, stood as proof that suffragists were dishonest.

Antis used Illinois as proof also that politics corrupted woman. After 1915 election *The Woman's Protest* detailed images of women yelling publicly at rallies, and for buying and selling votes.⁸⁹ In 1916 women even became involved in a political scandal. The Petticoat Graft Scandal, as it is sometimes called, happened in February 1916 when Page Eaton claimed that her boss Louise Rowe proposed a scheme of salary splitting. According to the *Tribune*, "Mrs. Rowe kept a stenographer on her pay roll who did no work and had proposed that she and Mrs. Eaton split the \$50 a month salary of an absent stenographer by the use of a dummy name."⁹⁰

Antisuffragists used these incidents as examples of why women should not have the vote.

⁸⁸ "Suffrage in Illinois," *Woman's Protest* III no. 3, June, 1913.

⁸⁹ Mambretti, "Battle Against Ballot," 176-177.

⁹⁰ "City Graft War Spreads." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb 23, 1916.

While suffragists had claimed that women would purify politics, antisuffragists persistently argued that instead the vote would corrupt women. The antisuffragists neglected to look at the good that women were able to accomplish with the vote, instead pointing at incidents like the Petticoat Graft Scandal, not only to prevent suffrage legislation, but to repeal existing laws.

Ultimately, even with the added motivation of the Illinois defeat, the antisuffragist movement came to an end. The movement suffered another great defeat in 1917 when New York passed state suffrage. Illinois and New York had two of the most active state antisuffrage organizations, leaving Massachusetts as the only stronghold on antisuffragist, but even they were defeated with the 20th amendment. The drawn out suffrage battle ended, and women entered the political realm across the nation. Many of the antisuffragists embraced politics, fighting desperately during the 1920s against Alice Paul's Equal Rights Amendment.

Conclusion

Before Seneca Falls women “were rarely in a position to suggest or implement sweeping change in politics, economics, or philosophy.”⁹¹ But thanks to the club movement and population surge of urban centers, suffrage became possible. Women left the home and began engaging in politics. Even antisuffragists were still heavily involved in reform, which made them part of the political world. Women lobbied, petitioned, wrote, and sometimes protested. They transformed their identity in society well before suffrage became a question. One of the centers of this

⁹¹ Jennifer Rycenga, “A Greater Awakening: Women's Intellect as a Factor in Early Abolitionist Movements, 1824-1834,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 21, No. 2 (Fall, 2005): 35.

transformation of womanhood was Chicago. As a result, Chicago also played a major role in the Illinois suffrage movement. It became a center not only statewide, but also nationally.

McCulloch, Trout, and Corbin all centered their lives and activities around the Windy City.

Eventually the influence of suffragists stretched beyond the city with the use of automobile and train tours, newspapers, and lobbying in Springfield.

Nationally, the movement took seventy years from Seneca Falls to the suffrage amendment. In the time between the major events, progress moved at a slow pace. Emerging antisuffrage organizations in 1912 indicate that the progress of suffrage finally picked up. At that same time, the final push for suffrage in Illinois was well underway. The progress in Illinois served as a catalyst for suffrage and antisuffrage across the nation. Sentiment in either direction was strengthened because the movement was no longer a distant possibility, but rather an imminent choice. Women across the nation had to choose which side of the battle they were on. In the years between 1913 and 1920 both the NAWSA and NAOWS both saw increased membership.

The victory in Illinois was a turning point for both movements, and also a turning point in the relationships among suffrage leaders within the state. The alliances that the IESA built over the last five year push to suffrage were demolished after women were allowed into polling places because women had always had differing opinions on what the vote could do. Working women and middle class women saw the votes as a means to change society, but the elite saw the vote as a status symbol. Women were equal citizens, and that was what they wanted. They did not need to pursue temperance or labor regulation. The elite were content with their new status, but the working women were not. The alliance between these women is a great point of comparison to

what women did with the vote on a federal level. Women were not only divided into suffragists and antisuffragists, but also into feminists and reformers. The vote could help make women equal or it could help make women special. The division between Trout and McCulloh is a division that closely mirrors the division in the debate over an Equal Rights Amendment.

Illinois also markedly changed the antisuffrage world. New state organizations formed, and the national movement continued to grow. Caroline Corbin's socialist fears translated into the national newspaper as well. Suffrage was a real, pressing fear for the antis, and as such, they organized and tried new tactics to win over public sentiment. Though Caroline Corbin gave up after the 1913 bill, her influential pamphlets continued spreading the belief that socialism was an imminent consequence of female enfranchisement. Antis continued to embrace politics more and more in an attempt to keep women away from the vote.

Illinois was the first state east of the Mississippi to grant suffrage to women. With the 1913 Municipal and Presidential Suffrage Bill, Illinois broke the antisuffrage stronghold on the East. The Illinois movement helped rescue suffrage from the long, monotonous journey from Seneca Falls by building momentum and opening up the possibility of legislating suffrage instead of amending constitutions. Within four years New York won the vote, which instrumentally increased women's influence over the electoral college. And in seven years, women all across the nation flooded into voting booths. The suffrage story in Illinois is one that had a tremendous impact on both sides of the woman's suffrage movement in the entire nation.

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