

QR Content for *Passing the Torch* mural

The Coalition Story

The Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention of 1848 was conceptualized over a cup of tea. Similarly, the Centennial Suffrage Celebration Coalition of Johnson City was first discussed over lunch by Johnson City resident, Linda Good and City Mayor, Jenny Brock. At that meeting, Linda and Jenny discussed the importance of creating awareness and celebrating the importance of the 19th Amendment passage and Tennessee's role as the 36th and necessary final state to ratify. At that time they did not realize that Johnson City was a focal point of suffrage activities leading up to that ratification. After over fifteen months of planning, fund raising, and traversing many road bumps (including a pandemic) in their journey, the Centennial Suffrage Celebration Coalition of Johnson City presented the "Passing the Torch" mural to Mayor Brock and the community on October 10, 2020.

Passion and partnerships were integral to the completion of Coalition efforts. Rebecca Proffitt, archivist at the ETSU Reece Museum, identified a dedicated historian in Tom Roberts, and sought out the perfect mural artist match in Ellen Elmes. A history enthusiast as well as an artist, Ellen had just begun her research into the Suffrage Movement at Seneca Falls when contacted by Rebecca and Tom.

The historic content provided herein has been compiled by Coalition historian, Tom Roberts. If you have additional information concerning the history of the Movement in Johnson City, please contact Johnson City Communications and Marketing office for additional consideration.

Several events that had been planned by the Coalition Education group headed by Coalition Co-leader, Joy Fulkerson of ETSU's Leadership and Civic Engagement, had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to pandemic restrictions, a parade similar to the one on October 7, 1916 in Johnson City led by Mary Eliza Shaut White, the Coalition opted for a short procession of Coalition participants dressed in Suffragist attire on the mural presentation day, October 10, 2020. Stacey White Ferren, granddaughter of Mary Eliza Shaut White, led the procession down Ashe Street to the mural site to begin the ceremony. A program of the ceremony and other historic information can be found in the ETSU Reece Museum archives.

Mural Details

The visual design and narrative of the mural was created by Artist, Ellen Elmes in accordance with the Coalition's selected theme. It tells the story of improved voting rights movements in the United States across time beginning with the Suffrage Movement and continuing into the 21st Century.

The process of creating the mural involved painting the imagery both on and off the wall. In 2018, Ellen Elmes and her husband Don engaged in a tutorial with the Philadelphia Mural Arts artist Nathaniel Lee to learn the process of preparing, painting and installing fabric panels on outdoor walls in the creation of a permanent mural. With this knowledge, Ellen was able to paint in her studio from April through July, (during the 2020 stay-at-home requirements of the COVID-19 pandemic), all the imagery on 16 separate fabric panels that comprise the left, right, and middle rectangular blocks of the mural design. Then, from late August to mid-September 2020, Ellen and Don installed the panels with a thick acrylic gel that affixes the panels, edge to edge, permanently to the wall. Next, by painting directly on the brick, they added the "bridge" imagery of the hands passing the torch between women through the ages. The final additions

included the black border to all the outside edges, as well as the lower middle border which gives credit to the major funders of the mural project.

Sponsoring Organizations

After a Coalition fund raising event named *Vibes and Votes* was held at the Willow Tree, a local Coffee House and Music Hall just prior to the imposition of gathering restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, *Bravissima! Women Sponsoring the Arts!* provided a major portion of the necessary money to pay for the mural. The Johnson City Public Art committee provided the materials, and creation of the mural began.

The following information, gathered by Coalition Historian, Tom Roberts, includes biographies of people who appear in the mural:

Mothers of the Suffrage Movement



Matilda Joslyn Gage (1826–1898)

Matilda Joslyn Gage, a suffragist, abolitionist, Native American rights activist, lecturer, and author from Cicero, New York, began her vocation as an activist in 1852 when she spoke at a women's rights convention in Syracuse, New York. She coedited the first three volumes of the *History of Woman Suffrage* with Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The six-volume publication, written from the perspective of Anthony and Stanton, was part of an effort to establish an official record of the women's suffrage movement in America. Gage also wrote pro women's rights essays and pamphlets, often questioning the church's position on issues she believed made women seem sinful and inferior to men. Gage harbored escaped slaves in her home and supported the rights of Native Americans, speaking out against their cruel and unfair treatment by the US government. In 1890, she organized a group called the Woman's National Liberal Union, dedicated to challenging the religious mandate of women's submission to men and halting the encroachment of religion in politics.



Lucy Stone (1818–1893)

Lucy Stone (Photo courtesy Library of Congress) a leading suffragist, abolitionist, newspaper publisher and prominent U.S. orator from West Brookfield, Massachusetts, dedicated her life to battling inequality on all fronts. When she married Henry Browne Blackwell in 1855, she went against tradition for married women by keeping her own last name. Before the Civil War, she wrote and delivered abolitionist speeches for William Lloyd Garrison and his American Anti-Slavery Society, while becoming active in women's rights and in 1850, organized the Women's Rights Convention in Worcester, Massachusetts that drew an audience more national in scope. She also worked to pass the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery, and involuntary servitude, except as punishment for a crime. In 1869, She broke with Susan B Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton and others over passage of the 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution, which granted voting rights to Black men but not to women. Though she wished that the 15th Amendment included suffrage for women, she believed that gaining voting rights for any disenfranchised group helped move America toward equality for all. As a result, Stone and Julia Ward Howe were leaders in the organization of the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) while Anthony and Cady founded the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA). However, the two groups did reconcile and merged in 1890 prior to Stone's death.



Sojourner Truth (1797 – 1883)

Sojourner Truth, an abolitionist, evangelist, author, and women's rights activist, was born into slavery as Isabella Baumfree in Swartekill, New York. After escaping and gaining her freedom in 1826, she sued her former "owner" for custody of her son, Peter after the New York Anti-Slavery

Law was passed. Winning her case and regaining custody of her son, she was the first Black woman to sue a white man in a United States court – and win. The family that took her in after her escape and helped with her court case, the Van Wagenens, had a profound effect on Isabella’s spiritual life and she became a fervent Christian. In 1843, with what she believed was God’s urging to go forth and speak the truth, she changed her name to Sojourner Truth and embarked on a lifelong mission to preach the gospel and speak out against slavery and oppression.

Her most famous speech, “Ain’t I a Woman” was given at the 1851 Woman’s Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio. The original transcript printed shortly after the speech by her friend and journalist, Marius Robinson (who reviewed the transcript with Truth prior to publication) differs from the more widely known, embellished version printed 12 years later by suffragist Frances Dana Gage. Regardless of the version, her story of oppression and injustice toward Black women and women in general galvanized abolitionists and suffragists alike.

Like Harriet Tubman, another famous escaped slave, Truth helped recruit Black soldiers during the Civil War and was a guest of President Abraham Lincoln at the White House in October 1864. While in Washington, Truth put her courage and contempt for segregation to work by riding on whites-only streetcars. When the Civil War ended, she worked exhaustively to help find jobs for freed Blacks faced with poverty. She spent her remaining years speaking out against discrimination and in favor of woman’s suffrage, leaving behind a legacy of courage, faith and fighting for human rights.



Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902)

Elizabeth Cady Stanton (Photo courtesy Library of Congress), an author, lecturer, and chief philosopher of the woman’s rights and suffrage movements, from Johnstown, New York began her activism in the abolition movement before shifting her attention to women’s rights, crafting the agenda for woman’s rights that guided the struggle well into the 20th century. While on her honeymoon in London for the World’s Anti-Slavery convention of 1840, she met abolitionist Lucretia Mott. Both were angry about the exclusion of women at the proceedings, so they vowed to call a woman’s rights convention when they returned home.

In 1848, Stanton and Mott planned and held the first women’s rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. The Seneca Falls Convention is considered by many to be one of the most significant milestones in the American women’s rights movement. There, a group of women’s rights activists gave speeches declaring the need for women’s political, social, and economic equality to

interested listeners over the course of a few days. Most significantly, the activists unveiled a Declaration of Sentiments, modeled after the American Declaration of Independence, which asserted 18 grievances from the inability to control their wages and property or the difficulty in gaining custody in divorce to the lack of the right to vote.

After Seneca Falls, Stanton met Susan B. Anthony in 1851 and the two quickly began collaboration on speeches, articles, and books. During the Civil War both worked jointly to advocate for the 13th Amendment, which ended slavery. After the Civil War she was able to travel more, showcasing her oratory skills and becoming one of the best-known women's rights activists in the country. However, she and Anthony opposed the 14th and 15th amendments to the US Constitution, which gave voting rights to Black men but did not extend the franchise to women. When asked whether she were "willing to have the colored man enfranchised before the woman," Stanton answered "no; I would not trust him with all my rights; degraded, oppressed himself, he would be more despotic with the governing power than even our Saxon rulers are." This position estranged them from other leaders in the movement and resulted in their founding the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) in 1869. Stanton served as NWSA president and wrote for NWSA's journal *The Revolution*.

In her later years, she wrote an autobiography, *Eighty Years and More*, co-authored three volumes of the *History of Woman Suffrage* (1881-85) with Anthony and Matilda Joslyn Gage, and published the *Woman's Bible* (1895, 1898), in which she urged women to recognize that religious orthodoxy was patriarchal and obstructed their opportunities to achieve autonomy.



Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906)

Susan Brownell Anthony (Photo courtesy Library of Congress), a champion of temperance, abolition, the rights of labor, and equal pay from Adams, Massachusetts became one of the most visible leaders of the women's suffrage movement. Her father was a Quaker and her mother's family fought in the Revolution and served in her home state government. As a result, Anthony was inspired by the Quaker belief that everyone was equal under God. After many years of teaching, she met William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass, who were friends of her father. They inspired her to do more to end slavery and she started giving abolition speeches despite the prevailing thought that it was improper for women to give speeches in public.

In 1848, her mother and sister attended the Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention, but she did not, meeting Elizabeth Cady Stanton for the first time in 1851. They became fast friends and spent much of the next five decades traveling together and fighting for women's rights. At times, Anthony risked being arrested for sharing her ideas in public which included emancipation of slaves, promoting women's right to vote and temperance.

Although ahead of her times in many ways, Anthony, and Stanton like many in their day believed that white women should have priority over Black men when it came to the vote. Neither she nor Stanton supported the 14th and 15th Amendments with Anthony notably stating she would cut off her own right arm before supporting Black men gaining the right to vote before white women. However, many suffragists like Lucy Stone publicly disagreed with Anthony's stance which led to development of two national suffrage groups being formed.

In 1872, Anthony was arrested for voting, tried and fined \$100 for her crime. The publicity generated from this event made many people angry and brought national attention to the suffrage movement. In 1876, she led a protest at the 1876 Centennial of our nation's independence, giving the "Declaration of Rights" speech written by Stanton and Matilda Joslyn Gage. She spent the rest of her life giving speeches, gathering thousands of signatures on petitions, and lobbying Congress every year for women and she helped merge the two rival suffragist factions into one, the National American Women's Suffrage Association (NAWSA), serving as president until 1900.



Lucretia Mott (1793–1880)

Lucretia Coffin Mott (Photo courtesy Library of Congress), an early feminist activist, minister and abolitionist from Nantucket, Massachusetts, dedicated her life to speaking out against racial and gender injustice through powerful oration. Mott's Quaker faith stressed equality of all people under God, which guided her belief that slavery was morally wrong, and that men and women should be treated equally. A devoted abolitionist and a fluent, moving speaker, Mott retained her poise before the most hostile crowds. In the 1820s she became a Quaker minister, delivering powerful lectures on the evils of slavery. Over the next several years, she joined or helped form numerous anti-slavery groups. She also began working for women's rights. At the World Anti-Slavery Convention in 1840, she met and befriended Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Women were not allowed to participate in the convention because of their gender, which

frustrated both Mott and Stanton. In 1848, the two women organized the Seneca Falls Convention.

In 1866, during the Eleventh National Woman's Rights Convention, Stanton, Susan B. Anthony among others organized the American Equal Rights Association (AERA) with Mott serving as president. The following year a schism started when two separate referenda granting suffrage to Blacks and women, respectively was voted down in Kansas. During the Kansas campaign, organization founders Stanton and Anthony accepted the help of a known racist, alienating abolitionist members as well as Lucretia Mott. As a result, AERA later split into two groups, the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) which was exclusively female and the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA).

In her later years, Mott was admired by many for her steady commitment to gender and racial equality. She continued her activism and speaking up to the time she died, giving her last address to the Friends' annual meeting in May 1880.

The Next Generation



Alice Paul (1885 – 1977)

Alice Stokes Paul (Photo courtesy Library of Congress), a suffragist, feminist, and women's rights activist from Mount Laurel, New Jersey, dedicated her life to the cause of securing equal rights for all women. Raised a Hicksite Quaker, her three-year stay in England and friendship with Christabel Pankhurst, daughter of England's most radical suffragette transformed her from a quiet Quaker into a militant suffragist. Upon her return to the US in 1910, she joined the National American Women's Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and was quickly put in a leadership position. However, her differences in political strategy with Carrie Chapman Catt, NAWSA president, led her to form the semi-autonomous group, the Congressional Union, in 1914 and then sever all ties with NAWSA to form the National Woman's Party (NWP) in 1916. Her leadership and militant strategies combined with the efforts of many hastened the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the vote for women.



Carrie Chapman Catt (1859 – 1947)

Carrie Clinton Lane Chapman Catt (Photo courtesy Library of Congress), a suffragist, humanitarian and peace activist from Ripon, Wisconsin, helped secure an American woman's right to vote through passage of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution. She directed the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and founded the League of Women Voters (1920). Catt became involved with the suffrage movement in the late 1880s joining the Iowa Woman Suffrage Association and later became involved with the NAWSA. An outstanding speaker, Catt gave speeches and helped organize local NAWSA suffrage chapters nationwide. In 1900, as a protégé of Susan B. Anthony, she was elected president of NAWSA replacing Anthony who vacated the seat at 80 years old. Despite splitting with Alice Paul over strategy, it was Catt's moderate leadership that finally led to President Woodrow Wilson lending his support to the 19th Amendment. Fifty-one years after Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton founded NAWSA, the Nineteenth Amendment gave women the vote in 1920.



Mable Ping-Hua Lee (1897 – 1966)

Mabel Ping-Hua Lee (Photo courtesy of Library of Congress), an advocate for women's suffrage in the United State was from Guangzhou (Canton City), China. Her father, Dr. Lee Towe, was a missionary pastor and he and the family moved to the United States in 1905. In 1912, at just 16 years old, Mabel took part in a parade with 10,000 other suffragists advocating for the right to vote. Lee, riding a horse, helped lead the parade. Prior to the parade, the New York Tribune and New York Times wrote articles featuring Lee's teenage activism and her involvement in the movement. And by 1913, she insisted that true feminism "is nothing more than the extension of democracy or social justice and equality of opportunities to women."

Ironically, the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act prevented Chinese immigrants from attaining citizenship and voting. Even when the 19th amendment was passed, Chinese women and many other women of color still did not have the ability to vote. The Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed by the 1943 Magnuson Act, during a time when China had become an ally of the U.S. against Japan in World War II. However, this act only allowed Chinese residents in the U.S. the opportunity to become naturalized citizens. It wasn't until 1952 that the McCarran-Walter Act repealed a number of other acts such as the Asia Barred Zone Act of 1917, which denied entry to peoples from South and Southeast Asia and the islands of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and the 1924 Immigration Act, which totally excluded the Japanese and other Asians from immigration and naturalization, that all people of Asian descent had the opportunity emigrate and become citizens.



Zitkala-Ša, “Red Bird” (1876–1938)

Zitkala-Ša (Photo source, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, NPG.79.26), a political activist, writer, and musician from the Yankton Indian Reservation, South Dakota, was a member of the Yankton Dakota Sioux and was raised by her mother. When she was eight years old, Quaker missionaries visited the Reservation, taking her and several other children to Wabash, Indiana to attend White’s Indiana Manual Labor Institute. Here she was given the missionary name Gertrude Simmons. Zitkala-Ša attended the Institute until 1887 but left despite her mother’s disapproval. She was conflicted about the experience, and wrote both of her great joy in learning to read and write and to play the violin, as well as her deep grief and pain of losing her heritage by being forced to pray as a Quaker and cut her hair.

She joined the Society of American Indians, a group founded in 1911 with the purpose of preserving traditional Native American culture while also lobbying for full American citizenship. She was firm in her conviction that Indigenous people in America should have the rights of American citizens; and that as citizens, they should have the vote: In her words, “In the land that was once his own – America...there was never a time more opportune than now for American to enfranchise the Red man! As original occupants of the land,” she argued, “Native Americans needed to be represented in the current system of government...” The federal Indian Citizenship Act passed in 1924 granted US citizenship rights to all Native Americans. Zitkala-Ša created the Indian Welfare Committee of the Federation in 1924. That year, she ran a voter registration drive among Native Americans, encouraging those who could, to engage in the democratic process and support legislation that would be good for Native Americans.



Ida B. Wells (1862 -1931)

Ida Bell Wells-Barnett, a journalist, civil rights advocate, and feminist born into slavery in Mississippi, led an anti-lynching crusade from Memphis, Tennessee in the 1890s and was one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The turning point for her activism came on May 4, 1884. After purchasing a first-class train ticket, the crew forced her to the “Colored” car. When she refused, they forcibly removed her from the train. During the scuffle, she bit the hand of a conductor and later sued the railroad and initially won \$500 before the decision was overturned by the Tennessee Supreme Court. She participated in the National American Women’s Suffrage Association white section during the first (1913) suffrage procession organized by Alice Paul. When told to return to the back and walk with the other African Americans her response was, “Either I go with you or not at all. I am not taking this stand because I personally wish for recognition. I am doing it for the future benefit of my whole race.” She initially left the scene, therefore convincing the crowd that she was complying with the request. However, she quickly returned and marched alongside her own Illinois delegation, supported by her white co-suffragists Belle Squires and Virginia Brooks. This event received extensive newspaper coverage and shed light on the reality for African American participation in politics.

Tennesseans in the Fight



Governor Albert H. Roberts (1868–1946)

Albert Houston Roberts from Overton County was an educator, jurist, and politician. He served as Governor of Tennessee from 1919 to 1921 and was instrumental in obtaining state ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment for woman suffrage. His highly unpopular tax reform, his use of state troops against labor, and his support for women's rights combined to make him one of the most unpopular Democratic governors in the state's history. He lost a reelection bid in 1920 to Alfred A. Taylor of Johnson City and Republican brother of famed Democratic governor Robert Taylor.



Febb E. (1873–1945) and Harry T. Burn (1895 – 1977)

Febb Ensminger Burn was a strong-willed farmer's widow who followed the woman suffrage debate by reading four newspapers and a dozen magazines from her Niota home. Her son, Harry Thomas Burn, Sr. was a Republican member of the Tennessee General Assembly for McMinn

County, Tennessee. Burn became the youngest member of the state legislature when he was elected at the age of twenty. two.

Febb would later tell a reporter, "Suffrage has interested me for years. I like the suffrage militants as well as the others." But after having read a barrage of bitter "anti" speeches published in the papers and realizing that her son's constituents in McMinn County were fiercely in opposition to woman suffrage, Mrs. Burn maintained that she felt compelled to force the issue. "I sat down on [my] little chair on the front porch and penned a few lines to my son."

Dear Son...

Hurrah and vote for Suffrage and don't keep them in doubt. I noticed Chandlers' speech, it was very bitter. I've been watching to see how you stood but have not seen anything yet ...

Don't forget to be a good boy and help Mrs. 'Thomas Catt' with her "Rats." Is she the one that put rat in ratification, Ha! No more from mama this time....

With lots of love, Mama.

Harry Burn is best remembered for action taken to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment during his first term in the legislature. Burn had originally intended to vote for the amendment. However, after being pressured by party leaders and receiving misleading telegrams from his constituents telling him his district was overwhelmingly opposed to woman suffrage, he began to side with the Anti-Suffragists. However, the letter from his mother in his coat pocket during the voting session on August 18, 1920 helped to change his mind.



Juno Frankie Pierce (1864–1954)

Juno Frankie Seay Pierce (Photo source, The Nashville Globe¹⁴ Jun 1918), a leading Black voice in the Tennessee Suffrage movement and founder of the Tennessee Vocational School for Colored Girls, was born during the Civil War to Nellie Seay, the house slave of a Smith County

legislator. She received her education at the McKee School, a private school in Nashville for Blacks started by the Presbyterian Church as a mission. She also attended Roger Williams University in Nashville and taught school briefly before marrying her husband, Clement J. Pierce. Upon returning to work in Nashville, she worked to create an educational institution for delinquent Black girls. At that time, they were not permitted in white juvenile institutions or schools and would be placed in local jails. She also served as president of the Negro Women's Reconstruction League, was the founder of the Nashville Federation of Colored Women's Clubs and was on the first Committee of Management of the Blue Triangle League of the YWCA.

At the invitation of suffrage leader Catherine Kenny, she spoke at the May 1920 state suffrage convention held in the House chamber of the Tennessee capitol where she asked the audience, "What will the Negro women do with the vote? We will stand by the white women. . . . We are asking only one thing—a square deal. . . . We want recognition in all forms of this government. We want a state vocational school and a child welfare department of the state, and more room in state schools." After the passage of the suffrage amendment, Pierce and Kenny were active in local Democratic Party politics. The vocational school for African American girls became a part of the legislative agenda of the suffragists and the newly organized League of Women Voters of Tennessee. After extensive lobbying by the women in 1921, the general assembly passed the bill creating the school. The school opened its doors two years later, and Pierce became its first superintendent, a post she held until 1939.



Catherine Kenny (1874–1950)

Catherine Talty Kenny (Photo source, Tennessee Historical Society) was a suffragist and political activist from Chattanooga, moving to Nashville after marrying her husband John M. Kenny. Kenny, a devout Catholic, became active in the Nashville Equal Suffrage League and in local Democratic Party politics. In 1915 she cochaired with Chattanooga native Abby Crawford Milton the campaign committee of the Tennessee Equal Suffrage Association. This campaign committee organized local suffrage societies across the state. By the time the Nineteenth Amendment for national woman suffrage passed both houses of Congress and was sent to the states for ratification, Tennessee had a suffrage club in almost every county. Kenny was considered the intellectual of the Tennessee suffrage movement and was highly regarded for her organizational skills. In 1919 Kenny organized a statewide effort to ratify the Nineteenth

Amendment. Her strategy for ratification was based on organization by congressional districts. When Governor Albert H. Roberts agreed to call a special session of the general assembly to vote on the amendment, Kenny's organization personally lobbied every member of it.



Sue Shelton White (1887–1943)

Sue Shelton White was a suffragist, equal rights advocate, attorney, and writer, born and raised in Henderson, Tennessee. White joined the woman suffrage movement in 1912. Working to increase support for suffrage in Tennessee, she served as recording secretary for the Tennessee Equal Suffrage Association beginning in 1913 but came to believe that the policies and methods of the more radical National Woman's Party (NWP) were more effective and changed her allegiance in 1918. Moving to Washington, D.C., White became Tennessee chair of the NWP and edited the organization's newspaper, the *Suffragist*. In effect she was Alice Paul's earpiece and lieutenant during the ratification fight in Tennessee, freeing Paul to maintain focus on fund raising. White achieved additional notoriety for participating in a suffrage demonstration in which the NWP burned President Woodrow Wilson in effigy. She was arrested and served five days in the Old Work House, a condemned jail. After her release, White joined the "Prison Special," a chartered railroad car that traveled around the country bringing the issue of woman suffrage to the people.



Mary Church Terrell (1863-1954)

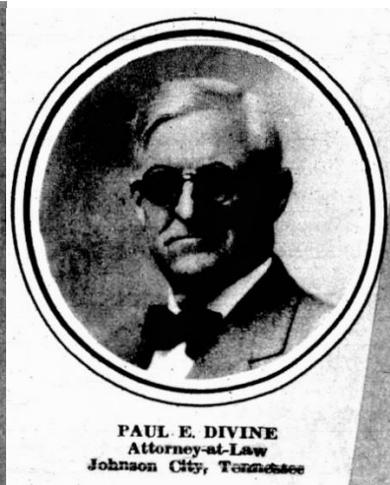
Mary Church Terrell was a civil rights activist, educator, writer, and suffragist from Memphis. She was one of the first Black women to earn a college degree, graduating from Oberlin College in 1884. She was the first president of the National Association of Colored Women and was involved in the formation of the NAACP. She was a member of the NAWSA and worked with her white sisters to ensure that Black women were not forgotten by the majority-white suffragist movement. After the 19th Amendment was passed, Terrell continued for another three decades protesting racial discrimination.



Mary Nelson Meriwether (1886–1935)

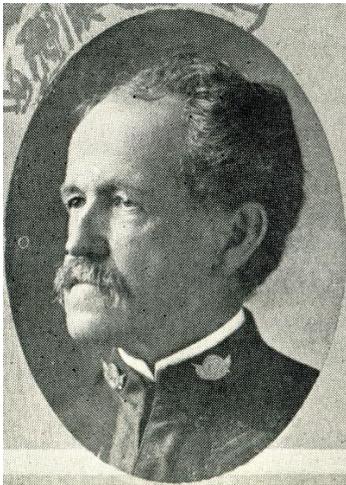
Mary Nelson Williams Meriwether Coffey (Photo courtesy Thomas Meriwether), descended from some of the oldest families in Knoxville and Tennessee, was a socialite in her younger years, a suffragist and educator. She was one of the editors for the Knoxville Political Equality League that posted suffrage related articles in the Knoxville Journal and Tribune. She worked closely with Eliza Shaut White of Johnson City and Lizzie Crozier French of Knoxville who were the Tennessee State Chairs of the Congressional Union in 1916 and 1917 while Mrs. Meriwether served as vice chair. She took part in the Johnson City suffrage parade on October 7, 1916 and was an honored guest providing the keynote address after the parade ended.

Johnson City Suffragists



Lula Belle Milburn (1881–1955) & Paul Divine (1874–1950)

Lula Belle Milburn Divine was prominent social and political figure in Johnson City, notably as a suffragist and founding member of the Johnson City Equal Suffrage League also known as the Johnson City Suffrage Club. She was consistently active (with her father Captain W.E.F. Milburn and husband, Paul E. Divine) and one of the key leaders of the local suffrage movement. She was appointed acting postmaster of Johnson City on October 7, 1922, the first woman to hold the post in Johnson City and one of the first in the state. She also served as president of the Johnson City Business and Professional Woman's Club after suffrage was achieved. Other groups she served with were the Monday Club, Merry Wives Club, and the Johnson City Book Club. Many prominent citizens, including Senator B. Carroll Reece served as pallbearers during her funeral.



Mary Hardy Milburn (1869–1938) & William Elbert Franklin Milburn (1844-1925)

This husband and wife team were ardent supporters of woman suffrage locally and had an impact on a state level as well. Mary Winifred Hardy Milburn, the second wife of Captain W.E.F. Milburn, the first treasurer at Mountain Home, hailed from Wilson, North Carolina. When she moved to Johnson City in 1899, she and her sister Addie launched and operated Miss Hardy's Millinery Store (opened March 27, 1899) at 237 and then 249 East Main Street. Mary was a founding member of the Johnson City Equal Suffrage League, serving as the corresponding secretary and assumed the role of president, September 1915 of the inaugural year when Margaret Hayes Powell moved back to Nashville. She was to have attended along with Eliza Shaut White, a banquet by the Knoxville Political Equality League honoring Alice Paul who was in attendance (January 1916), but was replaced by Katrina Stivers Brading at the last minute. Mary and Grace Armbrust were the contacts responsible for coordinating the suffrage parade through downtown Johnson City on October 7, 1916. At the February 15, 1917 Congressional Union's Tennessee State convention held in Johnson City, she and White were selected to serve as vice presidents for the First District under Lizzie Crozier French's term as president. Her husband, Captain Milburn gave one of the toasts during the evening banquet held at the Franklin Hotel. He also gave numerous speeches during the movement and wrote a defense of woman suffrage published statewide in response to an editorial against suffrage titled "Women in Public Life" by Bishop E.E. Hoss.

Ida Florence Potter Harris (1853–1936)

Ida Florence Potter Harris, one of city's outstanding social, civic, and religious leaders was a native of Rockford, Illinois prior to Johnson City with her husband, William Pond Harris in 1890. The Harris' started Harris Manufacturing which transformed from a small lumber and supply company into a leader of hardwood flooring that helped bring other industry to the area. Mrs. Harris served as vice president for the company in addition to her involvement with many civic and social endeavors. She was a charter member and first president of the Monday Club which was integral in the development of a public library in Johnson City as well as development of the Johnson City Equal Suffrage League, many of the members holding offices in both organizations.



Mildred Crystal Smith (1879–1944)

Mildred Crystal Smith, a socially connected suffragist and civic volunteer originally from Des Moines, Iowa, was a member of the Johnson City Equal Suffrage League, the local affiliate to the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage (CU) and a close friend of Eliza Shaut White. She was a member of the Johnson City Country Club, winning the vice-president's cup in a golf tournament with over 60 players held at the club in October 1914 and served as treasurer of the Woman's Auxiliary of Memorial Hospital and chairman of the saleswomen for the Liberty Bond fundraisers. During her time working with Eliza Shaut White in the suffrage club, hospital auxiliary and Liberty Bond drives, they became lifelong friends, traveling together at times after both left Johnson City. Both ladies were also responsible for booking and programming fundraising entertainment (such as MacDonald's Highland Band) held at the Capitol Theater.



Alpha Leona Richardson Sells (1881–1962)

Alpha Leona Richardson Sells (Photo source, the Reece Museum), a native of Church Hill, Tennessee, was a suffragist, Bible leader and teacher active in supporting her community. She joined the Johnson City Suffrage Club in 1915 after the club was formed, giving them even more access to her brother-in-law, Congressman Samuel R. Sells, a proponent of women's suffrage. She was active with group through passage of the 19th Amendment.

She was educated at Washington College, Martha Washington College and Sullins Academy. She and her husband, George Sells came to Johnson City in 1907 and stayed until their deaths. She served on the board of the Mayne Williams Library, was active with the Monday Club and Merry Wives Club and taught the Navigators class at Calvary Presbyterian Church.



Mary Eliza Shaut White (1883–1965)

Mary Eliza Shaut White, a native of Towanda, Pennsylvania, was a socially and politically connected suffragist and civic leader in Johnson City involved with the Woman Suffrage Movement from the time the Johnson City Equal Suffrage League formed early in 1915 through the passage of the 19th Amendment.

She was chosen to represent the club, an affiliate of the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage (CU) at their December 1915 convention in Washington DC and was elected as Chairman of the Tennessee State Branch in April 1916. In 1917, the Woman's Party and the CUWS merged to form the National Woman's Party (NWP) and Mrs. White was selected as the NWP Tennessee State Chairman for 1918 and served as the First District Chairman in 1917, 1919 and 1920.

During her time as a suffragist, she traveled to state and national conventions and worked with many of the key leaders of the movement such as, Alice Paul, Sue Sheldon White, and Lizzie Crozier French. Under her leadership, Johnson City held a suffrage parade in 1916 and hosted the first state convention of 1917 on February 15 at the Elks Club at 113 Spring Street where she presided over the business session. In the evening, the convention moved to the Franklin Hotel for a banquet with over 100 in attendance.

She used her influence and connections to rally support for the 19th Amendment by lobbying local decision makers and state legislators. She was in Nashville with Catherine Flanagan, a state and national organizer for the NWP, for the climactic moment when Tennessee became the 36th state to approve the amendment.



Margaret Hayes Powell (1889–1970)

Margaret Hayes Powell (Photo courtesy Reece Museum), born in Hayesland, Tennessee was a prominent suffragist, public servant, socialite, and a founding member and first president of the Johnson City Equal Suffrage League. She left Johnson City in October 1915 for Nashville and quickly became a key player in the suffrage movement from that city. She served as the Congressional Union's State vice president for Nashville in 1916 and 1917 but came back to Johnson City for good about 1920.

She was a member of the Tennessee State Board of Education for 24 years (1934-1959), serving under four governors. In recognition of that service, ETSU named Margaret Hayes Powell Hall after her. Mrs. Powell served as president of the Tennessee Diocesan (Episcopal) Women's Auxiliary from 1943-1945; was a member of the Tennessee State Public Health Council, Tennessee Democratic Executive Committee for the 1st District and presidential elector (1944), and the President's Committee on Armed Forces, appointed by President Truman.

She was also active in many civic organizations: serving as president of the 1st District, Tennessee Council of Parents and Teachers, the Tennessee Federation of Women's Clubs, and on several occasions the Monday Club. Mrs. Powell was a life trustee of Mayne Williams Library and was also active with the National Society of Colonial Dames of America, the John Sevier Chapter of the DAR, the Ladies Hermitage Association, and the Johnson City Bridge Club. Her daughter Hortense married former Tennessee governor, Prentiss Cooper in 1950. Currently, her grandson Jim Cooper is the U.S. Congressman for Nashville, Cheatham and Dickson Counties and grandson John Cooper serves as the Mayor of Nashville.



Bertha Brewer Ellis (1892–1947)

Bertha Brewer Ellis, a native of Johnson City, was a community leader in educational, civic, and cultural activities. A product of the Johnson City segregated school system, she excelled in her class work as an Honor Roll student at Langston. A graduate of A&I State College, she started her education career in 1910-1911 teaching first and second grades at Langston. In June 1924 she was appointed to Douglas grammar school, assuming the duties as principal in 1930. Douglas grammar school was founded in 1922 with three faculty positions, the principal, and two teachers. As a teacher and mentor, she emphasized hard work and self-reliance and was an inspiration to generations of young girls through her work with the Girl Scouts and as a Brownie

Scout leader. One of her exceptional educational achievements was the institution of the Douglas Banking System in 1928, which encouraged students to start and nurture a savings account. Her goal was to promote thrift and “to train the boys and girls to help themselves.” The success of this program was lauded in the press on several occasions over the years.

Her community work included serving as captain of the Court of Calanthe (an early African American women’s benevolent organization affiliated with the Knights of Pythias) war bond campaign, fundraising during two world wars, and participation in each Red Cross and Community Chest campaign. She served as president of the Johnson City Colored Teachers Association, secretary of the Johnson City Library Association, member of the Interracial Girl Scout Council, and Sunday school superintendent for St. Paul A.M.E. Zion Church.

Currently, no primary source documentation of suffrage activities in Johnson City’s Black community has been unearthed. However, it is well documented that Black women clubs, societies, and church groups became a substantial force during this time in our history, giving Black women access to political power. These groups also focused on many other social issues than white suffragists, stepping in to assist their own communities when the need arose. Considering her leadership and involvement in her community, it is difficult to believe that Miss Ellis would not have played a similar role in the suffrage movement locally.

The following information includes important people in the Suffrage Movement who are not depicted in the mural.

Other Significant Suffragists



Frances Watkins Harper (1825-1911)

Francis Harper, an abolitionist, suffragist, poet, and teacher and was one of the first Black women to be published in the United States. She may be best remembered for her poetry such as *Bury Me in a Free Land* and novels such as *Iola Leroy* which focused on injustice faced by Black Americans. She was a co-founder of the National Association of Colored Women with Ida

B. Wells and Mary Church Terrell. She worked alongside of her white sisters in the Suffrage Movement.



Mary Ann Shadd Cary (1823-1893)

The first Black woman to be a publisher in North America, Ms. Cary published *The Provincial Freeman*. She called for Black Americans to immigrate to Canada. She earned a law degree from Howard University in 1883 and organized her own suffrage organization for Black women, the Colored Women's Progressive Franchise Association.



Daisy Adams Lampkin (1888-1965)

Named Woman of the Year in 1947 by the NAACP, Lampkin had started suffrage meetings in her home in 1912 and continued to work for several Black women's suffrage organizations. She dedicated her life to supporting women's and civil rights. "You cannot be neutral," Lampkin once said. "You must either join with us who believe in the bright future or be destroyed by those who would return us to the dark past." Lampkin was the first woman to be elected to the national board of the NAACP and served as field secretary for the organization for several years.



Naomi Anderson (1843-1899)

At age 12, Naomi Anderson was considered such a talented poet that she was admitted to a previously all-white public school. She is known for her work with the Temperance Union and spoke in public in support of women's suffrage—a rare occurrence in those times, Anderson's poems were often published in major newspapers. Her best-known work is the 1876 Centennial Poem in which she called for equal rights for Black Americans. She was praised for her suffrage work in California by Susan B. Anthony.



Nellie Griswold Francis (1874-1969)

The only Black student in her class, Francis gave a speech at her high school graduation in 1891 about the need for equal rights for African Americans. She was a suffragist, civil rights activist, and community organizer. She wrote an anti-lynching bill that became a Minnesota law in 1921. She is one of 25 women honored for their roles in achieving the women's right to vote in the Minnesota Woman Suffrage Memorial on the grounds of the State Capitol in St. Paul.



Jovita Idar (1885-1946)

As a Mexican American teacher, Idar saw horrible conditions of her Mexican American students and left teaching to become a reporter. In 1911, Idar and her family organized a conference in Laredo in support of unions, criminal justice, women's rights, and bilingual education. Also, in that year she became the first president of La Liga Femenil Mexicanista and fought for Mexican American civil rights and education—including enfranchisement rights.



Hallie Quinn Brown (1850-1949) knew the power of Black women and urged anyone who heard her to let it flourish. Read her remarks from 1889 and you might believe she saw the future or at least had the capacity to call it into being: “I believe there are as great possibilities in women as there are in men. . . We are marching onward grandly. . . We love to think of the great women of our race—the mothers who have struggled through poverty to educate their children. .

Links for Additional Information

The following links were used for the development of historical information in these pages.

<https://www.jctnsuffrage.org>

<https://eeboo.com/collections/suffragists/products>

<https://matildajoslyngage.org/about-gage>

<https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies>

<https://www.thesojournertruthproject.com/compare-the-speeches/>

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/sojourner-truth>

<https://www.nps.gov/people/zitkala-sa.htm>

<https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/>

<https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/world/mabel-lee-a-pioneer-for-suffrage-some-recognition-at-last-united-states-19th-amendment>

<https://documents.alexanderstreet.com/d/1009932459>

<https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/catherine-talty-kenny/>

<https://www.neh.gov/article/how-black-suffragists-fought-right-vote-and-modicum-respect>

[http://teachtnhistory.org/File/Harry T. Burn.pdf](http://teachtnhistory.org/File/Harry_T._Burn.pdf)