

The Equal Suffrage Association

PRESENTS

"A Dream of Brave Women"
"An Anti-Suffrage Monologue"
"Lady Geraldine's Speech"

Grand Opera House

GALVESTON, TEXAS

MARCH 28th, 1913, AT 8:15 O'CLOCK

A MARRIED WOMAN MAY ALONE
CHECK OUT MONEY DEPOSITED TO
HER CREDIT IN

**Texas Bank & Trust
Company**

AND HER HUSBAND MAY NOT DO SO

Don't close your conversation with your Grocer
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Ambrosia Flour

It's the highest possible product of scientific
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Suffrage program at Galveston's Grand Opera House, courtesy Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas.

"A Municipal Broom": The Woman Suffrage Campaign in Galveston, Texas

Larry J. Wygant

Galveston, in 1912, was a city well-pleased with itself — and poised to reclaim the title "Queen City of The Gulf." In only a dozen years after being devastated by the worst natural disaster in the history of the United States, the "Great Hurricane of 1900," Galveston citizens rebuilt their city and protected it from future storms with a seventeen foot high seawall and by elevating a large part of the city to as much as seventeen feet above sea level. A new causeway was completed that provided rail and highway connections and replaced the single railroad trestle that since 1900 was the city's only link with the mainland. And the opening, in 1911, of the Hotel Galvez on the new Seawall Boulevard gave the Island City the most magnificent hotel on the Texas Gulf Coast and assured that once again tourists would enjoy the island's beaches.

These were by no means the only changes occurring in Galveston. Despite the failure of efforts to organize in the previous decade, the woman suffrage movement began to gain momentum and support in 1912. The Galveston efforts were well organized. Both women and men put forward a variety of effective arguments for woman suffrage, and gained support from many groups in the city. However, the 1919 state constitutional amendment for suffrage had a Galveston vote of more than two to one against. A look at the progress and at the goals of the Galveston campaign suggests a number of reasons for this defeat.

Early Efforts

In Galveston, organized interest in the woman suffrage movement had its beginnings in 1893 when Rebecca Hayes of Galveston issued a call for the formation of a Texas Equal Rights Association. Forty-eight women and men

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organized the association and elected Hayes president. She was re-elected the following year at the state convention in Fort Worth. Because of internal disagreements, the movement lost her services and by late 1896 the Texas Equal Rights Association became dormant. Despite Hayes' promotion of the cause, Galveston failed to organize a local society as an auxiliary of the state association.

In 1903, however, Galveston became a target of suffragists again when a group of Houston women sponsored a series of meetings in Galveston homes. As a result of these meetings a Galveston club of twenty-five members formed. In December, 1903, a two-day meeting in Houston organized the Texas Woman Suffrage Association. The attendees elected Annette Finnigan of Houston president and Mrs. C. H. Moore of Galveston vice-president.

Efforts to organize leagues in several Texas cities were unsuccessful and only Houston, Galveston, and La Porte sent delegations to the 1904 state convention in Houston. Meetings of the local leagues declined and no further state conventions met.¹ Texas, like the rest of the nation, entered a period of change which would make final victory possible — a period when, as one historian of the suffrage movement explained, "Women's clubs proliferated, women college graduates were almost becoming accepted as normal, women factory workers increased enormously in number and were beginning to organize, and middle class women were finding that recent household inventions and changes in living patterns gave them more time for outside activities, while their training was making them dissatisfied with traditional middle class women's activities."²

A Model for Change

The key to Galveston's massive rebuilding effort after the hurricane was the effective leadership provided by the businessmen of the city. At the core of this leadership was a small business elite which dominated the city's banking and corporate systems. This small group of approximately fifteen men was the Galveston Deep Water Committee.

The Deep Water Committee was formed in 1882 to secure needed harbor improvements. Its success in that task led the committee to become increasingly involved in city government. The members believed that mismanagement by city officials would make the accomplishments of the Deep Water Committee

¹Ida Husted Harper (ed.), *History of Woman Suffrage*, VI (New York, 1922), 630-643; Elizabeth Taylor, "The Woman Suffrage Movement in Texas," *The Journal of Southern History*, 17 (May 1951): 194-215.

²Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* (New York, 1965), 5-6.

worthless, particularly following the 1900 Storm when immediate action was necessary to bring a return of economic prosperity to the city.

Through the efforts of the Deep Water Committee and with the support of the business and professional middle-class, in 1901 Galveston became the first city to adopt the commission plan of city government. A subcommittee comprised of four members of the Deep Water Committee designed the plan. Citing the success of Galveston's new "businesslike" municipal government in coping with its emergency and rebuilding the city, by 1912 almost 250 cities in the United States adopted this form of city government, known throughout the nation as the Galveston Plan.³

The highly visible successes of Galveston's businessmen did little, however, to solve the basic ills of urban life that Galveston shared with other cities. Sanitation, schools, police and fire protection, housing, and moral decay were all problems that were aggravated by the transient nature of much of the population attracted to seaport and resort cities like Galveston.

In Galveston, as elsewhere, the chief impetus behind efforts to solve these urban problems came from its women. The businessmen of Galveston had provided these women with an effective model for achieving urban reforms — control of the government. The mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters of the Galveston men who were supporters of the Deep Water Committee and its commission government saw first-hand what could be achieved through lobbying with the state legislature, appeals to powerful voting blocs, and eventual control of the mechanism of government. The control of the political process achieved by the Galveston businessmen was at least partially responsible for the vigor with which the Galveston women renewed their interest in woman suffrage.

The Galveston Equal Suffrage Organization

In Galveston, interest in woman suffrage revived in February 1912, when Anna M. Jones of Galveston, then living in New York, addressed about 150 women at the Hotel Galvez. Several local women were also on the program. Julia Runge, whose father was a Deep Water Committee member, "brought in equal salary for men and women" and thus looked beyond the immediate question of woman suffrage.⁴

Two days after this meeting over 200 women held an organizational meeting at the Hotel Galvez. They elected the following officers for the newly created Galveston Equal Suffrage Association: Mary F. Bornefeld, whose

³Bradley R. Rice, *Progressive Cities: The Commission Government Movement in America, 1901-1920* (Austin, 1977), Chapter 1, "The Galveston Plan," 3-18.

⁴Galveston Daily News, February 16, 1912.

EQUAL SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION.

The members of the Equal Suffrage Assn. are cordially invited to meet Miss Anna Maxwell Jones, Wednesday, April ninth, from four to six o'clock, at the residence of Mrs. Thompson, 3224 Avenue J.

ETTA LASKER,
Corresponding Secretary

Invitation, courtesy Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas.

husband was a commission merchant and cotton buyer, president; Bettie Ballinger, daughter of a prominent attorney, first vice-president; Caroline Garrett, wife of the clerk of the court of civil appeals, second vice-president; Emma Gonzales, whose husband owned a rifle and sporting goods business, third vice-president; Rebecca Trueheart, daughter of a real estate speculator, recording secretary; Etta Lasker, daughter of a Deep Water Committee member, corresponding secretary; and Annie Hill, a teacher, treasurer.⁵

The Galveston organization immediately sought assistance from other suffrage groups around the country. Sally Trueheart Williams, who chaired the committee on constitution and bylaws, wrote letters to a number of suffrage groups inquiring about suggested constitutions, speakers, and brochures on the movement.

In answer to Williams' letter, the corresponding secretary of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, Mary Ware Dennett, sent a leaflet giving a model form of constitution for a local suffrage association. Dennett noted that "we have heard a great many interesting reports of new life among the Texas suffragists lately. Galveston is to be congratulated upon the formation of a new suffrage organization." Caroline Katzenstein, corresponding secretary of the Pennsylvania Woman's Suffrage Association, responded to Williams' inquiry by recommending several suffragist lecturers to the Galveston group.⁶

At their March meeting, the membership of the Galveston Equal Suffrage Association accepted the constitution proposed by the constitution and by-laws committee and set the first Saturday of the month as a meeting date. These monthly meetings, held from October through June, often featured lecturers who elaborated on suffragist themes.⁷

The association sought to educate and inform both its own members and the general public concerning the issues involved in the woman suffrage movement. During the few months immediately following organization several different tactics accomplished this object. The women set up a booth at the annual Cotton Carnival where suffragist literature "was widely scattered and all visitors were invited to enter their names in the suffrage register." The association subscribed to the *Woman's Journal*, the leading suffragist paper, and placed it in the reading room of the Rosenberg Public Library of

⁵*Ibid.*, February 18, 1912.

⁶Mary Ware Dennett to Sally Trueheart Williams, March 1, 1912, and Caroline Katzenstein to Sally Trueheart Williams, March 5, 1912, Galveston Equal Suffrage Association Collection, Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas.

⁷Galveston Daily News, March 10, 1912.

MEETING UNDER THE AUSPICES OF
WOMEN'S POLITICAL UNION

AT

AUDITORIUM

APRIL 10TH, AT 8:30 P. M.

SPEAKER

MRS. PHILIP SNOWDEN, of England

ADMISSION FREE

Handbill, courtesy Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas.

Galveston. Additionally, the local press published a series of suffragist articles and suffragist lecturers presented public lectures on the enfranchisement question.⁸

A variety of lecturers appeared both at meetings and in public events during 1912 and 1913. Perle Penfield, a medical student at the University of Texas Medical Department in Galveston, spoke on "Citizenship and its Tool, the Ballot" at the March 1912 meeting.⁹ As a member of the New York Chapter of the College of Equal Suffrage League, Penfield had formerly worked as an organizer for the National American Woman's Suffrage Association.¹⁰ Dr. Charles Zueblin appeared as part of the Rosenberg Public Library's Free Lecture series on April 5, 1913. His arguments for woman suffrage drew the largest crowd of the lecture series.¹¹ On the night following Zueblin's last lecture at the library, Mrs. Phillip Snowden, "the English suffragist," addressed a crowd at the Scottish Rite Hall. The *Galveston Tribune* editorialized that, "Snowdon's [sic] charming personality was the best answer in itself to the mistaken idea that all English women are militants, and her explanation of the conditions that have brought about the unfortunate situation there left her audience with an understanding of the difficult conditions peculiar to England which are the causes of suffragettism."¹² To draw further attention to their cause and to raise money for educational activities, the Galveston Equal Suffrage Association presented a program at the Grand Opera House in March 1913. The presentation consisted of three parts: "A Dream of Brave Women," an historical pageant; "An Anti-Suffrage Monologue"; and a "Commedietta" entitled "Lady Geraldine's Speech" by Beatrice Harraden. The *Galveston Daily News* reported a "packed house" and applauded the "capable efforts of Galveston women [in] making use of good-humored raillery" and offering "an appeal for the cause of women suffrage in the form of solid argument, sugar coated with laughter."¹³

Continuing their efforts to educate the citizens, the Galveston suffragists persuaded the *Galveston Tribune* to devote an entire section of its June 14, 1913, issue to the equal suffrage movement. Bold red ink on the front page proclaimed it to be the "Equal Suffrage Edition." The paper reported about local suffrage work, noting that the Galveston association lobbied for the

⁸*Galveston Tribune*, June 14, 1913.

⁹*Galveston Daily News*, March 10, 1912.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, February 16, 1912.

¹¹*Ibid.*, April 6, 1913.

¹²*Galveston Tribune*, June 14, 1913.

¹³*Galveston Daily News*, March 29, 1913.

women's property rights bill and for the bill that would submit the suffrage question to the men of Texas. The Galveston legislative committee sent letters to every member of the state legislature urging support of these measures.

The local membership committee was equally active, distributing pamphlets not only at all open meetings of the Equal Suffrage Association, but at other clubs, and even at the Opera House between acts. The committee proudly pointed out that from a charter membership of 81 in March 1912, the organization had more than doubled to 175 by June 1913.¹⁴

The Larger Context

Galveston women were also involved in the statewide and national suffrage movements. In April of 1913 Texas witnessed the first state convention by suffragists since 1904. Galveston was one of the seven Texas cities to send a delegation to the convention in San Antonio. At the April 1914 state convention of the Texas Equal Suffrage Association, held in Dallas, the Texas suffragists elected Mary Bornefeld, of Galveston, first vice-president. The association decided to step up its campaign of education and "to make a trial of strength of the movement in 1916."¹⁵ Perle Penfield served as state headquarters and field secretary during 1914 and conducted much of the organization that would be necessary for a statewide effort in 1916.¹⁶

The *Houston Chronicle* carried an entire page on the woman suffrage movement in Texas on July 5, 1914. Headlined "Leading Texas Women Work for Ballot," the *Chronicle* reported the views of Galveston suffragists. Included were Mary Bornefeld, Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Euna Harris, and Sally Trueheart Williams. The *Chronicle* commented on the strategy employed by the Texas suffragists, noting that the campaign would be waged on educational lines and free from militancy. "If there is any smashing done it will be confined to the arguments of the opposition."¹⁷

Following their planned educational program, the Galveston suffragists took to the streets in 1915. Helen Todd of California spoke to a crowd of approximately 300 men and 50 women from the back of an automobile parked near a busy downtown intersection. Todd was introduced by Mayor Fisher who "advocated the cause she represents."¹⁸

¹⁴*Galveston Tribune*, June 14, 1913.

¹⁵*Galveston Daily News*, January 13, 1915.

¹⁶Jane Y. McCallum, "Woman Suffrage in Texas," unpublished manuscript, no date, Mrs. Jane Y. McCallum Family Papers, Travis County Collection, Austin Public Library.

¹⁷*Houston Chronicle*, July 5, 1914.

¹⁸*Galveston Daily News*, January 13, 1915.

The first months of 1915 were busy ones for the Galveston suffrage leaders. Minnie Fisher Cunningham (no relation to Mayor Fisher) journeyed to Palestine, Texas, where she encouraged the women there to organize an equal suffrage group in that city.¹⁹ From January to March Cunningham, Harris, and Mrs. J.H.W. Steele of Galveston unsuccessfully lobbied in Austin for the passage of a resolution to submit the suffrage amendment to the electors.²⁰

The 1915 annual meeting of the Texas Equal Suffrage Association took place in Galveston and Minnie Fisher Cunningham became state president, a post to which she was re-elected every year for the remainder of the suffrage campaign. Cunningham earned a degree in pharmacy from the University of Texas Medical Department in 1902 and was married to a Galveston attorney.

Euna Harris represented Galveston women at the 45th Annual Convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association in Washington, D.C., in 1915. Her report of the meeting reflected the lack of support the Texas suffragists had in comparison to their Northern counterparts. Harris was extremely impressed by women she met and also "learned a lot about finance, and when they asked me of our budget I felt much chagrined at knowing nothing on the subject. I learned afterward from Miss Murphy we had none."²¹

Rationales for Suffrage

The Galveston women may not have had a budget, but they were rich in arguments for woman suffrage. In May 1912, the most talented lecturer in the movement and president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, spoke to a meeting of the Galveston Equal Suffrage Association. In her talk, Dr. Shaw dismissed all objections to the suffrage movement as "illogical, sentimental, half-witted, and silly." She commented on the growing tendency of women to go out into the world and take up the work of men, "declaring that it is not women who have taken up the work of men but the men who have taken up women's work and so forced them out into the world. The great modern factories are doing work which was once done by housewives, and so leave the women without the work which once belonged to them."²² By the early years of the twentieth century, work that traditionally belonged to women, such as sewing, laundering, and cooking, was being performed by men. According to Shaw, women were

¹⁹*Ibid.*, January 17, 1915.

²⁰Harper, 632. See also, McCallum, "Woman Suffrage in Texas."

²¹*Galveston Daily News*, no date, Galveston Equal Suffrage Association Collection.

²²*Ibid.*, May 21, 1912.

“Consistency, Thou Art A Jewel!”

THE law of Texas says a girl shall not give herself in honorable marriage without parents' consent, until 18 years of age. Well and good; it should be enforced. The same State, Texas, Art. 633 Penal Code, says a girl of 15 (a child) may, without parents' consent, give herself in adultery to a dishonorable man and ruin her whole life, that of her mother, and perhaps the life of an innocent, illegitimate child. Is it safe to trust our girls to man-made laws? The reasons why women should vote are legion, but this one alone should arouse every respectable woman to see the necessity of woman's vote. The legislature has been appealed to, in vain, to raise the age of consent. Shame to the manhood of Texas!

A SUFFRAGETTE

Handbill, courtesy Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas.

forced into factories and mills to seek employment in the activities that had been taken, by men, out of the home. Also in 1912, Sally Trueheart Williams called for women to follow “their housekeeping to the place where it is now being done, the polls.” Rebecca Brown sought to link the rights of property rather than those of the individual to enfranchisement. In doing so she recognized that the recent attempts by Southern states to maintain white supremacy with constitutional amendments had limited the right to vote by property qualifications, suggesting “strongly that every property holder should have a vote.”²³

Margaret Watson, in an article headlined “Foreigners Vote: But Women Denied: Lower Classes of Ignorant Europeans Welcomed to the Ballot,” substituted nativism for the old natural right argument for suffrage. Watson expressed the concern of suffragists in a city that served as the port-of-entry to thousands of immigrants. She stated that “too many who take out their ‘papers’ here are only weights to counterbalance the intelligent vote of Galveston . . .”²⁴ Southern women chafed at being ruled by descendants of their former slaves but Galveston women also joined with their Northern sisters in feeling humiliation at having to obey laws made by “lower classes of ignorant Europeans.”

During 1912 and 1913 Perle Penfield often presented the suffragist cause before various groups and wrote articles for the Galveston newspapers. In one article she implored women to become involved in equal suffrage as a means eventually to wield political influence in such urban reforms as street paving, housing ordinances, inspection of foods, garbage disposal, and education. She noted that “Galveston abounds in crowded alleys, where houses lack all the conveniences of a civilized city. One lot has two and even three or four houses crowded upon it, all occupied. The control of such conditions is quite as much a part of politics as the early closing of saloons.”²⁵ This represented a shift from the earlier arguments of the movement that emphasized the gains women could obtain from the vote, or what they could receive from the government. Women now recognized that the reform measures of the Progressive Era, in which they were particularly interested, often were not passed because of their disfranchisement. For the Galveston women, “suffrage ceased to be advocated primarily as a reform and became in addition a means to reform.”²⁶

²³*Ibid.*, February 16, 1912.

²⁴*Galveston Tribune*, June 14, 1913.

²⁵Newspaper clipping, no date, Galveston Equal Suffrage Association Collection.

²⁶*Kraditor*, 64-66.

In the *Galveston Tribune's* "Equal Suffrage Edition" Perle Penfield appealed again for enfranchising women as a means to reform municipal wrongs. In an article titled "The Meaning of Equal Suffrage," she observed that "the changes that have taken women out of the home have altered the conditions for those who remain. The majority of suffragists are homemakers, but they find that their housewifely duties have passed beyond their own walls. . . . They see the ballot as a domestic necessity — a municipal broom, food insurance, guardian against licensed vice."²⁷ This last was undoubtedly a reference to Galveston's reputation as a wide-open seaport city whose officials tolerated gambling and prostitution with a wink and a nod. Penfield clearly saw enfranchisement as the opportunity to reform society. The suffrage movement thus acknowledged that women would try to stabilize society as they did the home and family.

The women also made sure that the male membership of the Galveston Equal Suffrage Association was highly visible. Certainly, this was an effort to show the men of Galveston that woman suffrage was not solely a women's issue and that a number of highly respected Galveston men not only favored woman suffrage but were also members of the Equal Suffrage Association. Several Galveston men publicly expressed their support for female suffrage.

At the first open meeting of the Galveston Equal Suffrage Association in April, over one hundred women and men listened to Judge Robert Street talk on the "Legal Status of Women in Texas." Street offered an elementary solution to the problem of woman suffrage in Texas.

"It's a simple matter," Street counseled. "Strike out the word 'male' in section 3, article 6 of the constitution of the state of Texas and women can vote. Nothing else is necessary."²⁸ Apparently Judge Street did not further advise how this constitutional change might occur except to caution the women to be "conservative, yet persistent" in their methods to obtain the franchise.²⁹

Judge Street was one of seven men who were charter members of the Galveston Equal Suffrage Association. The others were Rabbi Henry Cohen; Charles Fowler, a banker and a member of the Deep Water Committee; Lt. Kenneth Harmon, an army officer at nearby Ft. Crockett; John W. Hopkins, superintendent of Galveston public schools; and two men from active equal rights families, Edward Lasker and Henry M. Trueheart.

Much of the male advocacy of equal suffrage concerned the basic right of

²⁷*Galveston Tribune*, June 14, 1913.

²⁸*Galveston Daily News*, April 14, 1912.

²⁹*Galveston Tribune*, June 14, 1913.

women to have the vote. In his lecture at the Rosenberg Public Library, Dr. Charles Zueblin emphasized that women were ready for the vote because "they had entered industry, engaged in public work, and received a coeducation with men." Indeed, "whether on the basis of industrial, intellectual or political experience, the voter has no more ground today to deny the vote to the nonvoter, than he has had in all the historic period when privilege has taken advantage of the underprivileged."³⁰

An attorney, Edward F. Harris, stated the 18th century premise of natural right based upon the democratic ideal that all men are created equal and women, being equal to men, had the same inalienable right to political liberty. The *Galveston Tribune* said that Harris "argued for the cause on the ground of democracy, convincing his hearers that for this reason alone women should be entitled to a voice in the making and enforcing of laws which concern the whole people."³¹

In the editorial of June 14, 1913, the *Galveston Tribune* called for all men to "contribute to progress by giving the ballot to women, not because of economic expediency, but because she is a human being and has earned, through patient service, a recognition, at last, . . . in the art and government of life."³² Throughout the campaign, the *Tribune* remained a staunch supporter of woman suffrage.

However, women's rights as human beings were by no means the sole concern of male advocates. Judge Street saw four reasons why women should have the vote. First, "Women were never so well fitted for it by education . . . and experience in commercial and industrial life." He noted, secondly, that the functions of government "embrace so many objects peculiarly within a woman's sphere." Thirdly, "women are morally better than men." Finally, rather than spend the new leisure time in "idleness and frivolity," women should discharge the responsibilities of citizenship.³³ Clearly Street had in mind the educated, middle-class woman who formed the greatest percentage of both Galveston and nationwide suffragists.

Rabbi Henry Cohen also recognized the influence of technology in the home as a means of allowing middle-class housewives new leisure time and he used this in his pro-suffrage argument. While not challenging woman's place in the home, Cohen observed "that woman has her own sphere — this sphere can be broadened, inasmuch as by the invention of domestic laborsaving

³⁰*Galveston Daily News*, April 6, 1913.

³¹*Galveston Tribune*, June 14, 1913.

³²*Ibid.*

³³*Ibid.*

devices, she has more time upon her hands now than formerly; moreover, without loss but with actual profit to herself, she can forego some of her trivial pastimes."³⁴ These views indicate a belief expressed by many men that the suffrage movement was good for women because it would make them better persons.³⁵

Among the men quoted by the *Tribune* in the Equal Suffrage Edition was former commission plan Mayor H.A. Landes who said that "women's presence at the polls has a purifying influence upon the surroundings and impresses upon all classes the necessity for proper and intelligent use of the ballot." George M. Courts, president of a stationery and printing company, believed "that giving women the ballot will have a good moral effect and exert an elevating influence upon our elections — surely it cannot serve to render them more of a farce than they are at the present day!" Mayor Lewis Fisher gave less than a full endorsement and remained ready to fall on either side of the fence when he observed that "until I am shown a good reason why women should not vote, I am in favor of it. Up to this writing no such reason has been advanced." Charles P. Macgill, an attorney and state legislator, was somewhat vague, noting that "one woman controlled chiefly by passion and prejudice is more dangerous to the community than many men under like conditions." Macgill called for education to eliminate what he termed "the vicious vote."³⁶

The women's vote proved to be, as predicted, a useful tool for moral reform, as shown in the gubernatorial campaign of 1918. The suffrage efforts of the Galveston women had provided them with an education in Texas politics. Expecting that the women's votes would be cast against former Governor James E. Ferguson, the state legislature, a majority of which supported incumbent Governor William P. Hobby, passed an amendment to the primary law allowing women to vote in primary contests in Texas.³⁷ The Hobby Democrats were not disappointed with their new female allies. Even before the vote was taken in the legislature for female suffrage in primary elections, Minnie Fisher Cunningham was named as a permanent member of

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵William L. O'Neill, *Everyone Was Brave: The Rise and Fall of Feminism in America* (Chicago, 1969), 350.

³⁶Galveston *Tribune*, June 14, 1913.

³⁷Ferguson was removed from the governorship by impeachment in 1917. Although his impeachment made him ineligible to hold public office, Ferguson challenged W.P. Hobby for the 1918 Democratic nomination for governor. Ferguson's opposition to woman suffrage and prohibition made him politically unacceptable to the Texas suffragists.

the Hobby Campaign Committee for Galveston County.³⁸

Characterizing the Ferguson campaign as illegal and controlled by the "liquor ring," Cunningham set out to prove that the women voters could be a powerful influence in Texas politics.³⁹ With their usual flair for organization, the Texas women vigorously campaigned for Hobby and, with their votes, contributed to his overwhelming primary victory.

The Final Outcome

Governor Hobby, in 1919, endorsed the submission of a state constitution suffrage amendment along with a prohibition amendment and the legislature set May 24th as the election day. The Galveston Equal Suffrage Association members began organizing and enlisting support for the suffrage amendment. By the end of April Helen McMaster reported that, "Mrs. Garrett and myself are out everyday working on the ward chairmen" and "we will run up to Alvin Thursday with Mrs. Harris."⁴⁰ C. H. McMaster, president of the Galveston *Tribune*, former city councilman, and husband of Helen McMaster, offered half a column in each day's newspaper to the suffragists.⁴¹

Those opposed to woman suffrage were also very active. On May 21, Corrine Rowe, an anti-suffrage lecturer from Washington, D.C., spoke in Galveston against woman suffrage at the Ball High School Auditorium. Rowe labeled suffrage "as a menace to the fundamental institution of the home and an entering wedge for socialism."⁴² Her visit was part of a statewide campaign by the Women's National Anti-Suffrage Association to link the suffragists to miscegenation and Bolshevism and to depict woman suffrage as a threat to the institution of marriage.⁴³

Statewide, when the votes were counted, prohibition passed but suffrage failed by only 25,120 votes out of a total vote cast of 308,666. The men of Galveston, however, rejected woman suffrage by a margin of more than two to one. The actual vote was 1203 for and 2732 against, which was almost

³⁸Minutes of the W. P. Hobby Campaign Committee, March 30, 1918, Minnie Fisher Cunningham Papers, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.

³⁹Minutes of Woman's Committee of W. P. Hobby Campaign, June 18, 1918, Cunningham Papers.

⁴⁰Helen McMaster to Edith H. League, April 29, 1919, Cunningham Papers.

⁴¹C. H. McMaster to Jane Y. McCallum, May 1, 1919, McCallum Papers.

⁴²Galveston *Daily News*, May 22, 1919.

⁴³Lewis L. Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists: Texas Democrats in the Wilson Era* (Austin, 1973), 255.

identical to the prohibition totals of 1020 for and 2791 against.⁴⁴

This humiliating defeat suffered by the Galveston suffragists was partially mitigated eleven days later when the United States Congress passed a national suffrage amendment. The Texas suffragists pressed the state legislature for speedy ratification of the 19th Amendment to the United States Congress. The *Galveston Daily News*, while claiming to be a "consistent advocate of equal suffrage," called for the Texas legislature not to ratify the 19th Amendment but rather to submit the question once more to the men of Texas. These appeals had little real effect and the national amendment was ratified by the Texas House on June 23rd and by the Senate on the 28th. Texas became the first state in the South to ratify the controversial 19th Amendment.

* * *

The Galveston suffragists should have had little trouble achieving their goal of educating and convincing the men of Galveston of the benefits of woman suffrage. By securing the endorsement of the business elite, the city political structure, the local newspapers, and organized labor, they put together the same coalition that proved so successful for the Deep Water Committee. Yet the lopsided vote of May 24, 1919, indicates their failure to convince the men of Galveston. A number of factors combined to defeat woman suffrage in Galveston.

An important ingredient missing from the suffrage campaign was a sense of crisis. Faced with the widespread destruction and even possible abandonment of the city following the 1900 Storm, the Deep Water Committee generated broad based community support for a program that promised security and economic prosperity. The suffragists did not create an equivalent feeling of urgency.

Equal suffrage was also a victim of white racism. Southern men with memories of the "Lost Cause" had not forgotten the old suffragist-abolitionist alliance.⁴⁵ The suffragists' virtual abandonment of blacks failed to erase those memories and guaranteed that black women would find little reason to support the suffrage cause. Dr. George M. Lee, voicing white concern over the "Negro question," feared that with suffrage, those who believed that the woman's place was in the home "on a high plane of gentle refinement" and should therefore be encouraged not to vote would open the door to "the ignorant masses of women, that is in certain parts of the South — the negro woman, [who] would by their votes bring about results probably overwhelm-

⁴⁴*Galveston Daily News*, May 26, 1919.

⁴⁵Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (New York, 1979), 104.

ingly disastrous."⁴⁶ In a June 6, 1919, editorial the *Galveston Daily News* considered racism to be one reason why the national movement still faced a struggle to gain ratification by three-quarters of the states.

It is equally evident that the chief reason of opposition in the Southern states is of a kind which will not be easily overcome. The South, or at least most of the states in the South, see in the presence of a large number of negroes a fact which vitally modifies the issue as it is presented to them. This is not to imply that the chief reason of the South's opposition is a valid one, for we believe the danger which looms so large and realistic to their imagination is largely spectral since if the proportion between white and negro votes should be disturbed appreciably, it is apt to be in the way which will increase the predominance of the whites.⁴⁷

Spectre or fact, these concerns had an adverse effect on the suffrage movement.

The urban reforms advocated by the Galveston suffragists were of little concern to the lower classes of working women, or men. Few in that group had the leisure time available to concern themselves with anything but their immediate economic survival. The suffragists, to win the endorsement of organized labor, argued that women should receive equal pay for equal work, that working women needed the vote to protect their special interests, that disfranchisement had undermined their power to bargain, and that women's lack of the vote had even lowered men's wages and weakened men's unions.⁴⁸ Perle Penfield probably used all of these arguments in her address to an open meeting on "The Ballot and the Industrial Women" and in another to the Galveston Labor Council. The Galveston Labor Council, which had also supported the adoption of the commission government, agreed to endorse equal suffrage and thus rallied support for the measure among the more than three thousand working men that it represented.⁴⁹ Although the suffragists appealed to the lower working classes and gained the Labor Council's endorsement, their membership remained solidly middle and upper class. With few exceptions, the Galveston suffragists emphasized the achievement of legal-constitutional rights and such a program had little interest for poorer classes concerned with economic rights.

Endeavors to link woman suffrage to social reforms may have also contributed to the defeat. In particular, the suffragists' close identification with prohibition angered the male electorate opposed to prohibition.

⁴⁶*Galveston Tribune*, June 14, 1913.

⁴⁷*Galveston Daily News*, June 6, 1919.

⁴⁸Kraditor, 148-149.

⁴⁹*Galveston Tribune*, June 14, 1913; newspaper clipping, no date, Galveston Equal Suffrage Association Collection.

Judging by the vote in Galveston, it appears that the "wets" saw the suffragists as "bone-dry" prohibitionists and used the election as an opportunity to defeat both amendments by almost equal margins.

Finally, the submission of a state constitutional amendment by Governor Hobby was not at all attractive to Texas suffragists. Their leaders had decided that it was unlikely that the men of Texas would pass a suffrage amendment and, under those circumstances, the work and money involved in a state campaign would only sap the strength of their efforts to seek relief in Washington in the form of an amendment to the national constitution.⁵⁰ With Washington as the focus of attention for the movement, it is unlikely that the Galveston women were able to command the resources necessary for a maximum effort.

The Galveston suffragists, like their counterparts elsewhere, gained little from their activities except the right to vote. The return to what President Warren G. Harding called "normalcy" in 1920 ended immediate prospects for expanding women's rights. The Galveston women won the suffrage battle without convincing a majority of the city's male citizens that woman suffrage was a cause worthy of their support. And it would take the support of those men to make the urban reforms envisioned by the suffragists when they obtained that "municipal broom," the right to vote. Galveston retained its reputation as a wide-open seaport until the mid-1950s when the Texas Rangers closed down the most flagrant examples of vice.

Gerda Lerner summed up the suffrage experience by writing that, for "middle-class women, the attainment of suffrage, and those legal-constitutional changes they expected would inevitably follow upon suffrage, seemed adequate. This explains the waning interest in the woman's movement after 1920."⁵¹

⁵⁰Gould, 254.

⁵¹Lerner, 60.

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