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READY TO WORK: WOMEN IN VERMONT AND MICHIGAN FROM SUFFRAGE TO REPUBLICAN PARTY POLITICS

By

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ABSTRACT

READY TO WORK: WOMEN IN VERMONT AND MICHIGAN FROM SUFFRAGE TO REPUBLICAN PARTY POLITICS

By
Karen Farnham Madden

Women comprise one-half the population but they do not hold fifty percent of the elected offices in America, nor has a woman ever held the office of president or vice-president. Although American women have had the vote since 1920 and now vote in equal or greater numbers than men, they still fall behind not only in office holding, but also in wielding political power. This dissertation seeks to identify the reasons for this inequality through a comparative analysis of women's political participation in Republican Party politics in Vermont and Michigan, from the era of the suffrage struggle to the 1980s. It demonstrates that women in each state carved out their own niche in local, state and national politics by working in suffrage organizations, women's voluntary organizations, and finally Republican Party politics. But it also demonstrates that gendered notions of citizenship contributed to shaping women's political possibilities over the course of the twentieth century in ways that took precedence over demographic and structural similarities or differences

between women in these two states.

The findings from this dissertation are that this disparity is rooted in the enlightenment foundations of American democracy. A political system that produced gendered political assumptions of our democratic government that in turn produced a system of structural and ideological impediments to women's equal political participation. Thus, a democratic political system that purportedly provides equal access to participation as pluralist theory or mass political theory would argue, is in fact one that has systematically and deliberately denied that equal access to women.

To My Father
whose love of knowledge
was my inspiration

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I am unable to express sufficiently, my gratitude to family members and friends for their support over the many years it has taken me to complete this degree. For their

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INTRODUCTION

Women comprise one-half the population but they do not hold fifty percent of the elected offices in America, nor has a woman ever held the office of president or vice-president.[1] Although American women have had the vote since 1920 and now vote in equal or greater numbers than men, they still fall behind not only in office holding but also in wielding political power.[2] The factors that influence this disparity are rooted in the enlightenment foundations of American democracy. These factors have been perpetuated in the development of the American political system as a gendered system and have functioned since the

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[1]By 1974, nationally women still held less than 5% of legislative positions. Jane P. Jacquette, *Women in Politics* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974), XIII. The percentage of women in United State House of Representatives rose to only 7% in 1990 and 11% in 1992 and 1994. Richard Logan Fox, *Gender Dynamics in Congressional Elections* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 102. Not surprisingly, a 1952 *Look* magazine article described the ideal Republican candidate for president as, "a 51 year old lawyer from New York or Ohio, a college graduate, either a congressmen or governor of his state, reservist with a commission in the United States Army, regularly attends a Protestant Church, and is married to the same wife." Fletcher Knebel, "The Grand Old Party," *Look* (July 15, 1952): 28.

[2]Although guaranteed the right to vote by the Nineteenth Amendment, many American women were still unable to vote. Until passage of the Cable Act in 1922, American women who married non-citizens lost their citizenship and were therefore no longer able to vote. There were also racial exclusions that kept some women from voting. Asian women were not eligible for citizenship and unable to vote. Although African-American women were given the right to vote with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, like black men in the South they were kept from voting through the initiation of literacy tests, the grandfather clause, and poll taxes.

constitutional period.[3] Gendered political assumptions of our American democratic society have helped support a system of structural impediments to women's equal political participation. Thus, a system that purportedly provides equal access to participation, as pluralist theory or mass political theory would argue, is in fact one that has systematically and deliberately denied that equal access to women.[4]

This dissertation examines how the structures of the political system and the enduring social ideal of a gendered separation of citizenship worked together to determine women's political possibilities as they attempted to establish positions for themselves within the political party system. It does this through a comparative analysis of women's political participation in Republican Party politics in Vermont and Michigan, from the era of the suffrage struggle to the 1980s.

The analysis presented is based on interviews,

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[3]Glenna Matthews argued that the gendered nature of democratic government denied women equality long before enlightenment philosophy. She noted for example, women were outside the "polis" in ancient Greek society. Glenna Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman: Woman's Place in the United States, 1630-1970* (New York: Oxford, 1992), 4-5.

[4]Dianne Pinderhughes, *Race and Ethnicity in Chicago Politics: A Reexamination of Pluralistic Theory* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1987); Mark Kornbluh, *Why Americans Stopped Voting* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Anne Costain, *Inviting Women's Rebellion: A Political Process Interpretation of the Women's Movement* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1992).

suffrage records, voluntary association minutes, state and national Republican Party records, newspapers, and other sources that reveal women's political participation in Republican Party politics. New England Yankees searching for opportunity settled both Vermont and Michigan; their political, social, and economic structures developed along similar lines. Thus an examination of each state offers a unique opportunity to compare women's political activity. This dissertation demonstrates that women in each state carved out their own niche in local, state and national politics by working in suffrage organizations, women's voluntary organizations, and finally Republican Party politics. The overall aim of this work is to evaluate how gendered notions of citizenship contributed to shaping structured institutional barriers limiting women's political possibilities over the course of the twentieth century over even important demographic and economic differences.

Long before women gained the vote, the enlightenment foundations of the Constitution, particularly the ideas of natural rights and social contract theory, shaped American women's citizenship and political possibilities. Twenty-five years ago, Susan Moller Okin concluded that even though the language in the Constitution is assumed to be

gender-neutral, there is in fact no political equity for activist women involved in politics. [5] More recently, Linda Kerber has concluded that even though egalitarian language is used in the Constitution, men and women experience the rights and obligations of citizenship differently. According to Kerber, social contract theory, which is at the heart of enlightenment theory, focuses on the binding moral duty of citizens' obligation, the association between self-preservation and the preservation of public safety, and the idea that a government can function only with the consent of the governed. The problem for women, Kerber noted, is that whereas men traditionally were presumed to enter social contracts as free agents, women were presumed to enter the social contract bound by marriage and its prior obligations to their husbands, therein creating unequal political and social status for women. Since rights and obligations are reciprocal elements of citizenship, and women were understood to owe all of their obligations to their families and husbands, it followed that they could make no independent social contract and certainly no claim to political rights.[6]

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[5]Susan Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 3, 4-5.

[6]Linda K. Kerber, *Toward an Intellectual History of Women* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1997), 44, 166.

Maintaining British tradition, American lawmakers reinforced this theory by choosing coveture over independence and dependence over autonomy, making women not only politically but also legally invisible.[7] Constitutional law presumed the validity of this idea, assuming that women only experienced politics through their husbands, fathers, and sons; embedded in political ideology and structure was the idea that women can serve the state only by serving the men of their family.[8] Women were therefore considered less patriotic than men and as having no obvious attachment to the outcome of national policies. As a result, women's exclusion from rights and obligations was historically understood to be rational, realistic, and wise. Women were legally and socially defined as possessing a different citizenship.[9]

Kerber's argument about American women and citizenship fits with the ideas of feminist political theorists Carole

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[7]Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, VA, 1980), 119-135.

[8]Kerber, "A Constitutional Right to be Treated Like American Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship," in Linda K. Kerber, Alice Kessler-Harris, and Kathryn Kish Sklar, eds., *U.S. History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 17-35.

[9]Kerber, *Toward an Intellectual History of Women,* 41-62; Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1988), 21-29.

Pateman and Anne Phillips about the development of western democracy. Pateman's examination of social contract theory illustrated how mainstream democratic political theory constructed the political world to exclude women. She traced how important historical figures such as Rousseau, Hegel, and Freud, constructed an argument that family was the foundation of civil society, that familial ties were based on biology and sentiment, and that women were naturally restricted to the private sphere by their duties as mothers and wives. Moreover, since it was also assumed that women were controlled by their biological desires, they became viewed within western political theory as incapable of developing a sense of justice, making them unfit for civil or public life. Even more pernicious to women's political equality was the conclusion that this "disorder" led women to exert a disruptive influence in social and political life and rendered them incapable of the rational decision-making necessary for political effectiveness.[10]

Complementary to Pateman's argument, Anne Phillips asserted that the historical division of society into public and private with the location of politics in the

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[10]Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 17-32.

public sphere and the exclusion of women from this arena contributed significantly to women's lack of political influence. She concluded that women's exclusion from the public sphere led to the development of a male-defined theory of democracy and citizenship. Within this theoretical perspective, traditionally male characteristics of bravery and courage became viewed as the outward manifestations of patriotism, while female characteristics of caring and nurturing were regarded as unimportant to public civic life. Further, activities such as voting and office holding were male activities much too difficult and unsavory for women to handle.[11] Joan Hoff-Wilson's analysis that "such unequal treatment [of women] is rooted in the fact that the Constitution and Bill of Rights created an exclusively masculine system of justice based on English Common Law and eighteenth century ideals of liberty and equality," provides further evidence for such conclusions. She concluded that even though these documents did not deny women the right to vote, by tradition and custom women's rights were limited and certainly did not include the right to vote.[12]

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[11]Anne Phillips, *Engendering Democracy* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 3, 92.

[12]Joan Hoff Wilson, "The Unfinished Revolution: Changing Legal Status of U.S. Women," *Signs* 13(Autumn, 1987): 36.

American political parties were established within this gendered dynamic. Critical issues that divided the early citizens, such as the power of the federal government versus states' rights, the common good versus individual rights, and whether a national bank should be established fostered the emergence of formal political parties representing particular perspectives. Initial limits to male citizen participation were eliminated over time. Continuing legal, political, and social constraints, including the party system, the Fourteenth Amendment defining citizenship as male, and women's role as private citizens, necessitated that women carve out their own space within the political system before the passage of state woman suffrage laws and the enactment of the Nineteenth Amendment.[13]

As one of the first scholars to examine women's political participation in the United States, Linda Kerber suggested that women took advantage of social and ideological changes resulting from the American Revolution to begin to carve out such political space. In the New Republic, since a virtuous citizenry was essential to the

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[13]Pauline Maier, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776* (New York: Norton, 1991), 228-70; Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (New York: Norton, 1969), 257-91, 304-28.

success of the fragile new nation, leaders concluded that such virtue could be best instilled through religion, education, and home life. This emphasis on the locus of virtue in the private realm provided mothers with a critical new role within the republic. In essence, in the New Republic, political virtue was domesticated and mothers became the custodians of moral citizenship.[14] Thus, American women participated in the political process, but only from outside the formal institutional structure of political parties and governing bodies.

Paula Baker offered evidence that from the initiation of the republic, women attempted to insert themselves more squarely into the public, political sphere. She asserted that nineteenth-century women shaped the political debate by participating in crowd actions, circulating and presenting petitions, founding reform organizations, and lobbying legislatures.[15] Like Kerber, however, Baker defined women's political participation as limited and outside the formal political processes of voting and office holding.

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[14]Kerber, *Women of the Republic,* 3-17; Kerber, "The Republican Ideology of The Revolutionary Generation," *American Quarterly* 37 (Fall 1985): 483.

[15]Paula Baker, *The Moral Frameworks of Public Life: Gender, Politics, and the State in Rural New York, 1870-1930* (New York: Oxford Press, 1991), 57-89.

Louise Tilly and Patricia Gurin broadened Baker's analysis of women's political activities by bringing together the public with the private spheres and arguing that we must examine not only women's political activities outside the formal political system, but also the manner in which women over time redefined what is political to include issues such as sexuality, private life, abortion, domestic abuse, and displaced homemakers.[16] Even though women were able to broaden the scope of political discourse, Tilly and Gurin noted women's ability to move within political structures was limited without the vote. Therefore, for women before suffrage, politics was based in voluntary organizations, some of which were formed explicitly for political activity. Tilly and Gurin concluded that changes for women over the twentieth century have increased economic opportunities for women, provided equal legal status for men and women, and integrated men and women more fully, but still not completely in politics and the economy.[17]

Elizabeth Varon and other scholars have recently worked to fill the gaps of our understanding of women's

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[16]Louise A. Tilly and Patricia Gurin, "Women, Politics, and Change," in Louise A. Tilly and Patricia Gurin, eds., *Women, Politics, and Change*, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1990),7.

[17]Ibid., 19-30.

participation in the larger political world of the nineteenth century. This new work has helped bring political parties to the center of the picture because parties were a key focus and location of nineteenth century political culture. Varon has argued that in the early nineteenth century women participated in civic activities as logical extensions of their domestic roles providing educational, spiritual, and religious guidance. They established schools for indigent children, organized societies to help women, and lobbied local and state bodies for funds. Further, she noted that women were involved in Whig party politics even before 1840. She concluded that women contributed to the party as partisans and mediators encouraged by party members to influence voters, but that they still were not offered opportunities to shape policy or positions of power within the formal party structure.[18]

Rebecca Edwards agreed with Varon that in the early nineteenth century women tried to shape the political system through their work in party organizations and entered politics as "ladies" in an effort to reform the system. Increasing social and economic divisions within American society fragmented the Democratic and Republican

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[18]Elizabeth R. Varon, *We Mean to Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1998), 2, 15, 48, 72.

parties offering women a window of opportunity to professionalize the political party system by shifting the sites of political discussion from rowdy saloons to refined political receptions, by initiating the use of prepared political essays rather than impromptu incendiary speeches, and by advocating the use of the Australian ballot. However, Edwards concluded that even though women worked within the parties, most of their work was as non-partisans attempting to influence the system from outside the formal political network.[19]

Edward's argument about national politics is supported by Michael Goldberg's work on late nineteenth century Kansas. There, suffragists worked together with members of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union in a grassroots campaign to clean up local elections. These women offered a new vision that inspired and uplifted the dynamics of politics in Kansas. But as politics in Kansas became more chaotic after 1890, with the Republican Party struggling to remain in control, women were unable to find a place within the party structure and their campaign for suffrage

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[19]Rebecca Edwards, "Gender, Class, and the Transformation of Electoral Campaigns in the Gilded Age," in Melanie Gustafson, Kristie Miller, and Elizabeth Israels Perry, eds., *We Have Come to Stay: American Women and Political Parties, 1880-1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 13-22.

failed.[20] By the turn of the last century, many women were thus working to influence the political process through the formation of local, state, and national volunteer organizations centered on improving the lives of women and children.

Anne Firor Scott argued that because women were expected to be responsible for community welfare as an extension of their household duties, they tackled community problems with a willingness to experiment. She concluded that their work in this regard built confidence, allowing them to deal with the increasingly difficult issues of industrialization over the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Scott aptly summarized women's entry into the world of politics.

> Since the early days of the Republic women have organized to achieve goals that seemed important to them. In retrospect it is clear that such women, constrained by law and custom, and denied access to most of the major institutions by which society governed itself and created its culture, used associations to evade some of these constraints and to redefine 'woman's place' by giving the concept a public dimension.[21]

Scott documented how women utilized voluntary organizations not only to improve their communities, but also to develop

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[20]Michael Goldberg, *An Army of Women: Gender and Politics in the Gilded Age Kansas* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1997), 86-126, 260-64.

[21]Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 2.

the political skills that would be useful as they gained the vote. They identified problems, raised funds, and in many instances, successfully persuaded local and state governments to provide resources for reform efforts.[22]

When these works on nineteenth century women and politics are put together with the scholarship on women in politics in the early twentieth century, the context of women's politics vis-à-vis the party system and suffrage takes on a sharper focus. They examine how pre-suffrage women began to make headway into politics on the local level through their voluntary organizations, as Scott suggested, rather than through party politics. By examining the Chicago, New York, and Cincinnati Woman's City Clubs, Maureen Flanagan, Elisabeth Israels Perry, and Andrea Kornbluh have shown the continuity of women's pre- and post-suffrage political work outside of the party system. Through their reform efforts, the members of these clubs improved the lives of women and children and often conditions in their local municipality. They did this by influencing local decision-making, determining the allocation of local resources, persuading influential politicians to develop reform programs that would improve conditions in their city, and most importantly by providing

[22]Ibid. , 2-5.

women with a venue to discuss politics and civic matters in an open forum free from male control. These clubwomen did not wield political power as it is traditionally defined, but they did develop professional organizations that began integrating women as a group into a broader, more pluralistic political community.[23]

These local studies have supported the findings of Nancy Cott and other scholars who have examined women's politics on the national level. They noted that even after women gained the vote, they tended to work within voluntary organizations, rather than political parties. Uncomfortable with party dynamics and not welcomed by men, they often did their political work in non-partisan groups such as the League of Women Voters, Business and Professional Women's Clubs, and the Young Woman's Christian Association.[24]

But simultaneously some women attempted to broaden their power and authority through formal political party participation. Here is where the institutions of the

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[23]Maureen Flanagan, "Gender and Urban Political Reform: The City Club and the Woman's City Club of Chicago in the Progressive Era," *American Historical Review* 95 (October 1990): 1046-1048; Elisabeth Israels Perry, "Women's Political Choices After Suffrage: The Women's City Club of New York, 1915-1990," *New York History* (October 1990): 417-34; Andrea Kornbluh, *Lighting the Way: The Woman's City Club of Cincinnati, 1915-1965* (Cincinnati: Young & Klein, 1986), II, IV, 3, 9, 14, 81, 102.

[24]Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 105-107; Elisabeth Israels Perry, *We Have Come to Stay: American Women and Political Parties, 1880-1960* (Albuquerque:

political system served to impede women's political possibilities in, what was as Flanagan described it,

> a system that was well established by the time women could vote. American politics, then as now, was not simply a process of giving the people what they want. It was a structured system in which access not only to nomination for office but to experiences that could legitimate subsequent nominations was controlled largely by individuals who to a large extent could choose their co-workers and successors. After almost a century of male domination, the party organizations were reluctant to grant power and authority to women.[25]

The issue is not that women made no political gains following suffrage. As political scientist Kristi Andersen concluded, although women were not able to move into the inner circle of politics after suffrage, they did inject elements of change into the political system through existing women's cooperative networks. Working within the dynamic of an early twentieth century nonpartisan political culture, women renegotiated gendered boundaries and reshaped the political process in fundamental ways. Women's increased participation as voters, according to Anderson, was an important element in changing a divisive, party-based system of the nineteenth century into a

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University of New Mexico Press), 97-108.

[25]Flanagan, "The Predicament of New Rights: Suffrage and Women's Political Power from a Local Perspective," *Social Politics: Gender, State and Society* 2 (Fall 1995): 306-307.

twentieth century non-partisan, candidate-centered, interest group politics.[26] Women's participation in political parties did increase after they gained the vote. From early twentieth century machine politics through the 1950s, women were important to local party organizations but as Paula Baker had recently demonstrated they continued to fill positions at the bottom of the organization and received few rewards for their hard work.[27]

Felice Gordon's study of post-suffrage New Jersey politics unveiled the complicated post-suffrage path followed by women that emerged from their particular pre-suffrage situation. Gordon noted that suffragists in that state had first attempted to gain equal political rights by arguing that women were entitled to the vote for the same reasons as men. They were taxpayers, citizens, and responsible, free human beings. But theirs was also a conservative approach to enter politics. The suffragists also pointed out that women in the west, who had already gained the vote, voted like their husbands and not as a

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[26]Kristi Andersen, *After Suffrage: Women in Partisan and Electoral Politics Before the New Deal* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 2, 14, 70, 83; Susan Ware, *Beyond Suffrage: Women in the New Deal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 68-86.

[27]Paula Baker, "She is the Best Man on the Ward Committee: Women in Grassroots Party Organizations, 1930s-1950s," in Melanie Gustafson, Kristie Miller, and Elisabeth Israels Perry, eds. , *We Have Come to Stay: American Women and Political Parties, 1880-1960 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 155-159.*

bloc. Therefore, the New Jersey suffragists argued, men had nothing to fear from woman suffrage. According to Gordon with suffrage many of these women continued along a moderate path. They formed the League of Women Voters, prepared for the 1920 presidential election by educating women about voting and encouraging them to join political parties, and to work for legislation that would improve their community. Gordon noted that between 1920 and 1930, New Jersey women joined political organizations, built new ones, such as the League, formulated new policies, and lobbied for a number of objectives, including protective legislation, improved political efficiency, and creating mechanisms to stop war. Working together, the women of New Jersey increased women's political participation by eliminating legal discrimination against female citizens.[28]

Despite the elimination of discrimination in law, however, such a moderate approach to political participation failed to appreciably enhance women's political status. Susan Hartmann demonstrated that it was not until 1964 that men and women voted in relatively the same number. She also noted that even though more women were serving in party organizations, they were still kept

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[29]Felice Gordon, *After Winning: The Legacy of the New Jersey Suffragists, 1920-1947* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 19, 26, 32, 33, 76 and 89, 112.

from most positions of power. Although suffrage provided women with a new independence and the ability to challenge male political authority, without a unifying goal of suffrage, their efforts were fragmented and few women were able to gain political office. Overall support for women running for political office was low even as women's voting increased. Female candidates lacked party support even as the number of eligible women voters increased from 43% in 1920 to 56% in 1948. At the same time, few women were serving in policy-making positions in political parties.[29] So, at best, decades after the federal suffrage amendment, political equality eluded women in the United States.

Recently several women's historians have begun to examine the issue of women's political history by looking specifically at women's participation in party politics. Much of this work identifies how a general male hostility to giving women equality within the party system, combined with women's participation in voluntary organizations, might have shaped a gendered political agenda and a gendered relationship to the political system through the twentieth century. Because, as will be shown, the Republican Party was more open for a time to accepting

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[29]Susan Hartman, *From Margin to Mainstream* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 1-22.

women's participation, tracing women's positions in that party offers one strategy for examining the relationship between institutional party structure, gendered ideas of citizenship, and political party participation.

According to Melanie Gustafson, the quasi-private nature of political parties in the nineteenth century allowed women to make connections to political parties. Private citizens, who allowed women interested in politics to attend meetings and work to support candidates, guided largely unregulated political parties. This cooperation fostered female partisanship and in 1888 the first women's political party auxiliary, the Woman's National Republican Association was formed. This tradition of participation in the Republican Party, according to Gustafson resulted in the Progressive Party of 1912 becoming a key in challenging assumptions about women's citizenship in ways that helped to shape the future debate over women's place in politics. By being at the forefront of party organization, women contributed to the political discussion, questioned political ideology and power structures, and insisted on maintaining a political alliance with men. When women gained the vote, their central role in Progressive Party formation demonstrated that there was a place for women in party politics. She noted, however, that although men

accepted female participation, women remained marginalized and were never incorporated into the power structures of the party and even while men congratulated themselves on welcoming women into the party system.[30]

The marginalization of women into the overall party system began at the local level. In her examination of Chicago politics, Maureen Flanagan hypothesized that the structure of the established political system limited women's ability to exercise power within the political framework. She pointed to four elements that guaranteed that women were not equal members of the polity in their city: the entrenched two-party system, the absence of party slates, the winner-take-all system and, finally, the century-long exercise of male suffrage. Within this institutional context, Chicago women found themselves significantly rebuffed in their efforts to make decisions or run for office.[31] Flanagan demonstrated how the women of Chicago, constrained by these barriers, kept working through alternative organizations such as the Woman's City Club in an effort to influence resource allocation and public policy development within the city. Their efforts

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[30]Melanie Gustafson, "Partisan Politics and the Progressive Party of 1912," (Ph.D. Diss., New York University, 1993), 1-15.

[31]Flanagan, "The Predicament of New Rights, 305-30.

resulted in the enactment of social reforms both before and after suffrage, such as the nation's first juvenile court and protective legislation for women and child factory workers. In the realm of formal politics, including party politics, however, these women discovered that they couldn't get nominated and win office and their actual influence within the two political parties increased very little through the 1920s.

Catherine Rymph has also pursued the question of women's political power by examining the formation of Republican Women's Clubs after 1920. According to Rymph, members used their clubs as a means to move into formal party politics, developing a new style of local party organizing while becoming informed and articulate party supporters. They did this by using grassroots organization to educate and socialize women politically. Women held forums, published literature, and provided safe spaces for political debate. She concluded that the Republican Women's Clubs were a double-edged sword for women; they offered opportunities for women to gain entry into the party system, while at the same time the auxiliary nature of the Club limited women's political role as full-fledged party

members.[32]

Much research on women and party politics has focused on the Republican Party. The reason for this is largely historical. The tradition identified by Gustafson in the pre-suffrage era was followed, according to political scientist Denise Baer, for several decades. She noted that the Republican Party was supporting the Equal Rights Amendment in 1940 and that elite party leadership fostered women candidates as evidenced by more Republican women elected to office than Democratic women. Historian Cynthia Harrison concurs with Baer's assessment noting that after World War II, it was the Republican Party and conservative Democrats that supported women's issues early in the twentieth century, not members of liberal groups, many of whom were afraid that such an amendment would endanger women's protective legislation and leave working women defenseless.[33] By the Reagan administration of the 1980s, however, the Republican Party has shifted significantly to

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[32]Catherine Rymph, "Forward and Right: The Shaping of Republican Women's Activism, 1920-1967," (Ph.D. Diss., The University of Iowa, 1998), 1-13; For a discussion of black Republican Women's Clubs and their influence in Chicago politics before the depression. See Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "In Politics to Stay: Black Women Leaders and Party Politics in the 1920s," in *Women Politics and Change,* 199-220; Darlene Clark Hine, *Hine Sight: Black Women and the Re-Construction of American History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 109-29.

[33]Cynthia Harrison, *On Account of Sex: The Politics of Women's Issues* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 4,8-9,104,211.

the right and no longer supported a women's agenda. Liberal Republican women were pushed out of the party. The Democratic Party, beginning in the 1960s with President Kennedy's Commission on Women and the party's support of social legislation, has been a more comfortable home for a majority of women.[34]

Many politically minded women thus began their careers in the Republican Party because it gave them a public recognition that was not forthcoming from the other national party, the Democratic Party. As early as the 1872 national convention women were recognized in the Republican platform "[for their] noble devotion to the cause of freedom." Their request for the vote was treated with "respectful consideration."[35] In 1876, Sara Andrews Spencer addressed the Republican National Convention and the platform praised the "substantial advance" toward equal rights for women. Following the demise of the Progressive Party, the 1916 Republican platform included a woman suffrage plank and the party candidate, Charles Evans

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[34]Denise Baer, *Elite Cadres and Party Coalitions: Representing the Public in Party Politics* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 51-63; Cynthia Harrison, *On Account of Sex,* 15-19; Jo Freeman, *A Room at a Time: How Women Entered Party Politics* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), IX.

[35]William E. Leuchtenburg and William Rand Kenan, "General Introduction," *Papers of the Republican Party* (Frederick, MD: University Publications, 1988), xi.

Hughes, endorsed woman suffrage when the Democrats and Woodrow Wilson would not.[36] Women from suffrage states were sent as delegates to Republican National conventions. As approval of the passage of a constitutional amendment for woman suffrage grew closer, Republican National Committee chair Will Hays asked Ruth Hanna McCormick to organize women's activities and she was eventually appointed chair of the first Women's Executive Committee. A women's division within the party was established in 1919.[37] Thus at the passage of the Suffrage Amendment, Republican women could legitimately believe that the possibility for achieving political equality within the party was quite realistic.

Despite the promises of these earlier decades, women found themselves without parity within Republican Party politics and political office holding and decision-making. This dissertation examines the historical processes and the dynamic situation developing by undertaking a comparative local level study. It begins by outlining the history of

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[36]Josephine L. Good, *The History of Women in the Republican National Conventions and Women in the Republican National Committee* (Washington, D.C.: Republican National Committee, 1963), 1-6; Anne Armstrong, Co-Chairman, *Women in Public Service* (Washington, D.C.: Women's Division, Republican National Committee, undated) 1-2.

[37]Jo Freeman argues that parties created the women's divisions to educate and mobilize women. Jo Freeman, *A Room at a Time*, 5, 63.

both states to depict the appropriateness of a comparative analysis. It then explores women's suffrage organizations, goals, activities, and successes in each state. To connect women's more "formal" political participation, represented by their participation in the suffrage movement, with women's informal political organizing through voluntary organizations, this dissertation investigates the ideas and public activities of two similar women's voluntary organizations - *The Athena Club* in Burlington, Vermont and the *Ladies Literary Club* of Grand Rapids, Michigan - from their founding through the 1920s. Chapter four and five of this dissertation then build on these earlier experiences to examine women's political participation in Republican Party politics from the 1950s to the 1970s in both Vermont and Michigan.

The analysis of women's activism in the later decades utilized oral interviews and examined the public papers of eighteen women, nine women in each state. (See Appendix A) Republican Party materials, including records of the Republican National Committee, the Vermont Republican Committee and the Republican Michigan State Central Committee supplement the interviews and the women's papers. All these sources allow for an analysis of Republican Party attitudes toward women's political contributions and of the

barriers to women's political success.[39]

Despite differences in the political situations in Vermont and Michigan, as this dissertation will reveal, women's political possibilities in both states were shaped and hindered by the institutional structure of the political party system. The party system had itself developed within a gendered ideal of citizenship, an ideal that continued to legitimate traditional structures and limit women's political possibilities through the twentieth century.

[38]Following my interviews with the Republican women from both states, I researched Republican Party papers expecting to find information about the women's political activities within the party. What I found, however, was that for the most part, women were not mentioned in meeting minutes, agendas or publications. Even prominent women like Consuelo Bailey in Vermont and Elly Peterson in Michigan received scant attention from their male Republican colleagues.

Chapter I

Vermont and Michigan
The Beginnings of Women's Activism

Women made important contributions in shaping Vermont and Michigan. They were active participants from the first European settlement when adventure-seeking Yankees from Connecticut and Massachusetts journeyed to the Vermont frontier in the 1760s looking for opportunity and better lives for their children.[1] As the Vermont frontier grew more crowded and the price of land skyrocketed after the American Revolution, many of the same Yankee adventurers moved on to Michigan to seek their fortune.

Young men and women of Protestant Western European descent made the trek to Vermont to escape the overcrowding in their hometowns in Connecticut and Massachusetts with the dream of owning their own land and providing a better life for their children. The move to Vermont was accomplished in two distinct phases. First, young husbands traveled to the Vermont frontier with their oldest sons to clear land and build a shelter. The trek was dangerous and arduous as they journeyed over forested land with few trails, often carrying everything they needed on their

[1]The term Yankee refers to those individuals of white, Protestant, Western European heritage who have been in the New World for several generations.

backs: only a lucky few could afford oxen to help carry the burden. Once they reached their destination, the real work of clearing the dense forest began. Every tree had to be cut down by hand and then the stumps chopped and burned to prepare the land for cultivation. The father and sons would also try to erect a crude shelter so that when they returned with their families there would be a safe haven for the precious animals and family members.[2]

As more and more settlers came to Vermont, delegates including future governor Thomas Chittenden met in 1777 to form a *Committee of Safety* in an effort to craft a constitution. Modeled on the Pennsylvania Constitution, Vermont's Constitution outlawed slavery, instituted public education and established universal male suffrage.[3] The Constitution initially provided for a unicameral legislature, but in 1836 a second chamber was added. Each town was given one legislative seat and as in most early

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[2]Accounts of the settling of Vermont appear in a variety of texts including: Rebecca C. Skillin, "William Cheney (1787-1875): The Life of a Vermont Woodsman and Farmer," *Vermont History* 39 (Winter 1971): 43-50; William Doyle, *The Vermont Political Tradition: And Those Who Helped Make It* (Barre, Vermont: Northlight Studio Press, 1984), 1-17; Charles Morrissey, Vermont (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 14-25; and Charles A. Jellison, *Ethan Allen: Frontier Rebel* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1969), 18-38.

[3]Because of continuing boundary disputes, however, Vermont was not brought into the United States until 1791. E.P. Walton, ed., "The Vermont Constitution, 1777," *Records of the Council of Safety and Governor and Council of the State of Vermont*, Vol. 1 (Montpelier: Steam Press, 1873), 90-95.

states the office of Governor held little power. Vermont citizens continued to demonstrate their proud Yankee heritage as Vermont moved toward maturity, a free and independent state. A number of small towns emerged with strong political connections to the Whig Party and in 1854, with the advent of the anti-slavery Republican Party, most Vermonters actively supported Lincoln's presidency.[4] Further, Vermonters strongly supported the Civil War by sending one-half of its able-bodied men to war and supporting the military effort with more than 10% of the state's total wealth. From 1854 until the mid-twentieth century, Vermont continued its support of Republican candidates and Republican ideals of small government, independent citizens, and limited support of women's rights, such as extended property rights and widow's inheritance rights.[5] These policies were supported by a citizen legislature made up of farmers and a few businessmen who could take a brief time away from their

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[4]Frank Bryan, *Yankee Politics in Rural Vermont* (Hanover, New Hampshire: The University Press of New England, 1974), 16-17.

[5]Children were frightened by being told that Democrats had black tongues and would get them if they didn't act properly. Andrew E. Nuquist and Edith W. Nuquist, *Vermont State Government and Administration: A Historical and Descriptive Study of the Living Past* (Burlington: Government Research Center, The University of Vermont, 1966), 13.

busy lives to go Montpelier, working not as a means to earn a living, but to support a way of life.[6]

A modern Republican Party emerged in Vermont in 1915 with the passage of a "progressive" law providing for direct primaries. Progressive Republican candidates for governor, including James Hartness in 1920, George Aiken in 1936 and 1938, and Ernest Gibson in 1946 and 1948, supported direct primaries, revised taxation, endorsed campaign finance, and court reform.[7] From 1915 to 1964, the progressive Republican Party continued to dominate Vermont politics with little challenge from the Democratic Party until the mid-1950s. Moreover, Vermont's progressive, Republican spirit remains today, as evidenced by Senator James Jeffords' unprecedented shift from loyal Republican Party member to Independent status in 2001.

Within this independent, Republican state, women played a role in shaping the social, political and economic future of Vermont. Women like Ann Story had helped to promote freedom and independence by supporting the Green

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[6]Although the Republican Party dominated Vermont politics for more than 100 years, the party was still responsive to the people's needs. There was a strong tradition of localism and a very large (276 person) difficult to manipulate legislature. Further, the Vermont Legislature continued to be dominated by farmers until the 1960s, still ranking in the top ten in the country. Doyle, *Vermont Political Tradition,* 101-40; Bryan, *Yankee Politics in Rural Vermont,* 17, 37.

[7]Ernest Gibson, "New Vermont Platform" (1912), Fraser Metzger Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, Special Collections, University of Vermont.

Mountain Boys in their quest for a state of free landholders.[8] Other women had supported the war effort by raising funds, sewing clothing, and nursing sick and wounded soldiers. As Vermont moved toward statehood after the Revolution, women helped shape the constitution that institutionalized Vermont's commitment to equality, freedom and independence by supporting the abolitionist movement. Rachel Gilpin Robinson, a Quaker, worked diligently in the abolition movement, providing a foundation for Vermont politicians to include an antislavery clause in the constitution, the nation's first such law.[9] Emma Willard, a Middlebury resident, influenced the Vermont educational system by opening a female seminary offering women a liberal arts education. Willard was able to convince male school officials that women needed a well-rounded education, not just instruction in the domestic arts, to be good wives and mothers. Vermont women's avid support of

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[8]Tales of Ann Story's bravery are documented in a number of sources including Dorothy Canfield Fisher's "Ann Story" in *Vermont Quarterly* 18 (July 1950): 87-102.

[9]Jane Williamson, "Rowland T. Robinson, Rokeby and the Underground Railroad in Vermont," *Vermont History* 69, supplement (Winter 2001): 19-31; In Chapter 1, Article I, of the Vermont Constitution, slavery is prohibited, "Therefore, no male person, born in this country, or brought from over the sea, ought to be holden by law, to serve any person, as a servant, slave, or apprentice, after he arrives to the age of twenty-one years, nor female in like manner, after she arrives to the age of eighteen, unless they are bound by their own consent, after they arrive at such age, or bound by law, for the payment of debts, damages, fines, costs, or the like."

temperance resulted in the passage of a state prohibition amendment outlawing the production, sale, or consumption of alcohol in 1852.[10] Like women nationwide, some Vermont women participated in suffrage campaigns leading to the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. Annette Parmelee, President of the Vermont Equal Suffrage Association, worked diligently promoting suffrage throughout Vermont.[11] Other Vermont women helped to shape their communities through their work in voluntary organizations. In one such association, the *Athena Club* of Burlington, members worked with local officials and were influential in the hiring of the first female police officer, among other reforms.[12]

Once women gained the vote in 1920, there were a few women who attempted to carve out a niche within the political party system. Some women joined the Republican Party and worked to support male candidates for office. Bernice Bromley worked in the gubernatorial campaign of

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[10]Doyle, *The Vermont Political Tradition,* 114-16.

[11]Vermont women's involvement in the suffrage campaign is documented by a number of scholars, including T.D.S. Bassett, "The 1870 Campaign for Woman Suffrage in Vermont," *Vermont History* 14 (April 1946): 48; Deborah P. Clifford, "An Invasion Of Strong-Minded Women: The Newspapers and the Woman Suffrage Campaign In Vermont In 1870," *Vermont History* 43 (Spring 1979): 11.

[12]Karen Madden, "The Athena Club of Burlington, Vermont: The Limits of Women's Clubs in a Small City," (Master's Thesis, Michigan State University, 1997).

Republican James Hartness in 1920; she later ran successfully for office.[13] Republican Edna Beard was elected to the Vermont House of Representatives in 1921 and then the Vermont Senate in 1923. Women continued to work within the party system and run for the Vermont House and Senate. Consuelo Bailey, Gertrude Mallary, and Madeline Harwood were loyal Republicans who felt they could best serve their state by running for office.[14] These women and several others worked in a variety of political positions to maintain the principles of freedom and independence promised by the first Vermont Constitution.

By 1820, the frontier for European settlement had moved from Vermont to the Midwest.[15] Many Vermont Yankees traveled to Ohio and Michigan looking for new adventure and

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[13]Bernice Bromley, Interview by University of Vermont Professor Emeritus Sam Hand, Ormand Beach, Florida, July 1981, Oral History Collection, Bailey Howe Library, The University of Vermont.

[14]Personal interviews by author with Mallary (29 January 2002) and Harwood (3 February 2000) provided information on their political careers. Information on Bailey's political life comes from her papers (Cartons A2,3,4,5,6,7,11,14,15,16,17,21) located in Special Collection at the University of Vermont.

[15]Records remain that indicate groups of families from several towns in Vermont moved to Michigan. Vermontville in Eaton County, Michigan was settled by a colony from Poultney, Vermont and eleven families from Addison County, Vermont founded the town of Sylvan, Michigan. William Stocking, "New England Men in Michigan History," *Michigan History* V (January-April 1921): 131-38; As a matter of fact, by 1890 more than one-third of Michigan's 1.6 million citizens hailed from New England, with the largest group from Vermont. Reverend Wolcott B. Williams, "New England Influence in Michigan," *Pioneer Collections: Report of the Pioneer Society of the State of Michigan* XVII (1892) 313.

broader opportunities.[16] Michigan, carved out of the public domain of the Old Northwest Territory and shaped by the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, provided cheap and abundant land for Yankees seeking their fortune. Like Vermont, Michigan's application for statehood was held up by boundary disputes and it was not until 1837 that Michigan was formally admitted to the Union as a state.[17] The boundary disputes between Ohio and Michigan began in 1802, when Ohio was in the process of writing and adopting a constitution. The dispute, labeled the Toledo War, concerned whether the mouth of the Maumee River was in Ohio or Michigan. Michigan Governor Mason led an armed militia to the Toledo strip and arrested Ohio officials who refused to leave. Although only one life was lost, the battle became legendary in Michigan history. Finally, a hunter present at the drafting of the Constitution assured members that the mouth of the river actually was further south than

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[16]Henry R. Schoolcraft, Indian Agent for Sault St. Marie, was related by marriage to members of the famous Vermont Allen family. Fanny Allen, second wife of Vermont's greatest hero, Ethan Allen, was the illegitimate daughter of Catherine Schoolcraft. Moreover, Ethan Allen's son; Ethan moved his family to Michigan in 1859 where all but one of his eight children remained. Charles C. Trowbridge to Henry R. Schoolcraft, Letter 10 January 1929, Clarence Edwin Cater, ed., " The Territory of Michigan, 1829-1837," *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, Volume XII, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1945), 4-6.

[17]William P. Browne and Kenneth VerBurg, *Michigan Politics and Government: Facing Change in a Complex State* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), xii, xiv, xvi, 365.

maps depicted, therefore it lay in Ohio territory. Ohio was admitted to the Union in 1803 without this proviso settled. Without settlement of this issue, Michigan's claim appeared valid. But in the end it was disputed boundaries that stalled acceptance of Michigan into the Union. Even though these boundary disputes delayed statehood for Michigan, settlers flooded into southern Michigan along the disputed territory and moved north as settlements became crowded.[18]

The completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 facilitated transportation and citizens began flooding into Michigan, the most popular destination for new settlers from 1831 to 1837.[19] Like earlier settlers in Vermont, men came to Michigan first to scout out a location and begin clearing land. They then returned home and during the next season brought their families to their new homes. Families coming to Michigan worked to clear the land for cultivation in much the same way that they had established farms in

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[18]Willis F.Dunbar and George S. May, *Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmann Publishing Company, 1995), 211.

[19]Yankees and Non-Yankees referred to migrants from New England as the "universal Yankee nation" and saw them as cultural imperialists. Susan E. Gray, *The Yankee West: Community Life on the Michigan Frontier* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 2.

Vermont. The work was hard and life dangerous because of the fear of Indian attacks and wild animals.[20]

The Congregational background of Michigan's first residents led to the development in 1835 of a constitution founded on the principles of democracy and equality.[21] The first article contained twenty-one sections, consisting of a bill of rights, although not labeled as such, modeled after the Connecticut Constitution. Like the Vermont Constitution, all male citizens of Michigan were given the right to vote, regardless of property ownership. The Constitution also provided for popular election of the legislators, governor, and lieutenant governor in odd numbered years so as to not conflict with the interest and attention of national elections.[22]

Like citizens in Vermont in the early nineteenth century most of the settlers of Michigan were staunch

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[20]Although initially the journey to Michigan mirrored that of the early settlers to Vermont, with the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, the ease of the trip was greatly increased. John Hinman reported that he traveled from his home in Castleton beginning on June 6, 1838, took a stage coach to Albany and from there rode various canal boats and steamers to his destination, Detroit. Colonel John Hinman, "My First Journey to Michigan with Reminiscences," *Pioneer Collections* XIV (1890): 563-65.

[21]George N. Fuller, *Michigan: A Centennial History of the State and Its People* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1939), 326; Gray, 6; Reverend Philo R. Hurd, Ph.D., "Congregationalism in Michigan," *Pioneer Collections* VII (1886): 110.

[22]Dunbar and May, *Michigan,* 204-209.

supporters of abolition.[23] In the 1830s and 1840s they were at the forefront of the anti-slavery movement. In 1836, Quaker leaders formed the first statewide antislavery society focusing on legislation to end slavery and to assist runway slaves.[24] By 1840, ignored by both the Democrats and Whigs, Michigan abolitionists organized their own political party, the Liberty Party. Many of these antislavery advocates took part in the first Republican Convention held in Jackson, Michigan, on July 6, 1854 where an antislavery platform was adopted and a slate of candidates was nominated.[25]

Their Yankee heritage and Puritan zeal for education also fostered the early development in Michigan of public education founded on the principles of intellectual, scientific, and spiritual improvement. Moreover, the Michigan Constitution was the first in the nation to

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[23]Michigan was an important stop on the underground railway. Slaves would come up the Ohio River to Detroit and then on to Canada. A.D.P. Van Buren, "Michigan in Her Pioneer Politics: Michigan in on National Politics and Michigan in the Presidential Campaign of 1856," *Pioneer Collections* XVII (1892): 248.

[24]Richard E. Groop, J. Michael Lipsey, Kimberly Medley, Charles Press, Lana Stein, and Kenneth VerBurg, *Michigan Political Atlas* (East Lansing, The Center for Cartographic and Spatial Analysis, Michigan State University, 1984), 3-5.

[25]A Vermonter, Jacob Merritt Howard, formerly of Shaftsbury, Vermont, is credited with being one of the founders of the Republican Party. Nuquist and Nuquist, *Vermont State Government and Administration,* 12; Groop et al., *Michigan Political Atlas,* 3; Fuller, *Michigan,* 326; Van Buren, "Michigan in Her Pioneer Politics," 253.

legislate the appointment of a state superintendent of schools.[26] Although not enacted until later in the nineteenth century, in 1837 progressive Governor Stevens T. Mason proposed legislation that provided for tax-supported public schools, mandatory teacher training, and minimum wages for teachers.[27] A commitment to abolition, the slow growth of cities, and the strong sentiment against "Rebel" Democrats fostered Republican control of Michigan politics until the 1880s.[28]

Women were active in a number of movements that helped to shape the modern state of Michigan.[29] As Claire B. Arthur noted in her suffrage booklet, *Progress of Michigan Women*, "wise laws came from the untiring activity of Michigan women interested in the development of their sex and the need of the state for women's counsel."[30] Even before the first Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls,

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[26]Flavius J. Littlejohn, "The Pioneers of Michigan: Their Devotion to Educational Interests Historically Illustrated," *Pioneer Collections* (1880): 129.

[27] Dunbar and May, *Michigan,* 283.

[28]Groop, et. al. , *Michigan Political Atlas,* 3-5.

[29]Irma T. Jones concluded that women working in voluntary organizations in Michigan created an educated public that would no longer tolerate the evils of humanity. Irma T. Jones, "Michigan Federation of Women's Clubs," *Michigan History Magazine* XV (1931): 70.

[30]Clara B. Arthur, *Progress of Michigan Women* pamphlet at Burton Historical Collection, (Detroit: Detroit Public Library, undated, no publisher), 5.

New York, Ernestine L. Rose had addressed the Michigan Legislature in 1846 in an emotional appeal for women's rights. Moved by her appeal, Austin Blair, a young legislator and future governor, supported the vote for women and in 1849 the Michigan Senate reported a resolution in favor of a state woman suffrage amendment. Although at this time suffrage was not granted, the Michigan Constitution of 1850 expanded women's property rights and in 1867 female taxpayers were given the right to vote in school elections. Even though woman suffrage was again turned down in 1874, for the first time two women, Mary Wilson and Nanette Gardner, voted. Further, the University of Michigan opened its doors to women in 1870.[31] In 1885 a group of Bay City women joined together under the leadership of Mary L. Doe in an unsuccessful attempt to gain municipal suffrage for women because they were taxpayers and were directly affected by local government.[32] By 1893, Michigan had passed laws expanding women's property rights; a joint signature of husband and wife was required to sell a home and widows were given inheritance rights. A Constitutional Convention called in 1908 to

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[31]Dunbar and May., *Michigan,* 301.

[32]Jane Morris Crowther, "A Challenge and a Promise: The Political Activities of Detroit Clubwomen in the 1920s," (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 2000), 57.

draft a more progressive document that met the needs of modern Michigan turned down woman suffrage, but did provide for tax paying women to vote on bond issues.[33]

Women were also leaders in the Michigan abolition and prohibition movement. Quaker Elizabeth Chandler organized the first antislavery association in Michigan in 1832. Laura Smith Haviland, an ardent abolitionist, worked tirelessly on the underground railway assisting runaway slaves in their journey to freedom. Although male crusaders formed a Michigan Prohibition Party in 1869, it was the Woman's Christian Temperance Union that was most effective in the fight against alcohol abuse. The most powerful organization in this fight, however, was the Anti-Saloon League, which worked through churches to organize and promote temperance. Women leagues sponsored lectures and meetings, printed material, and sponsored candidates for political office. This group managed to convince a large group of voters of the value of prohibition. Politicians respected the power of this gender-integrated group.[34]

In addition to temperance, abolition, and women's rights, politically minded Michigan women were active in a number of other voluntary organizations. For example, the

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[33]Dunbar and May, *Michigan,* 472.

[34]Ibid., 469.

women of Grand Rapids formed the *Ladies Literary Club* in 1876, dedicated to improving the lives of women and children in their community. Members worked tirelessly promoting an agenda that ranged from antismoking legislation and civil service reform to temperance and women's rights.[35]

The Michigan women's concern for their children's future reflects their Yankee heritage. Women who came to Vermont were anxious to provide better lives for their children. They migrated with their families from Connecticut and Massachusetts to Vermont in the 1760s when land was cheap and abundant. The population rose from 30,000 in 1781 to more than 217,000 in 1810.[36] These new immigrants to Vermont made their living by subsistence farming. One of the few cash crops that helped the settlers to survive was potash, which was used widely in the production of soap and processing of wool. Clearing the forests for farming and burning the unused trees left light and easily transportable ash that could be sold at distant markets. However, extensive marketing of Vermont's other

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[35]Hogue Stinchcomb, *History of the Ladies Literary Club of Grand Rapids* (Grand Rapids: Clarendon Printery, 1910).

[36]Population increases were due to both immigration and high rates of reproduction. Lewis D. Stilwell, *Migration from Vermont* (Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society and Rutland: Academy Books, 1948), 95; Nuguist and Nuguist, *Vermont State Government and Administration,* 15.

natural resources such as marble and granite was extremely difficult and expensive because of transportation difficulties.[37] Immigrants continued to come to Vermont in record numbers until 1808 when a number of factors fostered a shift from immigration to emigration. First, Jefferson's 1808 embargo forced Vermonters to discontinue trading with Montreal, one of its few distant markets. But perhaps the most significant event that shaped Vermont's development was the War of 1812. Citizens left areas of British conflict never to return and increased Indian raids forced others off their land. Additionally, population growth had caused the price of land to skyrocket, limiting opportunities, and many families moved on to the new frontier, now in Michigan and Ohio.[38]

These Midwestern Yankees, like their Vermont counterparts, formed communities based on traditional Protestant values and drafted constitutions providing equality and independence for most male citizens. Communities were formed and by 1837 the population was 175,000. It quickly rose to 750,000 by 1850.[39] The majority

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[37]Ibid, 100-103.

[38]Bryan, *Yankee Politics in Rural Vermont,* 13.

[39]Although Michigan's population was increasing rapidly by the mid-nineteenth century, emigration from Vermont fostered very slow increases. For example, from 1850-1860 the population increased by only

of these citizens were of western European descent, like their counterparts in Vermont. However, a small number of blacks trickled into Michigan in the mid-nineteenth century, particularly after the Civil War. Although Michigan's initial economy was subsistence agriculture, it quickly shifted to a strong industrial economy exploiting the natural resources of its forests and minerals including copper and iron ore.[40]

Although their journeys began along the same path, as each state matured it took a different avenue into the twentieth century. Vermont remained very rural; Michigan moved quickly into industrialization. As the population increased during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Michigan, two strong political parties developed, whereas in Vermont the Republican Party reigned supreme until the mid 1960s.[41]

Despite these differences, women in both states joined together in a variety of organizations to promote abolition, temperance, and women's rights. Contemporary women in Vermont and Michigan carried on the tradition of

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962 people. Stilwell, *Migration from Vermont,* 216; Nuquist and Nuquist, *Vermont State Government and Administration,* 15.

[40]Dunbar and May, *Michigan,* 242-57.

[41]Ibid, 443-45; Doyle, *The Vermont Political Tradition,* 141.

those early activist women by carving a niche in Republican Party politics in the mid-twentieth century.

Chapter II

The Suffrage Campaigns in Vermont and Michigan

Concern about women's rights led activist women in Vermont and Michigan to join suffragists across the nation who were working to expand the rights of women. The event that sparked the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848 was an anti-slavery meeting held in London that Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, American delegates, attended with their husbands. Even though the two women were active in the abolitionist movement they were not seated as delegates because they were women. Initially, as articulated in the Seneca Falls convention's *Declaration of Sentiments*, the women agreed to work to broaden a variety of rights for women, including property, divorce, and voting. But Stanton persuaded the delegation that voting was the most important change needed. As Stanton realized, suffrage would allow women to vote and run for office, thereby initiating and supporting legislative change that broadened women's rights.[1] Stanton, who dedicated her life to the cause of suffrage, emphasized women's rights in a speech to the United States Senate Committee on Woman Suffrage in 1892:

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[1]Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, in Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, ed. *One Woman, One Vote* (Troutdale, OR.: 1995), 9-10.

> If we consider her [woman] as a citizen, as a member of a great nation, she must have the same rights as all other members, according to the fundamental principles of our government.[2]

The Suffrage Campaign in Vermont

With the rise of the women's rights movement in the 1840s, many suffragists expected independent-minded Vermonters to embrace the suffrage movement. Because of their independent nature, national suffrage leaders including Lucy Stone and Julia Ward Howe saw Vermont as fertile ground for women's rights and therefore participated in suffrage conventions in Vermont.

Vermont historian T.D. Seymour Bassett noted that the town of Randolph was the site of one of the first gatherings in Vermont to spread the gospel of suffrage in 1854, just six years after Seneca Falls. In her speech to those in attendance, Lucy Stone urged women not to pay taxes until they could vote.[3] Miss L.J.C. Daniels of Grafton took Stone's message to heart and in 1912 refused to pay her taxes, stating, "she was not represented in the affairs of the state and furthermore she desired to

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[2]Elizabeth Cady Stanton, in Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Ida Husted Harper, eds., *The History of Woman Suffrage* (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1881) 189-190.

[3]T.D. Seymour Bassett, "The 1870 Campaign for Woman Suffrage in Vermont," *Vermont Quarterly* 14 (April 1946): 48.

emphasize the old battle cry of men, taxation without representation is tyranny."[4]

Women's rights advocate and publisher of the *Windham County Democrat,* Clarina Howard Nichols lobbied successfully in the 1840s and 1850s to expand Vermont women's legal freedoms. As the first woman to appear before the Legislature in Vermont, Nichols' campaign influenced Legislators to broaden divorce laws. Women could, after 1886, obtain a divorce under certain circumstances. Women already had the right to inherit and bequeath property and to own property jointly with their husbands and after 1888 new laws increased widow's inheritance rights.[5]

The Civil War stalled suffrage campaigns in Vermont and across the nation, but in 1869 the campaign was renewed in response to passage of the Fourteenth Amendment guaranteeing universal male suffrage.[6] As a result, the

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[4]Annette Parmelee, "Suffrage Sentiment in the East and South," *The Union Signal,* 20 January 1912, 11.

[5]Clarina Howard Nichols, "Reminiscences by Clarina I. Howard Nichols," in Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, eds. , *History of Woman Suffrage,* 172-174; Deborah P. Clifford, "An Invasion Of Strong-Minded Women: The Newspapers And The Woman Suffrage Campaign In Vermont In 1870," *Vermont History* 43 (Winter 1975): 11; Madeline Kunin, "Clarina Howard Nichols: Green Mountain Suffragette," *Vermont Life* 28 (Winter 1973): 14-16.

[6]Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, "A Short History of the Woman Suffrage Movement in America," in Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, eds. *One Woman One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement* (Troutdale, OR.: New Sage Press, 1995), 9-10.

elected thirteen member Council of Censors appointed a special committee to study the "woman question."[7] Three prominent Republicans, Jasper Rand of St. Albans, H. Henry Powers of Morristown, and Charles Reed of Montpelier deliberated on amending the Constitution by granting women the right to vote.[8] They recommended to the full Council that the Constitution be amended to extend the vote to women because

> We believe that woman, married, or unmarried, was made to be the companion of man not his mere servant; that she has the same right to control her property that he has to control his; that she has the same right to aspire to any occupation, profession, or position, the duties of which she is competent to discharge, that he has. A right is worth nothing without the power to protect it. The ballot alone can do this.[9]

Suffragists across Vermont organized a campaign to support passage of this amendment. National speakers including Julia Ward Howe, Lucy Stone, and Henry Blackwell joined the women of Vermont in their campaign. Suffragists

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[7]A Burlington newspaper article noted that there were only three questions that needed to be answered in deciding whether women should vote. First, will female suffrage change the nature of the family relations; second, will suffrage be useful to women; and third, will suffrage benefit society as a whole. "Female Suffrage," *The Daily Free Press and Times,* 15 February 1869.

[8]"Council of Censors," *The Daily Free Press and Times,* 31 July 1869.

[9]Paul S. Gillies and D. Gregory Sanford, eds., *Record of the Council of Censors of the State of Vermont* (Montpelier: Secretary of State, 1991), 640 and "Report of the Special Committee on Woman Suffrage, Council of Censor-Second Session, 1869, Special Collections, University of Vermont.

circulated a petition supporting the Committee's recommendation:

> We honorably pray that the body [Legislature] adopt the amendment proposed by the Council of Censors to extend the right of suffrage to women on the same terms as it is enjoyed by men.[10]

A Constitutional Convention was called so delegates could vote on the committee recommendations.[11]

Anxious about giving too much power to the Council of Censors, Republican leaders negotiated the inclusion of a vote on popular ratification of constitutional amendments in return for a vote on woman suffrage. Although the elected delegates supported popular ratification by a vote of 123 to 85, the suffrage amendment was overwhelmingly defeated 233 to 1.[12]

Annette Parmelee, Superintendent of Vermont Equal Suffrage Association Press Works, noted later that despite early enthusiasm for suffrage, the state movement lacked aggressive, organized leadership in its early days and lagged behind other New England states in the journey toward suffrage. In a 1912 article, she suggested that one reason Vermont women might have fallen behind was that they

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[10]Petition, Vermont Equal Suffrage Association (hereafter VESA) Papers, MSC 145:12, Vermont Historical Society, Montpelier, Vermont.

[11]T.D. Seymour Bassett, "The 1870 Campaign for Woman Suffrage in Vermont, 47-61.

were satisfied with the rights already granted them by the Legislature.[13] Her comments echoed those of a visitor to Vermont in 1873, who concluded that:

> There is little or no exclamation about Women's Rights in this state [Vermont]. The women have their own rights, and their husbands' too by all appearances.[14]

A statewide organization, the Vermont Equal Suffrage Association (VESA) was not formed until 1883. The first statewide meeting was held in Barton Landing in 1885. In preparation for this meeting, activist women decided to organize a suffrage committee in each Vermont town, to hold parlor meetings when applicable, and to engage the services of Hannah Tracy Cutler of Illinois, a professional organizer who had successfully campaigned to extend women's property rights in that state.[15] Over 3200 citizens in 31 Vermont towns responded to this effort by signing petitions to amend Section 2644 of the Revised Laws of Vermont to give women the vote. The petitions were presented to the

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[12]Paul S. Gillies and D. Gregory Sanford, *Record of the Council of Censor in the State of Vermont,* 626, 639, 706-07.

[13]Mrs. Annette Parmelee, "Will Vermont Women Come into Their Own," *The Union Signal,* 30 May 1912.

[14]Quoted in T.D. Seymour Bassett, "Life in a Summer Hotel, 1873," in *Outsiders Inside Vermont* (Brattleboro: Stephen Green Press, 1967), 91-92.

[15]Steven M. Buechler, *Transformation of the Woman Suffrage Movement: The Case of Illinois, 1850-1920* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Press, 1986), 59.

Vermont Legislature on November 26, 1884, but the male legislators defeated the revision by a vote of 95 to 42.[16]

In spite of repeated failures thereafter, a few independent-minded women continued the struggle for suffrage by holding annual meetings in small towns around the state each year until 1920.[17] One of the most memorable was the Twentieth Annual Meeting of the VESA in Woodstock in 1904 at which Caroline Scott presented a paper entitled, "The Ballot for Woman, Expedient." The attendees rejoiced over the successful campaign that resulted in Australian women gaining their first vote and vowed to continue to lobby the Vermont legislature.[18]

In 1908, the issue of woman suffrage was again brought before the Vermont Legislature. In an effort to insure passage of the bill, Annette Parmelee wrote to Governor George Prouty asking for his support. His response reveals Vermonters' divided opinions on this issue: "I have been in three legislatures where the matter has come up. In 1896, I made a short speech in favor of the bill, I see no reason to change my views. So many women take no interest or

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[16]Annette Parmelee, "Woman's Place Defined," *Chelsea Herald*, 8 February 1917.

[17]Yearbooks, VESA Papers, MSC 145: 4.

[18]Minutes of the Woman's Suffrage Association, 20th Annual Meeting, Woodstock, 22-23 May 1904, Special Collections, University of Vermont.

seriously object, when you can convince the Legislature that the majority of women want it [woman suffrage] it will pass," the governor wrote to Parmelee.[19] At a public hearing on equal suffrage following the vote, Annette Parmelee noted, "Four years ago, the Legislature killed the bill because they said there was not enough interest, two years ago there were too many women interested, they overdid it. This year women spoke eloquently, but the bill was still defeated."[20]

Vermont newspapers mounted a campaign that criticized the suffrage movement. A 1903 Orleans County *Monitor* urged women to stop "constantly petitioning the Legislature for equal suffrage until they have a large majority of their sex in favor of the movement." Parmelee was not the only one to comment on the defeat. Legislator J.L. Lewis, who had supported the bill, suggested that "speeches will go down in history, the future will have pride or ridicule for the legislature of 1908 [depending on whether the suffrage bill was passed or defeated]."[21]

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[19]Governor George Prouty to Annette Parmelee, 15 June 1908, VESA Papers, MSC 145: 12.

[20]Annette Parmelee, Speech, 19 November 1908, VESA Papers, MSC 145:5; Deborah Clifford, "The Drive for Women's Municipal Suffrage: 1883-1917," *Vermont History* 47 (Spring 1979): 183.

[21]J.L Lewis to Annette Parmelee, VESA Papers, MSC 145:12.

Undaunted by repeated failures, Parmelee continued her efforts as Superintendent of Press Works, inundating citizens and legislators with requests to support the suffrage movement. In a letter dated December 22, 1910, she suggested that "Friends" call their representatives and senators to support House Bill 188 giving women the right to vote on temperance and school issues.[22] She regularly wrote to members of the Vermont House of Representatives suggesting they support bills granting women the vote.[23]

The *Burlington Free Press* wrote that, "Annette Parmelee constructed her argument, as "It is simply a question of right and wrong."[24] The *Chelsea Herald* noted that Parmelee also argued that the best illustration of good government is a Christian home where father and mother have equal power and equal responsibility.[25] Parmelee's arguments support Kerber's contention that the traditional family is the basic unit of any social system. By

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[22]Letter from Annette Parmelee to "Friend," 22 December 1910, VESA Papers, MSC 144:7.

[23]Letter from Annette Parmelee to "Dear Sir," 19 November 1910, VESA Papers, MSC 144:9.

[24]*Burlington Free Press*, 27 October 1910.

[25]Mrs. Annette Parmelee, "Woman's Place Defined," *Chelsea Herald*, 8 February 1917.

suggesting equality within the family, Parmelee violated the basic tenets of social contract theory.[26]

On the whole, the Vermont campaign to gain the vote for women was not well organized. There were only five local suffrage organizations with about 150 members in a state with a strong anti-suffrage movement.[27] Busy tending to their families and farms, the rural economy demanded that women work closely with their husbands to provide a good life for their children. Property rights, not voting rights, were paramount. Just as importantly, Vermont's status as a one party state made voting itself of less interest.

Vermont's anti-suffrage sentiment is revealed in letters to Annette Parmelee from Mrs. H.W. Abbott who vehemently proclaimed "that a woman who will lower herself enough to want to vote, does not deserve to be called a woman."[28] In a second letter to Parmelee, Abbott closed by saying "I am not the only one who is against this dirty low

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[26]Linda K. Kerber, "A Constitutional Right to be Treated Like American Ladies," in Linda K. Kerber, Alice Kessler-Harris, and Kathryn Kish Sklar, eds. *U.S. History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995.), 17-35.

[27]Annette Parmelee, "Outline of Progress of Women in Vermont, 1900-1915," VESA Papers, MSC 144: 13.

[28]Mrs. H.W. Abbott to Annette Parmelee, 10 November 1910, Vermont League of Women Voters Papers, quoted in *Vermont Voices* (Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society, 1999), 261; Annette Parmelee, "Outline of Progress of Women, 1900-1915," VESA Papers, MSC 144:13.

work."[29] The largest Vermont newspaper, *The Burlington Free Press,* highlighted the anti-suffrage sentiment in the legislature. In a special issue on February 2, 1915 the paper the paper claimed that legislators decried, "Women do not want the Ballot."[30] A few weeks later the paper was delighted to report, "Woman Suffrage Killed in House Vote, 129-100."[31] A similar sentiment was echoed in a pamphlet circulated in 1919 by the Vermont Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage,

> The true woman of Vermont desires peace at home, prosperity in the state, and the right to enjoy the pursuit of happiness in the natural and rational way ordained by our fathers and sanctified by our Heavenly Father.[32]

The strong anti-suffrage sentiment and the seeming indifference of many women resulted in Vermont not granting the right to vote to women before the constitutional amendment was ratified in 1920. In spite of these this, with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment by Congress suffragists took up the challenge for Vermont to be the thirty-sixth and final state to ratify the proposed

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[29]Mrs. H.W. Abbott to Annette Parmelee, quoted in *Vermont Voices,* 267.

[30]*Burlington Free Press, Special Edition,* 2 February 1915.

[31]*Burlington Free Press,* 25 February 1915.

[32]Pamphlet, Vermont Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage-1919, VESA Papers, MSC 145:7.

amendment. National suffrage leaders including Carrie Chapman Catt, President of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, rushed to Vermont to campaign for ratification.[33] Suffrage activists gathered petitions from citizens, legislators, newspaper editors, and businessmen demanding that Governor Percival Clement call a special legislative session to vote on the amendment.[34] Four hundred women descended on Montpelier in the pouring rain to parade along the streets to appeal to the Governor.[35]

Clement refused to call the special session, saying "I will never be a party to any proceeding which proposed to change the organic law of the State without the consent of the people." Clement felt that the process of change that initiated the nineteenth amendment to the Federal Constitution, giving women the right to vote, conflicted with the process of change outlined in the Vermont Constitution. His concern that suffrage would boost prohibition was best illustrated when he stated that, "The

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[33]*Rutland Daily Herald,* 12 March 1919.

[34]Petitions for Special Legislative Session, VESA Papers, MSC 142:9. Supported by the Local Option League (a group in favor of each town deciding whether liquor should be legal) in 1902 and 1906, Clement unsuccessfully challenged the Proctor dynasty demonstrating his support of more liberal liquor laws. William Doyle, *The Vermont Political Tradition: And Those Who Helped Make It* (Barre, VT: Northlight Studio Press, 1984), 150.

[35]"Green Mountain Girls," *Woman Citizen,* 1 May 1920.

eighteenth amendment for Federal prohibition was forced through Congress and state legislatures by powerful and irresponsible organization, operating through paid agents with unlimited funds."[36] The *Burlington Free Press* reported,

> Governor Vetoes More Voting Power for Women…Governor's reasons, it may not be constitutional…Legislature can't amend Constitution…the Federal Amendment will soon pass.[37]

Even though Vermont did not support the national amendment, voters in Tennessee did. Ratification was achieved in 1920. However, not until the Vermont Constitution was amended in 1924 did Vermont women officially receive the right to vote.

With ratification of the amendment, suffrage activist Annette Parmelee decided to test the Vermont Republican Party's sincerity toward women. In January 1921 she wrote to State Republican Party Chair Leonard P. Wing, requesting proportional representation for women as promised in the 1920 State Republican Party of Vermont's campaign platform. No evidence of his response exists, but clearly Vermont Republicans failed to follow through on their campaign

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[36]Percival W. Clement, *A Proclamation*, 12 July 1920. Special Collections, Broadsides, University of Vermont.

[37]*Burlington Free Press*, 21 February 1919.

promises.[38] This despite the fact that when added, Amendment Forty to the Vermont Constitution stated that "Every person of the full age of twenty-one years shall be entitled to all the privileges of a freeman of this state." Other citizenship privileges and responsibilities came later. Women in Vermont only gained the right to serve on juries in 1943, after a long and protracted struggle.[39]

The Suffrage Campaign in Michigan

Women in Michigan initiated a much more aggressive, organized suffrage campaign than women in Vermont. In 1846, two years before the convention at Seneca Falls, Ernestine L. Rose, a New Yorker, addressed the Michigan Legislature appealing for women's right to vote. Although

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[38]Annette Parmelee to Leonard P. Wing, 15 January 1921, VESA Papers, MSC 144:30. The numbers indicate women in Vermont have never been proportionately represented in the Legislature. The percentage of women in the Legislature varies from a low of .004% in 1921 to 34% in 1993. Elizabeth Cox, *Women, State, and Territorial Legislatures, 1895-1995: A State-By-State Analysis, with Roster of 6,000 Women* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 1996), 282-98.

[39]Bills were introduced in the Vermont House in 1923, 1939, and 1941. Because public sentiment opposed women jurors on the grounds that social values were under attack and the traditional family was threatened, the amendment was not ratified by citizens until 1942 and took effect in 1943. D. Gregory Sanford, "From Ballot Box to Jury Box: Women and the Rights and Obligations of Citizenship." Presentation, Vermont Judicial History Society: Addison County Courthouse, Middlebury, June 23, 2000. <http://vermont~archives.org/talks/jury.html> (2 October 2001).

Whig legislator Austin Blair supported the initiative, most legislators ridiculed the idea that women should vote.[40]

Even though the first formal suffrage organization, the Michigan State Suffrage Association, was not organized until 1870, activist women were instrumental in the passage of the 1867 Act which permitted women taxpayers to vote in school elections.[41] As early as January 1, 1871, the *Grand Rapids Daily Eagle* reported a "Lecture on Woman Suffrage" by well-known literary figure Mathilde Victor.[42] By 1874, newspapers provided regular coverage of suffrage events, discussions, and debates. In an article on April 18, 1874 suffragists asked, "if male lunatics have the vote, why not women?"[43] Further, in a June article connecting woman suffrage and natural law, suffragists exclaimed, "Is the Elective Franchise a Natural Right? It Can't be a Democracy

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[40]Willis F. Dunbar and George S. May, *Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State,* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 301.

[41]Organization of suffrage societies was begun in Battle Creek, Michigan. Such overwhelming defeat led to the disbanding of the organization and no state suffrage group existed until 1884 when the Michigan Equal Suffrage Association was organized. Sharon E. McHenry, "Securing the Sacred Right to Vote," *Michigan History Magazine* 75 (March/April, 1991): 39.

[42]"Lecture on Woman Suffrage," *Grand Rapids Daily Eagle,* 7 January 1871.

[43]"The Woman's Crusade," *Grand Rapids Saturday Evening Post,* 18 April 1874.

if All Don't Have the Vote."[44] News of the Michigan suffrage campaign filled local newspapers day after day. *The Saturday Evening Post* reported that National suffragists Lucy Stone and Julia Ward Howe attended a mass suffrage meeting at Luce Hall in Grand Rapids in October 1874 that was a great success.[45] *The Grand Rapids Telegram* reported that the Reverend Anna Howard Shaw, a Michigan resident, proclaimed the rallying cry of Michigan suffragists: "Women are more moral, temperate, economical, law-abiding, and better fitted for government than men."[46]

Despite the valiant efforts of Michigan suffragists and the evidence they cited of support from sympathetic citizens, the first suffrage proposal presented to the legislature in 1874 was overwhelmingly defeated. In an isolated incident, however, two Michigan women were able to vote. Mary Wilson of Battle Creek and widow Nanette Gardner persuaded voting officials that because they had no men to protect their interests, they should be permitted to vote.[47]

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[44]"Is the Elective Franchise a Natural Right?" *Grand Rapids Daily Eagle*, 15 June 1874.

[45]"Woman Suffrage Meeting," *Saturday Evening Post*, 24 October 1874.

[46]"The Reverend Anna Shaw," *Grand Rapids Telegram* 7 February 1888.

[47]Dunbar and May, *Michigan*, 472.

Like suffrage votes all over America, Michigan votes were defeated time and time again.[48] These failures prompted prominent national suffragist Susan B. Anthony to exclaim in a letter to Kalamazoo suffragist Olivia Bigelow Hall "It is no use trying to get suffrage through the popular vote of any state…the average intelligence gets no higher!"[49] In 1891, the *Grand Rapids Evening Leader* reported that "The Ladies Smiled," even though the suffrage bill was again defeated.[50] Responding to this defeat, Susan B. Anthony lamented "Oh! dear when will the ignorance that binds women down be gone!"[51] Despite these setbacks, Michigan suffragists continued their campaign and organized the Michigan Equal Suffrage Association (MESA) in 1884. In 1885, inspirational talks at Elizabeth Cady Stanton's 80th birthday celebration, attended by members of the Michigan Equal Suffrage Association renewed their commitment to the campaign for a national suffrage

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[48]Sara Hunter Graham, "The Suffrage Renaissance," in Spruill Wheeler, eds., *One Woman, One Vote*, 157.

[49]Susan B. Anthony to Olivia Bigelow Hall, 15 November 1882, Olivia Bigelow Hall Papers, Library of Congress, MMC-0639, AC 11,702:1869-1889.

[50]"The Ladies Smiled," *Grand Rapids Evening Leader*, 15 May 1891.

[51]Letter to Olivia Bigelow Hall, 15 June 1891, Hall Papers, MMC-0639, AC 11,702: 1890-1891.

amendment.[52] Efforts by MESA finally resulted in the passage of an 1893 state law giving women the vote.[53] When the law was declared unconstitutional, many Michigan women became even more convinced that a constitutional amendment would be the only way women would get the right to vote in all elections.[54] Michigan suffragists organized mass meetings, scheduled speeches by national suffrage leaders and held yearly conventions in their efforts toward the passage of a national woman suffrage amendment.

Despite doubts about the possibility of obtaining suffrage from the state legislature, the strong, organized suffrage campaign in Michigan fostered a movement toward local voting rights for women. As early as 1888, Grand Rapids gave women the right to vote and serve on school boards, followed by Detroit in 1889.[55] An 1899 article in

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[52]Letters to Olivia Bigelow Hall from Anna Shaw, 29 December 1893, Emily Ketcham 13 December 1893, Rachael Foster Avery, 23 October 1894; Program of the Pioneers and Friends of Woman's Progress on the 80th Birthday of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Metropolitan Opera House, New York City, 12 November 1895, Hall Papers, MMC-0639, AC 11,702: 1893, 1895.

[53]Political scientist Susan E. Marshall noted that even though suffrage votes were defeated time and time again in state after state, there was growing support for this initiative by working-class men as early as 1895. Susan E. Marshall, "The Gender Gap in Voting Behavior: Evidence From a Referendum on Woman Suffrage," *Research in Politics and Society,* 8 (1998): 189.

[54]"Woman Suffrage, Vote Debated in Legislature," *Grand Rapids Evening Press,* 17 March 1893.

[55] Jane Morris-Crowther, "A Challenge and a Promise: The Political Activities of Detroit Clubwomen in the 1920s," (Ph.D. diss., Michigan State University, 2000), 57.

The Woman's Journal noted, "While the opposition to women board members has by no means been overcome, it has become greatly moderated by the able and efficient work which women have done as members of the board."[56] Local and national newspapers wrote that the 1899 school board election was particularly significant because suffragist Alde L.T. Blake was able to win with little campaigning to become the third female member sitting on the school board. As a prominent member of Grand Rapids society, Blake possessed the impeccable qualities necessary for success. She was well educated as a graduate of The Normal School of Farmington, Maine, was a dedicated member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Ladies Literary Club, and St. Cecilia Society, but perhaps most significantly, she was the mother of four daughters who were all involved in the suffrage movement.[57] The news of women's success on the school board spread across the nation as *The Woman's Journal* announced Michigan had "tried experiment of women on school board and it worked--women are on equal footing with men."[58]

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[56]"State Correspondence," *The Woman's Journal* 16 September 1899.

[57]"Women on School Boards," *Farmington Chronicle,* 21 September 1899; "Women on School Boards," *Grand Rapids Herald,* 10 September 1899; "School Elections," *Democrat,* 6 September 1899.

[58]"Grand Rapids Tried Experiment," *The Woman's Journal,* 16 September 1899.

Statewide municipal suffrage was granted in Michigan in 1893, and Governor John T. Doe promptly organized classes in city government so that women would be prepared to vote. Mayor Hazen Pingree of Detroit ordered more registration books in order to carry female registrants. There was disagreement, however, over which offices were municipal. Edward H. Kennedy and Henry S. Potter filed an injunction against Pingree and the Detroit Common Council attempting to overturn municipal suffrage. In response, Mary Stuart Coffin and Mary E. Burnett filed a writ of mandamus to force election commissions to carry out the law. Justice John W. McGrath denied the writ on the grounds that the "Legislature had no right to create a new class of voters." Between 1897 and 1899, several women's organization, including MESA, organized to secure the right of women to be elected to state boards. The legislation failed but Governor Pingree appointed Jane M. Kinney to the Board of the East Michigan Asylum for the Insane. The state senate approved this action, which opened doors for other women.[59]

Olivia Bigelow Hall also worked hard and made financial contributions to the state and national suffrage campaigns. Mary Lou Dickinson, president of the National

[59]Morris-Crowther, "A Challenge and a Promise," 57.

Council of Women, invited Hall to an 1895 celebration of women's accomplishments, noting "The National Council of Women places your name upon a list of pioneers who have aided in bringing the better day which we believe has dawned for womanhood."[60] Hall also was feted at the 80th birthday celebration of Susan B. Anthony. In her letter of invitation Rachel Foster Avery, secretary of the birthday celebration, described Hall as "one who has stood among those loyal to the cause of political justice for women."[61] In addition, Ida Husted Harper requested a photograph of Hall to include in a *History of Woman Suffrage*.[62]

Unlike that of their sisters in Vermont, the loyalty of so many Michigan women to the suffrage movement fostered a strong and organized campaign during the decades of the struggle to gain the vote for women. Without many of the broad legal rights that Vermont women had, suffrage seemed an even more important step toward equality for Michigan women. For example, women in Vermont gained property rights

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[60]Mary Lou Dickinson to Olivia Bigelow Hall, 7 October 1895, Hall Papers, MMC-0639, AC 11,702: 1895.

[61]Invitation to Olivia Bigelow Hall 20 January 1900, Hall Papers, MMC-0639, AC 11,702: 1900.

[62]Ida Husted Harper to Olivia Bigelow Hall, 1902, Hall Papers, MMC-0639, AC 11,702: 1902.

in 1847; Michigan women did not gain the same rights until 1915.[63]

The dawn of the twentieth century found Michigan women actively involved in the suffrage movement. Foremost among its leaders was Emily Burton Ketcham, who served four times as president of the state organization and who traveled across the country spreading the message of suffrage. Her eloquent speeches earned her an invitation to work and speak in the Woman's Building at the 1893 World Exposition in Chicago. Ketcham was instrumental in bringing the National American Woman Suffrage Association annual convention to Grand Rapids in 1899. National suffrage leaders Susan B. Anthony and Anna Howard Shaw were highlighted as speakers at the well-attended convention. Also in attendance as speakers were Lottie Wilson Jackson, the sole African-American delegate, and Frances Griffin, an Alabama veteran of the Women's Christian Temperance Union.[64] Ketcham continued the fight, and in a 1900 letter to Alde L.T. Blake she related her delight at meeting Carrie Chapman Catt. She also reported "Miss Anthony is jubilant

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[63]Edmund C. Shields, Cyrenius P. Black, and Archibald Broomfield, *Compiled Laws of the State of Michigan, 1915* (Lansing: Wynnkoop Hollenbeck Crawford Co., 1915-1916).

[64]Program, Suffrage Centennial '99, St. Cecilia Music Society, Grand Rapids, MI, April 27th, 1999.

as a school girl over the success of the enterprise--What a leader, a constant rebuke to apathy and inaction."[65]

At the 1908 Michigan Constitutional Convention the suffrage proposal was again presented, but was soundly defeated by a vote of 57 to 38. As a compromise, tax-paying women were given the right to vote on issues involving the expenditure of public money.[66] Suffragists were not satisfied with the compromise, but immediately took advantage of what they had gained. In Detroit, Ida Krummerfeld and Nellie Knott, for example, organized a door-to-door campaign to educate and organize female voters about social conditions so that they might put their new voting power to good use.[67]

By 1912, suffrage was a major topic of discussion throughout Michigan. Following the policies of the national party, the Michigan Progressive Party platform endorsed woman suffrage.[68] Suffragists mounted a strong campaign in support of the initiative by sending out more

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[65]Emily Ketcham to Alde Blake, 20 September 1900, Blake Scrapbook, Grand Rapids Public Library.

[66]Dunbar and May, *Michigan*, 447, 471-73.

[67]Morris-Crowther, "A Challenge and a Promise," 58-59.

[68]"The Vital Question in Michigan Today," *The Tradesman*, 19 June 1912.

than six tons of literature.[69] The *Grand Rapids Herald* reported, "Grand Rapids Has Contributed Greater Portion of the Real Earnestness and Tireless Zeal That Has Brought the Suffrage Question to the Ballot Box—Plans for Vigorous Campaign Throughout the Summer."[70] Moreover, Hull House founder Jane Addams was the keynote speaker at a 1912 mass meeting in Grand Rapids to support suffrage.[71]

Governor Chase Osborn persuaded the Legislature to place the issue on the November ballot for a referendum vote. Initial sentiment seemed to favor passage, but the measure was defeated by 762 votes. Suffragists were instrumental in getting the issue on the ballot again in 1913, only to be defeated once again, but this time by more than 10,000 votes. Although there seemed to be some voting irregularities in the election, Michigan suffragists chose not to contest the results because the defeat was so overwhelming.[72]

The men and women of the Association Opposed to Equal Suffrage, organized in 1913, initiated a strong campaign

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[69]"Three Suffragists Handled Six Tons of Literature, *Grand Rapids Herald*, 20 October 1912.

[70]"Women Forming Battle Lines for Great Struggle," *Grand Rapids Herald*, 7 April 1912.

[71]Jane Addams to Mrs. William Blake, 24 June and 1 July 1912, Blake Scrapbook.

[72]"Suffragists Not to Contest Vote," *Grand Rapids Herald*, undated.

against votes for women. They argued that the vote for women would lead to the dissolution of the family. The group most adamantly opposed to suffrage in Michigan was the liquor interests. Fearing prohibition if women gained the vote, manufacturers, sellers and saloon owners joined together to insure that Michigan would not give the vote to women.[73]

As World War I dawned, activist women continued to organize, march, and petition for woman suffrage.[74] Many of these same women supported the war by selling bonds, rolling bandages, and working in war production.[75] These efforts persuaded members of the Michigan Legislature to pass, and Republican Governor Albert E. Sleeper to sign a bill that led to amendment of the state Constitution in

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[73]The Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Anti-Saloon League had effectively campaigned for prohibition in Michigan and in 1916 Michigan citizens voted in favor of statewide prohibition suggesting that those who had liquor interests were wise in their opposition to suffrage. Dunbar and May, *Michigan,* 470-73.

[74]Michigan women were not only involved in their own state's campaign for suffrage, four women joined Alice Paul in picketing the White House. Ella H. Aldinger of Lansing, Betsy Graves Reyneau and Kathleen McGraw Hendrie of Detroit, and Mrs. G.B. Jennison of Bay City marched right alongside Paul, and Reyneau was arrested and sentenced to serve 60 days of hard labor in prison. *Michigan Women's History Time Line: Chronology of Michigan Women's History* <*http://leslie.k12.mi.us/~charnle2/mwchron.html*> (3 October 2000); UPI Reporter Helen Thomas, another Michigan woman who views the White House gates from her office, continues to be in awe of the courageous women who picketed the White House for suffrage. Helen Thomas, Interview with author, 6 January 1997.

[75]Clay W. Hollister to Mrs. William Blake, Chairman Kent County War Board, 10 May 1918, Blake Scrapbook.

1918 giving women the right to vote.[76] Unlike their counterparts in Vermont, Michigan women gained the right to serve on juries at the same time that they were granted suffrage. In the spring of 1919, Michigan women voted in the general election.

The passage of the suffrage amendment was the beginning of a new stage of political participation for Michigan suffragists. Because of the Republican control of state politics, this was particularly true for women who identified themselves as Republicans. School board member Alde L.T. Blake noted that women's organizations in the Republican Party were strong. Further, newspapers reported that "women don't wish to displace men, but are anxious for fair representation, particularly on the Republican National Committee…there is a strong spirit of cooperation."[77]

Voting rights for in Vermont and Michigan did not mean equality. Passage of the suffrage amendment did not bring about great change in the lives of most Vermont or Michigan women. But those women who chose to work on the campaign gained great strength in the sisterhood of the movement and

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[76]*The Michigan Suffragist*, May 1917; Burnita Shelton Matthews, "The Woman Juror," *Women Lawyers Journal* XV (April 1927): 1.

[77]*Grand Rapids Herald*, 9 January 1920.

a few went on to become active in Republican Party politics. Believing in the rightness of their cause, suffragists in Vermont and Michigan worked diligently toward their goal of suffrage for women.

At the same time that some women were working in formal suffrage associations toward the goals of political enfranchisement, others attempted to influence the political process through the formation of local, state, and national volunteer organizations focused on improving the lives of women and children. *The Athena Club* organized in Burlington, Vermont in 1906 and the *Ladies Literary Club* organized in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1873 provided just such an opportunity for many women. The next chapter will provide an in-depth discussion of each of these organizations, illustrating their commitment to civic action. Although many of these women did not belong to formal suffrage associations, their contributions to local, state and even national politics was significant. Consequently, moving from an examination of suffrage to a study of women's organizations can help us to better understand women and politics.

Chapter III

Learning a Women's Politics: Women's Voluntary Organizations In Vermont and Michigan

While some women in Vermont and Michigan were working in formal suffrage associations toward the goals of political enfranchisement, there were other women who were attempting to influence the political process through the formation of local, state, and national volunteer organizations centered on improving the lives of women and children. Anne Scott summarized women's entry into this public world of politics through their work in voluntary organizations by noting that women formed voluntary associations to help shape their communities because they were constrained by law and custom from entering the formal political system. She argued that these networks served as political training grounds.[1]

Other scholars have also used this network to explore how women learned to conduct business, carry on meetings, speak in public and manage money, skills that helped prepare them for politics, first indirectly, then directly as they gained the vote. These women's organizations thus served not only as political training grounds for women but, in the post-suffrage era, shaped political opinion and mobilized

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[1]Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 2.

women to vote.[2]

Scholars such as Elisabeth Israels Perry and Maureen Flanagan have shown that the members of women's clubs in large cities, although always constrained by men's political power, used their organizations to gain significant power as demonstrated by their ability to influence the allocation of resources within their local political arena. However, significant portions of the female population of the country lived in small cities. Investigating their behavior and ideas helps to understand better the breadth of women's political activities in the United States.

Little research has been done on small-city women's organizations. We still have relatively scarce information and analysis about whether the same results were obtained by these smaller groups as by women in larger cities.[3] A

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[2]For detailed discussions of women's involvement in social and political organizations see Scott, *Natural Allies;* Susan Hartmann, *From Margin to Mainstream* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989); Sara Evans, "Women's History and Political Theory: Toward A Feminist Approach to Public Life in Nancy C. Hewitt and Suzanne Lebsock, eds., *Visible Women: New Essays in American Activism* ((Urbana: The University of Illinois, 1993); Cynthia Harrison, *On Account of Sex: The Politics of Women's Issues, 1945-1968* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform* (New York: Oxford Press, 1991); Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor, *Survival in the Doldrums* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990); Sandra Haarsager, *Organized Womanhood: Cultural Politics in the Pacific Northwest, 1840-1920* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997); Karen J. Blair, *Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980); Victoria Lynn Gettis, "A Disciplined Society: The Juvenile Court, Reform, and The Social Sciences in Chicago, 1890-1930" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Michigan, 1994); Glenna Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman: Woman's Place in the United States, 1630-1970* (New York: Oxford Press, 1992).

[3]Limited accounts of women's activism in small city voluntary organizations were chronicled by Mary Caroline Robbins, "Village

comparison of women's groups in two small cities, Burlington, Vermont and Grand Rapids, Michigan, helps us to see the historical, social and political similarities in two geographically distinct cities.

The *Athena Club* was organized in Burlington, Vermont in 1906 by a group of socially prominent Burlington women. Unlike urban clubwomen, Burlington women's political fortunes were linked to their husbands' elite positions. As a result, they accomplished a number of their goals but limited their own political possibilities, both before and after suffrage. The *Athena Club* developed in distinct stages from pre-suffrage to the New Deal era. The first stage, 1906 until 1920, included the early organizational years in which the women, wives of Burlington's most prominent citizens, not only formalized their association but made tentative movements into the local political arena. During the second stage from 1921 to 1930, the women of the club organized a number of significant local, state and national political

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Improvement Societies, " *Atlantic Monthly* 79 (February 1897): 212; Mary Beard, *American Women: Images and Realities* (New York: Arno Press, reprint edition, 1972); Janet Ward, "Bake Sales, Thrift Shops Fund the Town that Women Run," *American City and County* 116 (March 2001): 4; Alva M. Stewart, "The Why, When and How of Women Mayors," *American City and County* 114 (July 1999): 59-61; Maureen Flanagan, *Seeing with Their Hearts: Chicago Women and the Vision of the Good City, 1871-1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Elizabeth Israels Perry, "Women's Political Choices After Suffrage: The Women's City Club of New York, 1915-1990," *New York History* (October 1990); Sandra Haarsager, *Bertha Knight Landes: Big City Mayor* (Norman: OK.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994).

initiatives aimed at assisting the women and children of Burlington, Vermont. In contrast to the growth of political engagement in the first two stages, from 1931 to 1935 the club's political activity declined. During this final period, the changing social status of women and political shifts taking place in Burlington minimized the impact that the club's politically active members could have on the city's affairs.[4] During the depression years, Burlington's political leadership shifted from conservative Republicanism to liberal Democratic, diminishing the political power of the husbands of the *Athena* women and in turn, limiting the political power of the women of the club.

Prominent women in Grand Rapids, Michigan, a city historically, economically and politically similar to Burlington, Vermont at the turn of the century, joined together in 1873 to form the *Ladies Literary Club* (*LLC*). Like the women in Burlington, during their formative years members of the *LLC* organized programs focused on literary pursuits. By 1885 the issue of woman suffrage became a topic

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[4]Information concerning Club activities unless otherwise specified comes from *Athena Club* minutes. Records include meeting minutes for *The Book and Thimble Club* 1906-1907, *Athena Club* general meeting minutes from 1919-1988, Executive Board minutes from 1914-1986 and meeting minutes from departments including Art Department, Civics and Health Department, History and Literature, Home and Garden, and Music. Also included in the collection are scrapbooks from various years that include undated articles from the *Burlington Free Press*. In addition the records include account books from 1914-1968 as well as membership rolls from the initiation of the Club to the present. All records are located at the University of Vermont in their Special Collection.

of discussion, and as the women got involved in the suffrage cause, the focus of their meetings shifted from literary pursuits to civic issues and efforts to improve the lives of women and children.

The Athena Club of Burlington, Vermont

Burlington is the largest city in Vermont, with a population at the turn of the century of approximately 20,000. Located on the shores of Lake Champlain, Burlington remains an industrial city today, although with the lake's decline as a waterway and the westward expansion of the population, industrial production and manufacturing jobs in Burlington have declined. Poverty and isolation, then and now, created class boundaries, but middle-class Burlingtonians, much as the people of the state as a whole, have preferred to see their city as a stable, conservative community where individual independence is cherished and outsiders are mistrusted. On a visit to Vermont in September of 1902, Theodore Roosevelt said of Burlington residents that they

> always kept true to the Old American ideals, the ideals of individual initiative, of self-help, of rugged individualism, of the desire to win and the willingness to fight.[5]

The group labeled "Old Americans" controlled Burlington

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[5]Quoted in Greg Guma, *Burlington's Progressive Past: The Age of Burke* (Burlington, 1968), 1.

politics at the time that a group of elite women of the city came together in 1906 to form a women's social club.[6] It began when Ella and Bessie Brown invited a number of women to their home for an afternoon of tea and sewing. Those who responded to the invitation included some of the most distinguished members of the Burlington community, including the wives of such individuals as the superintendent of the Mary Fletcher Hospital, the Director of the Board of Health, lawyers, university professors, politicians, business owners. In addition one working woman, Miss C. Churchill, superintendent of nurses at the Mary Fletcher Hospital in Burlington, responded to the invitation. That afternoon it was proposed that the women continue to meet weekly and by the fall of 1906 the *Book and Thimble Club* was organized. At subsequent meetings, the women approved a constitution, limited membership to twenty-five, set annual dues at twenty-five cents, and chose officers. In 1907, at the suggestion of the president, the club changed its name to the *Athena Club*, which members felt was more distinctive and appropriate to their goal of gaining wisdom and knowledge. Emulating women nationwide, the women of the club soon decided to expand their concern into community affairs.

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[6]As part of a study in coordination with Henry F. Perkins, Director of the Eugenics Survey of Vermont, Elin Anderson used the term "Old Americans" to describe the white, Protestant, Western European immigrants who were the first and by far the largest group to come to Vermont.

One indicator of the club members' newly extended sense of social responsibility was their decision in 1911 to join the State Federation of Women's Clubs, which itself belonged to the General Federation of Women's Clubs, founded in 1890. By founding the club and expanding their interest into their city's civic life, these women were following the pattern developing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in which women expanded their responsibility beyond the home to the neighborhood and community, taking the experience gained from running their homes and applying this expertise to the benefit of their towns and cities.[7] In the context of the early twentieth century, these activities are termed "municipal housekeeping," providing respectability to activities that otherwise might have been considered inappropriate for women. Jane Addams explained the municipal housekeeping sentiment of the early twentieth century:

> If a woman would keep on with her old business of caring for her house and rearing her children she will have to have some conscience in regard to public affairs lying quite outside of her

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[7]For a discussion of municipal housekeeping see Scott, *Natural Allies;* Maureen Flanagan, "The City Profitable, The City Livable: Environmental Policy, Gender, and Power in Chicago in the 1910s," *Journal of Urban History* 22 (January 1966): 165; Sarah Deutsch, "Learning to Talk More Like a Man: Boston Women's Class-Bridging Organizations, 1870-1940," *American Historical Review* 97 (April 1992): 380-81; Sara Evans, "Women's History and Political Theory"; Anne Meis Knupfer, *Toward a Tenderer Humanity and a Nobler Womanhood: African American Women's Clubs in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago (New York: New University Press, 1996);* Judith N. McArthur, "Minnie Fisher Cunningham's Back Door Lobby in Texas: Political Maneuvering in a One-Party State," in Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, ed., *One Woman One Vote: Recovering the Woman Suffrage Movement,* (Troutdale, OR.: New Sage Press, 1995).

immediate household. The individual conscience and devotion are no longer effective.[8]

Their new alignment with the Federation of Women's Clubs provided the *Athena Club* members with an opportunity to meet other women and to network with other women's clubs, thus giving them the location and opportunity to develop a political agenda. Between 1914 and 1916 the Club was reorganized to reflect these changes. The meeting minutes from those years indicate that the women favored a more broad-based organization, one in which the diversity of members' interests could be accommodated by dividing the club into five departments. The departments reflected both the members continuing interests in art, music, home and garden, and introduced a new department of Civics and Health that represented a growing awareness of community needs.

The attempts by the women of the *Athena Club* to influence Burlington politics before suffrage mirror the activities of women nationwide. In 1913, club members organized and maintained a new service in the city of Burlington, the first public restroom for women in the downtown area. Their idea was to provide women open access to the downtown business area.[9] In another example, in

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[8]Scott, *Natural Allies,* 141.

[9]Unknown Author, History of *The Athena Club,* 1925, 6-9. Maureen Flanagan described a similar project in her essay, "The City Profitable, The City Livable: *The Women's City Club of Chicago* wanted to build, furnish, and maintain public comfort stations as essential components of good urban life, see page 173.

1917, club members established a new community organization, *The Women's Protective League,* to provide children with a better education and to support changes in labor laws regarding women and children. The women of the club also were instrumental in the 1918 decision to hire the first female police officer in the Burlington Police Department.[10]

The women of the *Athena Club* expanded their local influence step by step. In 1908, Vermont legislators voted in favor of mandatory teacher training as an initial step toward broad-based public education through licenses issued by the Vermont Department of Education.[11] To show their support for this professionalism of teachers, the *Athena* women voted to make a modest contribution toward the expense of students attending normal schools.[12] Because of their strong commitment to improving the lives of women and children in Burlington, in November of 1910 the club supported a city-wide day nursery. In November of 1911 they purchased history texts for city school children and in the same month, the club provided its first scholarships for

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[10]N.E.L. Austin, Police Matron, "Report of the Police Matron," *Fifty-Fourth Annual Report of the City of Burlington, Vermont for the Year Ending December 31, 1918* (Free Press Printing Company, 1919), 95-96.

[11]John Huden, *Development of State School Administration in Vermont.* (Burlington, VT: Vermont Historical Society, 1944).

[12]The term normal school in Vermont refers to Teacher's Colleges that were established in Johnson and Castleton in 1867.

women to attend normal schools for teacher training.[13] In support of the war effort in 1914, the women were met one night per week to sew and knit for the Red Cross and the Navy League. Women also were encouraged by club officers to attend a Peace Conference held at the Strong Theater on May 22, 1914. By 1917, the *Athena* women helped to sponsor a Furlough House in Burlington whose purpose was similar to USO facilities. In 1919, in a quest to understand and influence world affairs, the club invited prominent author and social/educational reformer Dorothy Canfield Fisher to speak on her work with French war orphans. At the conclusion of her talk, a collection was taken and $137.50 was donated to the cause. Another collection was taken at a later meeting to purchase one gram of radium for Madame Curie, who was touring the United States on a trip sponsored by the American Association of University Women. Notwithstanding these diverse activities, the women in 1915 refused to rent rooms for suffrage or anti-suffrage meetings, saying they were not a political organization. Minutes of club activities provide abundant evidence, however, that both the club itself and numerous individual members attempted to influence decision-making and resource allocation on the local, state and even national level on this and other political issues.

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[13]"General Meeting Minutes," November 17, 1910, November 2, 1911, and November 16, 1911.

The women of the *Athena Club* dramatically increased their involvement in community affairs after suffrage. By 1920, with the passage of the nineteenth amendment, Burlington women joined other American women in beginning to expect a more direct involvement in politics. These expectations were only partially fulfilled. Initially, women were unsuccessful in their attempts to win political office because they were not able to gain the party support necessary to defeat incumbent male office holders. Although men were willing to provide auxiliary positions for women within party organizations, they kept firm control of the inner workings of party politics.[14] Women's organizations continued to function in the 1920s as pressure groups, to compensate for the small number of women in public office. With the new power of the vote, *Athena Club* members attempted to exercise more direct influence over municipal, state and national affairs. In 1921, for example, club members filed their first formal protest with their state

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[14]The inability of women to gain a foothold in party politics is discussed by Scott, *Natural Allies;* Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled* (New York: The Free Press, 1994); Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920" *American Historical Review* 89 (June 1984): 620-47; Maureen Flanagan, "The Predicament of New Rights: Suffrage and Women's Political Power from a Local Perspective," *Social Politics: Gender, State, and Society* 2 (Fall 1995); Elisabeth Israels Perry, "Women's Political Choices After Suffrage: The Women's City Club of New York, 1915-1990" *New York History* (October, 1990): 416-34; Kristi Anderson, *After Suffrage: Women in Electoral and Partisan Politics Before the New Deal* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1996), 27-47; M. Kent Jennings, "Women in Party Politics," in Louise Tilly and Patricia Gurin, eds., *Women Politics and Change* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1992),

representatives against the treatment of women housed in the state prison.[15]

By 1921, the women's newfound confidence, the end of the war and new leadership revitalized the club. These events, coupled with the increased membership, assisted the club members in extending their work to the national level. Secure in their new role as voters, at a January meeting the club adopted a resolution to support the Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Act of 1921 and sent telegrams to Vermont House and Senate representatives listing names of all the members who supported the bill's passage. The resolution declared:

> Resolved, That we as citizens of Vermont are deeply interested in the passage of the Sheppard-Towner bill, which we feel in providing for instruction in the hygiene of maternity and infancy and the household arts essential to the well-being of the mother and child will effectively safeguard the welfare of our state and nation.[16]

The women's efforts were rewarded with passage of the Vermont Shepard-Towner enabling legislation on February 20, 1925.

As these women successfully tackled difficult problems within their locality, they gained confidence and a

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240-42.

[15]General Meeting minutes, January 27, 1920, October 19,1921.

[16]*Burlington Free Press*, 26 January 1921; *Acts and Resolves Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont* (Montpelier: Secretary of State, 1925), 250.

willingness to experiment that furthered their ability to influence public policy. By 1925, the President's report declared the organization to be a service club rather than a social club. The commitment to service led to an expanded membership of over one hundred-fifty women and to another departmental reorganization. It was through the newly formed Civics and Health Department that the club worked on political affairs. In this department the women continued to hone the skills necessary to become active participants in municipal affairs, skills that included the political "arts" of listening, debating, acquiring information, exercising judgment and fundraising that had become the hallmark of a women's politics practiced largely outside the political party structure.[17] By the end of the decade, with the purchase of their own club house and a renewed commitment to their community, the *Athena Club* was actively engaged in the issues of moderate-cost housing, regulation of new industry, installation of new traffic lights, and completion of the airport. For these and other issues the club held mass meetings open to the public, encouraged women to vote, and sent letters to representatives involved with particular issues.

As the 1920s drew to a close, the number of activities

[17]For a discussion of the skills acquired by women's active participation in voluntary organizations see Evans, "Women's History and Political Theory" and Baker, "The Domestication of Politics."

undertaken by the club indicated an intensification of their efforts on behalf of women and children. Numerous speakers, including club member and Republican State's Attorney Consuelo Northrup, discussed local, state and national issues such as crime, children's mental health, changing sexual mores and the peace movement. In their work to improve the lives of women and children, the club sent letters to President Hoover expressing interest in his leadership and his support of efforts to promote world peace.[18]

By the 1930s, although Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal provided more openings for women in public life, the changing political climate and decisions they had made earlier had an opposite effect on the women of the *Athena Club*.[19] As economic depression struck the nation, Burlington's economy slowed and unemployment and tax problems became significant issues for its citizens. In 1929, Burlington voters elected Holmes Jackson mayor as the candidate for both parties, but his popularity waned as economic problems continued to plague the city. In 1933 progressive Democrat James Burke was elected mayor and in 1935 another progressive, Louis F. Dow, became mayor. This

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[18]"General Meeting Minutes," January 26, 1929, April 22, 1930.

[19]A discussion of this critical period for women appears in: Ware, *Beyond Suffrage;* Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion;* Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled;* and Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism.*

shift away from conservative community leadership left many of the women of the *Athena Club* with far less influence within the community because their spouses no longer controlled the political fortunes of Burlington.

The records of the club's activities across the decades illustrate how the members' deep roots in small-city conservative Republican politics had oriented them to seek to influence municipal affairs on the basis of their ties to that political segment of the male leadership of Burlington.[20] Once their husbands lost control of civic affairs and Irish Catholic Democrats took over, the club's hold on the business community's attention waned as well.[21] Their changing social status combined with the political shifts taking place in Burlington decreased the influence of

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[20]Clarence Beecher, M.D. was mayor of Burlington from 1925 to 1928 and his wife was a member of the Club. During his term in office, the mayor focused on city betterment including adoption of traffic lights, tree planting in city parks, and completion of the municipal airport. "Meeting Minutes" April 27, 1926 indicated that the Athena Club members also supported these issues.

[21]Elin Anderson, *We Americans: A Study of Cleavage in an American City* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1937); Robert B. Michaud, Salute *to Burlington: An Informal History of Burlington, Vermont* (Lyndonville, VT: Lyndon State College, 1991); Spela Valencak, *Burlington Mayors, 1865-1992* (Burlington, VT: Edmunds Middle School, Paradise Print Shop, 1992); Charles H. Possons, Burlington *in Brief* (Glens Falls, NY: High Grade Printer, 1894); Burlington League of Women Voters, *This is Burlington.* (Burlington, VT, 1955); Guma, *Burlington Progressive's Past; The People's Republic: Vermont & the Sander's Revolution* (Shelburne, VT: New England Printers, 1989); Peter Carlough, *Bygone Burlington: A Bicentennial Barrage of Battles, Boats, Buildings & Beings* (Burlington, VT: Queen City Printers, 1976); Steven Sorfer, "Electoral *Politics and Social Change: The Case of Burlington, Vermont,"* (Ph.D.diss., Brandeis University, 1988); Renee Jakobs, "A *Case Study of A Progressive City Administration in Burlington, Vermont, 1981-1983,"* (Master's Thesis, Cornell, 1983); Annual City Reports (City of Burlington, 1904-1985).

club members. Attendance dropped and the club reduced its community involvement, curtailed its activities and returned its focus to information gathering.[22]

By linking their fortunes to their husbands and failing to take the opportunity to form alliances with other women's groups within the city, the club's influence fell along with their husbands. Their class-oriented association limited their voice within the greater Burlington community, resulting in diminished power and influence as the liberal, middle-class politicians gained power in the city.

The Ladies Literary Club of Grand Rapids, Michigan

Grand Rapids, Michigan was incorporated in 1838. The city charter was approved in May of 1850.[23] Like Burlington, Grand Rapids was situated on a waterway, the Grand River, and developed as an industrial city dependent on water transportation. There were also several other similarities between Grand Rapids and Burlington during the early years of the *Ladies Literary Club*. Both cities had growing populations with the majority of citizens of Western European heritage from England, English Canada, and Germany.

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[22]"General Meeting Minutes," January 26, 1936 and January 28, 1941.

[23]There were so many Vermonters who settled in Grand Rapids that they joined together to meet regularly in a Vermont Club. Albert Baxter, *History of the City of Grand Rapids (New York: Munsell and Company, 1891), 84-89.*

Some of the first immigrants to come to both Burlington and Grand Rapids were the Irish who worked on the canals and railroads. In later years, Italians, Greeks, and Poles settled in both cities as well. In Burlington, the largest group of immigrants was the French Canadians who came to work in the textile mills, while Dutchmen manned many Grand Rapids furniture factories.

Residents of both cities reflected their Yankee heritage by building and supporting a number of churches. The first church to be built in Burlington was the First Congregational Church in 1810. Similarly, the citizens of Grand Rapids built a Congregational Church soon after settlement in 1836. In later years, in both cities the construction of Methodist, Baptist, and finally Catholic Churches followed, to serve the religious needs of all citizens.

The initiation of civic services for both cities followed similar patterns as well. In Burlington the first fire department was established in 1846, in Grand Rapids in 1848. Both cities established municipal governments based on the mayor/alderman system. Finally, even though Burlington's industrialization centered on textiles and Grand Rapids' industrial focus was the production of furniture, both cities developed sophisticated transportation systems using waterways and railroads to

support this industrial production.[24]

Despite these demographic similarities, women in Grand Rapids organized much earlier than the women in Burlington. Grand Rapids developed into a large industrial base that grew much faster than Burlington's. This growth fostered the movement of large numbers of immigrants to the city who were forced to live in tenements. Living conditions deteriorated and the women of Grand Rapids responded to the problems of industrialization by attempting to clean up their neighborhoods and provide better living conditions, particularly for women and children.[25]

The *Ladies Literary Club* of Grand Rapids evolved out of the *Ladies Library Association*. The impetus for a literary club came from Lucinda Hinsdale Stone, a New Englander who had come to Kalamazoo, Michigan in 1843 with her husband, Dr. J.A.B. Stone. Both husband and wife were interested in education and initiated co-education at Kalamazoo College, while later Lucinda Stone worked to gain admission for women at the University of Michigan. Her interest in women's education led her to organize history classes for women in Kalamazoo that her niece, Marion Withey, then brought to her own city, Grand Rapids. Stone attended the first Grand

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[24]Charles E. Allen, *Burlington, Vermont Statistics, 1763-1893* (Burlington, Vermont: Free Press Association, 1893), 3-13; Baxter, *History of the City of Grand Rapids*, 286-340, 463, 527, 840.

[25]Scott, *Natural Allies*, 140.

Rapids history class and helped the women organize their class schedule and booklist. Initially women were reluctant to prepare and present talks. Withey noted: "I well remember how I labored with Caroline Putnam to induce her to take one of the slips [with book title] and prepare a paper."[26] Out of this group came the *Ladies Library Association* in 1870, which in turn led to the formation of the *LLC* on April 10, 1873, when forty to fifty prominent women of Grand Rapids met in rooms connected to the library for the purpose of forming a literary club. A constitution was accepted and Caroline Putnam was elected president. Four subgroups were established: art and literature, education, history, and entertainment. The local newspaper published the club's Constitution and notes of club activities. In her 1910 history of the *LLC*, Hogue Stinchcomb captured the activist spirit of the women of the club:

> Every great movement has its pioneers. No great achievement has even been recorded that did not owe its success to a few strong souled men or women.[27]

In the 1870s, club members wasted no time in demonstrating their strength and resolve for change. They sent a petition to the Board of Education supporting the

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[26]Very little remains of actual club minutes prior to the twentieth century. The history of the club from 1873 to 1910 was chronicled by Hogue Stinchcomb, *History of the Ladies Literary Club of Grand Rapids* (Grand Rapids, Clarendon Printery, 1910), 7-20; also referred to as Mrs. Hogue.

[27]Stinchcomb, 7.

building of new schools.[28] After an 1873 talk by A.E. Strong from the high school, the women studied and investigated the issue of early education. Their efforts led to the establishment of kindergartens in the Grand Rapids school system.[29] The women were also involved in civic improvement, initiating a campaign to plant apple trees in vacant city lots.[30]

By 1881, the club had incorporated and established a new constitution. This new initiative increased participation in the club to almost 400 members, and led the women to begin a campaign to raise $3,500 to build their own clubhouse. In April of 1887 the members purchased Lot 5 in Block 17 of the city of Grand Rapids, laying the cornerstone in July of that year with the building dedication on December 31, 1887.[31]

The women became involved in the suffrage campaign with a discussion of the issue at their May 9, 1885 meeting. On May 23, President Caroline Putnam read a suffrage bill before the Michigan Legislature that granted women the right

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[28]In his history of Grand Rapids, Lydens attributed the changes in curricula and school buildings to the efforts of the women of the LLC. Z.Z. Lydens, *The Story of Grand Rapids: A Narrative of Grand Rapids, Michigan* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1966), 433-34.

[29]Anne Scott defines the process of self-education leading to a desire for community improvement as municipal housekeeping. Scott, *Natural Allies*, 21, 111.

[30]Lydens, *The Story of Grand Rapids*, 21,29.

[31]"The New Club House," *Grand Rapids Evening Ledger*, 31 December 1887.

to vote in school, local, and municipal elections. The bill was defeated but the issue continued to be raised. The city of Grand Rapids passed a municipal suffrage bill in 1888.[32] In the same year, a new president of the *LCC* was elected, Sarepta Wenham, and club membership exceeded 400. Interest in the suffrage movement grew and the club sponsored an Equal Suffrage Convention in June of 1888.[33]

During the 1890s, a number of changes were initiated in the *LLC* that mirrored progressive reform movements across the nation.[34] When asked to open the clubhouse one evening a month to local businesswomen, club members responded positively by forming a businesswomen's study group as well as a current events group.[35] The women continued to maintain their involvement in local education issues and sent a petition to the school board calling for improved sanitation in school basements. They also signed a resolution endorsing Elizabeth M. Mosher as the first female Dean at the University of Michigan.

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[32]Stinchcomb, 43; "State Correspondence," *The Woman's Journal*, 16 September 1899.

[33]"Equal Suffrage Convention, Ladies Literary Club," *Grand Rapids Evening Ledger*, 20 June 1888.

[34]Social progressivism, led primarily by women such as Jane Addams expanded the scope of women's responsibilities through their work to improve the lives of women and children. Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House*, Victoria Bissell Brown, ed. (New York, Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999). See also Christopher Lasch, ed., *The Social Thought of Jane Addams;* in addition to various works cited previously on women and progressive reform.

[35]Stinchcomb, 82.

To further demonstrate their commitment to social and political reform the club members joined the City Federation of Women's Clubs, a local umbrella organization, in 1893.[36] In an effort to expand their horizons beyond their local community, the club members voted in 1909 to join the General Federation of Women's Clubs.[37] The members of the club also continued their involvement in the suffrage campaign by inviting prominent national suffrage leaders to speak at lectures, including one by Julia Ward Howe in 1891, and by hosting national women's conventions such as the Women's Congress in 1891 and the annual meeting of the National American Woman's Suffrage Association in 1899.[38] In addition, the women invited women's rights advocate Florence Kelley to speak on the National Consumer League.[39]

Following the patterns of women's organizations in most cities, the dawn of the new century found the women of the *LLC* still very committed to issues that affected the lives of women and children, including education and suffrage.[40]

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[36]Ibid., 76.

[37]Sara Evans, "Women's History and Political Theory, 119-20.

[38]"Elegantly Received," *Grand Rapids Telegram-Herald*, 15 October 1891; "The Woman's Congress," *Grand Rapids Eagle*, 1 October 1891; Program, "Suffrage Centennial, 99."

[39]President's Report, 17th President, Mrs. Dwight Goss 1899-1900, *LLC*, Club House.

[40]Scott, *Natural Allies*, 84.

Jennie Gonzalez was elected president in 1901.[41] She noted that "*LLC* was a literary club, pure and simple in the past, now not a study club, but a service club. The past century marks not only the history of the Club, but the evolution of woman."[42] To support their new service focus, the club invited Denver, Colorado Judge Ben Lindsey to speak on the issue of a juvenile court system. His talk was followed by a discussion by Dr. T.B. Wright and a Mrs. Barker about the Chicago Juvenile Protective Association.[43]

During 1903-1904 the women forwarded eight petitions to the relevant local and state officials in an effort to improve the lives of women and children as well as their civic environment. A petition was sent to the Senate Investigating Committee in support of the investigation of accusations of polygamy against Reed Smoot of Utah. This petition was followed by a recommendation from the women that polygamy be prohibited in any new states. In an effort

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[41]Although Jennie Gonzalez married a man of Spanish descent from Cuba, his successful business concerns in Grand Rapids opened social doors most often closed to non-Yankees. She was also a member of St. Cecelia's Society, the Grand Rapids Art Society, and they were both active members of the Fountain Street Baptist Church. "Jose A. Gonzalez Claimed by Death," *Grand Rapids Press*, 14 September 1914; "Mrs. J.A. Gonzalez is claimed by Death, *Grand Rapids Press*, undated.

[42]President's Report, 18th President, Jennie Gonzalez, 1901-1902; Stinchcomb, 275.

[43]President's Report, 18th President, Jennie Gonzalez, 1901-1902, 19th President, Jennie Gonzalez, 1902-1903, 22nd President, Mrs. Sherwood Hall, 1905-1906; Yearbook, 1903-1904. A juvenile court system was proposed, but defeated in 1905 and 1907. The first home for juvenile offenders in Grand Rapids was opened in 1911. Lydens, *The Story of Grand Rapids*, 560-61.

to provide women and children with a safe community, club members organized, distributed and sent petitions to preserve the Calavaris Grove of Big Trees, to outlaw throwing litter on sidewalks, and to prohibit the opening of new saloons.

Like the members of the *Athena Club*, the women of the *LLC* recommended that a public comfort station be established and maintained so that women had greater access to downtown areas.[44] On March 9, 1906, the Grand Rapids club women organized a mass meeting to protest smoking in public buildings and resolved to press for the hiring of a smoke inspector.[45] At the same time the *Athena Club* in Burlington founded the *Women's Protective League,* club members in Grand Rapids organized the *Children's Protective League.*[46]

Much like their counterparts in the *Athena Club*, the women of the *LLC* expanded their horizons more and more often to national and even international concerns. Professor William A. Frayer of the University of Michigan provided members with information on *American Diplomacy in Europe in the Twentieth Century.* Addressing members of the club, Theodore Roosevelt asserted,

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[44]Stinchcomb, 117.

[45]Although the women of the LLC, campaigned diligently in 1906, 1907, and 1908 to reduce or eliminate smoking in Grand Rapids, there is little evidence that they were successful.

[46]President's Report, 20th President, Mrs. Sherwood Hall, 1903-1904.

> I believe in women's clubs…I am tired of people who praise past times, for there was never a time in the history of the world when there was such a vast opportunity for individual development.[47]

The women's interests even extended to conservation after they heard a talk by Dr. Filbert Roth of the University of Michigan on *Conservation of Natural Resources.*

Elected president for a second time in 1912, Caroline Putnam's keynote address declared her intention to "make this a woman's year." Mrs. Pennybaker, President of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, discussed *What Organized Women are Doing.* The Reverend Anna Howard Shaw, President of the National American Woman's Suffrage Association, spoke about suffrage as part of a series on *Woman and the Ballot* organized by Beatrice Forbes, after which the women of the *LLC* voted to donate $100.00 to the suffrage cause.[48] Author Charlotte Perkins Gilman addressed the issue of *Woman and Economics.*

The club's continued attention to local reforms was reflected in the *LLC's* Legislative Committee's endorsement of meat inspection, a smoking ordinance, a school bond issue, teachers' retirement pay, and minimum wage. The women also sent a resolution to President Taft supporting treaties for peace. In 1912, the club's bylaws were changed to

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[47]Quoted in President's Report, 27th President, Caroline Putnam, 1910-1911.

[48]"Minutes," September 17, 1912, "Man Created Need for Woman's

signify that the club was no longer a literary organization, but rather a service club.[49] Their action foreshadowed that taken by the *Athena Club* in 1925. The club's work for local and state reforms was rewarded in 1913 when the Governor requested their assistance with the Michigan State Committee of Inquiry in its investigation of the wages and conditions of women in the labor force.[50]

With the advent of war in Europe, club activities were curtailed and the woman began to focus more on war assistance. Members sold over $40,000 in War Bonds and War Savings Stamps, donated to the Soldier's Christmas Fund, and even provided assistance for French war orphans. A number of members worked for the Red Cross and War Relief. In addition, speakers during the war years focused on American government and patriotism.[51] In 1915, Professor R.G. Gettell of Amherst College presented a talk on *Present Problems in American* Government and in 1917 Dr. Frederic Howe, Commissioner of Immigration in New York, addressed the issue of *New Problems Facing America*.[52]

Vote," *Grand Rapids Evening Press*, 8 May 1912.

[49]President's Report, 27th President, Caroline Putnam, 1912-1913; "Minutes," January 20, 1912.

[50]Surviving documents do not provide information on the workings or outcomes of this committee. President's Report, 30th President, Mrs. Lucius Boltwood, 1913-1914; Minutes, October 25, 1913.

[51]President's Report, 34th President, Mrs. F.W. Powers, 1917-1918.

[52]Meeting Minutes, October 20, 1917, November 10, 1917, November 3, 1917; President's Report, 32nd President, Ellen Morrison,

After Michigan women gained the vote in 1918, club members' concern for political issues increased.[53] The end of World War I and the cultural shifts brought on by America's postwar red scare and the fear of foreign invasion led the women to focus more on gathering information about national and international issues such as national identity, foreign relations, peace and the World Court.[54] In January of 1919, Frank Dykema, Executive Secretary of the American Society spoke to the members on *Americanization.* In March of that same year, Bankel Jonkman, Assistant Prosecuting Attorney for Kent County, suggested the formation of a Citizen's Committee to investigate the character and fitness of political candidates. Gregory Mason, editorial investigator, spoke on *The Cutlook in Foreign Relations.* December of 1919 found the women still interested in the world situation and they invited Dr. Harry Huntington Powers of Boston to speak on *The New Peace.*[55]

This heightened interest in national and international affairs fostered excitement as the women voted in their

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1915-1916.

[53]Dunbar and May, *Michigan*, 473.

[54]World War I and the influx of immigrants in the 1920s ignited a fear of foreign invasion that was evident in public speeches, state and national legislation and court decisions. Americans became consumed with the idea of Americanization and protecting American ideals.

[55]"Minutes," January 16, 1919, March 1, 1919, December 6, 1919; Yearbook 1918-1919; President's Report, 36th President, Letta Eulalia Thomas, 1919-1920; 38th President, Mrs. Carl N. Mather, 1921-1922.

first presidential election in 1920.[56] Although the Michigan Republican Party anticipated women gaining the vote and took steps to bring women into the party, no real political power was relinquished. As the *Grand Haven Daily* Tribune noted, "Leading women who have made a complete study of politics are inclined to believe that the time is not quite ripe for them to plunge into the situation."[57]

Club members continued with their focus on national and international events. Captain Stanley Nelson Dancey, a member of the Canadian Forces, discussed *Americanization* with Club members. Later that year, members formed an Americanization Committee. In 1921, sharing national concerns over infiltration and influence from foreign sources, the women passed a resolution supporting the censorship of moving pictures. In February of 1921 Mrs. J.C. Herbson of Seattle was invited to speak on *Personal Responsibility in Relation to the World.*[58]

In the 1923-24 club year, the focus remained on national issues. Professor Richard Burton of the University

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[56]The inability of women to gain a foothold in party politics is discussed by Scott, *Natural Allies;* Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism;* Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled;* Baker, "The Domestication of Politics"; Flanagan, "The Predicament of New Rights"; and Perry, "Women's Political Choices After Suffrage."

[57]"New Element in Politics," *Grand Haven Daily Tribune,* 30 January 1920.

[58]Their focus was not entirely global. In December of 1922, the *LLC* opened their doors to men for an evening so that they could hear Mrs. James Morrison of the City Club of Chicago discuss *Modern Feminism.* "Men Invited to Hear Feminist," *Grand Rapids Press,* 2 December 1922.

of Minnesota provided information on *Americanization Through Literature*, Dr. Ian Campbell Hannah of Oberlin College discussed *Is Democracy Gaining*, Mrs. Bridges, President of the Chicago Ethical Society, introduced the women to the issues of *Immigration* and the Honorable Joseph B. Moore of the Michigan Supreme Court spoke on *A World Court*.[59]

Throughout the rest of the 1920s, America's place in world politics continued to dominate *LLC* meetings. A. Emil Davis, a London banker, educated the women on *The Economics of Internationalism*, Minosakin Yamamoto of Japan provided information on *American Japanese Relations*, Dr. Bruno Roselli spoke on *Mussolini and European Politics* and Whiting Williams, economic sociologist, elaborated on this subject in his talk titled *Social and Economic Justice under Mussolini, Stalin, and Hoover.* Cecil Roberts, an English novelist, discussed *What Europe is Thinking*, and author Dorothy Thompson provided information on *The New Russia*.[60]

In addition to the focus on international issues during the 1920s, the women of the *LLC* maintained their concern for local affairs, particularly those that affected women and children. At the December 8, 1923 meeting, Mrs. Frederick

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[59]"Minutes," October 13, 1923, October 27, 1923, January 26, 1924, February 23, 1924; Yearbook 1923-1924; President's Report, 40th President, Mrs. John S. McDonald, 1923-1924.

[60]Dorothy Thompson and her husband Sinclair Lewis were residents of Vermont.

Pierce discussed *The New Ways With Children* and in November of 1926 her husband, a clinical psychologist, provided information on *The New Psychology in Work, Play, and Religion.*[61] The club also began an art and drama class, offering women a new opportunity to experience cultural events. The women in the art and drama class spearheaded a campaign to organize a civic theatre, a monument to the club's concern for civic betterment, and an evening club for business girls.[62]

Although there is no evidence that the members of the *LLC* relied on their husbands' power in the city, like the members of the *Athena Club* their power diminished as the working-class Democrats began to take control of Grand Rapids politics.[63] No longer were the women heading committees to implement local reform. Although club members continued to invite prominent speakers, they no longer organized marches or sent petitions to elected officials in an effort to influence the allocation of resources and power.

The women of Grand Rapids who established the *LLC* in 1873 came together with the goal of providing a weekly meeting for women to learn about history, literature, and

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[61]"Minutes," 1923-1924, Yearbook, 1926-1927.

[62]"Ladies Literacy Club 75 Years," *Grand Rapids Herald*, 22 October 1944.

[63]Lydens, *The Story of Grand Rapids*, 93-95.

art. What the women actually accomplished was much greater than their original goal. Working together without relying on their husbands' influence within the community, the women were able to help shape their local, state and national community.

One might imagine that the nineteenth amendment granting women suffrage, as well as the tremendous preparation for equal participation in the official world of politics they had gained within their voluntary organizations, would have afforded Vermont and Michigan women parity within political party structures. One would, of course, be altogether wrong. Despite the broader horizons of Michigan women, neither they nor the women of Vermont entered the Legislature in either state in large numbers during the 1920s, nor in fact did a significant portion of women even exercise their newfound opportunity to vote.[64]

The following two chapters will provide evidence of the difficulties women encountered both in Vermont and Michigan when endeavoring to enter Republican Party politics. Even though women in voluntary organizations in Vermont and Michigan developed the skills necessary for political

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[64]Stuart W. Rice and Malcolm M. Willey, "American Women's Ineffective Use of the Vote," *Current History* 20 (July 1924): 641; In 1964, Martin Gruberg concurred with this earlier article that only 37% of eligible women voted in this first election. Martin Gruberg, *Women in American Politics: An Assessment and Sourcebook* (Oshkosh, Wisconsin: Academia Press, 1968), 9.

success, party politicians did not welcome them into the Republican inner circle. Moreover, although the *LLC* women were able to shape their community to a much greater degree than the women of the *Athena Club,* that success had little impact on their ability to enter partisan politics. The personal experiences of eighteen activist women in Vermont and Michigan illustrate a clear unwillingness on the part of party leaders to provide women with access to political power structures, forcing them to rely on the skills they acquired prior to suffrage to carve out their own niche within party politics.

Chapter IV

Vermont Women and Republican Party Politics in the Twentieth Century

Researching the history of Vermont and Michigan revealed the important contributions that women made in shaping the modern state. Not only were women active in the suffrage movement, many were active in voluntary organizations, such as the *Athena Club* of Burlington, Vermont and the *Ladies Literary Club* of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Through the voluntary organizations' informal political networks, these women influenced the allocation of local resources and power. Despite the advent of suffrage, however, the promises of full political participation were not met.

Even after gaining the right to vote, a number of impediments kept women from political power. Current scholarship on women's political participation across the nation suggests that political parties were reluctant to provide access and unwilling to share power with women. Women interested in political party work were not given positions of power or encouraged to run for office by male party elites. Instead, they were expected to provide support to male candidates by answering telephones,

stuffing envelopes and ringing doorbells. Relegated to these helping roles, women were not in a position to make policy decisions. Even more importantly, they did not have access to campaign funds that would enable them to run for office. These structural barriers essentially meant that women were without political power.

Despite these barriers, however, a number of women managed to carve out their own niche within the political party systems in Vermont and Michigan, and were present and active in Republican Party politics for many years. Many women active in Vermont and Michigan politics today express tremendous gratitude to those "trailblazers" who opened the doors for them. One wonders how easy it was for these first women. Did the Republican Party welcome women's participation in politics or was it some other circumstance or set of circumstances that enabled women in Vermont and Michigan between the 1920s and the 1980s to plant the seed for those women who followed them? To answer this, we must first understand the prevailing attitudes toward women's political participation, then examine the relative numbers of women who were active at this time. But more than that, it is important to listen carefully to the voices of those women who were indeed political trailblazers to learn their views about the factors that both enabled them to and

inhibited them from participating within the Republican Party.

Although Vermont women's experiences in the suffrage movement provided them with the organizational and political skills necessary to move into the Republican Party, the transition into party politics was not a smooth one. Nevertheless, the experiences of a number of politically-engaged Vermont women suggests that the situation in Vermont provided political openings for women that were not available in larger, more industrial states with strong two party systems, such as Michigan. Vermont's small geographic area, limited population, agricultural economy, the Republican stranglehold on state and local politics, and the fact that from 1920 to 1965 every town in Vermont sent a representative to the legislature each year, regardless of the town's population created more political opportunities for women in the state, despite the ongoing obstacles that gender discrimination put before them.[1] This last factor meant that because a number of towns in Vermont had very small populations, it was not difficult for women to get elected with little or no statewide party support.

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[1]Republican Party candidates were the victors in every election of major state offices from 1854 to 1958.

In her examination of women's politics after suffrage, Kristi Anderson found that county and local offices presented fewer barriers to women's political participation. Because these positions were often part-time jobs that conferred limited power and were often seen as extensions of women's housekeeping responsibilities, female candidates for these positions were less threatening to male politicians and voters. Moreover, as Anderson also noted, because decisions on this level were often made by consensus rather than through conflict and negotiation, women were often more interested in political offices that did not expose them to the "dirty" realities of partisan politics. Anderson concluded that because local politics was simply an extension of personal relationships, women could participate without being politicians.[2]

In the second half of the twentieth century, however, the state and its politics changed. Vermont was no longer a single party state. The opening up of Vermont through the completion of the interstate highway system brought more liberal, often Democratic urban dwellers from New York and Boston much closer to Vermont. The population shift fostered the growth of an already emerging Democratic Party

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[2]Kristi Anderson, *After Suffrage: Women in Partisan and Electoral Politics before the New Deal* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1996), 117-21.

in Vermont in the 1960s. The Republican Party nationally and in Vermont began a shift to the right as party platforms included strong opposition to women's issues such as abortion and equal rights. More importantly, the 1965 federally mandated reapportionment changed the political landscape for women seeking political office in Vermont. With reapportionment Vermont moved from a one-town-one-vote representation to a system of one-person-one-vote in which small towns no longer had individual representation, making it more difficult for activist women to gain office without party support.[3] Political party candidates from larger districts replaced the small town candidate, who had very often been a woman. As University of Vermont political scientist Frank M. Bryan noted, "It is not an exaggeration to suggest that Baker v. Carr case set the women-in-politics movement back twenty years in Vermont."[4] As Bryan suggested, after 1965 activist women in Vermont, unlike their predecessors from the earlier twentieth century, often had to depend on party support within a more

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[3]In a 1997 article, Cheryl Rivers, long-term Vermont Legislator concluded, "Men hold the top state offices, run the House and Senate, and predominate in the lobbying and press corps." "Women's Voices Heard in the Legislature," *The Burlington Free Press,* 2 March 1997.

[4]D. Gregory Sanford and William T. Doyle, The General Assembly in *Vermont State Government Since 1965,* Michael Sherman, ed. (Burlington, VT: Center for Research on Vermont and Snelling Center for Government, 1999), 36. The Supreme Court decision, Baker v. Carr, mandated that each state apportion its legislature by population.

competitive political system to be successful in their bids for political office, thus limiting their political possibilities.

This chapter will examine Vermont women's experiences within Republican Party politics in the mid-twentieth century. Even though male party elites were reluctant to open the doors to equal participation by women, by virtue of their hard work and tenacity, some women broke through the barriers. Following in the footsteps of these trailblazers provided a path for activist women to come.

The roots of Vermont's small size and rural nature in the twentieth century are found in the geography and geology of this tiny state. Geographically, Vermont is only about 150 miles north to south, 100 miles east to west at its widest point and only 40 miles east to west at its narrowest point. Even though earlier eighteenth century settlers in Vermont took advantage of the abundance and low price of the land in this tiny state to provide new opportunities for their families, by 1808 immigrants only trickled into Vermont. Harsh weather, the poor economic climate, Jefferson's embargo, the War of 1812, and a spotted fever epidemic served to slow population increases to only 8% between 1810 and 1820, whereas the increase at the national level was 32%. After 1820, Vermont rarely

experienced any significant population growth, and its population actually declined in a number of decades in the late nineteenth century, bringing the twentieth century population to only 500,000 people.[5]

Although the beautiful Green Mountains running through the center of the state attracted tourists to Vermont beginning in the nineteenth century, they also made transportation extremely difficult. It was not only difficult for people to travel to Vermont, but it was almost impossible to transport manufactured goods out of the state. The limited transportation makes it obvious why Vermont never developed a strong industrial base and therefore relied on agriculture as its main economic source.[6]

The organization of the Republican Party in Vermont began on July 13, 1854 when about 800 interested citizens gathered at the Vermont State House. Vermont was the second state to organize this new Republican Party out of its Whig Party, the party that had previously attracted the vast majority of voters in Vermont. Vermont's strong stand

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[5]Lewis D. Stilwell, *Migration from Vermont* (Montpelier, VT: Vermont Historical Society and Academy Books, 1948), 124-29. Vermont's lack of industry and manufacturing made it difficult to make a living in Vermont and with wide-open opportunities in states such as Michigan, many young people left the state for greater greener pastures.

[6]Ibid., 233-36.

against slavery eased Vermonters entry into the Republican Party and earned early success in Vermont with the 1854 election of Stephen Royce as the first Republican governor. The Republican Party continued to dominate Vermont politics and from 1854 until 1958 and never lost a statewide election. Further, Vermont's presidential electoral votes always went to Republicans, even in 1936 when every other state except Maine voted for Franklin Roosevelt.[7] In 1945, Robert Mitchell, senior editor of the *Rutland Herald,* suggested that Republican dominance in Vermont was due to a number of factors, including Vermont's support of temperance and prohibition and its rural nature that allowed for close scrutiny of political activities. Because Republican officeholders maintained the high standards demanded by voters such as keeping campaign promises and maintaining local option, there was no reason to shift allegiance.[8] Moreover, by the early twentieth century Vermont became known as a "barometer" of national Republican prospects.[9]

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[7]Samuel B. Hand, Jeffrey D. Marshall, and D. Gregory Sanford, "Little Republics: The Structure of State Politics in Vermont, 1854-1920," *Vermont History* 53(Summer 1985): 4.

[8]William Doyle, *The Vermont Political Tradition: And Those Who Made It* (Barre, VT: The Northlight Studio Press, 1984), 143-44.

[9]Hand, Marshall, Sanford, "Little Republics," 141.

This singularity of voting does not mean that all Vermonters in the Republican Party were of one mind. Although members of family dynasties such as the Proctors controlled Republican Party politics for many years, by the 1930s and 1940s progressives such as George Aiken and Ernest Gibson, Jr. divided Vermont Republicans into two distinct factions.[10] Aiken followed an unusual path to the office of governor (1936-1938) because he was not a major employer, a professional or a gentleman farmer, like those before him. As a small businessman, he was pragmatic and had a respect for tradition, but did not fear the expansion of government. Called by the press "a five-foot Abe Lincoln," he was able to shift the focus of Vermont's Republican Party from big business to a greater concern for labor and Vermont's disadvantaged due in part to the increased opportunities for change during the Depression.[11] Even though Aiken was a staunch Republican, he agreed with some of the New Deal legislation. However, he met resistance from the state legislature when dealing with labor issues and had to intervene personally when

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[10]Samuel B. Hand and Paul M. Searls, " Transition Politics: Vermont 1940-1952," *Vermont History* 62 (Winter 1994): 6; Thomas T. Spencer, "As goes Maine, So goes Vermont: The 1936 Democratic Campaign in Vermont." *Vermont History* 46 (Fall 1978): 240.

[11]Bruce H. Kalk, "Yankee Party or Southern Strategy? George Aiken and the Republican Party, 1936-1972," *Vermont History* 64(Fall 1996): 236-50.

industrial problems in the Vermont Marble industry occurred in 1936. Aiken aligned himself with the Farm Bureau and built a strong coalition between labor, agriculture, and politics.[12]

By 1944, Aiken had been elected to the United States Senate and he encouraged his progressive colleague, war veteran Ernest Gibson, Jr. to challenge incumbent governor Mortimer Proctor.[13] Even though industry and manufacturing were limited in Vermont, labor strife in the granite and marble industries was rampant in Vermont during the 1940s and Aiken's progressive coalition provided the votes for Gibson's upset primary victory over Proctor with 57% of the votes.[14] Many Vermonters were tired of Republican administrations, like Proctor's, that were more concerned with fiscal responsibility than citizen welfare. Labeled by the press "Vermont's New Dealing Yankee," Gibson was again successful in his race for governor in 1948. During his tenure as governor, he supported a progressive income tax, created the Vermont State Police system, and increased

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[12]Michael Sherman, ed., *The Political Legacy of George D. Aiken: Wise Old Owl of the United States Senate* (Montpelier, VT: Vermont Historical Society, 1995), 16.

[13]Mortimer Proctor was a member of the Proctor family dynasty that had dominated Republican politics in Vermont from the turn of the century.

[14]Sherman, *The Political Legacy of George D. Aiken,* 10-14.

salaries for teachers. He was, however, unable to convince legislators that Vermont needed mobile health units to serve rural clients.[15] Gibson resigned the governorship in 1950 to accept the unprecedented appointment by a Democratic President, Harry S. Truman, of a Republican to a federal judgeship.[16]

Gibson's resignation in 1950 signaled the end of progressive Republican control of Vermont politics because there was no single heir apparent for the governorship. A conservative, Lee Emerson, followed him in office in 1950. Emerson had been lieutenant governor under Mortimer Proctor when Gibson won the election and had been unsuccessful in his bid for governor against Gibson in 1948. Once elected, Emerson proceeded to weed out the progressives remaining in the state capitol, beginning with the head of the Liquor Control Board.[17] Emerson returned to traditional Republican policies of small government and fiscal responsibility. He also strongly supported National Republican Committee policies favoring extraordinary measures to root out communists. During Emerson's tenure in office, for example,

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[15]J. Kevin Graffagnino, Samuel B. Hand, and Gene Sessions, eds., *Vermont Voices, 1609-the 1990s: A Documentary History of the Green Mountain State* (Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society, 1999) 320.

[16]Doyle, *The Vermont Political Tradition,* 191.

University of Vermont biochemistry teacher Alex Novikoff was called before the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee to answer questions about his activities while at Brooklyn College. After Novikoff refused to respond to the committee's questions, a special faculty review board was convened at the University and in 1953 Novikoff was dismissed.[18]

Despite Emerson's conservative focus, there continued to be Republicans in the state who represented the more progressive Republican principles. One such progressive was United States Senator Ralph Flanders, a contemporary of Emerson's. As early as 1950 Flanders was concerned about Senator Joseph McCarthy's Communist witch-hunt. In 1954, Flanders offered the resolution that led the United States Senate to censure McCarthy.

The shifts in power between the progressive wing of the party, represented by United States Senators Ralph Flanders and George Aiken, and the more conservative principles espoused by Lee Emerson split the Vermont Republican Party and allowed Democrats to gain a foothold in the State's political system. As a result, in 1958, the

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[17]D. Gregory Sanford, email interview with author, 31 January 2000.

[18]Graffagnino, et al., eds., *Vermont Voices,* 320.

people of Vermont elected Democrat William Meyer to the United States House of Representatives. Meyer defeated his Republican opponent, Harold Arthur, by more than 3,000 votes. At the same time, Bernard Leddy, Democratic candidate for governor, came within 800 votes of upsetting Republican Robert Stafford. The vote was so close an unprecedented recount of the gubernatorial race was undertaken.[19]

Long before the Democrats began to make inroads into state politics, women began to enter the political arena in Vermont. It was within the dynamic of a small, primarily rural state with a relentlessly Republican political climate that Vermont women first entered partisan politics with bids for seats in the Vermont House and Senate. Examining the numbers of women in elected office reveals a moderate level of success, especially in comparison with women's fortunes elsewhere in the country. In 1953 the number of women in the Vermont legislature reached an all time high of 52 women in the 246 seat House of Representatives (18%). Even in 1965, the last legislative session before reapportionment, women held only 17% of the legislative seats. But in 1967, the percentage of women in the Vermont legislature dropped to 12% of the newly

[19]Doyle, *Vermont Political Tradition,* 200-202.

reapportioned house of 150 seats. (See Appendix C, Figures 1&2) Female representation did not reach the 1953 level again until the 1980s. It is noteworthy that women who were elected after reapportionment most often came from Chittenden County, the county with the largest population and most politically liberal leanings, rather than the smaller counties.[20]

Ann Hallowell's quantitative study of election results from 1921 to 1983 reveals that the disappearance of one-town-one vote representation mandated by the *Baker* Supreme Court decision of 1962 meant larger districts that reduced political possibilities for Vermont women. In her study, Hallowell analyzed more than 15,000 local elections in fifty Vermont towns in an effort to determine the level of women's office holding. She investigated a number of variables including the relationship of community size to increased participation by women. She concluded that the smaller the size of a Vermont town, the more likely women were to hold local office.[21]

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[20]Elizabeth Cox, *Women, State, and Territorial Legislators, 1895-1995: A State-by-State Analysis, with Roster of 6,000 Women* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1996), 282-98.

[21]Ann Hallowell, "Vermont Women in Local Government" (Master's Thesis, University of Vermont, 1989), 33, 45, 55.

But numbers only tell part of the story. To get a clear picture of women's political possibilities in Vermont one must listen to the voices of the trailblazers. The women that I interviewed in Vermont provided a unique opportunity to view Republican Party politics from the inside. These women broke down many barriers to women's political participation and opened the doors for contemporary activist women to take an important, if not equal, place in Vermont politics. But, by candidly sharing their personal experiences, they portrayed the difficulty of being a women and gaining power in the political systems.

One of these first pioneers was Pauline Tubbs, who joined the Republican Party in 1925, at the early age of sixteen before most women even considered party membership. In an interview she stated that party membership enabled her "to debate politics with my parents."[22] From the beginning of her political activities she was quite vocal about candidates and issues and this ability to speak out soon led her to leadership positions in the local politics party. Even though she never ran for office, having served as a loyal party member for a number of years, when reflecting on her political career, she felt nevertheless

that gender equity was elusive. She concluded after years of political work that it "seems like they [men] would vote women in and often let them do the work and then take the credit."[23]

Bernice Bromley was another political pioneer, one who experienced electoral success despite limited party support. In a 1981 interview conducted by University of Vermont Professor Emeritus Sam Hand, Bromley discussed the barriers encountered by activist women trying to break into party politics. First, there was women's reticence to join party politics itself as evidenced in her initial entry into Republican politics working in the 1920 gubernatorial campaign of James Hartness.[24] According to Bromley, "those were the days that women had to be coerced into politics."[25] On the other hand, Bromley credited her political success to her work in a number of voluntary organizations. She

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[22]Pauline Tubbs, interview with author, 6 March 2000.

[23]Ibid. In her book *A Room at a Time,* Jo Freeman described the difficulties women had moving into positions of power within the political party structure. Jo Freeman, *A Room at a Time: How Women Entered Party Politics* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 107-109.

[24]Kristi Anderson points to women's ambivalence toward political parties, many saw voting as their political contribution, not party membership. Politics was a dirty business, not something "ladies" would be involved in. Anderson, *After Suffrage,* 39-41.

[25]Bernice Bromley, interview by Sam Hand, Oral History Collection, The University of Vermont, July 1981. Sarah Schuyler Butler agreed with Bromley and noted, "many women will not make any effort in politics." "After Ten Years," *Woman's Journal,* April 1929, 10-11.

mentioned how serving on the school board, working in the Women's Republican Club, and with the American Legion Auxiliary provided her with the opportunity to develop political skills such as fund raising, lobbying, and speaking in public. The skills and confidence gained from this work prepared her for a future in Vermont politics. Although early in her political career male party members made her feel unwelcome at meetings, when asked by zealous friends to run for the legislature from Weathersfield, a very small Vermont town, Bromley accepted. Because she was a woman, however, Bromley noted that, she was seen by male party leaders as a newcomer even though she had been in politics for more than twenty-five years and as studies indicate to be successful in politics women have to work harder than their male counterparts. Also as a woman, any necessary campaign funding was more likely to come from other women or be donated anonymously in small amounts.[26] Her experiences as an unsuccessful legislative candidate in 1949 serve as an example of another kind of barriers women faced in their attempts to get elected. According to Bromley, "My timing was bad and I was defeated because as some of my [male] opponents told me afterwards, they felt

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[26]Gerald L. Ingalls and Theodore S. Arrington, "The Role of Gender in Local Campaign Financing: The Case of Charlotte, North Carolina," *Women and Politics* 11 (1991): 88.

that I wanted too much. I was a member of the school board and chairman in the Southeast District, and they thought that was enough for a [so called] newcomer."[27]

Bromley learned from these experiences and from her membership in women's organizations and subsequently ran a successful legislative campaign based on visits with her neighbors and friends, rather than with party politicians. She went on to serve in the House from 1951 to 1957 and then moved to the Senate in 1959. Like women nationwide, she was appointed to a number of committees that focused on the issues identified with women and children, such as Social Welfare and Public Health.[28]

A third Vermont political figure, Gertrude Mallary, who moved to Vermont from Springfield, Massachusetts, attributed her interest in politics to her husband who had run for a number of local offices in Springfield. As with so many other activist women, the skills that she had acquired as a president of a number of voluntary organizations including the Junior League and the Council of Social Agencies provided her with the ability and

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[27]Bromley, July 1981.

[28]Jane Sherron DeHart, "Rights and Representations: Women, Politics, and Power in the Contemporary United States," in Linda K. Kerber, Alice Kessler-Harris, Kathryn Kish Sklar, eds. *U.S. History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 234-35.

confidence to be an active participant in Fairlee, Vermont town meetings.[29] At a town meeting in 1953, she was asked by local members of her small town to run for the state house. She discussed running with her husband, Dewitt and because the job did not demand too much time, she said "well fine, let's try it."[30] After a successful campaign she noted that "it wasn't any great triumph or political skill or campaigning because that was the day when to be a Republican was enough."[31] When she got to the House of Representative she was surprised by the diverse makeup of representatives. "In the house there was a very motley sort of group. There were people who were interested who came with the idea of making a political career and they were few. Then there were the others who thought it would be interesting and that they might be helpful, and then there were the others who came because it was suggested and nobody [else] wanted to run. I suspect it was as bad as

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[29]For a discussion of the skills acquired by women's active participation on voluntary organizations see Sara Evans, "Women's History and Political Theory: Toward a Feminist Approach to Public Life," in Nancy A. Hewitt and Suzanne Lebsock, eds. *Visible Women: New Essays in American Activism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," *American Historical Review* 89 (June 1984).

[30]Gertrude Mallary, interview with author, 29 January 2000.

[31]Ibid. Unlike Bromley, Mallary's first political office was as a representative and members of her community supported her candidacy from the beginning.

that at some point."[32] Mallary served two terms in the House and then decided "I would like the Senate because instead of 246 people, there were 30, and I did like it better."[33] In the Senate, she worked closely with the only other female senator, Geraldine Clark. Mallary did not recall specific barriers to her political aspirations, but she noted that although "I did not feel that [discrimination] ...a number of them [women] were quite persuaded that they were being discriminated against."[34]

To combat this discrimination, Mallary pointed out that most female legislators took their membership in the *Order of Owls* very seriously.[35] On June 30, 1936, Vermont female Legislators came together in Proctorville for a two-day meeting. Just before this meeting, the Vermont women had been invited by the women in the Connecticut Legislature to join with them in forming the National Organization of Women Legislators, to provide political education and support to women in their new position as elected officials.[36] An editorial in the *Rutland Herald* signaled the

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[32]Mallary, 29 January 2000.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Susan Drown, Margaret Hammond, and Mildred Hayden, *History of the Vermont OWLS* (Montpelier: Vermont OWLS, 1973), 2.

supportive sentiment toward this women's group: "It is pretty certain that in addition to having a good time, these women will also talk politics and chances are they will know what they are taking about. We advise prospective men candidates for office to bear this in mind."[37]

Mary Wing, daughter-in-law of the 1921 Republican State Chair Leonard F. Wing, did not run for political office until 1988, but she had worked in Republican campaigns beginning in the 1940s.[38] Like many other women, Wing developed political skills through her participation in a number of voluntary organizations such as the Heart Association and the Cancer Fund.[39] She used her skills as a local party worker from Rutland in the gubernatorial campaign of Ernest Gibson, Jr. in 1946 and 1948, but found few other women willing or able to help her raise campaign funds. As Anne Firor Scott noted in *Natural Allies*, although women working in voluntary associations learned the art of fund raising, they were traditionally

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[37]"Editorial," *Rutland Herald,* 2 July 1936.

[38]Bruce Edwards, "Many Contests for House Seats," *The Rutland Herald Daily,* 19 July 1988, 13; Bruce Edwards, "Wing Takes Flight Into Own Campaign," *The Rutland Daily Herald,* 4 November 1988, 19.

[39]Voluntary organizations often served as a political training ground for activist women. See Evans, "Women's History and Political Theory and Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920."

uncomfortable asking for money.[40] Wing continued her political work in the local Republican office for Richard Nixon's first presidential campaign in 1960, but was much more involved in Robert Stafford's 1958 campaign for governor. Wing worked on one political gathering where Stafford was to join his supporters from across Lake Elfen, near Rutland, reenacting Washington's crossing the Delaware. Unfortunately, it was raining and the boat almost sank, but Wing noted, "I think that one of things that this taught me was to be innovative."[41] In 1984, Wing accepted John Easton's request to be his gubernatorial campaign manager. Her frustration with party regulars while working in Easton's 1980 campaign, led her to agree on the condition, "I will do it if I can do it my way. Like I am the power, I am in charge. I have ideas and I'm going to make it fun for them to meet you."[42] Wing noted that she couldn't remember another campaign that had a woman as state chair. An interesting aspect of this campaign was, that Easton was narrowly defeated by Madeline Kunin, Vermont's first female governor.

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[40]Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History.* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 26.

[41]Mary Wing, Interview with author, 20 March 2000.

[42]Ibid.

As Wing recalled her experiences in Vermont Republican Party politics, it was clear that they often mirrored the difficulties of women in politics nationwide.[43] Even though Wing was an integral part of a number of political campaigns, she felt "[the party] was patronizing [toward women]. They [women] mostly played the role of helper…do all the work in a campaign and you can have men up there."[44] Wing pointed out that women who were successful in politics were those who played by the rules of the game established by men.[45] She concluded "I found myself, Barbara Snelling

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[43]For discussion of the barriers to women's political activity see, Elisabeth Israels Perry, "Women's Political Choices After Suffrage: The Women's City Club of New York, 1915-1990," *New York History* (October 1990): 417-434; Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 105-107; Maureen Flanagan, "The Predicament of New Rights: Suffrage and Women's Political Power from a Local Perspective," *Social Politics: Gender, State and Society* 2 (Fall 1995); Susan Hartman, *From Margin to Mainstream* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 1-22; Melanie Gustafson, "Partisan Politics and the Progressive Party of 1912" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1993), 1-15; Catherine Rymph, "Forward and Right: The Shaping of Republican Women's Activism, 1920-1967" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Iowa, 1998), 1-13; Anderson, *After Suffrage*, 2-14; Jo Freeman, *A Room at a Time*, 163-64; Felice Gordon, *After Winning: The Legacy of the New Jersey Suffragists, 1920-1947* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 20, 145.

[44]Wing, 20 March 2000.

[45]In her discussion of women candidates and office-holders in *After Suffrage*, Kristi Anderson pointed out that the way for women to get things done politically was to dress and comport themselves as ladies, and remind men at least subconsciously of their mothers; Articles in popular magazines in the 1950s and 1960s support both Wing's conclusions and Anderson's research that women in politics have to work hard, always be a lady, and must know their place. Barbara Wendell Kerr, "Don't Kid the Women," *Woman's Home Companion*, October 1956, 4; "Politics-A New Wide-Open World for Women," *Mademoiselle*, March 1964, 238; Political scientist, Kathleen Dolan also pointed out that as candidates women have lower levels of political trust, which in turn decreases their chances of success. Kathleen Dolan, "Support for

and Madeline Harwood are probably the three that had a great deal of respect -- they didn't whine."[46]

The woman with perhaps the most experience in the Vermont Republican Party, Lola Aiken, wife of longtime Senator George Aiken said that she had perceived little discrimination against women interested in politics.[47] She spoke of how during her tenure in Washington, Margaret Chase Smith was the only woman in the Senate and she was respected and admired by everyone, perhaps because "she was a tough lady and I don't mean that in a bad way. I mean that she could compete."[48] Aiken nevertheless did point out that competition and discrimination developed when jobs in the Senate offices became more lucrative and offered more power, suggesting that men did not want women to be more powerful. Aiken commented, "For some reason, they never think women are worth the same salary that a man would be worth in the same damn job."[49] She also noted that women's family responsibilities often keep them out of positions of

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Women Candidates: An Examination of the Role of Family," *Women and Politics* 16 (1996): 56.

[46]Wing, 20 March 2000.

[47]Danica Kirke, "Keeping the Memory of 'The Governor,'" *The Burlington Free Press*, 22 May 1989, 3B.

[48]Lola Aiken, interview with author, 27 January 2000.

[49]Aiken, 27 January 2000.

power because of the time demanded for political success. Writing in the 1970s, political scientist Marcia Manning Lee concurred that the nature of sexual role assignments in American culture denies most women equal political opportunity. Two decades later, political scientist Kathleen Dolan asserted that men continue to oppose to women holding political office; in essence gender is still a barrier to political success for activist women.[50] Aiken herself at the end of the century was cautiously optimistic about women's political possibilities. She concluded, "I think it's improving and yet I always have in the back of my mind, it looks good. I'm not sure how good it is. How many women are really heading up things? That's where you can really tell."[51]

While Aiken was content not to run for office, Consuelo Northrup Bailey was a consummate politician who happened to be female. As local historian Lillian Baker Carlisle noted, "she [Bailey] wanted to compete not as a woman, she wanted to be Speaker of the Vermont House of

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[50]Marcia Manning Lee, "Why Few Women Hold Public Office: Democracy and Sexual Roles," *Political Science Quarterly* 91 (Summer 1976): 297; Kathleen Dolan, "Gender Differences in Support for Female Candidates: Is There a Glass Ceiling in American Politics?" *Women and Politics* 17 (1997): 35; A 1952 *Look* magazine article concurred with Aiken's, Dolan's and Lee's assessment that women's family responsibilities keep them out of politics. Jack Wilson, "Some of my Best Friends Are Women," *Look*, July 15, 1952, 26.

[51]Aiken, 27 January 2000.

Representatives, not the first woman Speaker."[52] Following in her father's footsteps, Bailey had joined the Republican Party at an early age and set her sights on a political career. After her graduation from the University of Vermont in 1921, Bailey taught for a year and then entered Boston College to attend law school. Following her graduation in 1925, she joined the Chittenden County State's Attorney's office and became the first female state's attorney in any county in Vermont. She went on to achieve a number of other firsts in the legal arena, including first woman to try a murder case and first woman to try a case in the Vermont Supreme Court. She was an active member of the Republican Party who supported Ernest Gibson, Sr. in his run for the United States House. His success landed her the prestigious job as his Washington secretary and she resided there from 1931 to 1937. She returned to Burlington to open a private law practice in 1937, and in 1940 at the age of forty-one married Henry Bailey. She ran a successful, small, local campaign and entered the legislature in 1951 as the representative from

[52]Lillian Carlisle Baker, "Consuelo Northrup Bailey," *Green Mountain Chronicles*, Audio Tape.

South Burlington, seated at Desk number 146, her father's former seat.[53]

During her second term in 1953, she decided to run for Speaker. Her successes in the legal arena had sharpened many of the skills she needed to become an outstanding legislator. Her record and loyal participation in party politics attracted the attention of Republican members of the House. In a 1954 speech, she described the campaign strategies that led to her success not only as Speaker, but subsequently as Lieutenant Governor.[54] She relied foremost on personal contact and first hand encounters requiring travel to every Vermont town to speak with each Representative. She also attended rallies, fairs, and conventions and visited farmhouse doors and fields. She recounts a number of incidents during her campaign travels that illustrate her tenacity and her belief in personal campaigning.[55] Trying to locate a particular representative

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[53]Conseulo Northrup Bailey, *Leaves Before the Wind: The Autobiography of Vermont's Own Daughter*, (Burlington: George Little Press, 1976), 232.

[54]Consuelo Northrup Bailey, undated speech, Folder A5, Special Collections, Bailey Howe Library, University of Vermont.

[55]Scholars have noted that activist women developed campaign strategies that often differed from their male counterparts. Elizabeth Israels Perry, *Belle Moskowitz: Feminine Politics and the Exercise of Power in the Age of Alfred E. Smith* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 196-97; Harriet Woods, *Stepping Up to Power: The Political Journey of American Women* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2000), 43; Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space and Power in Boston, 1870-1840* (New York: Oxford Press, 2000), 220-21; Pamela Tyler, *Silk*

that she was told to visit, she found herself face to face with a farmer in his hayfield. She stood there chewing hay waiting for him to speak "Mrs. Bailey, I'm going to vote for you. You know, it's this way. I can see from the color of your skin that you ain't a drinking woman." On another visit she traveled to the back hill country after being assured by his wife that she could speak to a Legislator at home. When she arrived she found he had gone hunting and slogged through a snowstorm to find him. She was unable to locate him, but on her return to town she found him waiting in his truck. "I thought you'd come back this way, and I didn't want you to climb that hill again tonight." He told her.[56] Bailey recalled, "Senator George Aiken said he knew I would win because he had passed me on a highway one day in a storm, and when he arrived in Burlington, he found my five gentlemen opponents cozily enjoying themselves in the warmth of the lobby at the Hotel Vermont.[57] As Aiken predicted, Bailey's persistence and personal style of campaigning won her the position of Vermont's first woman

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Stockings and Ballot Boxes: Women and Politics in New Orleans, 1929-1965 (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), 186-88.

[56]Bailey, undated speech.

[57]Consuelo Northrup Bailey, "Leaves Before the Wind," 252.

Speaker of the Vermont House of Representatives, only the second female speaker in the United States.[58]

Her numerous political successes would seem to indicate that Republican Party politics posed few barriers for Bailey.[59] But an examination of her decision not to run for Governor reveals the reality that political party dynamics continued to impede Bailey's, like other women's, political progress. As Lieutenant Governor in 1954, Bailey demonstrated her excellent leadership skills as she led the Senate through busy sessions, passing legislation that supported better education in Vermont among other items. As the time drew near for her to make a decision about running for Governor, however, political leaders including Republican leader and future governor, Deane Davis suggested the ground was not right for a female governor and that she should end her political career on a successful note and not attempt to become governor of

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[58]"Mrs. Bailey Elected State's 1st Woman Speaker of House," *Burlington Free Press*, 8 January 1953.

[59]The longtime struggle between the Burlington and Rutland wing of the Republican Party led to conflict from the beginning of Bailey's tenure as Lieutenant Governor. Graham Newell, longtime friend and political colleague of Bailey's noted that although the difference of opinion between Burlington and Rutland politicians was a common cause of tension in the legislature, because Bailey was a woman, her strongest adversary, Senator Asa Bloomer's opposition was personal and he was more intent on forming coalitions to spurn Bailey's attempts at committee formation and passing legislation. Graham Newell, Interview with author, 13 July 2001.

Vermont.[60] Bailey, the consummate politician, understood that without party support she could not hope to gain the office of governor and announced to the public that she would not run for governor. The *Burlington Free Press* assured readers that "Mrs. Bailey wants reelection to the Republican National Convention, she never aspired to be Governor."[61] Interestingly, both the *Rutland Herald* and the *Suburban List* identified more personal reasons as the deciding factor. They claimed that Mrs. Bailey made the decision not to run for Governor for personal, not political reasons, citing her husband's illness. The difference between Bailey's public and private reasons for not seeking the governorship of Vermont in many ways confirms prevailing notions of women's place within American society in the 1950s. Women could venture into politics, but only if it did not impinge on their family responsibilities. The public accepted "personal" reasons from female politicians for their decisions, perhaps even

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[60]Deane Davis, "Consuelo Northrup Bailey," *Green Mountain Chronicles*, Audio Tape. Bailey's friend and colleague, Graham Newell confirmed that Bailey herself knew that Vermont was not ready for a female governor.

[61]"Johnson Runs Again, But Not Mrs. Bailey," *Burlington Free Press*, 10 April 1956.

preferred them to serious discussion of the reluctance to elect women to public office.[62]

As Bailey was finishing her political career in electoral politics, Vermont was "no longer ruled by family a dynasty or even one faction."[63] The state's Republican Party was splintered, allowing the Democrats to gain a foothold in Vermont politics, resulting in the 1962 election of Phillip Hoff as Governor, the first non-Republican governor in more than a hundred years. The development of a strong second party in Vermont in conjunction with the 1965 reapportionment that shifted Vermont to a one-person-one vote system changed the rules of the political process for Vermont women. Thereafter, it became much more difficult for women to win elections in larger districts than their own small towns without strong support from the Republican Party.

Moreover, as part of the Federal Highway Act of 1956, Vermont began to construct an interstate highway system that connected the small, rural state to the rest of the northeast. Driving times from major cities, like New York and Boston, to Vermont's bucolic countryside were reduced

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[62]"Mrs. Bailey Steps Out," *Rutland Herald*, 27 May 1956; "Mrs. Bailey Out of the Contest for Lieutenant Governor to Succeed Herself," *The Suburban List*, 12 April 1956;

[63]Doyle, *The Vermont Political Tradition*, 200.

by twenty-five percent or more. Initially, this increased the number of summer visitors to Vermont, but during the 1970s, Vermont cities and towns became the year round residence of more and more former city dwellers. The easier access to Vermont through the interstate highway system, the resulting shift in population, and a strengthened Democratic Party that began to gain power as early as 1952 increased electoral competition.[64] Like women nationwide, Vermont women now faced the additional impediment to their political aspirations of having to negotiate through the barriers of the political party structure that they had been previously been able to avoid.[65] This increased competition made it more difficult for women to get nominated and run successfully for political office.

As the Vermont political landscape was changing, the Vermont Republican Party that had been so progressive during the Aiken era now followed the National Republican Party in its move to the right. Even progressive Republican Senator George Aiken, who in the 1940s had supported liberal policies including co-sponsoring bills to eliminate the poll tax and prohibit racial discrimination in

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[64]Rockwell Stephens, "Broad New Highways through Vermont," *Vermont Life"* 20 (Spring 1966): 12-16; Doyle, The *Vermont Political Tradition,* 202.

[65]Ibid., 205.

employment, by the late 1950s was qualifying his support of civil rights legislation. Although he supported the Civil Rights Act of 1957, he negotiated the "Mrs. Murphy" clause that allowed small rooming houses to rent rooms to whomever they chose, in essence legalizing discrimination in certain circumstances. At the 1964 Republican Convention in San Francisco, Aiken nominated Margaret Chase Smith for president, but in the end he supported his party's ultra conservative candidate, Barry Goldwater. In 1965, he again gave only qualified support to another piece of Civil Rights legislation, the Voting Rights Act. He was committed to eliminating literacy tests in the South that were established as a means to exclude black voters, but he supported another measure of exclusion, the municipal poll tax. Finally, Aiken, a Nixon supporter, did not protest when the administration supported thirty Mississippi school districts that requested more time to integrate their schools. By the time of Aiken's retirement in 1974, his progressive vision of the Republican Party had disappeared, making the party uncomfortable for many women, particularly those who supported women's rights and abortion. As political scientist Denise Baer pointed out, although the Republican Party had been a natural home for many progressive-minded women prior to the early 1970s, after

the 1976 convention the party alienated even many mainstream Republican women by reversing its historic position of support for women's rights.[66]

As if the changing ideological climate in the national party was not enough of a problem, the *Carr v. Baker* Supreme Court decision now served to limit Vermont women's political possibilities even further. The ruling mandated reapportionment in most states including Vermont, where the state was forced to shift from its traditional one-town-one vote electoral system to a one-person-one vote system. This shift was not easily accepted in Vermont because it negated the strong town meeting tradition that was the foundation of Vermont's system of government. The citizens from small Vermont towns like Fairlee, from which Gertrude Mallary had been elected and Dorset would no longer have a strong voice in the legislature. Because these small towns had sent the largest number of women to the Vermont legislature, reapportionment severely hampered women's political possibilities in Vermont for the next two decades. When this structural change was combined with the national Republican Party's move to the right during

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[66]Bruce H. Kalk, "Yankee Party or Southern Strategy? , 244-48; Denise Baer, *Elite Cadres and Party Coalitions: Representing the Public in Party Politics* (New York: The Greenwood Press, 1988), 69-80.

Nixon's presidency, the number of women in the Vermont legislature continued to spiral downward.[67]

Despite the Nixon Republican landslide in 1972, the fiscally conservative Democratic candidate Thomas Salmon won the race for Governor of Vermont that year. He took advantage of the split in the Vermont Republican Party as two strong candidates, moderate James Jeffords and conservative Fred Hackett, battled it out in the Republican primary.[68] Running a successful campaign against the Republican primary winner, Fred Hackett, Salmon continued former Governor Davis' environmental initiatives and tried to keep Vermont for Vermonters. Although his major focus was to offer citizens property tax relief, he strongly supported women's issues such as the ERA. Although Vermonters were split on their support of the issue, there were groups of women who were strongly opposed to the ERA. Salmon recalled a visit, during his tenure as Governor, by a group of Lamoille County women opposed to the ERA. The women insisted on seeing him without an appointment and after being led into his office, they proceeded to lecture him on the evils of equal rights for women. As was his usual policy, he listened closely to their religious

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[67]Hallowell, "Vermont Women in Local Government, 33, 45, 55.

[68]Doyle, *Vermont Political Tradition,* 213.

argument against the ERA and then defended his own support of the amendment. This group was not swayed by Salmon's argument and he recalled their final gesture. As they were leaving the office, they announced that they had a gift for him. He put out his hands and received their gift, a copy of the Bible.[69] Despite their opposition, Salmon helped to make Vermont one of the first states to endorse the federal ERA. Nevertheless, the number of women in the legislature continued to decline.[70] It was not until Republican, Richard Snelling's tenure as governor beginning in 1976 that the number of women in the Vermont Legislature began to rise again.[71] As Vermont women moved to the more liberal Democratic Party, particularly those in Chittenden County, activist women again began to win elections to the Vermont house and senate.[72]

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[69]Thomas Salmon, Interview with author, 13 December 2001.

[70]Doyle, *The Vermont Political Tradition,* 213-15; "Governor's Commission on Women, 1999 Annual Report."

[71]Cox, *Women, State, and Territorial Legislators,* 282-98.

[72]Leahy was also the first "western" senator to be elected to occupy the eastern seat. The mountain rule was adopted to assure all Vermonters of equal representation because the Green Mountains not only divided the state geographically, but politically as well. Therefore, election for the United States Senate Seat from Vermont had alternately been filled by a citizen east and then west of the Green Mountains. Samuel B. Hand, Frank Bryan, D. Gregory Sanford, "The Erosion of Republican Hegemony in Vermont, 1927-1974," A Prospectus for a Research Project Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, September 1, 1979-August 31, 1981.

Republican Richard Snelling held the office of governor from 1976 to 1985 and was elected again in 1990. As a moderate Republican and advocate of women's rights, in 1983 he supported amending the Vermont Constitution to include an Equal Rights clause. The proposed amendment passed the required two legislative sessions and a vote was put to the people in the general election on November 6, 1984. There were strong campaigns by both the advocates and the opponents of the amendment, with national leaders, including Phyllis Schlafly coming to Vermont to protest passage of the amendment; the ERA was defeated in a close vote.

In 1992, the issue of equality for women again came before the voters when Representative Althea Kroger, Representative from Essex Junction introduced an amendment to delete nine gender exclusive terms from the Vermont Constitution and replace them with gender-neutral language. The voters approved this change in November 1994 and Democratic Governor Howard Dean adopted it in 1996.[73]

In 1984, Vermont elected its first female governor, Democrat Madeline Kunin. Unlike John Easton, the Republican candidate, Kunin did not have to run a primary campaign

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[73]D. William C. Hill, "The Constitution," in Michael Sherman, ed., *Vermont State Government Since 1965*, (Burlington, VT: Center for Research on Vermont and Snelling Center for Government, 1999), 24-26.

because she was unopposed as a Democrat. Relying on women she brought together in a "kitchen cabinet," Kunin's campaign for governor focused on both a traditional political campaign that included political debates and Rotary luncheons and a more feminist campaign making personal connections with women all over the state. Although the vote was close, Kunin defeated Easton and concluded that it was female voters who made the difference.[74] She centered her administration on improving children's lives, education, mental health, and the environment. But her greatest legacy was broadening women's place in politics by appointing women from all walks of life to important positions within her administration, including Ellen Fallon as Legal Counsel, Elizabeth Bankowski, Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs, Sallie Soule, Commissioner of Employment and Training, Susan Crampton, Secretary of the Agency of Transportation, Jeanne Van Vlanden, Director of Labor and Industry, and Mollie Beattie, Director of Forests, Parks,

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[74]Madeline Kunin, *Living a Political Life: One of America's First Woman Governors Tells Her Story* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 278-82, 307. Like Consuelo Bailey, Kunin realized that political success in Vermont necessitated persuading voters, sometimes one-by-one that you are the best candidate for the job.

and Recreation, the first woman to hold this position in the country.[75]

The experiences of Madeline Harwood, a fifth generation Vermonter and conservative Republican political activist provide some insight into the shifting dynamics of Vermont politics in the 1960s. As a young wife and mother she had been a member of the PTA and of various church organizations. She noted, however, that at a certain point her focus changed: "I got very upset over World War II and I decided that there must be something that people could do to prevent these sorts of things. So I decided after my husband came back from overseas that I would try to get more involved in politics and see what needed to be done there."[76] Harwood indicated that she used the skills she gained while working in voluntary associations to become an effective party worker who raised significant funds for the Republican Party. She noted that most women remained as campaign supporters, not running for office. She noted, "men have begun to realize that women could do more than housework."[77] She went on to serve effectively in extended

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[75]Kunin, *Living a Political Life*, 355-60.

[76]Madeline Harwood, Interview with author, 3 February 2000.

[77]Ibid.

terms in the Vermont Senate, 1969-1973 and 1977-1983, as well as the House in 1989 and 1991.[78]

Harwood however, pointed out that when she ran in the Republican primary for Congress in 1974 against James Jeffords and John Burgess relying on the party for equitable primary support, she believed she had been treated unfairly. During the primary each candidate was allowed access to the address plates with the names and addresses of Vermont Republicans for one mailing. She recalls, "There were some things that went on that I felt the other candidate that I was running against got preference over me. We were allowed one mailing to help us in the primary, and this other party got his mailing list and when I went for mine, the machine was broken."[79] Further, party leaders tried to talk her out of running, using typical gendered "personal" arguments. They suggested that her husband needed her and campaigning would force her to neglect her duties to her husband. Harwood's political experiences indicate that Vermont women could still be elected to local office despite reapportionment, but when

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[78]"Lawmaker Will Not Seek Re-election," *The Burlington Free Press,* 9 April, 1992, 4B; "Vermont Faces Difficult Decisions on School Choice," *The Burlington Free Press,* 4 May 1992, 19.

[79]Harwood, 3 February 2000. Harwood is unsure whether candidate Burgess used the plates. Madeline Harwood with Karen D. Lorentz, *Two*

she tried to move up the political ladder and sought office on the federal level her experience indicates that Vermont women fared no better than women from other larger, urban states where the lack of party support, indeed, party hostility kept women from more powerful political office.

The experiences, finally, of Gretchen Morse and Susan Auld exemplify the determination of Vermont's conservative Republican male leadership in the later years of the twentieth century to limit women's political possibilities. Strongly influenced by her family's interest in and enthusiasm for politics, Morse entered Republican politics as a moderate when she moved to Vermont with her husband in 1969. Through neighbors and friends in Charlotte, she worked with other moderate Republicans including Robert Stafford, James Jeffords, and Richard Snelling. Like other Vermont women, she felt party support was not particularly necessary in local political campaigns, but noted, "I do remember when I started going around to talk to people about whether I should run or not, that they warned me about the fact that some of the party regulars were very, very concerned."[80] She did run successfully a number of

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Harwoods in the House: A Vermont Memoir, (Shrewsbury, VT: Mountain Publishing, 2001), 155-56.

[80]Gretchen Morse, interview with author, 22 March 2000.

times for the Vermont legislature serving from 1976 to 1985, when like female legislators nationwide she was asked to serve on committees that were identified with women and children. She served as the Chair of the Education Committee from 1980-1982 and Health and Welfare 1982-1984. On the one hand, chairing such committees gave women influence on issues of traditional concern to them. On the other hand, as Jane Dehart has noted, such legislative typecasting, putting women on committees that deal with women's concerns such as children and social welfare, "allows male legislators to retain control over areas in which they perceive real power to reside: taxes and budgets, for example."[81]

Male politicians continued to shape and control women's political possibilities as is shown when, during her tenure in the Legislature, Morse ran in 1984 for Speaker of the House. Like Consuelo Bailey, she talked to people in the Republican Caucus all over the state in her effort to gain the speakership. "Every single person that I talked to thought I could become the next speaker. But they didn't support me for speaker because I was too

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[81]Dehart, "Rights and Representation: Women, Politics, and Power in the Contemporary United States," in Kerber, Kessler-Harris, and Sklar, ed., *U.S. History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 236-37.

liberal."[82] After her unsuccessful campaign for Speaker, however, she was offered the position of Secretary of Human Services by Democrat Madeline Kunin, in her initial term as Vermont's first female governor, "And one of the reasons why I left [the legislature] and accepted the position of Secretary of the Agency of Human Services when Madeline asked me was because I knew, [Speaker of the House] Ralph Wright would never appoint me to anything ever again."[83] Morse pointed out, one reason Wright was so adamantly opposed to women in the legislature was because women worked in bipartisan groups, rather than always supporting their party's position.[84] Morse recalled that most women in the legislature during her tenure. In fact, worked together to support issues that affected women, such as fair credit, fair housing, and fair employment practices. At one point, she said, Governor Snelling wanted to remove funding for the Governor's Commission on Women and female legislators worked across party lines to successfully reinstate

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[82]Morse, 22 March 2000.

[83]Ibid.

[84]Morse, 22 March 2000. Political scientists Anthony Gierzynski and Paulette Budreck concluded that in political campaigns women promote other women. Anthony Gierzynski and Paulette Budreck, "Women Legislative Caucus and Leadership Campaign Committees," *Women and Politics* 15 (1995): 23.

adequate funding for the organization.[85] She concluded, "there were quite a few women who were elected to the house while I was there. It's because it doesn't cost a lot of money to run [for local office in Vermont]."[86]

Like a number of other women before her, Susan Auld maneuvered through the world of politics by beginning with membership and then leadership on her local school board.[87] Her concern for her community led her to run for the legislative seat from Middlesex in 1978. She served successfully in the legislature from 1979 to 1985, but was frustrated by male legislators' attitudes, "when women in leadership shared ideas, but were not well regarded."[88] The way in which the house speaker treated Auld and other women legislators, suggests how determined the men were to stay in control.

> Also my first term as assistant leader, Steven Morse, Republican, was the speaker and even though I might have had good ideas, I don't feel that they were regarded…it was not a lack of

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[85]The Governor's Commission on Women was established in 1964 during Phillip Hoff's Tenure as Governor. According to Lola Aiken this was at the urging of Senator Aiken, who staunchly supported women's rights and served on President Kennedy's First President's Commission on Women. Aiken interview with author, 27 January 2000.

[86]Morse, 22 March 2000.

[87]James E. Bressor, "Vermont Women's Strides in Politics Slow as '88 Election Approaches," *The Burlington Free Press*, 25 July 1988.

[88]Susan Auld, Interview with author, 18 April 2000.

> respect for women, but for the ideas when the ideas were offered in strategic discussions!
>
> Then the speaker didn't want a debate… this was Ralph Wright, and these women got up and spoke and they were eloquent and they were good and tough. He called me up afterwards and he said, I am telling you, you are to tell these Republican women to be seen and not heard.[89]

She felt that before Ralph Wright's tenure as Speaker, women often worked together in bipartisan groups on women's issues such as alcohol prevention, education, and public kindergartens. But once Wright was in office, Auld stated, things changed, party loyalty took precedence over issues and women's earlier bipartisan support disappeared. She noted that such bipartisanship points to one of the many differences between men's and women's political styles. She suggested that women focus more on inclusivity and equality, which gives them the ability to work together.[90] Auld concluded that women like Consuelo Bailey, who was such a leader, served as models and paved the way for other women. Consequently, she felt there were more women in key positions and legislators like Cheryl Rivers and Helen Riehle, "they know how to play the game. So they are people

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[89]Ibid.

[90]As early as 1926, Emily Newell Blair noted that unlike men, women traditionally work together to solve problems whether they are social or political. Emily Newell Blair, "Men in Politics as Women See Them," *Harpers Magazine* 152 (May 1926): 704.

to be reckoned with. They understand that there is work to be done, and don't look for glory, but solutions to Vermont's problems."[91]

Although women have made significant gains within Vermont Republican politics, as indeed they have in Democratic politics, they have not reached parity with men within the state's political system. In 1992, "The Year of the Woman," Vermont women seemed to be making some progress, but by the 1994 election it became clear that women continued to have difficulty surmounting political party barriers. The number of women in the Vermont Congress dropped from 62 in 1992 to 53 in 1994. (See Appendix B, Table 1) There has been only one female governor, one female lieutenant governor, and one Republican female gubernatorial candidate.[92] Political activists such as

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[91]Auld, 18 April 2000.

[92]Editorial, "A Government That Looks Like All of Us," *The Burlington Free Press,* 5 November 1992, 8; Paul Teetor, "Republican Women Dominate Senate Race," *The Burlington Free Press,* 5 November 1992, 1; Toya Hill, "Female Candidates Absent" Vermont Avoiding Trend to Push for Higher Offices," *The Burlington Free Press,* 3 August 1992, 1A; Molly Walsh, "Gender Takes a Backseat," *The Burlington Free Press,* 29 October 1994, 1B. In 1992, an editorial noted that there were five women elected to the Vermont Senate from Chittenden County making a total of 11 out of 30. "It takes 20 years of running for school boards and city councils, but the formerly powerless have begun to fill up the political pipeline." In 1982, an editorial noted that after twenty years of sitting on school boards and city council, women were finally winning elections, five women were elected to the senate making the total eleven out of 30. Although this was cause for celebration, readers were cautioned gender is still an issue. By 1994, Burlington Free Press columnist Molly Walsh noted that the National Organization of Women did not support female candidate Jan Backus because of her stand on "women's issues", while they did support James Jeffords.

Madeline Harwood, Gretchen Morse and Susan Auld made it clear in their interviews that the resistance of male Republican Party leaders to give women power and recognition continues to limit Vermont women's participation in party politics. Even though the numbers tell us that Vermont women's opportunities for political success were greater early in the century before reapportionment, those opportunities did not translate into ongoing political power for women. Pauline Tubbs, Bernice Bromley, Gertrude Mallary, Madeline Harwood, Mary Wing, Lola Aiken, and Consuelo Bailey all noted the disappointments and frustrations they experienced at the failure of their male colleagues to accord them parity within the political party system. For Vermont women interested in political careers, the gendered political party system served and continues to serve as a barrier to women's political participation, even in a small, relatively homogeneous, not highly industrialized state.[93]

[93]Women's experiences in politics in a number of other states echo, Vermont women's experiences. Sue Thomas, "Why Gender Matters: The Perceptions of Women Officeholders," *Women and Politics* 17 (1997): 47-49; Clyde Brown, Neil R. Heighberger, and Peter A. Shocket, "Gender-Based Differences in Perceptions of Male and Female City Council Candidates, " *Women and Politics* 13 (1993): 11.

Chapter V

Michigan Women and Republican Party Politics in the Twentieth Century

Michigan women participated in Republican Party politics only with great difficulty during most of the twentieth century. Unlike their counterparts in Vermont, there was no early period when Michigan women were able to move into political office with relative ease. In fact, only 27 women served in the Michigan Legislature between 1921 and 1941, beginning with Eva McCall Hamilton (R-Grand Rapids).[1] Moreover, from 1921 to 1995 only 78 women served in the Michigan Legislature, compared to 532 in the Vermont Legislature, and in Michigan the percentage of women legislators did not rise above 5% until the 1970s.[2] (See Appendix B, Table 2)

Even though large numbers of Michigan women had gained political skill while working toward passage of the suffrage amendment, for most of them this hard work did not translate into party acceptance. Michigan women encountered the same barriers to political success faced by

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[1]Mary C. Brown, *Women in the Michigan Legislature, 1921-1989* (Lansing: House of Representatives, 1989), 5.

[2]Elizabeth Cox, *Women, State, and Territorial Legislators, 1895-1995: A State-by-State Analysis, with Roster of 6,000 Women* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1996), 157-61, 282.

their counterparts in Vermont. Although they were permitted to participate in party activities, their roles were limited to those of supporter, rather than decision maker. For the most part, Michigan women were not running for office; they were distributing flyers and flowers in support of male candidates, as women were in Vermont. In addition, the large urban population in the twentieth century, a strong two party political system, particularly after the 1940s, the one-person-one vote system of representation and the gendered nature of the political system all served to limit the political possibilities of Michigan women throughout the twentieth century.

Although Michigan gained statehood much later than Vermont, Michigan's population increased much more rapidly from 1830 well into the twentieth century. Michigan's population growth from 1830 to 1840 was the largest of any state in the nation. Population increases moderated later in the century, but by 1890 the population in Michigan exceeded 1,000,000, whereas Vermont's population was only 500,000 well into the twentieth century.[3]

Michigan's abundance of natural resources including

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[3]Robert I. Vexler and William F. Swindler, Series Editor, *Michigan: A Chronology & Documentary Handbook* (Dobbs Ferry, New York: Oceana Publishers, 1978), 5,7,18.

timber, copper, and iron, particularly in the Northern Peninsula, brought an influx of immigrants from the Cornish mines as well as Norwegians and Swedes to take jobs in the lumber mills.[4] Improvements in transportation, including canals and railroads, and the introduction of telegraphic communication provided new access to the Michigan frontier.[5] Although mining and timber provided jobs for immigrants and new sources of money for investors, until the early twentieth century agriculture was the backbone of the Michigan economy, just as it was in Vermont.

Despite this similarity, Michigan women's political experiences did not parallel those of Vermont women. The first factor that made it difficult for politically active Michigan women to enter partisan politics was the large urban population. As large numbers of immigrants continued to settle in Michigan and as the importance of manufacturing increased early in the twentieth century, Michigan's population shifted by 1920 from rural to urban centers and 61% of the citizens lived and worked in cities such as Detroit and Grand Rapids. This shift from rural

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[4]James E. Jopling "Cornish Miners of the Upper Peninsula," *Michigan History Magazine* XII (1928): 554.

[5]Susan E. Gray, *The Yankee West: Community Life on the Michigan Frontier* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 48.

areas continued, and by 1950 more than 71% of Michigan's population lived in urban areas. Although the movement toward urban centers was slower in Michigan than in other parts of the Great Lakes region, the coming of the automobile in the early twentieth century fueled a population increase in eastern Michigan, particularly in Detroit.[6]

A second factor affecting Michigan women's political possibilities was the presence of a strong two-party system that represented this large, mostly urban population, particularly after the 1940s. Although Michigan was considered a Republican state in the first three decades of the twentieth century, and only one Democrat, Woodbridge N. Ferris, was able to break through the Republican stranglehold, by the 1930s Democrats began to make important inroads into Michigan politics. In 1933 there were 55 Democrats and 45 Republicans in the Michigan House of Representatives. Except for the 1947 election in which only five Democrats were elected to the House, both Democrats and Republicans equally served the citizens of

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[6]Willis S. Dunbar and George F. May, *Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmann Publishing Company, 1995), 165, 242-72, 482-84, 548-49; Joseph LaPalombara, *Guide to Michigan Politics* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1960), 8.

Michigan.[7] This strong competition for legislative seats necessitated well-funded, formal political campaigns that relied on the financial support of political parties, as well as the need to assure the loyal support of male voters to cast their ballots for the party choice. In this competitive context, both parties wanted to slate strong male candidates. It was difficult, therefore, for women in Michigan to even get nominated, let alone elected. In contrast until the 1960s in Vermont little campaigning and little spending were necessary because essentially only the Republican Party existed. This situation allowed more women to be victorious in their quests for office than Michigan women.

A third factor that had a negative impact on women's political possibilities in Michigan was the system of apportionment. The state's eighty-three counties were divided into thirty-four legislative districts, based on population. The relatively equal one-person-one-vote system of representation resulted in very large districts. In 1950, for example, the actual number of citizens in

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[7]LaPalombara, *Guide To Michigan Politics*, 23.

Michigan represented by a single seat was 63,716.[8] The large size of the districts meant that any potential candidate had to first campaign to win the primary election and then to run a formal, highly structured, and well-financed campaign to gain the support of a majority of citizens in his/her district. Without political party support, it was extremely difficult to reach such a large number of voters. Women in Vermont had a much less difficult time gaining office. Consuelo Northrup Bailey, for instance, became the first female lieutenant governor in the nation by personally visiting the voters. Because it was difficult, if not impossible, for women in Michigan to gain the needed support, political office was often out of reach for women. By contrast, in Vermont, until reapportionment, interest in serving in the legislature was tantamount to winning a seat, even for women.

The Republican Party of Michigan began to take shape late in May of 1854, when groups opposed to the Kansas-Nebraska Act decided to come together in Jackson to form a new party. On July 6, 1854 more than 1,500 people met on a downtown street corner, because there were no buildings

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[8]In Michigan the number of Legislative districts was established by the Constitution and amending the constitution was the only way to make changes. LaPalombara, *Guide to Michigan Politics,* 16-18.

large enough to hold the crowd, and formed an organization they called the Republican Party.[9]

Like Vermont, Republican Party politics dominated state government, particularly the office of governor, from the party's inception in 1854 until the election of G. Mennen Williams in 1948. Although no single reason can be identified for this dominance in Michigan politics, according to a recent study of Michigan history, the predominance of Yankee stock undoubtedly contributed to the Republican Party allegiance of many Michigan voters.[10] Although Democratic candidates won some elections in the legislature during this period, apportionment by county favored rural areas and the state's initial rural nature also fostered the dominance of the Republican Party.[11] But, unlike in Vermont, a growing Democratic Party constantly

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[9]Dunbar and May, *Michigan,* 308-309.

[10]Democratic candidates for Governor were only elected to four, two-year terms between 1882 and 1914 and again to three, two-year terms during FDR's era, 1933 to 1945. After World War II, the revitalization of the Democratic Party fostered party competition and it was common for one party to win the Governorship and the other party to control the Legislature. One party controlled both the office of Governor and both houses of the Legislature for only fourteen years between 1949 and 2001. Dunbar and May, *Michigan,* 381; "Michigan Political Parties: Republican Party," *Michigan Historical Collections Research Strengths* http://www/umich.edu/~bhl/bhl/mhchome/parties/republic.htm (4 December 2001).

[11]William P. Browne and Kenneth VerBurg, *Michigan Politics and Government: Facing Change in a Complex State* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 86, 196-97.

challenged the Michigan Republican Party. The influx of European immigrants and southern blacks to work in the Detroit auto industry in the early twentieth century led to the growth of labor unions, many of which supported Democratic initiatives and candidates.[12] Yet until the 1930s the Republican Party dominated even Detroit. The party's Yankee and Anglo immigrant businessmen and industrialists controlled municipal politics and wielded considerable influence within the state party organization.[13] Even though the Republican Party controlled Michigan politics until the 1940s, the strong union presence would increasingly serve as a counterweight and potential threat to the power of the traditionally Republican automobile company owners.[14] It was this growth in the number of workers and union power in the automobile industry that fostered the increasing political party competition in Michigan far earlier than in Vermont. Michigan's shift toward urbanization and this

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[12]Oliver Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrialization, and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 2-5, 8; Melvin G. Holli, *Reform in Detroit: Hazen E. Pingree and Urban Politics* (New York: Oxford Press, 1969), 4, 219-220; Ronald William Edsforth, *Class Conflict and Cultural Consensus: The Making of a Mass Consumer Society in Flint, Michigan* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 104-109.

[13]Browne and VerBurg, *Michigan Politics and Government*, 258-59.

[14]Lawrence M. Sommers, Joe T. Darden, Jay R. Harman, and Laurie K. Sommers, *Michigan: A Geography* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1984), 176-78.

increased political competition fostered an environment of fierce party battles that provided few opportunities for women's political activism.

Like members of Vermont's Republican Party, Michigan Republicans were not single-minded in their political opinions. In 1866, Michigan's Republican delegation was solidly behind black suffrage, but the majority of citizens were in no hurry to expand suffrage and it was 1869 before Michigan voters approved the amendment, by only 2000 votes, giving blacks the right to vote in Michigan.[15] The split in the National Republican Party over the issue of reconstruction in the 1870s also served to divide the Republican Party in Michigan. In 1861, liberal Republicans and Democrats had both endorsed the Civil War governor, Austin Blair. Yet by 1882, the "regular" Republican candidate, John J. Bagley, however, soundly defeated Blair. The 1882 defeat in the race for governor, the near defeat in 1884 and losses in several other key elections signaled to Republican leaders that new tactics were necessary for continued electoral success. In 1886, party members nominated Cyrus G. Luce, a farmer rather than a businessman, as their candidate for governor. Luce won the

[15]Blacks were voting in former slave states such as Mississippi long before they could vote in Michigan. Dunbar and May, *Michigan,* 382.

election by only 7,000 votes. He was reelected in 1888 by slightly more votes.[16]

Despite experiencing some defeat in the 1880s, the Republican Party pointed with pride to the fact that from 1852 Michigan never gave a single electoral vote to the Democratic presidential candidate. In 1891, however, Democratic legislators were able to enact a provision that established a new policy for the selection of presidential electors. Each congressional district would henceforth choose one delegate, while the other two delegates were chosen by the state at large. Consequently in 1892 for the first and only time Michigan's electoral votes were split and five of Michigan's votes went to the successful Democratic candidate, Grover Cleveland. Benjamin Harrison, the Republican candidate, received the other nine electoral votes.[17]

Michigan's Republican governor Albert Sleeper strongly supported President Woodrow Wilson's declaration of war on August 6, 1917. Although Michigan sent more than 135,000 men to war, the state's greatest contribution was in providing war materials. The newly industrialized state

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[16]Vexler, *Chronology and Documentary Handbook of the State of Michigan,* 18.

[17]Dunbar and May, *Michigan,* 386.

provided raw materials, including iron and copper, but perhaps more importantly steel ships, armored trucks, and tanks. In 1920, Alex J. Groesbeck won an overwhelming victory as governor by 703,180 votes to Democrat Woodbridge Ferris' 310,566 votes, but the upheaval of war and industrialization had disrupted the absolute dominance the Republican Party over the governor's office. Woodbridge Ferris had been elected governor in 1912 and 1914. Nor could Republicans be guaranteed control over national office as Woodbridge was elected to the United States Senate from Michigan in 1922, the first Democrat since 1859.[18]

Michigan's shift from an agrarian to an industrial economy early in the twentieth century set the stage for much of Michigan to be devastated by the Great Depression. Although Michigan Senator James Couzens expressed concern about the American economy early in 1928, little attention was paid to his warnings. As the Depression engulfed the American economy, numerous companies went out of business in Michigan as well as the rest of the nation. Small companies in Michigan were more directly affected by the economic disaster, while large automobile manufacturing

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[18]Vexler, *Chronology and Documentary Handbook of the State of Michigan,* 21.

plants like General Motors and Chrysler actually improved their economic position as smaller car plants went out of business.[19] Because of the Depression and high rates of unemployment in the automobile plants, the companies were plagued by strong and sometimes violent union campaigns. The newly established United Automobile Workers of America organized sit-down strikes in numerous plants, including a number in the Flint, Michigan plant.[20] Success at General Motors led to a short and successful union campaign at Chrysler, but the Ford Motor Company held out much longer. In an effort to stop the strike, a company sponsored strong-arm squad beat union organizers outside the Rouge plant in Dearborn. The 1937 Supreme Court decision upholding the power of the National Labor Relations Board undermined the anti-union activities and Ford workers voted in favor of unionization, thereby completing the process of transforming Michigan's open-shop to the most powerful labor union organizations in the world.[21] The unionization of Michigan's automobile industry fostered growth in the

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[19]Dunbar and May, *Michigan,* 514-17.

[20]Unions organized sit-down strikes, rather than walkouts to keep owners from bringing in strikebreakers. Sidney Fine, *Sit-Down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-1937* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1969), 1-5, 308, 340-41; Sidney Fine, *Frank Murphy: The New Deal Years* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1979), 289-325.

[21]Sommers et al, *Michigan,* 119, 125.

Democratic Party that led the party to several successful political campaigns in the 1930s and 1940s during which times Republican and Democratic candidates alternated winning the governorship each term for a decade.[22]

During the tumultuous depression years, Franklin Roosevelt intervened in Michigan politics to help assure his own success, particularly in his 1936 campaign for president. Fearing both the organization of a third party by his enemy, Louisiana Senator Huey Long, and the power of the charismatic Father Coughlin and his Union Party, Roosevelt supported Catholic Frank Murphy in his bid for governor. Roosevelt assumed that Murphy's connections to the Church would keep Catholics from deserting the Democratic Party in favor of Coughlin's party. Roosevelt was reelected as President by a landslide in 1936 and Frank Murphy rode on his coattails into the office of Governor of Michigan.

Although Murphy initiated liberal New Deal programs during his tenure as Governor, his first official duty on January 1, 1937 was to deal with a strike that had begun at the Fisher Body Plant on December 30, 1936. Aware of the

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[22]Dudley W. Buffa, *Union Power and American Democracy: The UAW and the Democratic Party, 1935-1972* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1984), v, 71.

strong possibility of violence, Murphy decided to send in the National Guard to maintain order, but not to eject the striking workers, as General Motor's executives pressured him to do. Murphy's success at handling the strike helped him to maintain his position as governor, but his insistence on following the dictates of his conscience, rather than party mandates when making difficult decisions, led to his defeat in 1938 by Republican Frank Fitzgerald.[23]

Politics took a backseat as Michigan citizens supported World War II, by providing both soldiers and more than $50 billion worth of war materials.[24] But by 1945, Michigan citizens were looking forward to returning to normal conditions, as automobiles were again being manufactured and snapped up by Americans all over the country. Politics, somewhat dominated by one party during the depression and the war, now returned to strong two-party competition. Harry F. Kelly captured the governorship for the Republicans in 1942 and in 1944. During Kelly's tenure as governor, scandal involving the buying of votes, elevated special prosecutor, turned Republican candidate, Kim Sigler, to the governorship in

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[23]Dunbar and May, *Michigan,* 529-31; Fine, *Sit-Down,* 9-10, 308-309; Fine, *Frank Murphy,* 299-304.

[24]Sommers et al, *Michigan,* 119.

1946. UAW President Walter Reuther consolidated his union and political power and in 1948 supported Gerhard Mennen "Soapy" Williams for governor. Even though old guard Democrats opposed him, Williams won the nomination and was narrowly elected governor.[25]

Williams served six terms as Governor of Michigan, but Michigan's economic boom had slowed and the state's growing financial problems made for internal political party battles to control the state and its economic future. Williams wanted a graduated personal income tax, but the Republican controlled legislature favored an increase in the sales tax.[26] Although the three percent tax level was the maximum permitted by the Constitution, the Republican legislature was able to amend the Constitution allowing an increase in the sales tax to four percent.[27]

The struggles between the Democratic governor and the Republicans in the legislature were even more evident in the corporate taxation policies. In attempt to solve the grave fiscal problems of the state, Governor Williams

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[25]Williams was heir to the family soap fortune. Brown and VerBurg, *Michigan Politics and Government*, 197.

[26]"Principles and Philosophy, Taxation, 1958," *Republican State Central Committee* RSCC Papers, Box 31, Bentley Museum, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

[27]Browne and VerBurg, 197-99; Dunbar and May, 559-63, 587.

levied heavy taxes on businesses. As a result, many businesses left Michigan and few new companies were willing to locate there.[28] In addition, the loss of so many businesses left many workers unemployed, further adding to the state's economic woes. This economic climate paved the way for the Republicans to break the Democrats' stranglehold on the office of Governor.

Lieutenant Governor John B. Swainson had succeeded Williams for one term. He was then defeated, however, by the dynamic Republican candidate George Romney in the 1962 election.[29] Romney was a reformist Republican who proposed a state income tax in 1964 as a way to end Michigan's fiscal crisis.[30] His administration and its policies also fostered a more welcoming environment for women, who were credited by some as being the key to the Republican victory in 1962.[31]

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[28]*Interoffice Report* (Michigan Republican State Central Committee, 1962) Box 49, Republican State Central Committee Papers, Bentley Library, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan.

[29]Romney was the first Republican in fourteen years to be elected Governor of Michigan. George Van Peursen, Chair, *Annual Report* (Michigan Republican State Central Committee, 1962). Box 31, Republican State Central Committee Papers, Bentley Library, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan.

[30]Dunbar and May, *Michigan,* 577.

[31]In a Republican Women's Federation of Michigan File Bulletin, it was noted that women were seen as the key to a Republican victory in 1962. Dorothy Benton, *File Bulletin* (Battle Creek: Republican Women's Federation of Michigan, November 1961).

It was during Romney's tenure as Governor that Elly Peterson became the first woman elected to the position of Chair of the Republican State Committee. Peterson's long and distinguished political career in Michigan politics gives us a window onto women's political activism in Michigan and the pervasive way in which gendered ideas and gender discrimination functioned to shape and limit women's political possibilities.[32]

Growing up, Peterson knew little about politics because her Republican mother and Democratic father rarely discussed the subject. Peterson's initiation into the Republican Party began in the Young Republican Club, in Illinois in the 1930s. Peterson's recollection of one of her first political activities epitomized much of her and other women's politics activism for years to come. She recalled walking along Michigan Avenue in Chicago in the pouring rain handing out sunflower replicas for Alf Landon. She remembers distinctly that as the paint from the sunflowers ran down her arm, Colonel McCormick, owner of the *Chicago Tribune* and head of the campaign, rode by in his car several times urging her and other women volunteers on but he never got out in the rain to join them. Peterson

[32]Sharon Yentech, "GOP Pins Hope on a Woman to Bring New Life into Party," *The State Journal,* 26 February 1965.

realized very early that women played a particular role in politics: "We didn't do anything about issues, we wouldn't have been permitted in any meeting of interest, but we did a lot of scut work."[33]

After her marriage in 1935, she moved with husband Merritt first to Kalamazoo and then to Charlotte, Michigan and by the 1950s she was very involved with Michigan Republican politics.[34] Like women nationwide, Peterson began her political career in her local Republican office doing everything from cleaning to running the mimeograph machine. However, because the staff was small, she worked closely with part-time State Chair attorney Larry Lindemer and by 1957 she began to take over more and more of his duties.[35]

As Lindemer gained confidence in Peterson's abilities, he suggested to other Committee members that she take on a formal committee position. As Peterson noted, however, the idea was rejected for reasons that were consistent with the party's identification of itself with big business: "He was

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[33]Elly Peterson, Interview with author, 29-31 August 1996.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Political scientist Jo Freeman refers to women's apprenticeship in party offices as a means to break into the party organization. Jo Freeman, *A Room at a Time: How Women Entered Party Politics* (New York: Rowman, Littlefield Publishers, 2000.), 149-51.

going to make me organizational director, but the finance men wouldn't let him because they said no women were active in the automobile business in high places, women were just zero."[36] In spite of this rejection, Peterson continued her work in Michigan Republican Party politics and tried to bring other women into the committee.[37] But male attitudes were slow to change and as she pointed out, "The men were in the front and the women were very definitely the workers, but thought of as followers."[38]

By 1962, however, Peterson's persistence and the changing state political climate led to a place on George Romney's campaign for Governor. According to Peterson, Romney was more open to bringing women into party work and invited her into his organizational meetings. It was during this campaign that Peterson realized, "a lot of these women [campaign workers] were very smart politically, had a political sense and organizational skills."[39]

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[36]Peterson, 29-31 August 1998.

[37]Because of their minority position in both political parties and in political offices, politically active women must focus much of their energy on sponsoring and supporting other women as candidates. See Anthony Gierzynski and Paulette Budreck, "Women Legislative Caucus and Leadership Campaign Committees," *Women and Politics* 15 (1995): 23, 33-34.

[38]Peterson, 29-31 August 1998.

[39]Ibid.

In 1963, Peterson was elected Vice-Chair of the Michigan State Committee, a position always held by women. In this capacity she attended the Republican National Committee meeting where she expected she would work hard and be part of the decision-making process. She was disappointed in this later expectation, finding instead that women in this position were most often wealthy women who could write a check, but "they did absolutely nothing political and were not allowed into the inner sanctum." Peterson also recounted a story that demonstrated women's inability to enter the political inner sanctum. Peterson recalled a particular Republican Party Committee Meeting of the midwestern region. The meeting was held in a hotel suite where the men and women had coffee together in the living room. When the men wanted to discuss party business they retreated to the bedroom. Several women followed them, so the men went into the bathroom so they would not be disturbed while discussing important party business.[40]

Peterson worked on the state and national level and became known as a dedicated party member who could be counted on to work hard and not cause any trouble, a pattern described by political scientist Kristi Anderson as

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[40]Ibid.

acceptable to male party members.[41] Moreover, as Anderson noted, the way for women to get things done politically was to dress and comport themselves as ladies and to remind men at least subconsciously of their mothers. Peterson had concluded that she was not threatening to men in the party because of her age-she felt she was seen as a mother figure.

It was perhaps because of this image that Peterson was called back to Michigan in 1964 to run against incumbent Democrat Phillip Hart for the United States Senate from Michigan. Even though specifically asked to run, male Republicans did not really view her as a viable candidate. In a later reflection on her political career, Peterson said that "Romney picked her to oppose Hart because `No man was willing to run' a race they were sure to lose."[42] Peterson's experience was that of many other women in politics: as a woman, she was *not* expected to win the election. As a moderate, party elites felt was acceptable to both wings of the party and could draw the party back

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[41]Kristi Anderson, *After Suffrage: Women in Partisan and Electoral Politics Before the New Deal* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 125; Peterson , 29-31 August 1996.

[42]Robert Lewis, "GOP's Elly Sings Third Swan Song," *Grand Rapids Press*, 6 December 1970.

together after the Goldwater debacle.[43]

As was the case with many other female political candidates in the 1960s, much of Peterson's campaign publicity in her race against Hart ran in the women's section of the newspaper, not as political news. An example from Peterson's 1964 campaign for Senate that illustrates this inequity was an article in the Lansing *State Journal* that appeared in the women's section, not the political or news section of the paper, focusing on her appearance as much as her political qualifications for office.[44] Despite this less than optimal situation, the "nation's top-ranking Republican woman" ran a strong primary, beating out two men to become the general election nominee, and garnering a respectable number of votes against a strong incumbent in the general election although the popular Hart easily won reelection.[45]

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[43]In a report prepared by the Republican National Committee in 1965, the Goldwater election was referred to as the election when the Committee suffered its greatest defeat. *The 1964 Election: A Summary Report with Supporting Tables* (Washington, D.C.: Republican National Committee, Research Division, 1965), 1, 7-8, 38. Anderson noted that before the New Deal women were frequently nominated as sacrificial lambs, but in 1964, Peterson was still in that same position. Anderson, *After Suffrage*, 126; Peterson, 29-31 August 1996.

[44]This particular article appeared in the women's section and focused on Peterson's feminine qualifications such as her appearance and family background. Virginia Redfern, "Elly Peterson Is Combination of Femininity, Political Skill," *The State Journal*, 22 April 1964.

[45]Shanto Iyengar, Nicholas A. Valentino, Stephen Ansolabehere, and Adam F. Simpson, "Running as A Woman: Gender Stereotyping in Political

Thinking this defeat was the end of her political career, Peterson took a leisurely vacation. Upon her return in January of 1965, Joyce Braithwaite, a friend and political ally, persuaded her to attend the state central committee meeting in Lansing. Braithwaite interrupted Peterson's sleep with the excited announcement: "Elly, they're talking about you for state chairman." Peterson recalls responding with disbelief. "That's the dumbest thing I ever heard of. There's no woman state chairman in the whole country."[46] At the time, Ray Bliss of Ohio was Republican national chairman and would not let women into the state chair meetings, even if they came with a proxy vote. Despite Peterson's disbelief, at 8:00 a.m. the next morning Governor George Romney and Lieutenant Governor William Milliken asked Peterson to take over as chair of the Michigan Republican State Committee. There are several reasons for her rise to power in Michigan politics. The then chair, Arthur G. Elliot, had resigned in response to criticism from party members following the dismal showing

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Campaigns," in Pippa Norris, ed., *Women Media and Politics,* (New York: Oxford Press, 1997), 77, 97; Susan J. Carroll and Ronnee Schreiber, "Media Coverage of Women in the 103rd Congress," in Pippa Norris, ed., *Women Media and Politics,* (New York: Oxford Press, 1997), 145;

[46]Joyce Braithwaite, Interview with author, 28 February 2000.

of the state Republican Party in 1964.[47] Peterson was well known to Michigan Republicans by that time, having worked within the party organization for twenty years. Governor Romney said of her: "She looks like a girl, thinks like a man and works like a horse."[48] She was chosen to chair the state Republican Party because of her organizational skills. Michigan Republicans hoped she would revitalize and bring new life to the Party.[49] Peterson agreed to lead the Party, and was elected chair in February of 1965. She served as a strong and capable leader from 1965 to 1969.[50]

In her position as Chair of the Republican State Central Committee, Peterson dealt with a number of difficult issues. One of the most intriguing was the campaign of Phyllis Schafly, Chair of the Illinois Republican Women's Clubs, who was determined to take over the Republican Women's Clubs nationwide and promote her conservative agenda. Letters that Peterson sent during the

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[47]Tom Shawver, "Let's Start Fighting, Elly Tells the GOP," *Detroit Free Press*, 21 February 1965.

[48]Elizabeth A. Conway, "Elly Energetic, Eager, Effective," *The State Journal*, undated.

[49]Sharon Wentsch, "GOP Pins Hope on a Woman to Bring New Life into Party," *The State* Journal, 28 February 1965; Robert Lewis, "Ferency, Mrs. Peterson Agree on Three Issues," *The Ann Arbor News*, 31 March 1965.

[50]*Annual Report, 1967*, Michigan Republican State Central Committee RSCC Papers, Box 1, Bentley Library, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.

struggle describe the battle of two strong, politically active women with diametrically opposed points of view. On September 21, 1967, Peterson's made a strong and direct response to Schafly's initial move to inject the conservative Eagle Forum agenda into that of the Republican Women's Clubs. Peterson first rejected the application of Mrs. Elma Ambrose, a protégé of Schafly's, to start a new Republican Women's Club. Two more rejection letters followed the next day and again six months later. Peterson then sent a memo detailing Schafly's disruption of the Convention with a note and a copy of a Washington Post article to the women leaders of Michigan emphasizing that no separate Republican women's group should be allowed to organize, especially in Michigan. Finally, Peterson sent a memo to Dorothy Elston, President of the National Federation of Republican Women's Clubs recommending that she simply refuse the conservative women membership in the National Federation.[51]

Peterson recalls the battle with Schafly well, but said that although Schafly was never able to take over the

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[51]Letter from Elly Peterson to Mrs. Elma Ambrose, 5 September 1966; 6 September 1966; and 1 March 1967; Memo from Elly Peterson to the Women Leaders of Michigan, 22 May 1967 and Memo from Elly Peterson to Dorothy Elston, 21 September 1967. National Republican Women's Federation Collection, 1965-1968, Box 38 Bentley Library, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.

Republican Women's Clubs, she felt the whole affair should have been handled differently. In retrospect, she concluded that running a reasonable, logical campaign while Schafly was playing to everyone's emotions suggesting that women would be drafted; that everyone would have to use the same bathroom was a mistake.[52]

During Peterson's tenure as Chair of the state Republican Committee, she also worked diligently to bring other activist women into positions of power. The first woman Peterson hired was fellow Charlotte Republican, Joyce Braithwaite, as her executive assistant. Although Braithwaite went on to serve in the powerful position of political liaison to Governor William Milliken during his fourteen-year tenure as governor, from the outset she shared Peterson's awareness of the lack of equality for women: "There were no Republican women leaders until Elly Peterson was elected State Party Chairman, women did all the work and men took all the bows."[53] In her twenty-year career in Republican politics in Lansing, Braithwaite said she felt lucky enough not to experience discrimination. She believed this was the case because Milliken was her mentor,

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[52]Peterson, 21 February 2000.

[53]Joyce Braithwaite, Interview with author, 28 February 2000.

a strong mentor being something "which a woman needed to get a foot in the door in those days." She added "Elly tried to bring a lot of women along during her tenure in the 60s and 70s, but the men were loath to take them seriously. I could see the injustice to other women and resented them [men]."[54]

Another Michigan Republican activist was Shirley McFee, who began her involvement with Republican Party politics when she helped to organize the Republican Women's Club in 1953 in Battle Creek, where she later tangled with Dorothy Bennett, a colleague of ultra-conservative Schafly. During the summer of 1956, McFee also did volunteer work in the Michigan Republican Headquarters. She stated that although she developed a strong liaison with Elly Peterson and the State Party organization, much of her early political activism was as a precinct delegate. McFee's experiences also were like those of Peterson and Braithwaite. She contended that, as a woman, "You had to wiggle your way in and despite the fact that women had delegate positions, there were not too many of them who were taken seriously."[55] McFee recalled that in her Battle

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[54]Ibid.

[55]Shirley McFee, Interview with author 19 October 1999.

Creek experiences she constantly encountered male refusal to accord women political equality. Nor does she believe all that much has changed. "I think then and now there is an underlying attitude with men that they expect the women to take the secondary positions, and I experienced this when I was on the Board of Commissioners for the City of Battle Creek."[56] She concluded after many years in politics that "the women are still expected to do all of that [support work] and let the men make all the decisions." She at least sees hope for the future "The door has been pushed ajar and more and more women are asserting their right to a substantive role."[57]

Another of Peterson's protégés was Helen Milliken, wife of Governor William Milliken.[58] Although Milliken described her parents as apolitical, she got involved with politics on the local level when her husband ran for Republican County Chairman. But it was not until he ran for lieutenant governor under George Romney that she was drawn into state politics. Milliken recalled that "Romney

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[56]Ibid.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Milliken was governor from 1969-1983. His decision to leave politics was largely based on Michigan's dire economic problems. John Holosha, Milliken to Quit Politics at End of His Term in '82, *The New York Times* 23 December 1981, 14A.

was such a charismatic figure that you couldn't help but be caught up in his ideas, his programs, and so forth."[59]

Initially, Milliken played a supportive role in her husband's campaign for Governor. But by the 1970s she was a central figure in the non-partisan campaign for the Equal Rights Amendment. Although her own political activism brought her to the forefront of the women's movement in the 1970s, Milliken noted that in the 1960s and 1970s, "the males simply considered it [politics] their turf and their prerogative and a women's opinion was listened to rarely, if at all."[60] Milliken pointed out that even an experienced political activist like Elly Peterson went unheard in Gerald Ford's campaign for President. "I can remember Elly in the Ford campaign of 1976 coming back to Michigan in August, just sick."[61] Peterson had been at the heart of Ford's campaign and, according to Milliken, predicted that "They're going to lose it, because those men at the top have written off the women's vote and the cities aren't even going to try because they don't think certain segments are available and won't try for them. They will not listen

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[59]Helen Milliken, Interview with author, 20 November 1999.

[60]Ibid.

[61]Ibid.

to me on the folly of this."[62] Milliken herself concluded "Gerry Ford thought he was going to win that election, but Elly was right on target."[63] Milliken was not surprised at the situation, however, because the Ford hierarchy was composed largely of conservative Reagan supporters.

Milliken's frustration with the Republican Party's position on women and women's issues led her, with a number of other prominent Republican women including Elly Peterson, to publicly support the Democratic candidate for Governor in 1982, James J. Blanchard.[64] In retrospect, Milliken concluded that most women's political opportunities have not changed significantly since her own initial involvement, particularly in the Republican Party. "Their opportunities," she asserted, "have been smothered."[65]

Ranny Riecker's experiences were similar. She entered Republican Party politics at a young age because her mother was the first woman ever elected to the Ann Arbor City Council. After meeting her husband while doing graduate

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[62]Ibid.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Hugh McDiarmid, "It's time the feminists spoke out on Headlee," [Republican candidate for governor] *Detroit Free Press* September 19, 1982.

[65]Milliken, 20 November 1999.

work at Mt. Holyoke, she moved with him to Washington for three years and then in 1958 returned to Michigan where they both got involved in Republican Party politics. Riecker noted that the local party in Midland, Michigan was "absolutely inept" so there were wide-open opportunities in local politics.[66] Riecker unofficially took over the Republican Party county office and also worked on a number of political campaigns. Her political activism continued and her loyalty and hard work brought her the Vice-Chairmanship of the Republican State Central Committee in the mid 1960s and to serve on the Republican National Committee in the early 1970s. Even though she had been able to work her way through the ranks of Republican Party politics, Riecker noted her opinion "I think you [a woman] were still expected to do all the work and be moderately passive-aggressive in the decision-making."[67] Riecker concluded that despite the barriers posed by the male party structure, Michigan Republican women had their own resources: "We were very lucky to have had Elly. Because I think the normal woman's attitude is just the opposite. I'll climb up on your shoulders. The newer group [of women

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[66]Ranny Riecker, Interview with author, 20 March 2000.

[67]Ibid.

politicians] was more cooperative."[68]

Even though her parents were not active in politics, Margaret Cooke became interested in her early childhood. While watching the 1952 Republican National Convention she said to her father "I'm going to be there one day."[69] As a student at Michigan State University in 1962 Cooke joined the College Republican Club and became, through hard work and persistence, the first female Vice-Chair of the Michigan Federation of College Republicans in 1965. Cooke went on to become Assistant Secretary of the Young Republicans National Federation in 1971. In spite of her successes, however, she observed gender discrimination, particularly before Elly Peterson became State Chair in 1965. According to Cooke, the women in the Michigan Republican Party were "the ones who stuffed envelopes, they did the work of the party and made coffee for the meetings. This was the role we were allowed to have because we were not seen as having a right to more important policy or decision-making roles."[70] Cooke concluded that today there

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[68]Ibid.; Political scientist, Jesse C. Donahue concluded that all women don't necessarily support other female candidates or so-called women's issues such as abortion. Jesse C. Donahue, "The Non Representation of Gender: School Committee Members and Gender Equity," *Women and Politics* 20 (Summer 1999): 65, 79.

[69]Margaret Cooke, Interview with author, 4 November 1999.

[70]Cooke, 4 November 1999.

are even more barriers to women's political participation in the Republican Party because of its shift to the right. "Now, we [women] kind of have no home, those of us who are Republican. I think moderate women are in worse shape today in the Republican Party than they've ever been."[71]

A final political protégé of Elly Peterson's, Mary Coleman, attributed her membership in a number of women's organizations including the American Association of University Women and the Business and Professional Women's Club to opening doors into the world of politics.[72] After a wartime stay in Germany, she and her husband returned to Marshall, Michigan where their belief in working for good

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[71]Ibid.

[72]Mary Coleman, Interview with author, 20 February 2000. Women's involvement in social and political organizations proved to be a training ground for many activist women. Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Susan Hartmann, *From Margin to Mainstream* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989); Sara Evans, "Women's History and Political Theory: Toward A Feminist Approach to Public Life in (Nancy C. Hewitt and Suzanne Lebsock, eds. *Visible Women: New Essays in American Activism* (Urbana: The University of Illinois, 1993); Cynthia Harrison, *On Account of Sex: The Politics of Women's Issues, 1945-1968* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform* (New York: Oxford Press, 1991); Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor, *Survival in the Doldrums* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990); Sandra Haarsager, *Organized Womanhood: Cultural Politics in the Pacific Northwest, 1840-1920* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997); Karen J. Blair, *Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980); Victoria Lynn Gettis, "A Disciplined Society: The Juvenile Court, Reform, and The Social Sciences in Chicago, 1890-1930" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Michigan, 1994); Glenna Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman: Woman's Place in the United States, 1630-1970* (New York: Oxford Press, 1992).

government led him to run for state senate. It was during her husband's tenure in Republican politics in the late 1950s that Coleman was drawn more centrally into her own political activism when in 1971 she ran and was elected in a non-partisan vote to the position of juvenile judge.[73] With the urging of other judges and her husband's declaration that if she did not like what was going on in the Michigan Supreme Court she should run. Coleman entered the Supreme Court campaign. With Elly Peterson leading her campaign, Coleman was elected as the first female justice to the Michigan Supreme Court in 1972. Her personal successes aside, however, Coleman noted that "politics was a man's world and men felt that women couldn't handle the job."[74]

Helen Thomas, a friend of Elly Peterson and long-time United Press International reporter covering the White House, noted a shift in men's attitudes toward politically active women over the last 50 years. Thomas, who is from Michigan and who has had a front seat on Washington politics since the early 1950s, observed that although women who reached the level of holding office in the United

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[73]Coleman, 20 February 2000.

[74]Ibid.

States Congress were treated with respect, there were still men who had a patronizing attitude toward them and felt they needed protection. "I think basically they [women] went along until the Women's Movement and then women began to resent this kind of attitude."[75] Thomas credits the women's movement of the 1960s with helping more women to realize their political potential and providing the necessary confidence to seek office. Observing lingering gender discrimination, Thomas concluded "I think they [women] realize that we're all in this together and we have to stick together."[76]

Although Peterson and a number of the other Michigan women activists recounted a long history of difficulty and discrimination working within the political party system, one activist, Carol Josephson, a conservative Republican from Grand Rapids, reported a different experience. Although her parents were not active in politics, Josephson became interested in Republican politics as a student at Cornell and recalled clearly how her initial interest was piqued. "I admired the students who participated in political rallies and who were acquainted with the

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[75]Helen Thomas, Interview with author, 6 January 1997.

[76]Ibid.

candidates and their platforms."[77] Even though she was unable to participate at that time because she was working her way through college, Josephson vowed to get involved when the time was right. She began her political activism when she returned to Michigan and took on the post of secretary of the Young Republicans. In this capacity she met Gerald Ford and eventually worked on his first campaign for the United States Congress in 1948. Like most women during that era, including many of the other women interviewed for this study, Josephson was kept busy stuffing and addressing envelopes and working the phone center. In the 1950s, Josephson participated in local political activities, often with fellow Republican Dorothy Judd in the League of Women Voters. Dorothy Judd was a dedicated member of the League of Women Voters, a group that strongly supported reapportionment, as well as the Citizen's Action Committee. But Judd's most memorable contributions to Michigan were as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1961.[78]

Josephson's political activities included serving as a

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[77]Carol Josephson, Interview with author, 28 November 1999; Campaign Flyer, "Carol Josephson: Republican Campaign Activist."

[78]Dorothy Judd Papers, Collection 104, Box 1, Grand Rapids Public Library.

Republican delegate to the 1976 Republican Convention in Kansas City, as Vice-Chair of the Kent County Republican Committee, and then moving up to become the first woman elected as district chair of the 5th Michigan district in 1978. Josephson recalls that she worked her way up the ladder in the Republican Women's Club and became President in 1974. Unlike the other women interviewed for this study and those deeply involved in Michigan electoral politics, Josephson concluded that "the Federation is really the organization that any woman who wants to become active or wanted to use that as a springboard to run for political office, and they really do encourage you to run for office, should join."[79] Josephson did speculate on why she reacted differently from the other women with regard to her own political career. She concluded that while some women felt they were not supported by men in the party, she chose to work in the background and was comfortable within the party organization.[80]

Although women have made significant gains within Michigan Republican politics, as indeed they have in Democratic politics, they have yet to reach parity within the political system. (See Appendix C, Graphs 3&4) They do

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[79]Josephson, 28 November 1999.

not hold fifty percent of the elected positions, nor has there ever been a female governor in Michigan. Although there is no single reason to explain this lack of equality, the recollections of Elly Peterson, Joyce Braithwaite, Helen Milliken, Shirley McFee, Rany Riecker, Margaret Cooke, Mary Coleman, and Carol Josephson about their experiences make it clear that the attitudes of the men who firmly controlled the state's Republican Party apparatus continued to limit Michigan women's participation in party politics even during the 1970s.

[80]Ibid.

Conclusion

Beneath the veneer of courtesy and outward show of consideration universally accorded women, there is a widespread male hostility - age-old perhaps - against sharing with them any actual control.
Eleanor Roosevelt
Redbook April, 1928

The population of the United States is more than fifty percent female, but women hold less than fifteen percent of elected office on the national level. Even though women in America gained the vote in 1920 and now vote in equal or greater numbers than men, they still fall behind not only in office holding but also in wielding political power. The factors that influence this inequality are rooted in the enlightenment foundations of American democracy. These factors were perpetuated in the development of the American political system. Consequently, the political system that developed in the United States was gendered and has functioned as such since the constitutional period. Gendered political assumptions of our American democratic society have helped support a system of structural impediments to women's equal political participation. Thus, a system that purportedly provides equal access to participation is in fact one that has systematically denied that parity to women.

The political party experiences of women in Vermont and Michigan mirror those of women nationwide. My examination of the social, economic, and political systems in each state, as well as of the political experiences of a number of individual Republican women, has provided some answers by integrating the structure and processes of the formal political institutions, women's separate political history, and the gendered ideas imbedded in western democracy.

In Vermont, which was dominated by the Republican Party before 1962, women had more access to the political party system than did women in Michigan. Living in small rural communities, most with populations less than 1,000, provided women with numerous possibilities to serve in the Vermont Legislature. In the small towns, there were few males who had the flexibility to serve in the Legislature. Even though legislative sessions in Vermont were short in duration, leaving their farms or small businesses for even a week was impossible for most men. The unavailability of male citizens opened the door for women. In addition, the dominance of the Republican Party before 1960 meant little competition for Vermont's legislative seats, providing more political possibilities for Vermont women. Although their numbers declined after reapportionment in 1965, women

continued to hold political office in Vermont. Between 1921 and 1995, more than 500 women served in the Vermont Legislature.

Women's political participation in Vermont began with the formation of suffrage organizations and with participation in voluntary organizations that helped shape local and state decision-making. Although the suffrage groups in Vermont were not well organized or particularly well attended, they still served to influence the political process. The mass meetings and organized marches, while not immediately successful, kept suffrage and other women's issues in the public eye.

In addition to those who organized Vermont's suffrage activities, some women served their communities through their participation in voluntary associations such as the *Athena Club* of Burlington, Vermont. Within such organizations women were able to influence the allocation of local and, at times, state resources. The club members focused primarily on initiatives that would improve the lives of women and children in their community. The women educated themselves about issues of interest, and used their knowledge to inform the public and to petition their local and state representatives to effect change.

With the passage of the Suffrage Amendment in 1920, some women were successful in their bids for state office in Vermont. The system of one-town-one-vote provided opportunities for Vermont women that were not available to women in larger, more urban states like Michigan, which has a one-person-one-vote system. In Vermont, every town sent a representative to the legislature. Because many Vermont towns had very small populations, there often was little competition for the legislative post. If no man sought the available office, an opportunity existed for a woman to run for the Legislature. The fact that Vermont was essentially a one-party state also benefited women, because it further decreased the numbers of candidates seeking a particular seat. As a result, by 1953 women comprised a fifth of the Vermont legislature. The number was so unusual that *Life* magazine ran a story in the April issue featuring these Vermont women, complete with a full-page group picture of the fifty-two women. By 1965, with federally mandated reapportionment and the end of the one-town-one-vote system, it became necessary for women to obtain the support of party members to run for office in Vermont. As the size of the political arena grew, and the residents of several towns shared one seat in the legislature, the voters were less willing to give women the opportunity to represent

them. The competition for the smaller number of seats also caused the political parties to become more influential and at the same time more reluctant to support women as candidates for office. The political possibilities for women once again were limited because of their gender.

Unlike women in Vermont prior to reapportionment, women in Michigan had few opportunities for political success. The state had a strong two-party system with large congressional districts, which made it necessary for women to have party support from 1920 forward. Perhaps because of these obstacles, women in Michigan organized strong, effective suffrage organizations that promoted women's rights. The Michigan Equal Suffrage Association was effective in lobbying for municipal suffrage and, more importantly, for full voting rights for women as early as 1918, two years before the federal amendment.

Elsewhere in Michigan a number of women worked in voluntary organizations toward the improvement of the lives of women and children. One such organization was the *Ladies Literary Club* of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Shortly after organization in 1873, club members began to focus on suffrage. The women also were deeply involved in local and state reform. They signed petitions, led marches and rallies, and lobbied the legislature in support of

education reform, improved labor laws, and increased community access for women.

After women gained the vote in 1918, some of the same Michigan women who were interested in suffrage moved into Republican Party politics and were successful in achieving sufficient power to be seated as alternate delegates to the 1920 Republican National Convention held in Chicago on June 8, 1920. Despite that success, in general strong political party competition and the need to gain the support of more than 60,000 voters made it difficult for Michigan women to gain access to nomination for candidacy, therefore rendering them politically powerless.

This dissertation examined women's political experiences in Vermont and Michigan from suffrage to Republican Party politics. It begins with a brief history of each state to determine similarities and differences in the economic, social and political systems that developed in Vermont and Michigan. Chapters two and three outlined activists women's work in suffrage organizations and voluntary associations in Vermont and Michigan. The final two chapters examined the personal experiences of eighteen women active in Republican Party politics. The purpose of this research was to determine what effect the institutional structure of the political system within the

Republican Party had on women in general and these women in particular. For contemporary women in Vermont and Michigan, the gendered nature of the political system served as a barrier to women's political activism. (See Appendix C, Figures 5&6)

The political possibilities of women in the Republican Party in Vermont and Michigan were limited by men's unwillingness to open the gates of power to women. Future research on the Democratic Party and activist women's experiences might provide a useful comparison. Well into the twentieth century, however, the Democratic Party was relatively weak in both Vermont and Michigan, which could limit research possibilities. As women continue to make inroads into party politics, research opportunities will arise that offer scholars new avenues for further research.

APPENDIX A

ILLUSTRATIONS

Politically Active Vermont Women


Lola Aiken


Susan Auld


Bernice Bromley


Madeline Harwood


Consuelo Northrup Bailey


Gertrude Mallary


Gretchen Morse


Pauline Tubbs


Mary Wing

Politically Active Michigan Women


Joyce Braithwaite


Mary Coleman


Margaret Cooke


Carol Josephson


Elly Peterson


Dorothy Judd


Shirley McFee


Helen Milliken


Ranny Riecker

APPENDIX B

TABLES

Year	Vermont House	Michigan House
1921	1	0
1923	4	0
1925	11	1
1927	8	0
1929	9	0
1931	15	0
1933	8	0
1935	17	0
1937	15	1
1939	16	2
1941	19	1
1943	35	1
1945	47	2
1947	37	1
1949	25	2
1951	36	2
1953	53	1
1955	48	3
1957	49	3
1959	52	3
1961	45	3
1963	48	4
1965	47	5
1967	21	6
1969	21	6
1971	21	5
1973	28	7
1975	22	8
1977	25	7
1979	35	13
1981	36	16
1983	32	14
1985	45	14
1987	45	20
1989	51	20
1991	48	21
1993	51	28
1995	43	30

Table 1

Comparative:
Women in the Vermont House of Representatives vs.
Women in the Michigan House of Representatives

Source: Elizabeth Cox, Women State, and Territorial Legislators, 1895-1995: A State-by-State Analysis with Rosters of 6,000 Women (Jefferson, N.C.: Mc Farland and Company, 1996).

Table 2

Comparative:
Women in the Vermont Senate vs. Women in the Michigan Senate

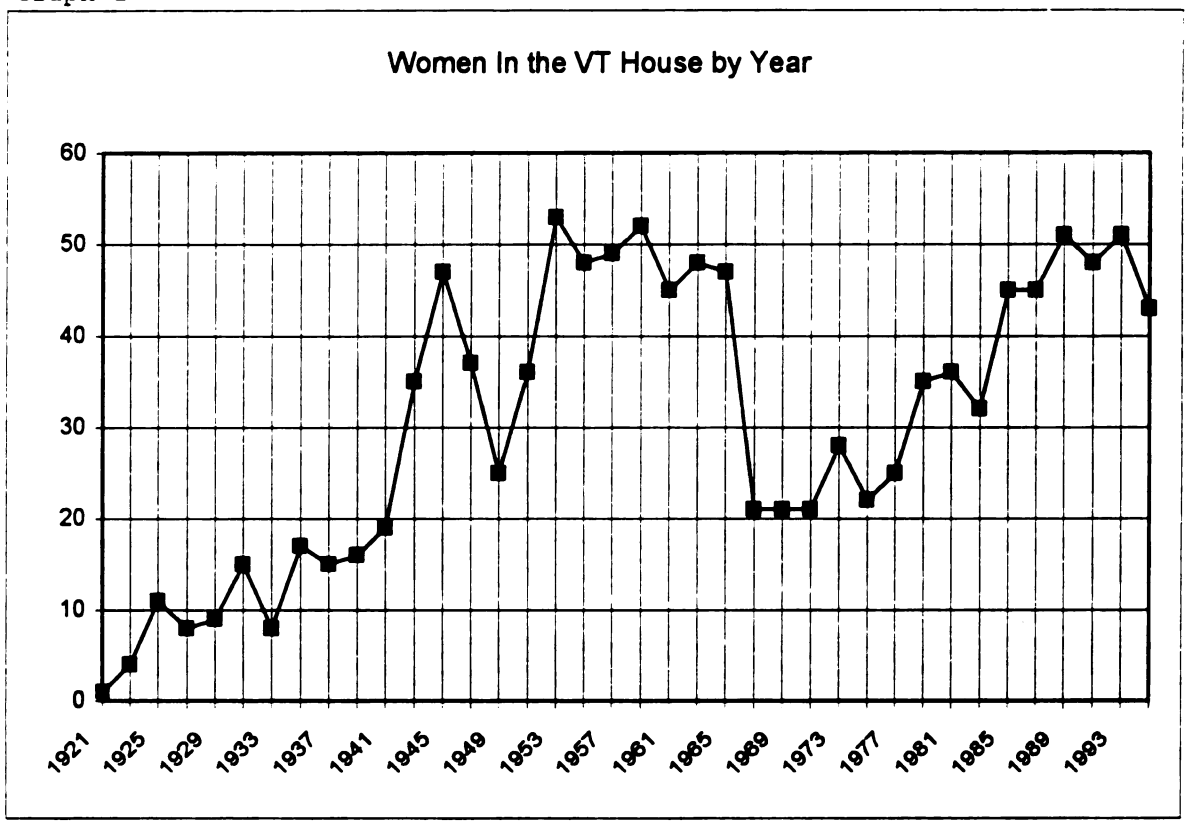
Year	Vemont Senate	Michigan Senate
1921	0	1
1923	1	0
1925	0	0
1927	0	0
1929	1	0
1931	1	0
1933	2	0
1935	1	0
1937	1	0
1939	1	0
1941	0	0
1943	0	0
1945	1	0
1947	3	0
1949	1	0
1951	2	0
1953	2	0
1955	2	0
1957	2	0
1959	4	0
1961	5	0
1963	3	0
1965	1	0
1967	2	1
1969	3	1
1971	3	0
1973	3	0
1975	2	0
1977	2	0
1979	3	0
1981	4	0
1983	5	2
1985	4	2
1987	3	2
1989	6	2
1991	7	3
1993	11	4
1995	11	3

Source: Elizabeth Cox, Women State, and Territorial Legislators, 1895-1995: A State-by-State Analysis with Rosters of 6,000 Women (Jefferson, N.C.: Mc Farland and Company, 1996).

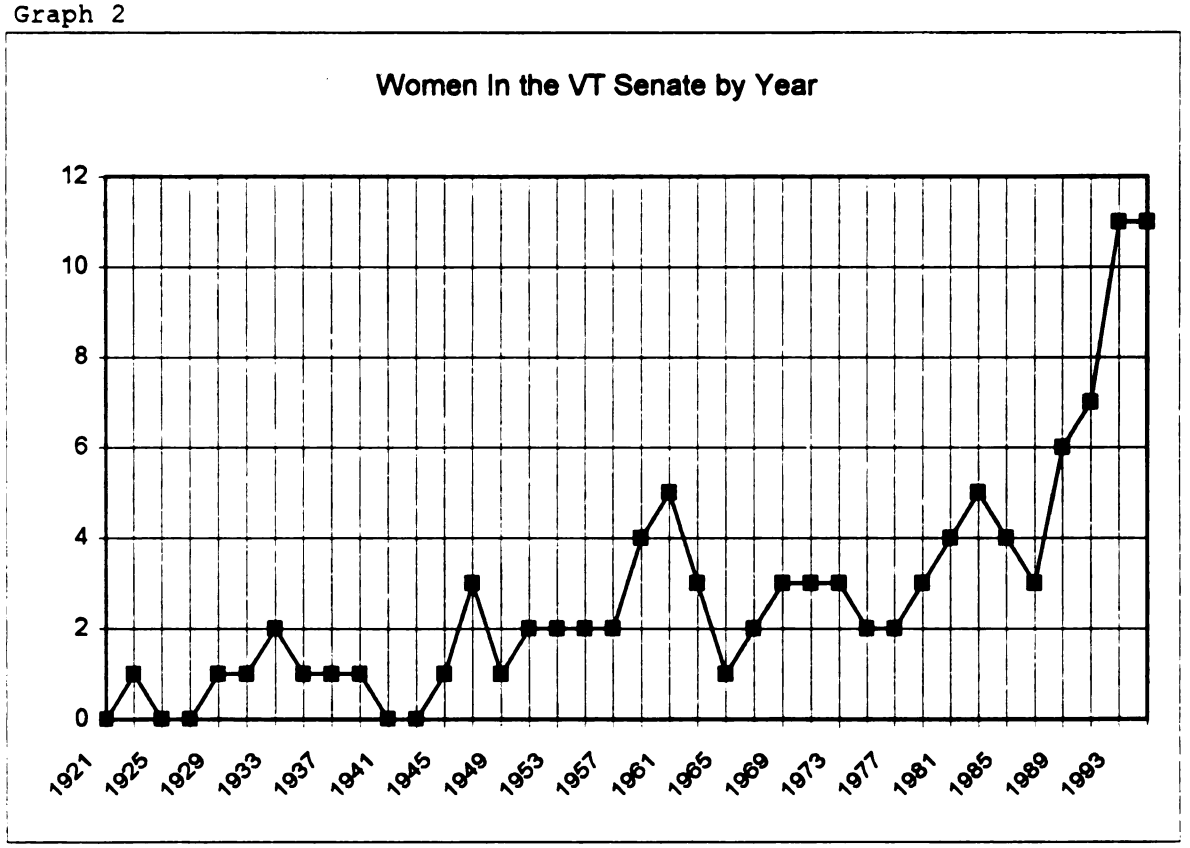
APPENDIX C

FIGURES

Graph 1

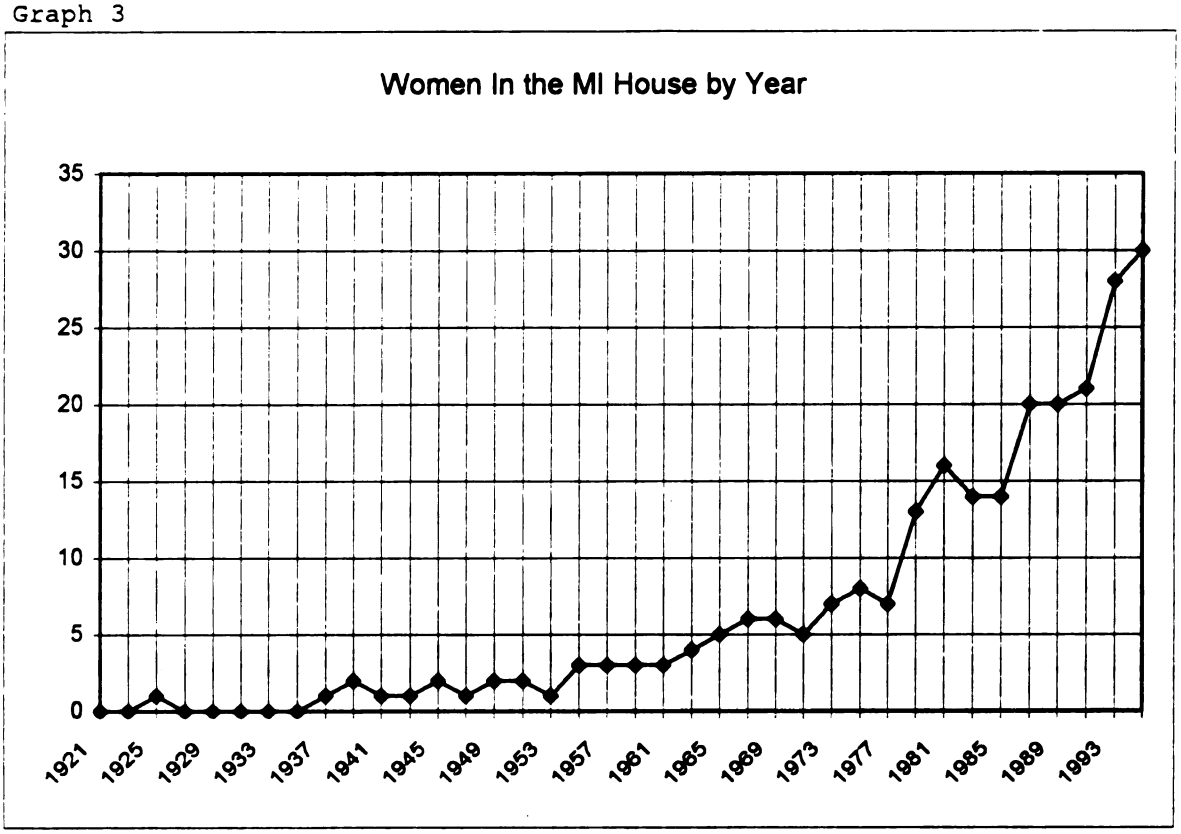


Graph 2

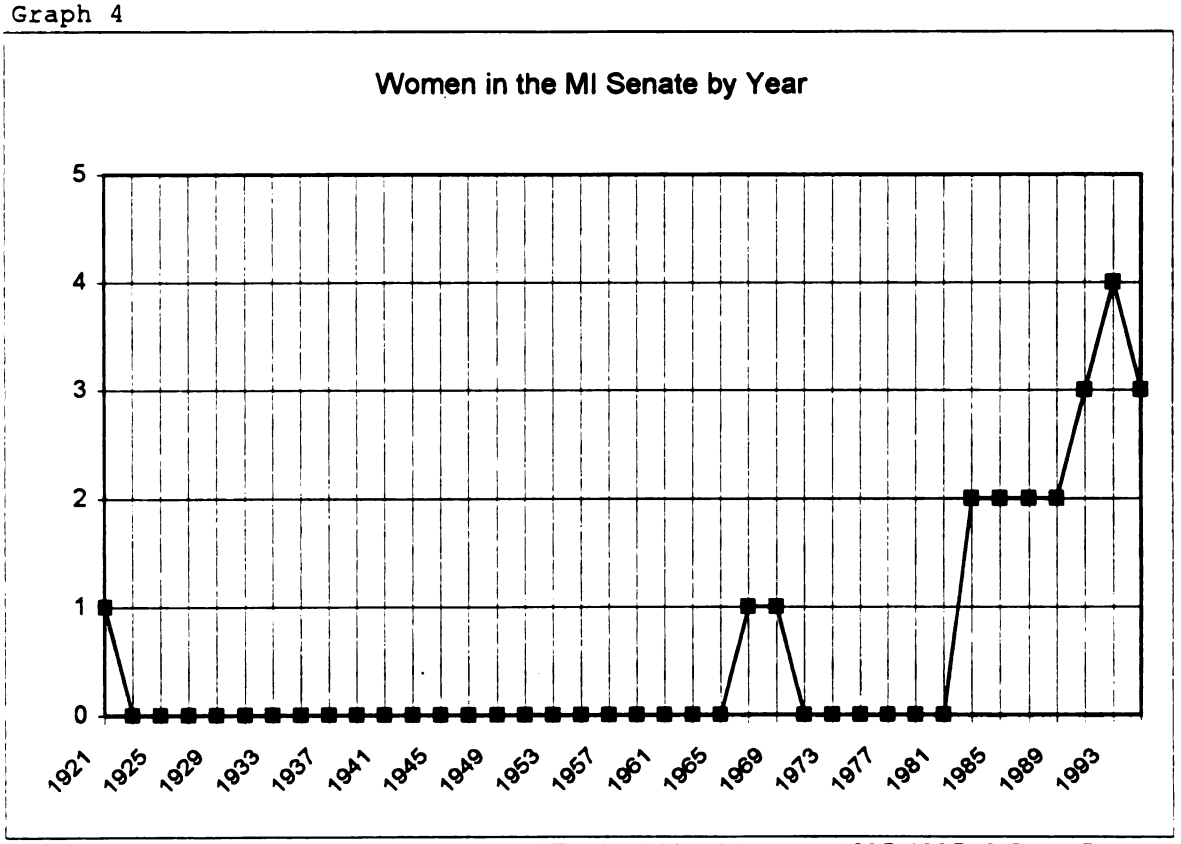


Source: Cox, Elizabeth. ***Women, State, and Territorial Legislatures, 1895-1995: A State-By-State Analysis, with Roster of 6,000 Women***. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 1996.

Graph 3

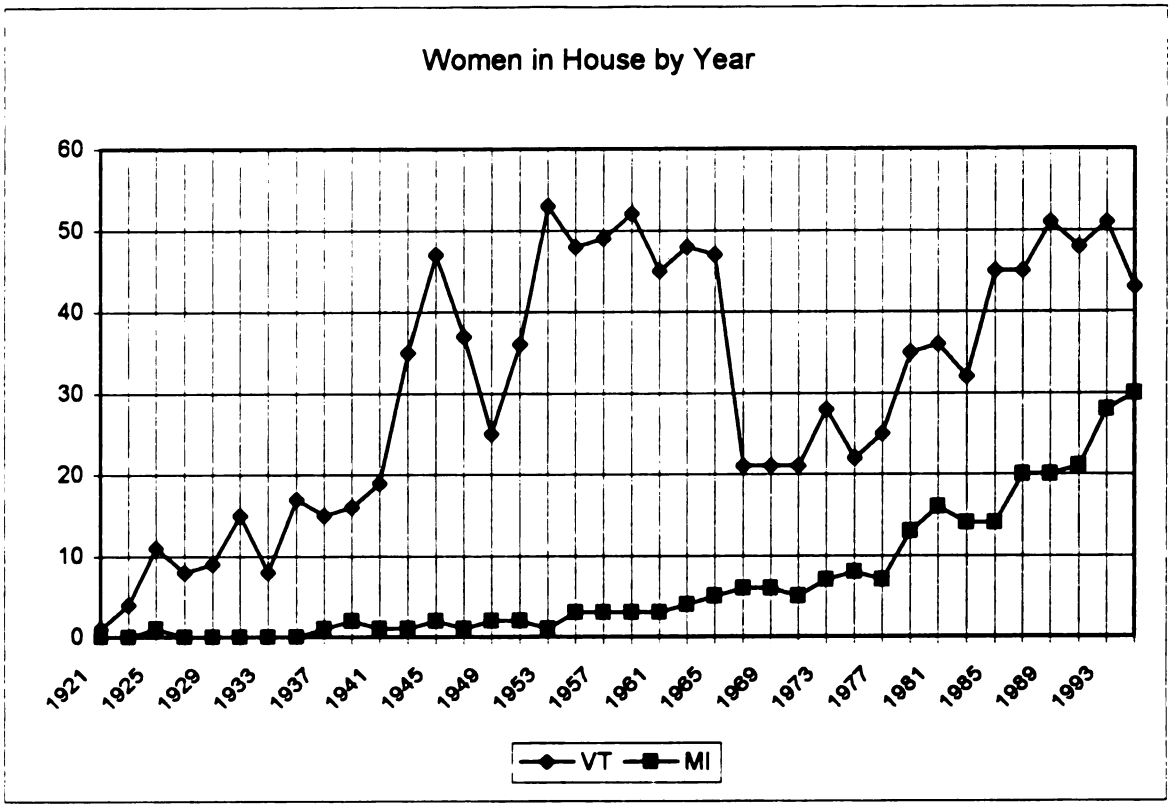


Graph 4

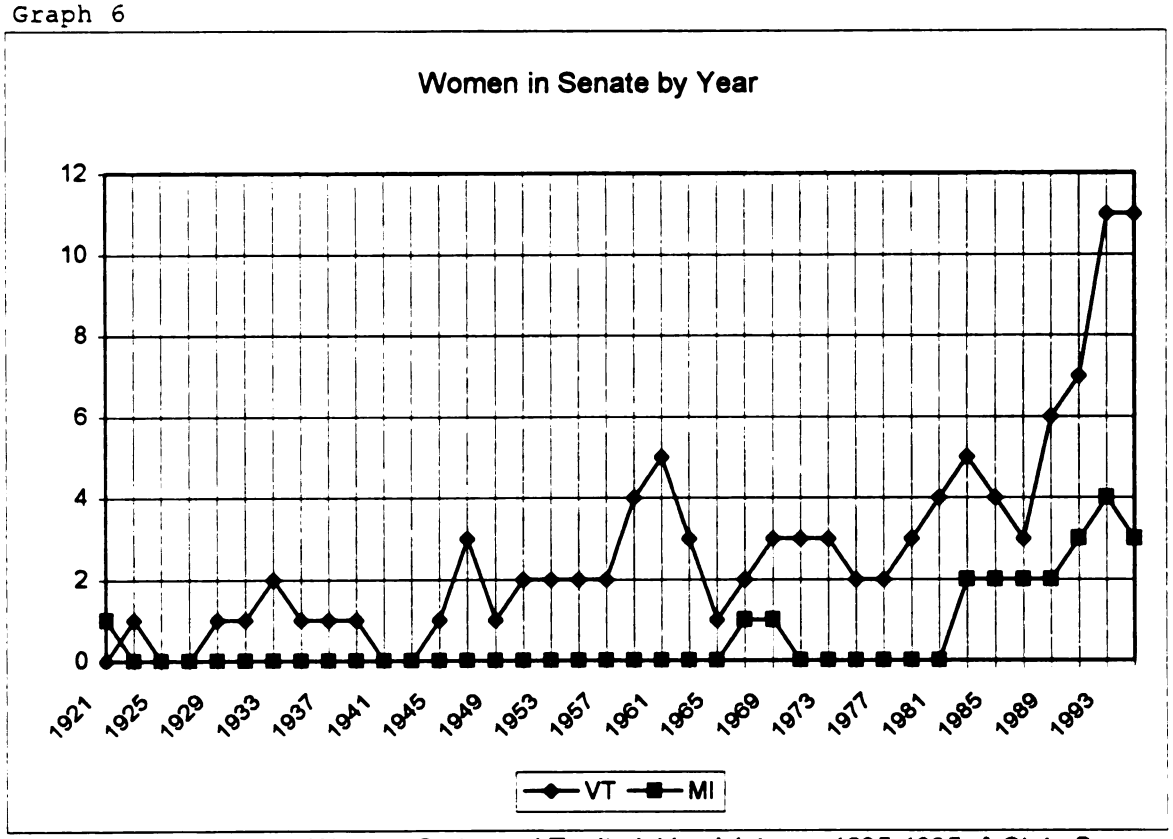


Source: Cox, Elizabeth. *Women, State, and Territorial Legislatures, 1895-1995: A State-By-State Analysis, with Roster of 6,000 Women*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 1996.

Graph 5



Graph 6



Source: Cox, Elizabeth. *Women, State, and Territorial Legislatures, 1895-1995: A State-By-State Analysis, with Roster of 6,000 Women*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 1996.

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