

Issue # 53

Fall 2022



THE CLARION



The Woman's Suffrage and Political Issues Chapter of the American Political Items Conservators

A non profit organization dedicated to the preservation of political memorabilia
www.apic.us

Kenneth Florey, Editor
Emilia van Beugen, Associate Editor
Collaborative Contributors:
Robert Fratkin Germaine Broussard

Editor's Notes

The WSAPIC Chapter meeting at the National APIC Convention that was recently held in Reno went very well. Matt Dole helped to facilitate a ZOOM component, so those who weren't able to make it to Nevada could take part in the proceedings. The highlight of the meeting was a Power Point presentation by Germaine Broussard that involved an impressive array of seldom seen suffrage memorabilia. There was also a discussion of the numerous fakes and fantasy items that have recently appeared on the market place, including flags, de-faced coins, and bogus patches; Our thanks to Dave Quinton and the Locals Chapter, who ceded 15 minutes to us of their own scheduled gathering so that we could finish our crowded agenda.

Our cover photo this issue comes to us with the kind permission of David Yount. It features an image of a poster designed by Rose O'Neill, famous creator of the Kewpie Dolls. O'Neill was an ardent suffragist and contributed a variety of her art work to the suffrage campaign in New York, including various posters, post-cards, ceramic statuettes, trolley card signs, and magazine illustrations. David's poster was produced originally for the 1915 suffrage referendum in that state. When the first referendum failed, another was held two years later, which proved to be successful. This poster was used again in that follow-up campaign with the numeral "6" hand-written over the "2" in "1915" indicating the new date of November 6 for the vote.

This issue features some wonderful contributions from WSAPIC members, including a story also from David Yount about a remarkable local suffrage photo that he recently uncovered. Professor Katherine Durack is again represented with Part II of her account of her fashioning modern quilts with a suffrage tie-in. Greg Cross's contribution is an extremely well researched article about the true story behind the highly desirable "Sarah's Thread Holder" piece. A number of years ago, a well-respected book dealer identified "Sarah" as Sarah Bagley, a Female Labor Reform advocate active in the Lowell, Massachusetts area prior to 1848. While the connection seems a plausible one, and one that I reported on in my book on collecting suffrage memorabilia, Greg dispels the myth and reveals who the true "Sarah" was. Amanda Owen provides us with more detail about the Genealogical and Suffrage History project that she is involved with and provides some links for follow-ups.

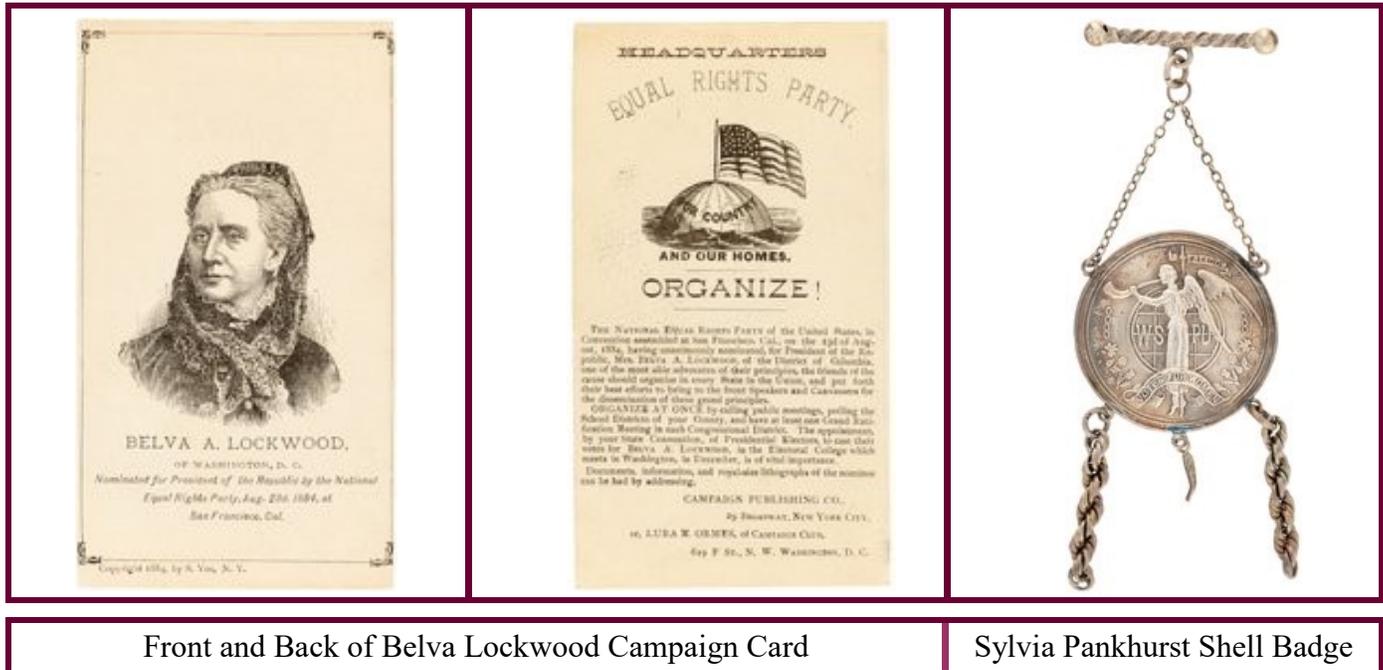
Greg's article is longer than 2,000 words, which generally is our limit for pieces, and we originally discussed splitting it into two parts. However, we decided for the purpose of narrative continuity that it makes more sense to present it as one piece. As a result, this issue contains several more pages than our typical sixteen.

We are always looking for member contributions to The Clarion, so if you have a subject that you would like to write about, an account of a recent discovery, a summation of historical context behind an object or group of objects, a characterization of certain types of memorabilia, a unique photo of a rare suffrage item, etc., please consider submitting an article to us.

John Koster has alerted us to a new video on suffragist Blanche Ames Ames. You can access it on <https://vimeo.com/450274019> password: Blanche21. It is certainly worth watching, and the producer, Kevin Friend at BCN Productions, would love to receive feedback: kfriendbcn@gmail.com

Ted Hake's Auction 235

Ted Hake's Auction 235, which closed on July 26-27 a week after the National APIC Convention in Reno, followed the trend of many recent auctions by offering a significant portion of suffrage items for sale. Some of the highlights of the auction are described below:



Front and Back of Belva Lockwood Campaign Card

Sylvia Pankhurst Shell Badge

The item that drew most interest was an 1884 3 ½" x 6 ¼" portrait campaign card for Belva Lockwood for the Equal Rights Party. Lockwood is considered by some to have been the first legitimate female candidate to run for President, for when Victoria Woodhull declared her candidacy in 1872, she was not of legal age as set by the Constitution. The back of this card is sometimes found blank, but this example contained a campaign message urging women to organize and to send for other materials. The bottom of the announcement contains the name of Lura M. Ormes, Belva Lockwood's daughter and legal assistant, who died

early in 1894 from complications following a battle with influenza. The card realized a final bid of \$3,666.30 (\$4,362.23 with BP).

Another rare piece was a previously unknown item to American political auction. It was an embossed 1 ¼" medallion featuring Sylvia Pankhurst's "Angel of Freedom" design. Sylvia, daughter of Emmeline Pankhurst, was considered to be the artist of the movement. With its jeweler designed mount, the shell badge measures approximately 3 ½" overall. It was gaveled off at a price of \$3,410.73 (\$4,024.66 with BP).

... Ted Hake cont'd



The 1 3/8" metal pin, encased in a floral rosette frame, was discussed in the last issue of *The Clarion*. It was produced by the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage, an organization that was founded in Washington, D.C. in 1902 and held its first Convention in Berlin in 1904. It was formed because suffrage activists felt that a previous organization, the International Congress of Women, was not committed to suffrage. The motto of the IAWS was "Jus Suffragii" ("The Right of Suffrage"), which also served as the title of its journal. The pin realized \$1,200 (\$1,416 with BP).

The 6" x 9" cloth pennant on its original 12 1/5"

wooden stick had the highest minimum bid (\$500) of any suffrage item in the auction. Another example of this item that was framed was recently listed on eBay at \$3,650. The Hake version sold for \$1,375 (\$1,622.50 with BP), another indication of how much cloth items have gone up in price in recent years.

The 1 3/16 wide purple, green, and white "Votes for Women" enamel pin was based on an English design. Several different variations are known, one in sterling. This example was made by C. G. Braxmar Co., of New York, and brought \$919.60 (\$1,084.13 with BP).



The 1 1/4" sepia pin pictured above left pictures Elizabeth Smith Miller. For quite some time there was some confusion as to who this person was since she is not identified on the pin. Guesses ranged from Emma Willard to Mary Anthony. However, a search on Google images indicates that it is, indeed, Miller. This pin was initially made for the 1907 New York State Woman Suffrage Association Convention in 1907 and came with a ribbon. Even though the button came without the ribbon and many bidders were unfamiliar with Miller, the pin still realized \$925 (\$1,103.90 with BP).

The attractive 3/4" WPU (Women's Political Union)

celluloid does appear relatively frequently in auction. This particular piece, however, came with an attractive purple, green, and white rosette attached and went for \$412.50 (\$486.75 with BP).

The 1" sepia pin on the right that pictures Susan B. Anthony was probably a memorial piece, as virtually all buttons that honored her were. This copy contained no lettering, but the image was clear and sharp, bringing \$512.53 (\$666.59 with BP)

There will come a time when the number of suffrage items appearing in the marketplace will slow down, but it appears that we have not reached that point as yet.

Photo of 1911 Float of the Woman's Franchise League

From David Yount, who is an Indiana native, comes an account of an item that recently sold in a Hindman Auction held June 21 of this year. It is a photograph from the collection of Tom Charles Huston of a float that appeared in the July 4, 1911 "Safe and Sane" parade held in Indianapolis. The parade and the float itself passed by President Taft, who had attended the festivities and was seated at the Soldiers and Sailor's Monument.



The photo depicts five women wearing white dresses and wearing sashes bearing the names of those five states that at the time had granted women full suffrage status [California also granted full franchise rights to women later that year]. A sixth woman, wearing the sash for Indiana, holds a sign reading "No Suffrage." A large banner at the bottom of the float reads "33 States Grant Partial Suffrage." The slogan refers to the fact that women in many states, Indiana excluded, while not allowed to vote for Presidential or state-wide elections, still had ballot rights in municipal elections, generally for that of school board.

The Indianapolis Star of July 6, 1911, included a letter from a woman identified only as "Sylvia" of Rushmore, who may have been one of the women on the float, about this display of the Woman's Franchise

League. In it she criticized Indiana for its "backward and provincial attitude in this particular." She pointed out that: "Among Northern states only three others—Maine, Pennsylvania and Missouri—refuse in women all voice in public questions, while all the Southern states, except Louisiana, are in the same category with us." She concluded: "We can not [sic] prosper as we should until 'the other half' is recognized as an equal factor in the social, economic and political life of the community."

The photograph, on a damaged heavy mount and with a pre-auction estimate of \$500-\$700, realized a final \$1,375 with BP. Original, non-newspaper suffrage photos from the period are always in demand, and this example, obviously, was prized by the winning Indiana resident.

OUR HISTORY PROJECT

By Amanda Knox

Although many thousands of women and some men have advocated for women's suffrage since the founding of our country, few people today know any of their names or anything about the heroic efforts they undertook to ensure women would have voting rights. To discover that a family member played such an important role would not only restore the suffragists to their rightful place in our nation's story, but would also provide role models who can inspire people to vote today.

Our older citizens are members of the last generation to have a living memory of a suffragist relative. It is important to record these memories in oral and video recordings and to make them available to future generations. Additionally, as people downsize and declutter, they may be unaware of the historical importance of some of the items they find in boxes, folders, or attics. Part of our mission is to make sure they are preserved.

OUR HISTORY PROJECT is a joint initiative of the Justice Bell Foundation, Wild West Women, Inc. and the National Women's History Alliance. Our vision is to create enthusiasm and interest in women's history and those who fought for voting rights by expanding access to the resources needed to find suffragist ancestors. Our goal is to provide families, schools and community organizations with free resources, downloadable templates, and a video series that show people how to find information about their ancestors. A dedicated website has been designed for this purpose at [Home | Our History Project](#) .

Each video episode will serve two purposes: to provide information about women's history as viewers follow two families as they gather information about

their ancestors, and a how-to guide that shows people how to research their own family history. We have identified two sets of siblings who advocated for women's suffrage in the early 20th century. Their descendants have agreed to work with us.

The first set of siblings are Etha Carroll Cowles Armstrong and Clara Carroll Cowles, from York, Pennsylvania, where they played a significant role promoting women's suffrage and were especially instrumental within York's African American community. The second set of siblings are Louise and Oliver Hall. Ms. Hall worked for the cause throughout the northeastern states. In 1914, she became the organizing secretary of the Pennsylvania Woman's Suffrage Association. In 1915, she joined the Votes for Women campaign and Justice Bell Tour as the director and a speaker. Mr. Hall was an enthusiastic ally. He joined his sister in Pennsylvania to drive the truck and serve as the official photographer.

We invite you to follow us on this journey as we document our progress. Each video episode will feature interviews with family members and experts, and will highlight locations where valuable information can be found. Free downloadable templates will help you put it all together. Our plan is to complete four episodes by the end of 2022 and ten episodes by the end of 2023.

Thousands of people fought for women's suffrage. Their descendants will number in the hundreds of thousands. Our hope is that you find your own suffragist ancestors and also bring these free resources to your local schools and organizations.

Learn how you can support Our History Project at [Home | Our History Project](#)

The May 2 Suffrage Pin and May 9 Demonstration Postcards

While the pin to the right has been recognized generally as suffrage related, some collectors are still confused by the date of May 2 as referenda supporting voting rights for women were generally held in November.

May 2, 1914, however, was a significant date in the early days of Alice Paul's newly formed Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage. When Paul returned from

England in January 1910, she was the subject of much notoriety, having come under the influence of English militant leader, Emmeline Pankhurst, resulting in her being arrested seven times and imprisoned three. She became involved with the National American Woman Association (NAWSA) which reluctantly allowed her to take charge of its Congressional Committee on Suffrage and plan a demonstration in Washington on March 3, 1913, the day prior to Woodrow Wilson's Inauguration as President. The demonstration was highly successful, drawing a crowd of approximately ½ million onlookers.

But the leadership of NAWSA became increasingly concerned with Paul's resolute militancy, albeit non-violent, and made various attempts to reign her in. Paul reacted by withdrawing from NAWSA and forming her own Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage (later reconstituted as the National Woman's Party). Reflecting on the success of the March 3 parade, Paul saw the powerful impact that spectacle could have on advancing the cause of suffrage. Accordingly with affiliates of the CU now in place in many cities, she planned a two-part event to increase national awareness on the need for a national amendment. The first, scheduled for May 2 (hence the date on the button), involved a series of demonstrations throughout the country, and the second, scheduled for Washington on the following week of May 9, was intended to underscore the relationship between women in their own towns and cities and proposed federal



legislation on the question of suffrage.

Paul was also responding to Wilson's dismissal of suffrage by claiming that he had not been informed much about the topic and was not aware of a large constituency supporting it. The May 2 parades took place in such cities as Atlanta, Philadelphia, Chicago, Wilmington, Milwaukee, Fargo and others, and were described collec-

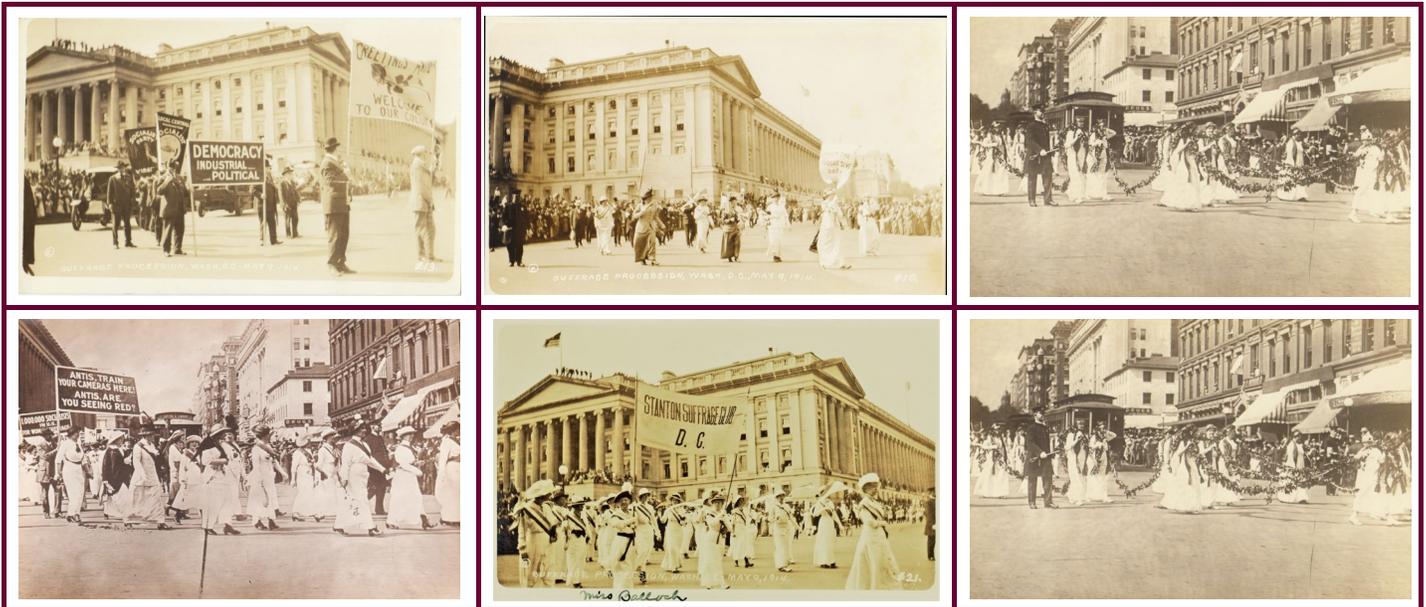
tively in *The Suffragist* as "The Greatest Suffrage Day." In Boston, seven thousand persons took part with Governor Walsh reviewing the event from the State House and Mayor James Curley observing it from City Hall. The button pictured at the beginning of this article, was manufactured by the A. R. Lopez and likely made specifically for this local event and not for national distribution. In New York State, the day was celebrated in more than 60 towns and cities, and in New York City Paul's group was joined by the Women's Political Union, whose members drove 51 cars as part of the procession, the Woman Suffrage Party, and Alva Belmont's Political Equality Association. In Portland, Maine, there was an automobile parade to Congress Square. According to *The Suffragist*, Hartford, Connecticut "had one of the finest parades in the country, and an immense crowd turned out to see it." 5,000 women in white dresses and bonnets marched in Chicago. In New Jersey, "practically every county seat in the State and in all the more important towns observed the day." In Maryland, the Just Government League used the event as a fundraiser and sold over 12,000 suffrage pencils at five cents each.

In the demonstration that took place in Washington the following week, part of the emphasis was to gain support from Congress for Senator Joseph Bristow's re-introduction of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment, which would have granted women nationally the right to vote. NAWSA contributed a small float for the event in support of the competing Shafroth-Palmer

... May 2, cont'd

Amendment, which proposed instead that states would be required to hold referenda on suffrage whenever a minimum of 8% of voters requested such a vote. Paul was bitterly opposed to Shafroth-Palmer,

but reportedly allowed the NAWSA float to indicate how little support it had among women as opposed to the national approach that she favored. A few post-cards depicting the May 9 march are shown below.



The May 2 button as well as the May 9 postcards are an important reminder that pieces of suffrage memorabilia are not items isolated by themselves without

context but rather embody a large and important part of history.

Suffrage Images and Ephemera Inspire Suffrage Quilts – Part II

By Katherine T. Durack, PhD

Banners and buttons; sashes and signs; flags and photos. Many items that collectors save inspire the suffrage quilts I've been making. The four quilts I describe here illustrate the challenges of using ephemera and textile arts to tell suffrage stories throughout the seven decades of activism in the US.

Several of the suffrage quilts I've made are tied to activism dating from the mid-nineteenth century when few images and artifacts document events, while others mark moments in the first decades of the twentieth century when it's possible to draw upon a rich supply of photos and ephemera.

Three quilts were created to complement the March 2022 dedication of woman suffrage centennial historic markers in Cincinnati, Ohio. The markers were installed as part of a national program to document woman suffrage activism in the US, a partnership between the William G. Pomeroy Foundation and the National Votes for Women Trail (NVWT), a project of the National Collaborative for Women's History Sites. A fourth quilt illustrates how digital printing technologies today make it possible to incorporate reproductions of photographs on fabric.

... Quilts, cont'd

“The Icing On the Cake” coordinates with the historic marker in Cincinnati at the former site of the Blackwell homestead, where Lucy Stone stayed during visits to Cincinnati in the 1850s and lived briefly after she and Henry Blackwell married in 1855. They both spoke at the National Woman’s Rights Convention in Cincinnati in 1855.

With no ephemera to draw upon for the visual design, I chose to stitch a wedding cake to represent the Stone-Blackwell marriage on May 1, 1855. I decorated the “cake” with flowers from a floral print in colors that evoke the “ashes of roses” color of the dress Lucy reportedly wore. “The Marriage of Lucy Stone Under Protest” is stitched on the top layer of the cake, and subsequent layers feature the text of the protest published nationwide after the wedding.

Another suffrage centennial marker indicates the former location of the Apollo Building in downtown Cincinnati, the 1882 business address for Margaret V. and Elias Longley. Like Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell, Margaret V. and Elias Longley were “pioneer” suffragists and dedicated their lives to civil reform.



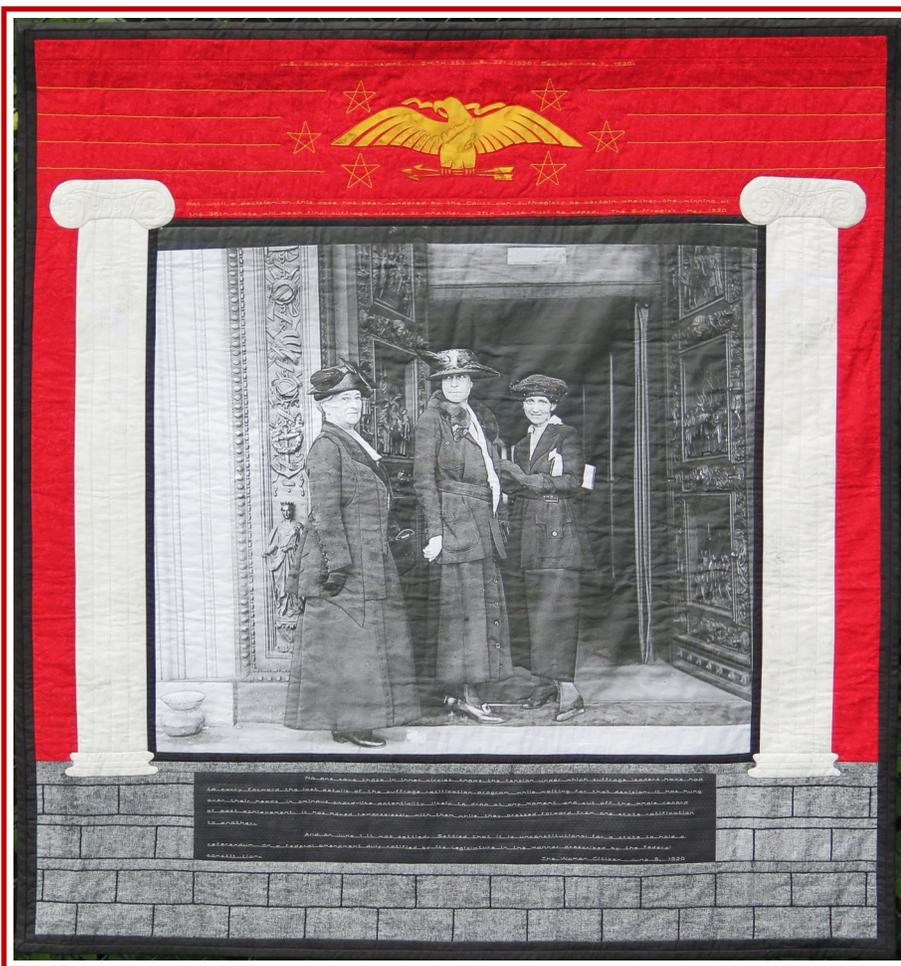
A Woman’s Place is at the Keyboard” shown on the left, commemorates an elegant, widespread, and subversive moment of activism by Margaret Longley: the 1882 publication of her revolutionary typewriter manual for “Remington's Perfected Type-Writers.” This slim volume introduced Margaret's original innovation: using all the fingers to strike the keys and the thumb to strike the space bar. It also incorporated practice phrases like “no man can take her place” and “Woman's right to the ballot.”

The typewriter fabric depicts the same model described in Margaret’s manual. Curving along two edges, ribbons are stitched with quotes that allude to women’s potential superiority in using this new mechanical device and the gendered inspiration for the multi-finger key-striking approach: “Those who have been used to playing the piano gain speed much sooner than those whose fingers are untrained to such work.” The sharps on the piano keyboard use fabric printed with typewriter keys. On the white keys, I’ve stitched practice phrases from Longley's manual, organized into a statement about activism.

... Quilts, cont'd

“Let Ohio Women Vote” is associated with the woman suffrage centennial historic marker honoring Cornelia Cassady Davis near the Cincinnati Art Museum and the former site of the Art Academy. Davis studied, taught, and exhibited her art at this cultural gem atop Mt. Adams.

Cornelia Cassady Davis's artwork was created for a competition sponsored by the Woman's Party and first used in Ohio for the 1912 suffrage campaign. The campaign and Davis' popular artwork inspired this quilt, which also includes quotes stitched in the borders from James Oppenheimer's poem “Bread and Roses” (1911) and trade union organizer Rose Schneiderman's “Bread and Roses” suffrage speech, delivered for the 1912 Ohio campaign.



By 1920, photographs played a huge role in both documenting the work of suffragists and moving citizens to action. The photograph central to my quilt, “A Thread Held Fast the Sword,” draws attention to the June 1, 1920, US Supreme Court decision in *Hawke v. Smith* — a decision that cleared legal obstacles to Tennessee's final ratification vote. Cincinnati George S. Hawke had filed suit challenging Ohio's effort to hold a referendum that could overturn the state legislature's ratification of a Federal constitutional amendment, affecting both the 18th (prohibition) and 19th (woman suffrage) amendments. Suffragists—and anti-suffragists—had watched the case closely, as the outcome would determine whether women might vote in 1920.

To create this quilt, I relied on photographs available online from the Library of Congress as well as other documentation from 1920. The central image shows Mrs. Richard Wainwright, Abby Scott Baker, and Mrs. Sue White of the National Woman's Party standing at the threshold the Capitol Building before entering to attend the Supreme Court hearings on *Hawke v. Smith*. The eagle above this image reflects the carved gilt eagle that hung on a banister over the seat for the Chief Justice in the room where the Supreme Court met from 1860-1935. Stars and stripes are quilted on either side of the eagle to evoke the shield upon which the eagle had perched when the Senate occupied the room. Marble columns and scarlet draperies flanking the photo are also inspired by the room decor.

... Quilts, cont'd

The first quote on the quilt—beneath the eagle—is from *The Suffragist*, May 1920. If the case failed, Ohio and 5 other states would be legally empowered to rescind ratification of the 19th by their state legislatures. The second quote on the quilt, beneath the image, is drawn from *The Woman Citizen*, June 5, 1920, and expresses how the case had “hung over [suffragists’] heads in ominous sword-like potentiality likely to drop at any moment and cut off the whole record of past achievement.”

Tennessee’s state constitution prohibited sitting members of the legislature to vote on constitutional amendments, requiring instead that an election be held before the legislature could vote on ratification. Legal minds interpreted this provision to be like the referendum prohibited by the *Hawke vs. Smith* decision. Thus, the Ohio case paved the way for the Tennessee governor to call a special session to vote on woman suffrage.

Links:

Let Ohio Women Vote

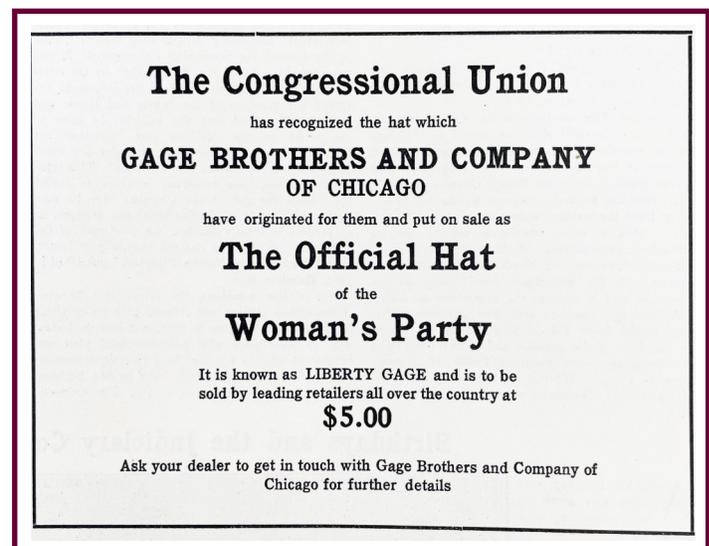
- **Original poster** — [File:Let Ohio Women Vote.jpg - Wikimedia Commons](#)

A Thread Held Fast the Sword

- **Old Senate Chamber** — restored to appearance before use by Supreme Court — [Old Senate Chamber | Architect of the Capitol \(aoc.gov\)](#)
- **US Supreme Court in Capitol Building** — Library of Congress
 - Stereoscopic image showing columns and eagle above Chief Justice’s seat — [U. S. Supreme Court chamber, Capitol, Wash. | Library of Congress \(loc.gov\)](#)
 - Supreme Court chamber — [U.S. Capitol interiors. Old Supreme Court room in U.S. Capitol I | Library of Congress \(loc.gov\)](#)
- **Eagle and Shield** — recently restored — history and photographs — [759_pg102_155x3 \(govinfo.gov\)](#)
- **Mrs. Richard Wainwright, Abby Scott Baker, and Mrs. Sue White entering Supreme Court chamber** — Library of Congress — [Mrs. Richard Wainwright, Mrs. Abby Scott Baker, Mrs. Sue White, 4/23/20 | Library of Congress \(loc.gov\)](#)

The Official Suffrage Hat of Alice Paul’s Congressional Union

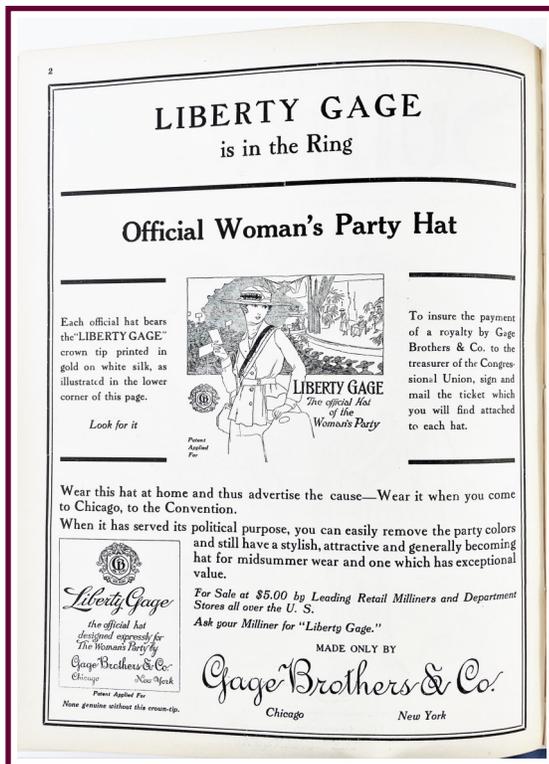
In general, most suffrage organizations, while merchandising parade accoutrements such as ribbons and sashes, did not sell or sponsor specifically designed suffrage clothing. One of the few exceptions was that of a parade hat. The May 13, 1916 issue of *The Suffragist*, the official journal of Alice Paul’s Congressional Union (later the National Woman’s Party), announced that the organization had recognized a hat produced by the Gage and Brothers of Chicago as “The Official Hat of the Woman’s Party.” Known as “The Liberty Gage,” it sold for \$5.00, quite an expensive item at the time, and was promoted as being available at “leading retailers all over the country.” At least one such retailer, Mayer Brothers of Washington, advertised it in *The Suffragist* as being for sale in its millinery department.



... Hat, cont'd

In a follow-up article the next week, the journal pictured Mrs. J. A. H. Hopkins, Chair of the New Jersey Congressional Union, wearing the hat and provided added details about its purpose. It was designed originally to be worn at the upcoming Woman's Party National Convention held in Chicago that June. It was a straw sailor hat, trimmed on the left side of the brim with a ribbon in the official purple, white, and gold colors of the party.

The Congressional Union was to receive a royalty from the sale of each hat, provided that purchasers filled out a detachable slip and sent it to the NWP headquarters. Actually, the hat had an earlier history as it figured in the demonstration at the Capitol steps in Washington, D. C., when envoys from the Salt Lake City Conference presented their suffrage resolution to both Houses of Congress.



In an effort to promote sales, the article in *The Suffragist* pointed out that this hat was not intended exclusively for parades but one that women could wear year-round on all occasions, thus promoting the cause. Gage, the manufacturer, took out a full-page advertisement for the hat in the June 3 issue, just in time for the Woman's Party Convention, which included a drawing of a smartly dressed woman wearing it together with a Woman's Party sash.

To date, no example of this hat has ever turned up in a political memorabilia auction, although it is highly probably that some have survived. The National Woman's Party often did not include any suffrage wording on its banners and ribbons, perhaps assuming that its colors of purple, white, and gold were sufficient enough to serve as a promotional tool. In any event, it may have been this lack of a printed suffrage message that obscured over time both the origin and purpose of the hat. Perhaps some fortunate collector may find one in a thrift shop where its identity and history are unknown to the proprietor.

The Housewives' League

The "Housewives" pin pictured on the right has drawn some attention from collectors in terms of its background. It has been identified in several auctions, in private sales, and even in *Clarion 6* as an early membership pin for an African American organization. On the surface, this appears to be a plausible attribution, but it is an incorrect one.



... Housewives League, cont'd

The African American group was established in 1930 by Fannie B. Peck as the Housewives League of Detroit, whose purpose was to encourage African American women to patronize both African American owned businesses as well as white businesses that did not discriminate in their hiring practices. Its mantra was "Don't buy where you can't work." The employment of African Americans was a particular concern after the ravages of the depression limited job possibilities. The Detroit League worked in conjunction with the Booker T. Washington Trade Association, headed by Peck's husband, the Rev. William H. Peck, and the National Negro Business League.

In 1933 the Detroit group evolved into the National Housewives League of America, Inc. with Fannie Peck elected as its first president and chapters springing up throughout the country. The group continued on until 1997 when an aging membership and an expanded hiring climate caused the group to disband. Any remaining assets were transferred over to the United Negro College fund.

But it is another unrelated group also called "The Housewives' League," which was formed by Mrs. Julian Heath around 1912, that was responsible for the production and dissemination of the badge pictured above and not the similarly titled African American organization. Reacting to the rise in prices at the time, particularly for food, Heath along with many women questioned "why?" Solemn men proclaimed that the fault was the result of the tariff and the increase in the price of gold. Not satisfied with those answers, Heath formed the League not only to explore the real reasons behind food inflation, but also to devise ways of combatting it.

Membership in the League cost ten cents, and each woman who joined received a button that the *Boston Globe* declared "has already become a power throughout the length and breadth of the land. The State chairman wrote Mrs. Heath that not long ago she went into a market that was not very fair in dealing with its customers, and she heard the remark made: 'There comes that confounded button again'."

Some of the reforms the League promoted involved the creation of food cooperatives, persuading milk merchants to divide cities into regions to cut down on distribution costs, the sale of eggs by the pound, and the promotion of "pure," unadulterated food particularly with respect to tuberculin free beef. But buttons also played a prominent role in pushing these changes. Another merchant speaking to the *Globe* remarked that he was proud when anyone comes to his store wearing that button, because it placed "his store on the high value plane it deserved."

Given her reaction to male dominated construct with regard to food prices and her ability to organize women against the status quo, one would assume that Mrs. Heath would be a dedicated acolyte to the suffrage movement. This was not the case, however, for she was an acknowledged anti-suffragist, believing that a woman's place was in the home. Still, her Housewives' League was characterized at the time as "a movement rather than an organization, and this newly awakened consciousness of the housewife has changed the entire viewpoint of women toward house-keeping, and of the public toward the housewife."



Who Was Sarah?

By Gregory Cross

One of the more unusual items sought by collectors of suffrage materials is “Sarah’s Thread Holder.” This gadget was the basis for “Sarah’s \$25,000 Suffrage Victory Campaign Fund” during the 1915 campaign for women’s suffrage in Massachusetts. “Sarah” has been widely identified as Sarah Bagley, a Lowell Mill Girl, labor reform activist, and the first female telegraph operator. Descriptions of the thread holder inevitably include an account of Bagley’s life and accomplishments; there is no doubt that she was someone worthy of recognition and commemoration.



Many thread holders of various configurations exist, but most contain and dispense thread from a single spool. Sarah’s Thread Holder is unique in that it was designed to hold three spools, each of a different weight (thickness) thread. The intent is to slide the spools into the 4¼ inch long cylinder such that the end of the thread from each spool passes through the appropriate hole in the side. This design, however, makes it extremely awkward to load the spools so the thread ends can actually be pulled through the holes.

The attribution of Sarah as Bagley was first seen by many suffrage collectors in Sarah Baldwin’s article “Sarah’s Suffrage Victory” in the September 2003 issue of *The Clarion*. Catalogues for auctions such as Hakes and Heritage have subsequently followed suit. An internet search for “Sarah’s Thread Holder” produces other results making the same connection. Ken Florey credited Baldwin’s article as the source for much of the information about the item in his 2013 book, *Women’s Suffrage Memorabilia*. The attribution to Bagley was recently made in the Spring 2022 issue of *The Clarion*.

The only description of the thread holder earlier than Baldwin’s that I have found is from a 1999 catalogue that includes a very similar account of Bagley’s life, written by Priscilla Juvelis (personal communication,

9 August 2021). Baldwin and Juvelis were partners in a Massachusetts bookshop at the time so it is almost certain that Baldwin drew on Juvelis’ description to ascribe the identity of Sarah to Bagley. When asked how she connected Bagley and the thread holder, Juvelis responded that “it is hard to remember back to 1999” but thought it must be in one or more of the sources she cited.

Despite the apparent consensus linking Sarah Bagley with the thread holder, several questions prompted me to search for a confirmation of Sarah’s identity.

- What is the evidence for Sarah’s identity in the references cited by Baldwin and Juvelis? Descriptions of the thread holder by other writers either cite no references at all or rely on Baldwin or Juvelis as their authority.

... Sarah, cont'd

- Text on the thread holder states "Sarah's thread holder designed at the request of a busy housewife and manufactured for the use of her sisters." Who was this busy housewife?
- Baldwin wrote that Bagley "slips from public view and record" after 1848. Is it likely that she would be remembered as a significant figure to be honored 67 years later by the suffragists of Boston?

I began by first looking at the references cited by Baldwin and Juvelis. Most are brief biographies of Bagley that make no connection between Bagley and the women's suffrage movement, let alone the thread holder. Rather, she was an activist concerned with the hours, pay, and working conditions of women in the textile mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, and of working women and men in general. Some of those writers find it of greater interest that she was the first female telegraph operator.

The only primary source cited by Baldwin and Juvelis is *The Woman's Journal and Suffrage News*. A search through all the issues between 1913 and 1916 produced no references to Sarah Bagley in any context¹. There are, however, four references to the thread holder in three issues from 1915.

- The first is a brief article in the October 16 issue reporting that

The Executive Board of the Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association has endorsed a unique sales campaign to raise funds... A thread-holder, selling at 25 cents each, is the basis of the plan....

- Identical advertisements were published in the November 13 and November 20 issues, placed by the Thread Holder Company, urging those who participated in the thread holder sales campaign to claim their prizes.
- Also in the November 20 issue, a short article stated that no prizes in "Sara's [sic] \$25,000 Suffrage Victory Campaign" had yet been distributed and encouraged participants to contact the Thread Holder Company to claim their prizes.

\$500.00 IS AWAITING **WHOM?**

This amount is now ready for the
17 Prize Winners in

SARAH'S \$25,000 SUFFRAGE VICTORY CAMPAIGN

ARE YOU ONE OF THEM?

In order to make a correct list of winners, so that prizes may be distributed **AT ONCE**, it is essential that each participant in this recent Campaign **SEND IN A PERSONAL RECORD OF SALES OF THREAD HOLDERS MADE DURING THE CAMPAIGN**—with her Local League President's O. K. and statement that the proceeds from these sales have been duly collected and turned in—one half to State League Headquarters in Boston and one half to the Local League Headquarters.

It will be to your advantage to send this information AT ONCE to the

Thread Holder Company
(Official Headquarters for Sarah's Suffrage Victory Campaign)
246 Summer Street - Boston, Mass.

Woman's Journal. 1915. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

With these meager findings, the original trail to Sarah's identity ended. But these items opened other avenues for research. Might the name and address for the Thread Holder Company in Boston lead to information about the origins of the item? The thread holder itself has text stating "Patent Applied For"; could the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) provide information about a patent applicant or holder? Would minutes for the Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association (MWSA) Executive Board provide more details? Were there other documents that would provide further evidence?

Several possible avenues to Sarah's Thread Holder's origin story proved to be dead ends. No independent record of the Thread Holder Company can be found. *The Boston Register and Business Directory* for 1915 does not show that company at any address. Nor do other federal, state, local, or private directories of companies from that time list a company of that name.

... Sarah, cont'd

A search of U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) records from 1913 to 1920 revealed no applications or patents granted for this thread holder.

A review of the many digitized documents of the Woman's Rights Collection held by the Schlesinger Library was more fruitful in shedding light on the origin of the thread holder.

Minutes of the September 2, 1915, meeting of the Executive Board of the MWSA include the following, stated here in its entirety:

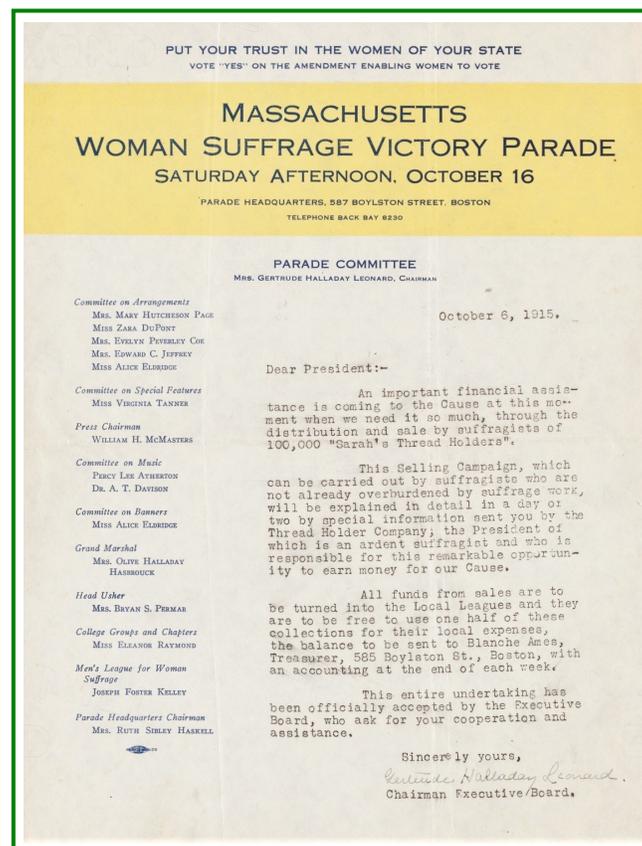
Mr. Chandler Blake of Brookline came up to speak of a scheme proposition for raising money by means of thread holders.

Mrs. Park moved a vote of thanks to Mr. Blake. The motion was carried.

Mrs. Adams moved that we accept Mr. Blake's proposition. The motion was carried.

This is obviously the basis for the October 16 announcement *The Woman's Journal and Suffrage News*.

Another set of documents includes a letter (shown below) from the MWSA Executive Board Chairman, Mrs. Gertrude Leonard, addressed to the presidents of the state's local associations. In this letter dated October 6, 1915, Leonard informs the presidents about the "Selling Campaign" and states that details will come from the Thread Holder Company's President, who is "an ardent suffragist." She asks that "suffragists who are not already overburdened by suffrage work" help with this campaign.



From: Maud Wood Park Papers (Woman's Rights Collection). Suffrage and Women's Rights. Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association (MWSA). Re: parades, 1913-1915, undated. WRC-Pa, folder Pa-148. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

... Sarah, cont'd

Thread Holder Company
Pres. C. Chandler Blake Vice-Pres. Sarah Swan Blake Pres. N. A. Mayer - Director: C. Chandler Blake, James W. Carter, Martha Denny, J. C. Allen, L. W. Allen

ORIGINATORS OF NOVELTIES
 Manufacturers of Sarah's Thread Holder
 and Pillar Tray Soap Dish
 246 Summer Street, Boston, Mass.

THE CRYSTAL SOAP DISH
 PILLAR TRAY

↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑
 -- AND WHO GETS THAT \$500
 ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑

Honest Suffrage Workers who are MEMBERS OF YOUR OWN LOCAL LEAGUE may get a good share of it -- possibly ALL of it -- and for only a moderate amount of effort!

\$25,000
Sarah's
Suffrage Victory
Campaign

IT'S THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF THE CASH PRIZES TO BE AWARDED IN SARAH'S \$25,000 SUFFRAGE VICTORY CAMPAIGN -- to be distributed -- in sums from \$150 to \$10 -- among the 17 individuals selling the greatest number of Sarah's Thread Holders during the Campaign.

Does everyone in YOUR District KNOW about these Prizes? Campaign closes November 2nd. Prize winners will be announced a few days later.

Big Records can be made in the few remaining days, when enthusiasm is high and results count most. AND \$25,000 IS AT STAKE FOR THE CAUSE

Dear President:-

Please do not fail to send us a complete record of the sales made by each Campaigner in your district up to and including November 2nd. Send it as SOON after that date as is possible. This is very essential in making the awards correctly. It would be a pity to have anyone miss a share in the \$500 because her name was not sent in.

Also will you kindly see that all unsold Thread Holders are returned to us. According to the terms of our contract with the Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association, NO FREE THREAD HOLDERS CAN BE SENT TO CAMPAIGNERS AFTER NOVEMBER 2nd.

As to the CASH RECEIPTS from sales -- if you will recall a recent letter from Mrs. Leonard -- 50% of the total received from sales made in your district should be sent direct to State Headquarters at 565 Boylston Street, Boston; the remaining 50% to be kept by your own Local Headquarters to be expended as you direct.

Yours very truly,
 C. Chandler Blake
 President

From: Cambridge Political Equality Association Records (Woman's Rights Collection). Correspondence, 1914-1920, undated. WRC, folder 1076. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

The MWSA *Headquarters Bulletin No. 11*, October 22, 1915, consists primarily of Instructions for Election Day on 2 November. But there is one paragraph reminding readers of “the unusual opportunity to make money for suffrage,” referring to the thread holders, while again not asking “any suffragists to undertake more than she can do... .”

Nowhere among all these documents and records is there any mention of Sarah Bagley or of any discussion or decision to commemorate her on the thread holder or through a fundraising campaign.

Rather, the available evidence all points to Sarah Swan Blake as the woman memorialized on Sarah's Thread Holder.

This conclusion is supported by indications that the manufacture of “Sarah's Thread Holder” in fact pre-dated Chandler Blake's proposal that it be used as a fundraiser for the suffrage campaign.

In yet another set of documents is an undated letter on the letterhead of the Thread Holder Company, signed by C. Chandler Blake, President. As the promised follow-up to Mrs. Leonard's October 6 letter to local chapters, it explains the details and rules of the “\$25,000 Sarah's Suffrage Victory Campaign.”

On the letterhead, Sarah Swan Blake is listed as Vice President.

Sarah Swan Weld and C. Chandler Blake were married in 1905. In census records, Chandler Blake is described variously as an inventor or general manager. During this time, they rented a home in Brookline, a suburb of Boston. Mr. Blake engaged in various business ventures over the years but nothing suggests that any continued for long.

Other holdings in the Schlesinger Library's collection show Chandler Blake included in a list of “Key Men who will permit the State Association in its suffrage work to use their names in letters and telegrams.” In yet another document, Sarah Blake is mentioned as a canvasser for the 1915 election campaign in the Brookline chapter. These brief references indicate that the Blakes were among the many “Victory Campaigners” who worked for women's suffrage in Massachusetts in 1915.

All communications received at Headquarters in regard to the Thread Holders are at once forwarded to the offices of the company, and will be answered and adjusted from there. We do not, of course, ask any suffragist to undertake more than she can do, but wish once more to emphasize the unusual opportunity to make money for suffrage while helping to introduce a useful article which is the invention of one of our most ardent sympathizers.

From: Maud Wood Park Papers (Woman's Rights Collection). Suffrage and Women's Rights. Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association (MWSA). Resolutions, report, other publications, meeting and event notices, fliers, programs, ballots, etc., 1915-1919. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

... Sarah, cont'd

One piece of evidence is that the letterhead for the Thread Holder Company announces itself as “Originators of Novelties” and “Manufacturers of Sarah’s Thread Holder and Pillar Tray Soap Dish.”

Another is the printing on the thread holder cylinder itself, which says “Designed at the request of a busy housewife and manufactured for the use of her sisters.” There is no mention of suffrage or the Victory Campaign on the cylinder itself.

Only one feature of the thread holder links it to the suffrage campaign. One end declares itself a “Souvenir of • Sarah’s Suffrage Victory Campaign • Help Cut the fetters.” This end cap is identical to a separate pinback button. Since the end caps are designed to be easily removed it seems that this was added after the initial manufacture, replacing whatever was originally there. The other end cap advertises a particular make of thread.

No records have been found showing how many thread holders were sold, the amount raised, the number of prizes awarded, or other details following the end of the campaign. Given the emphasis on organizing for a major Suffrage Victory Parade on October 16 and the election itself on November 2, it is likely that few suffragists in Massachusetts had the time to sell many thread holders in the very brief time allowed. The advertisements and article in *The Woman’s Journal and Suffrage News* following the election mentioned above support this conclusion.

One of the pleasures of collecting suffrage or any political cause items is discovering and telling the stories and history behind them. As new information is uncovered, we sometimes need to revise our understanding of these stories. My examination of records pertaining to the 1915 campaign for women’s suffrage in Massachusetts revealed an unexpected story behind Sarah’s Thread Holder.

¹ This publication is available online through the Woman's Rights Collection of the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University. *The Woman's Journal* was published in Boston from 1870 until 1917. In 1912, the title changed to *Woman's Journal and Suffrage News*. At the start of 1917, the title changed again, back to *The Woman's Journal*.

[Photos by Author]