



Suffragist Esther Wollison in November 1915

Detail of Wollison; she holds a sign reading: “Show your faith in the women of Massachusetts. Vote yes on the amendment enabling women to vote.” In 1915 male voters in Massachusetts rejected a proposal for statewide municipal suffrage 65%–35%. Courtesy of the New Bedford Whaling Museum.

“In a Good Cause”: Framingham and the Fight for Women’s Suffrage

ANITA DANKER



Editor’s Introduction: *The year 2020 marked the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment, which granted women’s suffrage. It stated simply, “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.”*

Historically, Massachusetts played a key role in the struggle for women’s rights. As early as the 1830s and 1840s, abolitionists such as Lydia Maria Child, Lucy Stone, Abby Kelley Foster, Sarah Parker Redmond, and Sarah and Angelina Grimke broke social norms to speak in public about the evils of slavery. The first truly national women’s rights convention was held in Worcester in 1850. After the Civil War, suffragists intensified their campaign, which had been on hold during the war years. In 1866 a group of activists gathered in Boston for the organizing meeting of the American Equal Rights Association. Just three years later, however, the organization split over the issue of whether to support the 14th and 15th Amendments, which provided voting rights for African American men but not for women.

In Massachusetts, leaders of the American Women’s Suffrage Association (AWSA) branch fully supported African American rights; they eventually formed the Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association. They were initially confident that the state’s strong abolitionist heritage and Republican-dominated politics would easily lead the legislature to enfranchise women. In 1869 Lucy Stone persuaded

the legislature to create a “Joint Special Committee on Woman Suffrage.” That year the House of Representatives voted on allowing women the right to vote in municipal elections; to suffragists’ great dismay, it was defeated 66%–34%. This would be the first of many defeats. Suffrage in Massachusetts would prove far more challenging to attain than the first generation of women’s rights activists ever imagined.¹

The fight to serve on school boards was another post-war priority. The first petition to the legislature was presented in 1866. It succeeded in some towns where a handful of women were slowly elected to school boards, even though they had no right to vote in these elections. In 1874 Boston elected three women to its school committee. In 1879 activists won and the state legislature passed a law allowing women to vote for school committee members. However, suffrage activists protested that the measure was limited and (because of poll taxes) discriminated against poor women who were unable to pay.²

Nationally, in 1878 a federal amendment to grant women the right to vote was introduced in the U.S. Senate for the first time. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and others testified; it eventually failed in a 16-to-34 vote in 1887. The wording remained unchanged over the next four decades. A far more restricted amendment was proposed in 1888 calling for limited suffrage for women who were spinsters or widows who owned property.

*In Massachusetts, activists returned to the right to vote in municipal elections. In 1881 the State House of Representatives again voted on the question of municipal suffrage for women: it was defeated 76 “yeas” versus 122 “nays” (61.6%). In 1892 the poll tax for women in Massachusetts was finally abolished. The law gave all women citizens who could read and write the right to vote for local school committee members. However, the percentage of registered women voters remained low. At that point four women served on the Boston school committee and 157 women served in 112 cities and towns. Meanwhile, in 1893 former abolitionist and activist Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin (1842–1924) founded the Woman’s Era Club for African American women in Boston. Its motto was “Make the World Better.” It published *The New Era*, the first newspaper/magazine published for and by black women. Ruffin would go on to become a founding member of the NAACP and remained a staunch suffrage ally.*

At the same time, Massachusetts soon distinguished itself as home to the oldest and strongest anti-suffrage organization in the United States: the Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to Women, which was founded in 1895 and led by prominent women. Some suffrage opponents argued that giving women the right to vote represented a threat to the fundamental order of society. Others believed that suffrage was being forced on the general public by a small group of activists. However, many “antis” were themselves

progressive social activists and reformers. Rather than conceding the public sphere to men, they believed that women could be better, more effective citizens without the ballot and the corrupting influence of politics. Some feared that if women won the vote, involvement in electoral politics would divert their energies from the thousands of women's clubs and organizations in which they had found a power base. Thus, not all "antis" were "reactionaries" intent on upholding the patriarchal order. By 1915 the organization had 37,000 female members. By holding rallies, providing speakers, and raising funds, it played a key role in dividing the women's movement and helping to defeat a series of women's suffrage referenda in Massachusetts.³

Twice, women's suffrage was put to the Massachusetts voters and both times it was defeated. In 1895, women were permitted to vote along with men on a non-binding referendum to gauge public opinion on the question of enfranchising women in municipal elections. Only 4% of eligible women voters participated, although they overwhelmingly voted in favor of the measure (96%). In all, suffragists were deeply disappointed that only 24,000 of 600,000 eligible women voters turned out to cast a ballot. In contrast, 68% of males cast their votes against suffrage (187,000 vs. 87,000).⁴ A brief period of discouragement followed: in 1889 there had been ninety suffrage leagues in the state, but this fell to twenty-six in 1895.⁵

In 1915 Massachusetts male voters again resoundingly rejected women's suffrage. Statewide, only 35.5% were in favor. They were not alone; male voters in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York also rejected women's suffrage in similar referenda. Following this statewide defeat, Massachusetts suffrage activists, including many from Framingham, decided to concentrate their efforts on the national campaign to amend the Federal Constitution, rather than state-by-state efforts.

World War I proved to be the turning point. In the end, President Woodrow Wilson declared that women's suffrage was a necessary war measure. Acknowledging the invaluable contribution women had made to the war effort, and pressured by Alice Paul's militant Women's Party and its ongoing acts of civil disobedience, the president finally backed the 19th Amendment. On June 25, 1919, Massachusetts was the eighth state to ratify the 19th Amendment by a vote of 185–47 in the State House of Representatives and 34–5 in the Senate. By August 1920, thirty-six states had ratified it, ensuring that the right to vote could not be "denied or abridged" based on sex.⁶

Despite the pioneering roles that Massachusetts women had played, for much of the twentieth century their contributions to winning suffrage were overlooked and/or overshadowed. In 1975 Historian Sharon Hartman Strom perceptively noted that:

The bias in the original sources toward New York may possibly be attributed to several factors: New York women wrote almost all of the published autobiographies; the state of Massachusetts was so notorious among suffragists for its anti-suffrage movement that the hundreds of suffrage activists were often forgotten; New York won a popular referendum for woman suffrage in 1917 while Massachusetts lost one in 1915, leading to the possible but not necessarily logical conclusion that Massachusetts had a weaker suffrage organization; the official history of the movement was edited by New York women, except Ida Husted Harper . . . Harper managed to avoid including Massachusetts in the index of Volume V of the History of Woman Suffrage [in 1922].⁷

Suffrage organizations existed in towns and cities across the Commonwealth, but many of these local stories have still not been uncovered. In this groundbreaking article, Anita Danker explores the history of the suffrage movement in Framingham and its antecedents, origins, and impact. She traces the unique confluence of factors that led to the emergence of a vibrant suffrage movement and its influential leaders. Particularly after 1900, the number of prominent Framingham women associated with the movement is impressive. The focus of Danker's in-depth study is twofold: the first is to explore and analyze the unique set of factors that generated and enabled such a high level of activism, and the second is to highlight its most prominent leaders. Dr. Danker lives in Framingham and has written about local history topics for many decades, with a focus on women's history.

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Among the group of militant suffragists demonstrating at the White House on July 14, 1917, was a diminutive homemaker from Framingham, Massachusetts: Louise Parker Mayo (1868–1952). She and the other protesters were arrested for blocking traffic and sentenced to sixty days in the notorious Occoquan Workhouse jail. During her brief incarceration, Mayo worried about how her seven children were faring in her absence and hoped to be home in time to finish making her raspberry preserves.⁸ When interviewed by the local press, her eldest daughter commented that, while the family was sorry that their mother was in jail, they really did not mind because it was “in a good cause.”⁹

Nineteen months later, another Framingham resident, Josephine Collins (1880–1960), was arrested along with a number of like-minded activists on Boston Common demanding action on the Nineteenth Amendment, stalled

by President Wilson, who had decided to visit the city on his way home from the Paris Peace Conference. The activists were charged with loitering and sent to the Charles Street Jail.¹⁰ An entrepreneur and one of the first members of the National Woman's Party (NWP), Collins was a single woman who had helped run the family market when one of her brothers went off to war.¹¹

Not as dramatic but nonetheless heroic were the efforts of Olive Mills Belches (1879–1937) on behalf of the suffrage amendment. A single woman employed at her family's apple farm and nursery, Belches served as the state chairman of the NWP's Massachusetts branch after having previously held leadership positions in local suffrage organizations.¹² While most prominent due to their leadership and the nature of their contributions to the suffrage movement, Belches, Mayo, and Collins represent many others in the community who took a public stand and fought for women to gain the most fundamental right of citizenship in a democratic republic—the right to vote.

The number of high-profile Framingham women associated with the women's suffrage movement is impressive and most notable during the first two decades of the twentieth century—a time of strife and national division over the final push for passage and ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. The focus of this study is twofold: to explore and analyze the unique set of factors that generated and enabled such a high level of activism, and to highlight its most prominent leaders. Since its founding in the seventeenth century, Framingham's story rings familiar in its links to the major historical currents sweeping the larger colony, state, and nation, yet it also left its own unique footprint.¹³ Framingham's distinctive chronicle highlights institutions and individuals, enabled by a well-developed infrastructure, that came together to create a vibrant cohort of women dedicated to the cause of women's suffrage in the early twentieth century.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND INSTITUTIONS

During the years immediately following the Civil War and into the first two decades of the twentieth century, Framingham was a community on the move. Town historian Stephen Herring describes one of the three principal villages, South Framingham, as “well on its way to fulfilling its own destiny as a major industrial, commercial, and transportation center for eastern New England.”¹⁴ Manufacturing straw bonnets, originally a cottage industry largely undertaken by women in their homes, was the largest business venture during the post-war years, while agriculture still held sway around Lake Waushakum in the community's southern section. According to the United States Census, the population grew from 4,227 in 1860 to 11,302

in 1900, and then to 17,033 in 1920. Roads, railroad lines, trolleys, hotels, and public buildings in particular, as well as its location midway between the cities of Boston and Worcester, helped advance the staging of events that showcased various suffrage activities in Framingham.

TRANSPORTATION: TRAINS & TROLLEYS COME TO TOWN

A railroad for Framingham dates as early as the 1820s when a need arose for an efficient way to connect Albany and Boston. In 1831 the Massachusetts legislature issued a charter authorizing the building of a railroad to connect Boston and Worcester.¹⁵ The decision to build the railroad bed through the southern part of Framingham greatly enhanced the economic life in that neighborhood, contributing to the growth and popularity of Harmony Grove and Lakeview at Mount Wayte, sites for important suffrage meetings. The *Woman's Journal* featured a story publicizing a historic July 4, 1871, mass meeting dedicated to women's suffrage and opened by listing the reduced Boston and Albany fares for trains connecting Boston, Newton, Worcester, and a number of other communities with Harmony Grove in Framingham.¹⁶ The New England Chautauqua at Lakeview had its own railroad station at the base of Mount Wayte and routinely listed essential information concerning schedules and fares in its publicity materials.

While the railroad lines were crucial in bringing outsiders into town, once there, they could easily navigate throughout the community via trolley. During the 1880s, a companion network to the train lines surfaced when the street railway or trolley system replaced the old horse-drawn street cars.¹⁷ Herring notes that "Framingham entered the twentieth century with an almost entirely electrified trolley system."¹⁸

BUILDINGS: PRIVATE AND PUBLIC

In addition to the existence of convenient roads, railroads, and trolleys, another key factor contributing to Framingham's prominent role in the suffrage movement between Boston and Worcester is the fact that visitors could find comfortable accommodations and meeting places. Art historian Leah Lipton, in an essay describing the railroads' influence on the community's growth, explained how the construction of a number of hotels and business blocks in the wide shadow of the celebrated depot, designed by Henry Hobson Richardson, contributed to its lasting commercial development.¹⁹ One example was the Park Haven, first called the Railroad Depot Hotel due to its location next to the station.

Nearby Irving Square, the site of a new brick commercial building, proved a popular meeting place, including one of the era's most significant local women's suffrage meetings held there in 1909. Advance notice in the *Tribune* mentioned the location as well as the expected slate of speakers while making note of the assembly as evidence of the new, bolder strategy employed by the area's suffrage committee: "This is the first time, at least in the lives of the present generation, that such open-air active campaigning has been undertaken and it is already proving its value and interest."²⁰ After the fact, the *Boston Globe* published a brief article listing some of the more prominent participants, including the feisty trade union organizer Margaret Foley and attorney Theresa Crowley.²¹

Village Hall is a historic building frequently mentioned in informal accounts concerning suffrage activities in Framingham. The stately, white wooden building was constructed by local carpenter Dexter Esty and designed in the Greek Revival architectural tradition in 1834 by Dexter Hemenway and Solomon Willard (who also planned the imposing First Baptist Church in Framingham Centre and the Bunker Hill Monument in Boston). The structure served as the annual town meeting site and seat of government until 1891, when it was no longer large enough to house the functions for which it was intended.²² The fact that suffrage gatherings were among the events that took place at Village Hall has rendered it one of the "sacred spaces" associated with the town's involvement in the fight for women's rights.

1840–1880: REFORMERS GATHER AT HARMONY GROVE

In the 1840s Edwin Eames, a descendant of one of the founding families, established a private recreational enterprise that he called Harmony Grove. Situated between Farm Pond and Union Avenue in Framingham, the site evolved into a popular park for family outings with facilities for boating, picnicking, hiking, and dancing. Eventually the grounds expanded from four to fifteen acres, including a natural amphitheater that could accommodate about a thousand spectators.²³ Aided by the newly developed railroad, the site hosted numerous meetings devoted to publicizing such high-profile reform efforts as abolition, temperance, and, after the Civil War, women's suffrage.²⁴

Familiar names from the earlier anti-slavery meetings frequently appeared on the publicity materials for the later assemblies. In 1870 a women's suffrage convention at Harmony Grove showcased the indefatigable William Lloyd Garrison and another tireless reformer, Julia Ward Howe (1819–1910). Howe had a unique connection to Framingham in that her Civil War anthem, "Battle Hymn of the Republic," was first sung publicly in 1862 at Plymouth

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NO SLAVERY!

FOURTH OF JULY!

The Managers of the
Mass. ANTI-SLAVERY SOC'Y

Invite, without distinction of party or sect, ALL who are ready and mean to be known as on LIBERTY'S side, in the great struggle which is now upon us, to meet in convention at the

GROVE IN FRAMINGHAM,

On the approaching FOURTH OF JULY, there to pass the day in no idle glorying in our country's liberties, but in deep humiliation for her Disgrace and Shame, and in resolute purpose--God being our leader--to rescue old Massachusetts at least from being bound forever to the car of Slavery.

SPECIAL TRAINS

Will be run on that day, TO THE GROVE, from Boston, Worcester, and Milford, leaving each place at 9 25 A. M.

RETURNING--Leave the Grove about 5 1-2 P. M. FARE, by all these Trains, to the Grove and back,

FIFTY CENTS.

The beauty of the Grove, and the completeness and excellence of its accommodations, are well known.

EMINENT SPEAKERS,

From different quarters of the State, will be present.

Earle & Dorr, Printers, 218 Main Street, Worcester.

Broadside Advertising a Rally of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, 1854

This broadside specifically mentions the many logistical factors that made Framingham's Harmony Grove so significant during these decades: the "completeness and excellence of the [local] accommodations" as well as the "beauty of the Grove" were "well known." In addition, "special trains" were provided from Boston, Worcester, and Milford.

In May 1854, after intense debate, the U.S. Congress had passed the Kansas-Nebraska act which permitted settlers to legally establish slavery in the Western territories. To mark these dark days, the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society called for a rally on July 4 at the bucolic oaks of Framingham's Harmony Grove. The broadside invited supporters "there to pass the day in no idle glorifying in our country's liberties, but in deep humiliation for her Disgrace and Shame, and in resolute purpose . . . to rescue old Massachusetts from being bound forever to the car of Slavery."

The Society had conducted annual July 4 ceremonies at Harmony Grove between 1846 and 1865, but this one was especially memorable. The amphitheater's stage was decorated with two white flags bearing the names of Kansas and Nebraska along with banners proclaiming "Virginia" and "Redeem Massachusetts." An inverted U.S. flag draped with black crepe hung above.

The "eminent speakers" included William Lloyd Garrison, Sojourner Truth, and Henry David Thoreau. Garrison gave one of the most controversial speeches of his life. "Today, we are called to celebrate the 78th anniversary of American Independence. In what spirit?" he asked, "with what purpose? to what end?" The Declaration of Independence had declared "that all men are created equal . . . It is not a declaration of equality of property, bodily strength or beauty, intellectually or moral development, industrial or inventive powers, but equality of RIGHTS—not of one race, but of all races." Then, in a dramatic climax, Garrison burned copies of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law and the U.S. Constitution. Many newspapers condemned his action.

Sojourner Truth spoke after lunch. She warned the gathering that God "would yet execute his judgments upon the white people for their oppression and cruelty." Henry David Thoreau boldly declared that the "law will never make men free; it is men who have got to make the law free." This spirit of radicalism influenced local Framingham residents for decades. Harmony Grove later became an important venue in the movement for women's rights. Source: Massachusetts Historical Society.

Church located near the common in the center of town.²⁵ Her commitment to women's suffrage is underscored in a quote that can be found on the title page of a collection of her speeches and writings on the topic. In it Howe asserts: "The ballot, the most perfect weapon yet devised of moral and intellectual power. We do not wish to take it from the hands of any man; we would put it in the hands of every woman."²⁶ At the 1870 meeting, she shared the stage with two sisters from Glastonbury, Connecticut: Abigail and Julie Smith. The pair had been making the rounds of the suffrage circuit with the poignant and infuriating story of being required to pay taxes on their farm when they had no voice in the laws determining the levies and setting the rates. Their Jersey cows were sold at auction to satisfy their debt, making both the sisters (and the cows) martyrs to the cause of women's suffrage.²⁷

Howe featured prominently again at the 1871 July Fourth celebration at the Grove. She served as chair of the executive committee that planned the event, which was well-publicized in the Boston-based *Woman's Journal*. The publication is reported to have had a circulation that reached from the East Coast to the Midwestern cities of Chicago and St. Louis.²⁸ Its founder and editor, Lucy Stone, co-founded the American Woman Suffrage Association and, with her spouse Henry Blackwell, also attended Harmony Grove reform meetings devoted to abolition, temperance, and women's suffrage.

In 1874 the *Boston Globe* advertised the annual July Fourth gathering at the Grove with a notice that Stone and Blackwell would be among the speakers, a group also comprising Julia Ward Howe, who was slated to read a poem, and William Lloyd Garrison, who planned to deliver an address.²⁹ The keynote speaker was Mary Livermore (1820–1905), who collaborated with Stone on the *Woman's Journal* publication and was instrumental in implementing a later meeting devoted to suffrage at the Chautauqua site at Mount Wayte, another Framingham institution that helped support and promote women's drive to obtain the vote.

In his reflections about Harmony Grove's impact on local Framingham residents, one-time editor of the



Mary Livermore, 1867

Journalist and president of the American Woman Suffrage Association.

Framingham News Raymond Callahan notes that although large gatherings convened at the site to discuss the great controversies of the years during which it operated, there was “dissent without disorder.”³⁰ Framingham was not so much a hotbed of abolitionism, temperance, and women’s rights itself as it was a convenient location where groups devoted to these causes could gather to air their grievances. Harmony Grove was constructed to host thousands in its sunken amphitheater, and the locals did not interfere with the activities of the various groups that met there to protest so long as there were no riots, no destruction of property, and no personal injuries to disrupt the routine business of the community.

1880–1900: LOCAL CHAUTAUQUA SUPPORTS SUFFRAGE DAY

While Harmony Grove was a private business enterprise originating as a recreational venue, the New England Chautauqua Sunday School Assembly at Mount Wayte in Framingham, often simply referred to as Lakeview, began as a site for Methodist camp meetings but evolved into a summer festival that combined educational pursuits and entertainment along with its fundamental religious mission.³¹ It was associated with but not formally classified as a branch of the original Chautauqua in western New York state that dates to 1874 and, despite some challenging years, is still in operation today. In its glory days in the 1880s and 1890s in Framingham, Lakeview was the site of an annual two-week program staged in a bucolic setting northwest of Farm Pond that was served by the railroad, which scheduled extra trains at a nearby stop for the convenience of the Chautauqua visitors.

Lakeview amenities included an outdoor auditorium, a “hall of philosophy,” a large dining hall, and several buildings that served as headquarters for various Protestant denominations. Once the Chautauqua was established, over one hundred cottages were erected on Mount Wayte, distinguished by their whimsical gingerbread trim (similar to those found on Martha’s Vineyard today). A few of these structures are still standing in the Mount Wayte neighborhood, and, although altered through renovations and the inevitable wounds of time, are still recognizable. A typical two-week Chautauqua session would include a slate of lectures on academic subjects such as history, literature, and science, as well as social issues and temperance, a particular favorite of the participants. To add a note of celebration and gaiety to the agenda, the organizers also scheduled concerts, light shows, and fireworks.³²

Like Harmony Grove, the Framingham Chautauqua held sessions devoted to a number of serious topics that attracted visitors from elsewhere but also

served to inform the locals about significant reform efforts, including the fight for women's suffrage. The 1894 Woman's Day at Lakeview was the subject of a highly favorable article in the *Boston Globe*.³³ Although it rained, attendance was reportedly good. The audience was treated to speeches by familiar suffrage reformers Julia Ward Howe and Henry Blackwell, as well as one delivered by the Reverend J. W. Hamilton, who gave an account of six thousand years of discrimination against women. Musical selections throughout the program no doubt added an air of festivity to the subject's otherwise serious tone. The *Globe* article described Mary Livermore's opening speech as "glowing."

The Chautauqua program booklets available at the Framingham Public Library and the Framingham History Center for later sessions (1913 and 1914 meetings) indicate significant attention to temperance but no evidence of days set aside to highlight women's suffrage. Passage of the prohibition amendment clearly had taken precedence over the suffrage movement in the Chautauqua leadership's agenda. In the early years of the twentieth century, the number of active participants in the formal educational program dwindled significantly, as did the attendance tallies for various events at Lakeview. Offerings trended away from the more serious lectures and courses that characterized the programs during its heyday in favor of more practical offerings and entertainment. A victim of changing tastes, competition from other Chautauqua assemblies that sprang up in the region, and financial struggles, Lakeview folded in 1918 after operating for nearly forty years with its lively summer gatherings.³⁴

FRAMINGHAM NORMAL SCHOOL

The Framingham Normal School, a more durable institution with links to the women's suffrage movement, was originally founded in 1839 in Lexington after the legislature passed a law authorizing the creation of the State Board of Education.³⁵ It was the first state normal school in the nation devoted to teacher training.³⁶ Only women applicants were considered. Its popularity is evidenced by the fact that it twice outgrew its quarters and eventually found a permanent home on Bare Hill in Framingham, near the center of the community.

Ellen Hyde (1838–1926), a Framingham Normal School graduate (1862) and principal of her alma mater (1875–1898), took on various causes in the promotion of women, including the push for women's suffrage. Hyde developed a number of signature programs during her long tenure, perhaps most significantly the lengthening of the course of study from two to four

years.³⁷ She advocated for the Model School, later the Practice School, where teacher candidates could hone their skills in a field setting. She also oversaw the incorporation of the Boston School of Household Arts and the creation of a glee club.³⁸

As a college administrator, Ellen Hyde recognized the achievements of accomplished women with ties to the normal school. She also supported the cause of women's suffrage in the larger community. Her name appeared on the Framingham Equal Suffrage League's official letterhead in 1911 under the heading "Honorary Vice-Presidents" along with those of three other women. After retirement Hyde continued her commitment to education for young girls by opening a school in her home in Framingham.³⁹

Under Hyde's leadership, a campus building was dedicated to educator Abby May (1829–1889), a distant relative of Louisa May Alcott, for her role in the women's suffrage movement and other social causes. May served on the New England Sanitary Commission during the Civil War, spearheaded the New England Women's Club (which sought to improve education for girls), and was a leader of the school suffrage movement.⁴⁰ Situated on a hill at the gateway to the campus, May Hall is perhaps the most conspicuous building on the Framingham State University grounds today.

In Massachusetts, school suffrage groups lobbied to have women elected to school committees, believing that their presence would help bring about reforms in education.⁴¹ In 1873 May was elected to the Boston School Committee only to suffer the indignity of being denied her seat by other



Abigail May (1829–1889)



Ellen Hyde, c. 1875



First Female Voting in Massachusetts

In 1879 Massachusetts women won the right to vote in school committee elections. Source: *Boston Globe*, December 9, 1879.

members on the basis of her sex. The following year the state legislature passed a law allowing women to serve on school committees.⁴² May was appointed to the Massachusetts Board of Education in 1879 and, in this capacity, she was a regular presence on the campus of the Normal School as a designated “official visitor.” (Official visitors were responsible for gathering data and preparing annual reports concerning the various activities at the schools, achievements of recent graduates, and expenditures.)

In recognition of Lucretia Crocker (1829–1886), Class of 1850, for her life of service in education, Crocker Hall opened in 1886 and still stands on the Framingham State University campus.⁴³ Like Abby May in her support of women serving on school committees, Crocker ran in the 1873 election and was similarly refused a seat. Her strong ties to the Normal School continued after graduation, as she taught classes in science, mathematics, and geography there until 1854.⁴⁴

Framingham Normal School graduate Bertha Johnston (1864–1953), a member of the Class of 1885, worked for suffrage after she completed her studies. Following further study at the Chicago Kindergarten Institute, Johnston took a position as editor of the *Kindergarten Magazine*.⁴⁵ Additionally Johnston worked at a settlement house before moving back to her hometown of Brooklyn. She had developed an interest in women’s suffrage soon after finishing her education at Framingham Normal School



Lucretia Crocker (1829–1886)



Bertha Johnston (1864–1953)

and joined the New York City's Women's Suffrage League and Women's Political Union after leaving Chicago. Clearly, these activities illustrated her strong public commitment to influencing government at both the state and national levels to approve legislation granting women the vote.

The case of Kate Gannett Wells (1838–1911) illustrates the complexities of whether advancing women's rights, arguably a parallel mission of the Normal School, could be advocated by individuals who opposed women's suffrage. Wells was elected to the Boston School Committee in 1875 and later served several terms on the State Board of Education in a role similar to that of her predecessor, Abby May. Like May, she too was honored by a building on the campus of the Normal School, Wells Hall. Yet despite a lifetime of activism, including dedication to causes for the advancement of women, Wells argued vigorously against suffrage, including before the state legislature in 1884, claiming that women were too busy to be involved in politics.⁴⁶ She emphasized that they should attend to their domestic duties first and then commit themselves to reforms involving education and other moral questions. True to her stated beliefs, Wells founded the New England Women's Club and the Women's Educational and Industrial Union, and supported the unsuccessful campaign to allow women to attend Harvard Medical School as well. In 1902 Wells Hall was dedicated in recognition of her tenure as an official visitor to the Framingham Normal School. While May and Crocker Halls still remain standing, Wells Hall was demolished in the early 1960s.

There is scant evidence to support the notion that gaining the vote for women was a priority at the Normal School. However, in a collection of historical sketches published by the Alumnae Association to recognize the school's 75th anniversary, the section covering 1889–1914 does include a brief description of suffrage activities. It begins by noting: "In these days of agitation of votes for women, it would be remarkable if we had no representatives in that field of human interest. In fact, we have long been concerned with suffrage."⁴⁷ The paragraph goes on to mention the activities of three graduates who were involved in the suffrage campaign in various capacities after they left the school, but it does not detail their participation in any organized activities while they were enrolled at the institution. Similarly, there exists a 1913 photo of "suffrage hikers" gathering before a "pilgrimage" to Washington D.C., taken on the campus, but there is no explanation of whether or not any other suffrage activities were held on campus and the extent to which they were supported by other faculty and/or students.⁴⁸

While there appears to be little evidence that Framingham Normal School was a center of suffrage activity, the institution was founded to

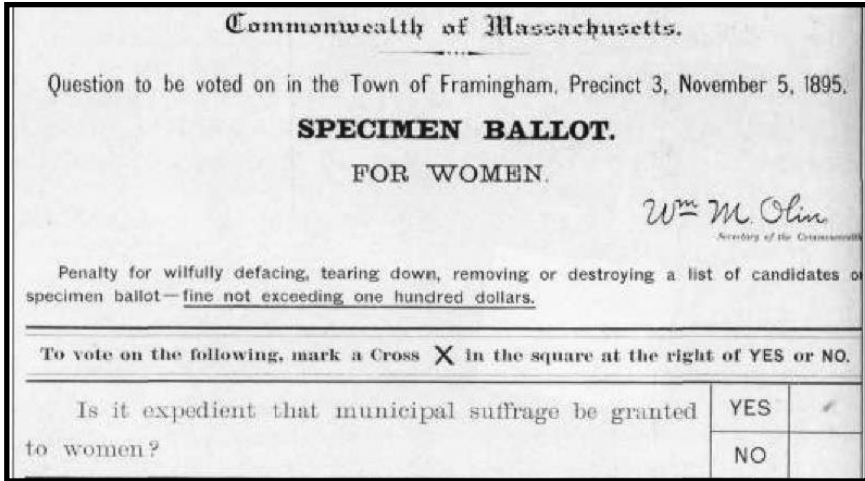
educate young women to be professionals and to foster their independence. Women assumed leadership roles as administrators and, in the case of Ellen Hyde, pushed for buildings to be named to honor activists with ties to the suffrage movement. Prior to the appointment of Hyde as principal, Annie Johnson served in that role from 1866 to 1875, the first woman to head the school.⁴⁹ Reportedly, the members Board of Visitors were particularly vigilant in their oversight mission, fearing the school might suffer under a woman's tenure. Framingham Normal School was supportive of women's progress, yet still reflected the prejudices of the larger society as to their capability when given untraditional responsibilities. Some graduates went on to work for voting rights for women and, in the cases of Lucretia Crocker and Abby May, ran for elective office before they had full access to the ballot box. The presence of Framingham Normal School in the community was a reminder that women could achieve success as professional educators and reformers if they were educated, held to high standards, and provided with opportunities to become involved in issues of concern to the society at large.

In 1895 activists succeeded in getting a non-binding referendum limited to municipal suffrage on the ballot. Suffragists were disappointed that only 4% of eligible women participated, although they voted overwhelmingly in favor of the measure (96%). In contrast, 68% of males voted against it. In 1915 the state's male voters again rejected women's suffrage, 65%–35%. Following this defeat, Massachusetts activists,



May Hall, c. 1890s

The building was named after educator, suffragist, and social reformer Abby May.



1895 Referendum Ballot, Framingham

The ballot asks: “Is it expedient that municipal suffrage be granted to women?” This nonbinding referendum would have allowed women to vote in town and city elections only.



“Suffrage Hikers” with Banner, Framingham Normal School c. 1913

including many women from Framingham, decided to concentrate their efforts on the national campaign to amend the U.S. Constitution.

20TH CENTURY WOMEN OF COURAGE

In the twentieth century, Framingham residents Olive Mills Belches and Josephine Collins were instrumental in establishing the town as a center of suffrage activity. At two significant June meetings in Framingham in 1918, Belches was re-elected chairman of the Massachusetts branch of the NWP, and Collins was selected to serve as secretary. Although Belches' role in the party's state branch was the more prominent and powerful, she remains relatively unknown in her home town. Collins, on the other hand, is far more celebrated as one of the two residents who demonstrated against President Wilson for his seeming indifference to the passage of the suffrage amendment, and ended up in jail. For her sacrifice, the NWP awarded Collins the symbolically significant "jailhouse door" pin (shown below).

The other recipient was Louise Parker Mayo, who went to Washington, D.C. to participate in the historic Bastille Day protest in 1917 and was arrested, then sent to the Occoquan Workhouse. A square outside the Village Hall was dedicated in their honor in 2005. Far different in her life experiences from these three was the African American artist and reformer Meta Warrick Fuller, who chose suffrage as a means to combat racism in the community and help establish herself and her family as prominent citizens. The Fuller family was so highly respected that many years later a public school was named in their honor.

Although Belches, Fuller, May, and Collins are certainly not the only Framingham activists who fought for the equal suffrage amendment, their stories are unique in that they contradict the widely accepted vision of the suffragist as an upper-middle class white woman who had the time and means to get involved. I have chosen to flesh out in greater depth those four who do not represent the common stereotype because they illustrate the variety of individuals who made great



"Jailhouse Door" Jewelry Pin

Awarded to jailed suffragists.

sacrifices in the fight for women's rights and belie the myth that it was a movement that had no room for black women, working women, and farm wives with pressing family responsibilities.

OLIVE MILLS BELCHES: THE UNSUNG LEADER

An obituary published in the *Boston Globe* on March 2, 1937, described Olive Mills Belches (1879–1937) simply as the proprietor of Cherry Meadows Gardens in Framingham.⁵⁰ Her death was apparently sudden, and her lone survivor was her brother Edward, a landscape architect living in Great Barrington at the time. No mention was made of her prominence in the state branch of the NWP, but a similar notice in the local press did acknowledge her activism on behalf of women's suffrage. The article claimed that her "writing on the subject received wide publication."⁵¹ If this statement is accurate, little of a formal nature seems to have survived in local or national repositories. Some of her horticulture publications, on the other hand, are still available online at such websites as the *Biodiversity Library* and *Historic New England*.⁵²

Accounts of Belches' considerable activities in both local and state suffrage organizations live on through copies of her letters, including correspondence with Alice Paul of the NWP and other prominent suffragists, which can be accessed electronically at the Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe and through the Library of Congress. From these sources, a picture emerges of a committed foot soldier and quiet leader who answered the call when others did not and contributed her significant talents to the movement despite the demands of her family business and physical and emotional exhaustion.

Belches was born in Boston in 1879 to a father with roots in Canada and a mother whose birthplace was listed as Massachusetts. She had one brother, Edward, two years her senior, with whom she would later run the family nursery. According to the United States Census of 1900, the Belches were then living in Brookline, a town bordering on Boston. Both Olive and Edward were in their early twenties, unmarried, and living at home. Olive had previously attended Brookline High School where she won a prize for public speaking in 1895.⁵³ By 1910 the Belches family had moved to Framingham and had sufficient means to employ an Irish maid. Both Olive and Edward were in their thirties by this time and resided at the family home in Framingham.

In 1916 the letterhead of the Framingham Equal Suffrage League indicates that "Miss Olive Mills Belches" was the president of the executive board. Her official correspondence for this time period reveals the nature and

extent of her duties as head of the local organization as well as her opinions with respect to the leadership of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA).⁵⁴ She reported on the activities of various speakers and the expenses related to their appearances, noting her support because the lectures would clearly benefit the cause of suffrage. Belches was feeling somewhat overwhelmed by a state-level campaign and exhausted from being “engrossed every waking hour and almost while sleeping in planning and . . . speaking, writing, . . . and lifting, lifting, lifting people.” She lamented that “It takes a long while for the juice to run back, after being squeezed dry.”

Elsewhere in the correspondence, Belches offered her less-than-wholehearted support for Carrie Chapman Catt, who had assumed leadership of the NAWSA at the national level in 1915. She admitted that, while Catt was a “wonderfully fine orator” who had “an interesting career,” she struck her as only a mediocre leader. Such snippets provide insight into the toll that heavy involvement in social justice campaigns like the suffrage movement took on those in command and also into the well-publicized divisions within and among various women’s rights organizations.

In an exchange between Belches and Cambridge suffragist Grace A. Johnson later in the month, Belches expressed her surprise and sorrow upon learning of the death of Maria “May” Hollowell Loud of Medford,



**Olive Mills Belches,
Chair of the Mass. NWP**

Massachusetts, whom she described as someone who “worked faithfully” with “Negroes in the South.”⁵⁵ She closed her letter by exclaiming that “It is very, very sad!” In her reply, Johnson noted of Loud that “she was a very fine worker in many fields.”⁵⁶ An obituary appearing in the *Boston Globe* announcing Loud’s funeral service explained that it would be conducted by the Society of Friends, of which she was a member. The notice described her as “prominently identified with all things pertaining to the welfare and advancement of the negro race” and as the president of the Medford Equal Suffrage League.⁵⁷ The significance of both the correspondence and the newspaper accounts is that they highlight Hollowell’s activism with special emphasis on her commitment

to improving the conditions of African Americans. Her case adds some complexity to the observation that most white, middle-class suffragists were either blatantly racist or unwilling to jeopardize their cause by embracing that of African Americans.

Later in 1916, the Framingham Equal Suffrage League withdrew from the more moderate Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association and joined the Congressional Union, which, under the leadership of militants Alice Paul and Lucy Burns, eventually formed the NWP. The Framingham Suffrage League comprised 112 members at this time. Their decision was nearly unanimous, and Olive Mills Belches assumed the role of chairman.⁵⁸ Without having access to the minutes of the local group's debate concerning the decision, it is difficult to conclude what precipitated the change. Newspaper coverage of suffrage meetings held in Framingham in the years preceding the shift, such as the highly publicized rally at Irving Square in 1909 and the 1914 session of the Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association at the town hall, undoubtedly served to keep public interest alive. Speculation aside, the shift in affiliation from one with a gradualist approach to one that was clearly defiant and activist did underscore the mood of the locals and helped to explain the willingness of two of its members, Louise Mayo and Josephine Collins, to risk arrest and possible public condemnation in order to participate in controversial demonstrations shortly thereafter.

By 1917 the name of Olive Mills Belches appeared on the letterhead of the Massachusetts branch of the NWP as chairman of the state executive committee.⁵⁹ Her portrait, taken during this time period, can be accessed in the American Memory collection of the records of the NWP.⁶⁰ She is seated at a typewriter, wearing a ruffled blouse with a decorative pin at the neckline, and looking straight into the camera lens with a slight smile on her pleasant, rounded face.

Over the course of the next two years, a number of letters between Belches and Paul provide additional insight into the character and commitment of the two leaders as well as the often tedious work involved in bringing the arduous fight to achieve the passage of the women's suffrage amendment to a successful conclusion.⁶¹ The tone of the letters was respectful and warm. In an exchange between Belches and Abby Scott Baker, of Washington, D.C., the former wrote: "I was delighted to meet Miss Paul Sunday and most favorably impressed. I think she is a wonderful leader."⁶²

Topics discussed by Belches and Paul in their official correspondence included making arrangements for speakers, the activities of the Massachusetts chapter, membership issues, and the nomination of officers. A letter from Belches to Paul written on April 19, 1918, recorded four Framingham

residents among the fourteen members selected by the nominating committee for positions of leadership (equaled only by the city of Cambridge). This information is yet another indication of the centrality of the community in the suffrage movement during the years immediately preceding the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. In the same letter, Belches suggested that the NWP engage her childhood friend Walter Eaton as a speaker, observing that "I think a man who will speak well for our policy is quite rare, don't you?" Elsewhere in her letters, Belches spoke well of other male supporters.

When the suffrage fight was over, Belches remained in Framingham and continued to work at Cherry Meadows Gardens. In the town census of 1926, she is listed as a resident of Pleasant Street, where the family business was located, and her occupation is recorded as "secretary."⁶³ Her father and brother lived there as well and were described as farmers. Olive Mills Belches was just fifty-nine when she died in 1937. She had no heirs, but she left behind a legacy of dedication and leadership for a cause to which she gave her tireless support even in the face of extreme physical and emotional stress.

META WARRICK FULLER: ARTIST AND ACTIVIST

Belches, the leader of the Framingham Equal Suffrage League, remains a relative unknown in the history of the suffrage movement in Massachusetts. But one member who achieved fame and critical acclaim (though for activities unrelated to women's rights), was the talented sculptor Meta Warrick Fuller (1877–1968). Her efforts on behalf of the League reflected her dedication to human rights as well as her commitment to making a contribution to the cause on her own terms. As an African American woman, Fuller provides another example of the diversity of the Framingham suffrage cohort.

Meta Warrick was born into an upper-middle class Philadelphia family that was able to provide her with educational and cultural opportunities that encompassed art school and study abroad in Paris.⁶⁴ There she attended the *École des Beaux-Arts* and socialized with such notables as Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Auguste Rodin, and W. E. B. DuBois. In 1909 she married Dr. Solomon Carter Fuller, a Liberian-born psychiatrist who taught at Boston University and was a pioneer in the study of Alzheimer's Disease. The couple raised three sons in Framingham while maintaining demanding careers and active social lives, sometimes in the face of hostility and racism.⁶⁵ As a wife and mother, with a spouse who expected her to assume traditional homemaking responsibilities, Meta Fuller frequently struggled to keep her artistic career from faltering. Despite losing much of her artwork to a warehouse fire in 1910 in Philadelphia (where many of the pieces she created in Paris were stored),

and retreating somewhat from her career after her marriage, Fuller carried on.

The Fullers joined St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Framingham, and, in the face of some initial pushback from their white neighbors, became active in the community.⁶⁶ Meta joined the Framingham Equal Suffrage League, offering to contribute her talents to the group's annual autumn fundraiser. When a fellow member suggested that she sell some of her artwork at a booth set up at the town hall and donate the proceeds to the organization, Fuller balked at the idea, considering it both undignified and destined to be unprofitable.⁶⁷ She suggested instead the creation of a medallion that could be cast in various sizes with a design that might



Sculptor Meta Warrick Fuller

Member, Framingham Equal
Suffrage League

be used in the future for other objects such as buttons or medals. Fuller offered to charge the League only for the plaster, and, after some concerns about how many medallions could be produced from a single barrel, the committee responsible for finances accepted her proposal.

To the artist's disappointment, a new controversy surfaced over whether or not to include a likeness of the town hall on the medallion. She was adamant that the project be dedicated to a single cause—votes for women. Finally, the Equal Suffrage League accepted Fuller's concept and requested that she produce a number of the medallions to sell at their September fair. Apparently they sold well, and received praise from the local newspaper for a design that emphasized family. In her doctoral dissertation on Fuller's life and accomplishments, Judith Kerr writes that "Meta had chosen to equate the nation to a strong, united family—an institution to which women contributed significantly—thereby justifying women's right to full participation in national political affairs."⁶⁸

Fuller later turned her attention to peace and other social justice causes and produced a large body of sculpture depicting a variety of themes, including slavery, emancipation, and African culture. She became deeply involved with community theater and wrote poetry as well. Over the years, the bustling Fuller home welcomed a number of noteworthy African American visitors. Meta Fuller lived a long and productive life, passing in

1968 at the age of ninety-one. A facsimile of her Warren Road studio and a number of her impressive works, including a cast for the suffrage medallion, are on display at the Danforth Art Museum at Framingham State University.

“WOMEN OF MEANS” DO THEIR PART

A number of Framingham residents clearly matched the stereotype of the American suffragist as a woman of means with domestic servants to do her housework, a sense of noblesse oblige, and time on her hands to act on her conscience. Their names appeared on the letterhead of the Framingham Equal Suffrage League and in newspaper coverage of suffrage-related events in Boston. When Mabel Vernon of the NWP came to town in 1918 to raise funds to finance the anticipated final drive for passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, the *Globe* reported that several prominent local women pledged their support.⁶⁹ Among them were Mrs. Henry S. Dennison, Mrs. Lewis D. Bement, Mrs. Calvin Austin, Mrs. Austin St. Clair, and Miss Elizabeth Gray, who each promised to donate \$100 to the fundraising effort.

One key individual whose name also appeared in the *Globe* article as Mrs. Manfred Bowditch, later known as Margaret Pearmain Welch (1893–1984), was a particularly noteworthy member of the cohort. Welch, who divided her time between her Beacon Hill residence in Boston and a historic “country home” in Framingham, is described by her biographer as:

the quintessential socialite who established Waltz Evenings in her Louisburg Square drawing room and also the beauty whose marriages and divorces caused ostracism. At the same time, she worked tirelessly on women's suffrage, reproductive rights, world peace, environmental protection, monetary reform, land conservation, and more.⁷⁰

Her former Framingham home is located next door to the Friends Meetinghouse, which she helped found. Prior to the 1918 NWP fundraiser, Welch was involved in several suffrage-related activities, including the planning of a 1912 concert for the benefit of the Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association (MWSA) and appearing as a nymph in the “Ballet of Sylvia” staged in Boston to support both the Red Cross and the MWSA.⁷¹

Another prominent woman with ties to both Framingham and the suffrage movement was the controversial Mary Ware Dennett (1872–1947). The distinctive home that she shared for a period of time with her architect husband, William Hartley Dennett, is still standing in a remote neighborhood

near the Framingham Country Club. Members of the American Arts and Crafts movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the couple became embroiled in a tangled relationship with close friends Herman and Margaret Chase. When William, a “free love” advocate, suggested that Mary and Margaret both live with him under the same roof, Mary sued for divorce and custody of their two sons.⁷² After a bitter court trial, Dennett found herself a single mother with few financial resources despite her social class. Like Welch, Dennett exemplified the reformer with multiple interests, having worked for a number of radical causes, including peace, sex education, and birth control. When her ex-husband refused to support the children ostensibly because he had been denied full custody, Dennett accepted a paid position as field secretary of the Massachusetts Suffrage Association. Serving from 1908–1910, she proved to be an effective organizer and energetic campaigner. Her whirlwind 1909 “Votes for Women” drive served as a model for future efforts.⁷³

Dennett’s successes in Massachusetts led to an invitation from the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) to move to New York and work at the national headquarters. She accepted but soon realized that she was in the midst of an internal struggle within the organization and at the same time with the larger suffrage movement. Still she used her talents to shore up the literature department of the NAWSA, a vital division for turning out pro-suffrage propaganda materials. Her disagreements with the organization’s leader, Anna Howard Shaw, over financial issues ultimately led to her resignation in 1914. Her five-year stint as a salaried suffrage worker helped prepare Dennett for future activist campaigns, most spectacularly in birth control and sex education.⁷⁴



Mary Ware Dennett (1872–1947)

Photo courtesy of Sharon Spaulding.

UNLIKELY REBELS: LOUISE PARKER MAYO AND JOSEPHINE COLLINS

At the corner of Edgell Road and Oak Street, adjacent to Village Hall, a historic marker reading “Mayo-Collins Square” stands as a modest reminder of Framingham’s two most celebrated suffragists. One was a farm wife and mother of seven children, Louise Parker Mayo (1868–1952), and the other, Josephine Collins (1879–1960), was a shop-keeper and entrepreneur who never married. Although they most certainly knew each other through local suffrage organizations, there is little evidence that they were collaborators or even friends. Each gained notoriety in separate protests—one in Washington, D.C., and the other on Boston Common. Both were arrested and honored by the NWP for their sacrifices with the awarding of “Jailed for Freedom” pins, now held in the collections at the Framingham History Center.⁷⁵

Louise Parker studied at Framingham Normal School, Class of 1887, and worked as a schoolteacher before her marriage to William Mayo.⁷⁶ They moved to a dairy farm in the northwest corner of Framingham, where they raised their family. Although small in stature, Mayo frequently drove a horse-drawn school bus around town to supplement the family income. After her husband became ill from lead poisoning, she gradually took over the running of the farm.⁷⁷ Mayo was active in a number of community organizations,

THE SEX SIDE OF LIFE

An Explanation for Young People

BY

MARY WARE DENNETT

including the PTA, the community improvement society, and local suffrage groups. Reportedly she held suffrage meetings at her home.

After hearing a convincing speech by Mabel Vernon of the NWP favoring direct action, Mayo decided to go to Washington in 1917 to demonstrate her support for the cause. Her oldest daughter, Katharine, agreed to run the household and care for the younger children while she was out of town. Her mother marched in front of the White House in the Bastille Day demonstration of 1917 and was arrested with fifteen other protesters, including two from Massachusetts. Mayo refused to pay the \$25 fine and was sent to the infamous Occoquan Workhouse where NWP leaders Alice Paul and Lucy Burns would later endure painful force-feedings during their time behind bars.

President Woodrow Wilson hastily issued pardons, and Mayo quietly returned home to get back to work on her farm. In an interview for the *Boston Traveler* after her return, Mayo recounted being worried about how her children were faring in her absence. She had few complaints other than that “she missed her toothbrush, milk, and sugar in her coffee and found the food not very appetizing.”⁷⁸ According to one of Mayo’s granddaughters, she did not dwell on her suffrage activism in her later years but instead focused on encouraging family members to become educated, which she saw as the best way to help women and to give back to one’s community.⁷⁹

While Louise Mayo may have been reticent about discussing her experiences as a militant member of the NWP, fellow Framingham resident Josephine Collins was not. She was born in 1880, the eldest daughter of Irish immigrants. Collins, her five brothers, and a younger sister grew up on historic Salem End Road. Little is known about her early life, but she appears to have been a resourceful individual who found a variety of ways to support herself throughout her lifetime.⁸⁰ She gained employment as a nanny in Rhode Island and helped run the family market at home when needed. Collins had an independent streak, which led her to open a variety of businesses, including a fabric store, a periodicals shop, and a tea room. She believed that her enterprises sometimes suffered after



Louise Parker Mayo

she became involved in the suffrage movement due to pressure exerted by husbands who did not approve of their wives frequenting her establishments. In her later years, she worked at Babson College as a bookkeeper.

Collins became active on the local suffrage scene and at the state level as well during the eventful years before the final passage of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment. She served as the secretary of the NWP's Massachusetts branch and answered the call to go to Boston in February 1919 to demonstrate when President Wilson came to town.⁸¹ As the city prepared to welcome him home from his peacemaking efforts overseas, local suffragists were drafting a statement chiding him for being, in their eyes, only lukewarm in his endorsement of their quest. Agnes Morey of the Woman's Party insisted that though they were seeking to hold a mass meeting on the Common, if Wilson spoke there, they would not interrupt his speech.⁸² She argued convincingly that they believed simply that it was "ignoble of America to dictate qualifications for membership in the League of Nations which America is herself now unable to meet." Further she claimed that if the President supported the enfranchisement of women, he would have a more solid case and therefore an easier time in achieving his goal of spreading democracy throughout the world.

Twenty-two women, Josephine Collins among them, gathered near the State House to make their own case on February 24 but were asked by officials of the Boston Police Department to disperse for fear they would disgrace the city.⁸³ "When they refused, sixteen of them were hauled off to the Charles



Josephine Collins

Street Jail."⁸⁴ Among those boldly carrying banners was Josephine Collins, whose sign read "Mr. President, how long must women wait for liberty?"⁸⁵ They were charged with "loitering for more than seven minutes," and most of them defiantly refused to post bail. Alice Paul protested that they were held in solitary confinement and did not receive the fresh clothing that their families had provided for them. Most did not complain and did needlework to pass the time. Collins is quoted as insisting "Why, it's warm and comfortable. . . . They're lovely to us."⁸⁶ This conciliatory posture was undoubtedly an effort to cultivate positive public opinion. On February 27, much to her displeasure, Collins was released from jail. Reports as to who paid

her fine are conflicting, but a *Boston Globe* account of her discharge claims that “Miss Josephine Collins of Framingham left involuntarily soon after 2 p.m. her brother having paid her fine against her protests. She resisted so strongly that jail officials had to forcibly eject her and place both her and her valise in her brother’s auto.”⁸⁷

Despite her outrage, Collins eventually reconciled with her brother. The caption of a photograph showing her celebrating her 79th birthday in a local nursing home notes her participation in suffrage demonstrations. Her brother John, believed to be the sibling who arranged for her release, is shown with his arm around her smiling as she is about to blow out her candles.⁸⁸ Unlike Louise Mayo, who preferred to move on after her arrest, Collins talked openly about her experiences and, according to her grand-niece Carol Kane, regularly reminded female family members and friends to vote in upcoming elections, a right that she and many others had fought so hard to secure.⁸⁹ She passed away in 1960 and is buried at St. Stephen’s Cemetery in Framingham.

Not long after the demonstrations in Boston, the last during which suffragists were jailed for their street protests, the Nineteenth Amendment passed both houses of Congress and was sent out to the states for ratification. On August 18, 1920, Tennessee became the thirty-sixth state to approve, and shortly thereafter, on August 26, the amendment was added to the United States Constitution. Preparations began in Framingham and elsewhere to register the expected burst of new voters. According to the Annual Town Report for 1920, the community held forty meetings, considerably more than usual, to accommodate the changes brought about by the suffrage amendment. A total of 5,923 voters were registered, and 2,313 of them were women. Among the precinct officers at the local polls that year was one Josephine Collins, conspicuously taking a prominent role in this historic election.

THE COMMUNITY REMEMBERS

Official celebrations in honor of Framingham’s suffragists were a long time coming. In 1962, however, on the occasion of a family reunion, a ceremony was held at the Mayo farm during which the jailhouse door pin that had been awarded to Louise Mayo by the NWP was formally presented to the Historical Society by her daughter Katharine Rorstrom.⁹⁰ She was the eldest Mayo daughter and the one who in 1917, at the age of seventeen, had agreed to tend to the family so that her mother could participate in the demonstration in the nation’s capital. Reportedly eighty members of the Mayo family witnessed this poignant moment.

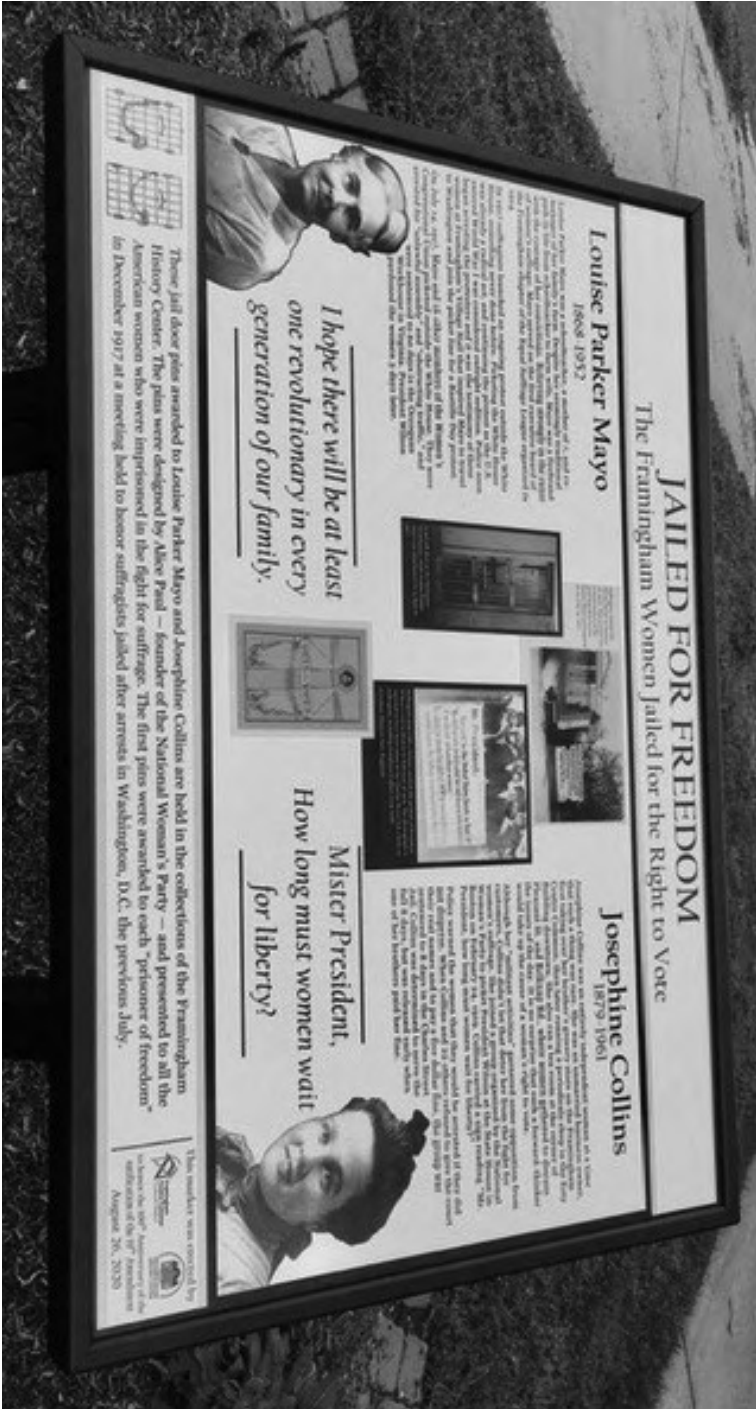
Over four decades later, on August 27, 2005, the day following the 85th anniversary of the passage of the Anthony Amendment, about 150 individuals, including a small number of family members, gathered to hear speeches delivered by local political figures and the town historian, Stephen Herring, dedicating the small patch of land named in honor of Louise Mayo and Josephine Collins. In his remarks, Herring stressed the fact that “Mayo and Collins and thousands like them were the force behind the icons of the women’s suffrage movement: Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Alice Paul. . . . These leaders could not have accomplished this on their own. This was a grassroots movement.”⁹¹ Mayo and Collins were singled out because they chose to participate in dramatic events that resulted in their arrests, not an ordinary occurrence in the American suffrage movement. They both showed courage and resolve in their willingness to take a risk for the advancement of a cause which they believed to be worth the sacrifice.

The community of Framingham has continued to remember the contributions of local suffragists through a variety of more recent creative and commemorative efforts. Storyteller Libby Franck, a resident of Framingham, brought Josephine Collins to life in her colorful 2012 performance celebrating the 92nd anniversary of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. Franck chose to portray Collins because she believed that she had received less attention in the press than Mayo and consequently was not as well known.⁹² The following year, Franck assumed the persona of Mary Ware Dennett and told the story of her commitment to a number of social movements, including suffrage, world peace and birth control.

Each year on the anniversary of the adoption of the suffrage amendment, Carol Kane, in a tribute to her great Aunt Jo, places purple, gold, and white balloons—the suffrage colors—on the signpost that marks Mayo-Collins Square, the only one in the city to be named for women residents. The Square represents more than these two local standouts, however, for it symbolizes a much larger cohort of Framingham residents who contributed in ways that best matched their skills and talents to the movement to enfranchise women.

In 2019, in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the Congressional approval of the Nineteenth Amendment, the Framingham History Center created a Framingham Women’s Suffrage Trail designating twelve sites significant to the community’s efforts to make the democratic process of voting for elected officials available to those who were denied this right on the basis of their sex.⁹³ The sites comprising the trail include various institutions, structures, markers, squares, and, most significantly, the individuals who put their lives on hold to participate in a civic and social movement of monumental importance to the nation’s identity as a representative democracy.

This interpretive panel was installed on Women's Equality Day, Aug. 26, 2020



* * * * *

As noted throughout this study, Framingham as a community in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries possessed a unique set of characteristics that enabled and fostered an unusually high level of awareness and participation in the suffrage movement. Its central location—which gave rise to the building of roads, railroads, and a trolley system that in turn sustained institutions possessing social justice overtones if not missions—made it an attractive gathering place for meetings of anti-slavery, temperance, and women's suffrage reformers. The Framingham Normal School's conspicuous presence, high on a hill overlooking Framingham Centre, is another significant factor in the community's reputation as friendly to the cause. Its student body consisted of female students and was headed during a critical period of its development by a strong-minded leader, Ellen Hyde. Of paramount significance are intrinsic intangibles and extrinsic events, such as the historic suffrage meeting at Irving Square in 1909, that motivated to action those individuals within the community who had their own reasons for taking action or donating funds to the cause.

In these efforts, Framingham does not stand alone, for it represents any number of other communities with similar or parallel suffrage stories. Framingham's experience stands as a reminder of the long struggle during the decades following the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, where participants publicly declared "That it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise."

HJM

Notes

1. For a succinct yet in-depth and thorough history of the Massachusetts suffrage movement see Barbara F. Berenson, *Massachusetts in the Woman Suffrage Movement: Revolutionary Reformers* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2018). For a focus on the 1900–20 time period, see Sharon Hartman Strom, "Leadership and Tactics in the American Woman Suffrage Movement: A New Perspective from Massachusetts," *Journal of American History* 62, no. 2 (1975): 296–315. For the nineteenth century, see Lois Bannister Merk, "Massachusetts and the Woman Suffrage Movement" (Ph.D. diss., Northeastern University, 1961).

2. Edmond B. Thomas Jr., "School Suffrage and the Campaign for Women's Suffrage in Massachusetts, 1879–1920," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 25 no.1 (Winter 1997): 1–17.
3. For a nuanced discussion of anti-suffrage women's ideology, see Manuela Thurner, "Better Citizens Without the Ballot': American Anti-Suffrage Women and Their Rationale During the Progressive Era," in Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (ed.) *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement* (Tillamook, OR: New Sage Press, 2005). Full records of the "Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to Women" 1894–1920 are held at the Massachusetts Historical Society.
4. Berenson, 82.
5. Strom, 300.
6. Strom, 315. Strom concludes that: "The woman suffrage workers of Massachusetts had, by 1919, transformed a dormant, unimaginative state society of suffragists into a network of aggressive organizations, which mobilized thousands of women, many of them young, in suffrage work and a unique political movement."
7. Strom, 298. Published in six volumes from 1881 to 1922 by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her associates, *History of Woman Suffrage* ensconced the "official," New York and NAWSA-based interpretation of the suffrage movement. For a superb, recent deconstruction of traditional suffrage historiography, see Lisa Tetrault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848–1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).
8. "Picket Back at Work," *Boston Traveler*, July 20, 1917.
9. "Family Is Militant: Sons and Daughters Hope Suffragist Will 'Stick'," *Boston Post*, July 18, 1917.
10. Doris Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom: American Women Win the Vote*, ed. Carol O'Hare (Troutdale, OR: NewSage Press, 1995), 171–74.
11. Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom*, 206.
12. Olive Mills Belches {photo}, <http://www.loc.gov/item/mnwp000086/>.
13. See Stephen W. Herring, *Framingham: An American Town* (Framingham: Framingham Historical Society, 2000) and Josiah H. Temple, *History of Framingham Massachusetts: 1640–1885* (Framingham: Town of Framingham, 1887), an earlier history of the community which was later published in a new edition by the Framingham Historical & Natural History Society and the New England Press of Somersworth, NH, 1988.
14. Herring, *American Town*, 181.
15. Temple, *Framingham*, 376.
16. "Fourth of July, The Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association Will Hold a Mass Meeting in the Grove at Framingham," *The Woman's Journal*, June 24, 1871.
17. Herring, *American Town*, 202.
18. *Ibid.*, 228.
19. Leah Lipton, "Around the Station: The Town and the Train: Focus of a New England Town's Growth" (Exhibit at Danforth Museum, Framingham, MA, 1978).

20. "Woman Suffrage Open Air Meeting," *Framingham Tribune*, August 6, 1909.
21. "Equal Suffrage Association Holds Open-Air Meeting," *Boston Globe*, August 8, 1909.
22. <https://framinghamhistory.org/historic-buildings/village-hall/>.
23. Herring, *American Town*, 146; James L. Parr and Kevin A. Swope, *Framingham Legends and Lore* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2009), 85–88.
24. On the Fourth of July in 1854, at the annual meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society held at Harmony Grove, speakers included Sojourner Truth, Henry David Thoreau, Lucy Stone, and William Lloyd Garrison, who railed against the Constitution for its implicit endorsement of slavery and burned a copy of it in bold defiance. The episode is described in Herring, *Framingham*, 162.
25. In Martha E. Dewar and M. Joan Gilbert, eds., *Framingham Historical Reflections* (Washington, DC: McGregor and Werner, 1974), 54, it is noted that the lyrics were first published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1862 and so moved attendees at a service held at Plymouth Church that they added the piece to a service that same year. Herring in *Framingham*, 178, includes a quote from an 1899 letter Howe wrote to a local resident endorsing the community's claim that it was the site of the first public singing of "Battle Hymn of the Republic."
26. Julia Ward Howe with an introduction by Florence Howe Hall, *Julia Ward Howe and the Woman Suffrage Movement* (Boston: Dana Estes, 1913).
27. Edgar Potter, *Old Harmony Grove: Its Great Meetings and Some Reminiscences of Its Days of Glory, Now Gone By* (Framingham: Press of Gazette, 1896), n.p.
28. Dewar and Gilbert, *Reflections*, 60.
29. "Miscellaneous Notes," *Boston Globe*, July 3, 1874.
30. Dewar and Gilbert, *Historical Reflections*, 58.
31. Anita C. Danker, "Redeeming the Time: Learning Vacations at the New England Chautauqua Assembly," *Massachusetts Historical Review* 17 (2015): 67–97.
32. *New England Chautauqua Sunday School Assembly at Lakeview, South Framingham, Mass. Fifteenth Annual Session, 1894*. Program booklets for the various sessions are housed in the Local History Collection at the main branch of the Framingham Public Library and the archives of the Framingham History Center.
33. "Woman's Day: Last Session of the New England Chautauqua Assembly for 1894," *Boston Globe*, July 25, 1894.
34. Danker, "Redeeming the Time," 89–91.
35. "FSU History—Part 1," www.framingham.edu/academics/henry-whittemore-library/special-collections-archives.
36. Kelly Kolodny, "Framingham Normal School (1839): Framingham State University, 'Live to the Truth,'" in *Remembering Massachusetts State Normal Schools: Pioneers in Teacher Education*, eds. Mary-Lou Breitborde and Kelly Kolodny (Westfield, MA: Institute of Massachusetts Studies, 2014), 21.
37. Kolodny, "Framingham Normal School," 25–26.

38. “Ellen Hyde, 1875–1898,” image and information from the FSU library, Special Collections and Archives; www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:5425kp062.
39. Sheila Gamble Cook, ed., *Dear Miss Hyde: The Friendship between Ellen Hyde, Principal of the First State Normal School in Framingham, Massachusetts and the Chafee, Sharpe, & Gamble Families as Chronicled by Their Letters, 1898 to 1926* (Arlington, MA: Stephen G. Surette, 2003), 19.
40. Ednah Dow Cheney, *Memoirs of Lucretia Crocker and Abby W. May*, <https://ia600908.us.archive.org/34/items/memoirsoflucreti00chen/memoirsoflucreti00chen.pdf>.
41. Barbara Berenson, *Massachusetts in the Woman Suffrage Movement* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2018), 73–76.
42. In 1879, Massachusetts approved a reform measure allowing women to vote in school committee elections.
43. FSU History—Part 1.
44. Crocker’s list of accomplishments in the field of science education is impressive. She continued her teaching at the college level at Antioch in Ohio but made the decision to return to Massachusetts in 1859 to help care for her aging parents. She pioneered in the field of nature studies and helped implement the development of a science curriculum for the Boston Public Schools based on observation more than textbooks. Crocker had the distinction of being appointed supervisor of the school system, the first woman to serve in this post. In 1880, in recognition of her numerous contributions to science education, Crocker was elected to the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Crocker Hall was initially used as a dormitory, but was later converted to classrooms. Boston Women’s Heritage Trail: Boston Women Making History, “Lucretia Crocker,” <https://bwht.org/lucretia-crocker/>.
45. “Bertha Johnston: Papers, 1872–1953,” located at Framingham State University Henry Whittemore Library, Special Collections and Archives.
46. Mary M. Huth, “Kate Gannett Wells, Anti-Suffragist,” *University of Rochester Library Bulletin*, www.rbscp.lib.rochester.edu/3562.
47. Grace V. Shepard, *Historical Sketches of the Framingham State Normal School* (Framingham: Alumnae Association, 1914), 122.
48. Photograph titled “Women’s Suffrage Hikers c. 1912–1914,” *Digital Commonwealth*, <https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/5425kn06v>.
49. Kolodny, “Framingham Normal School,” 25.
50. “Miss Olive M. Belches,” *The Boston Globe*, March 2, 1937.
51. Typed summary of an obituary published in the *Framingham News* in March, 1937.
52. Olive Mills Belches’ horticulture publications can be found at www.biodiversitylibrary.org and www.historicnewengland.org (accessed Aug. 3, 2020).
53. “Brookline Prize Speaking: Prize for Boys Went to Marshall Stearns; for Girls to Olive M. Belches,” *Boston Globe*, May 10, 1895.
54. Olive Mills Belches to Grace Allen Johnson, February 11, 1916, Grace Allen Johnson Papers, *ProQuest History Vault* (accessed July 22, 2019).

55. Belches to Johnson, February 16, 1916.
56. Johnson to Belches, February 23, 1916.
57. "With Quaker Services: Mrs. May Hallowell Loud of Medford Is to Be Laid at Rest Tomorrow," *Boston Globe*, February 19, 1916. Hallowell is further described as a portrait painter who had studied in Paris. A brief article published in the *Globe* the following day notes that delegations from a number of "negro organizations" attended the funeral services.
58. "Changes Organization: Framingham Suffrage League Joins Congressional Union," *Boston Globe*, June 30, 1916.
59. Her portrait, taken during this time period, can be accessed in the American Memory collection of records of the National Woman's Party. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mnwp000086/>.
60. Ibid.
61. From the Library of Congress National Woman's Party Records, Group 1, Container: 1:148, Folder: Belches, Olive M.
62. Belches to Baker, January 17, 1918, Library of Congress, National Woman's Party Records.
63. Luther C. Leavitt, John P. Finn, and James P. Shay, Assessors of Framingham, *List of Residents: Twenty Years of Age and Over* (Framingham, MA: Lakeview Press, 1926), 5.
64. Judith N. Kerr, "God-given Work: The Life and Times of Sculptor Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, 1877–1968" (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1986), https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_1/11143; and Grace E. Nelson, "Meta Warrick Fuller: A Female Perspective in the Harlem Renaissance" (African Studies Conference, February 23, 2018).
65. According to the Federal Census figures, in 1900, the population of Framingham was 12,948, of which a scant sixty-nine were classified as "Negro." The initial hostility to the Fuller family that is mentioned but not detailed in sources such as the 1985 Danforth Museum of Art exhibition notes may have been related to the fact that they moved into an elite neighborhood and not exclusively based on their race. By 1920, the population of the community had grown to 17,033, while the number of African Americans remained relatively small at 174.
66. Danforth Museum of Art, "An Independent Woman: The Life and Art of Meta Warrick Fuller" (Danforth Museum of Art, December 16, 1984–February 24, 1985).
67. Kerr, 229.
68. Ibid., 233.
69. "Anne Martin Says End of Suffrage Fight Is in Sight," *Boston Globe*, March 25, 1918.
70. Elizabeth F. Fideler, "Margaret Pearmain Welch (1893–1984): Proper Bostonian, Activist, Pacifist, Reformer, Preservationist" (Boston Athenaeum, October 3, 2018).
71. Elizabeth F. Fideler, *Margaret Pearmain Welch (1893–1984): Proper Bostonian, Activist, Pacifist, Reformer, Preservationist* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2017), 79.

72. Constance M. Chen, *"The Sex Side of Life: Margaret Ware Dennett's Pioneering Battle for Birth Control and Sex Education"* (New York: New Press, 1996), 64–111.
73. Chen, 131.
74. See the Schlesinger Library, Mary Ware Dennett Papers, MC 392; M-138 and Mary Ware Dennett Papers, MC 629.
75. <https://framinghamhistory.org/?s=josephine+collins>.
76. Anita C. Danker, "Grassroots Suffragists: Josephine Collins and Louise Mayo, A Study in Contrasts," *The New England Journal of History*, 67 (2011): 56–57.
77. <https://suffragistmemorial.org/louise-parker-mayof>.
78. "Picket Back at Housework," *Boston Traveler*, July 20, 1917.
79. Jean Trifero in telephone discussion with author, August 2, 2009.
80. Danker, "Grassroots Suffragists," 55.
81. For a full account of the episode, see James J. Kenneally, "I Want to Go to Jail: The Woman's Party Reception for President Wilson in Boston, 1919," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*, 45, no. 1, (Winter 2017): 102-133.
82. "Wilson's Ship Due in Port Tonight President Lands Tomorrow at 10," *Boston Daily Globe*, February 23, 1919.
83. "Welcome to Boston Warmest on Record," *Boston Daily Globe*, February 25, 1919.
84. Now repurposed as the euphemistically named Liberty Hotel. See Dan Murphy, "Charles St. Jail History," *Beacon Hill Times*, August 24, 2017.
85. "Arrest of 22 Suffragettes," *Boston Daily Globe*, February 24, 1919.
86. "Militants Think Their Jail Treatment 'Lovely,'" *Boston Daily Globe*, February 27, 1919.
87. "Jailed 'Suffs' Send Wire to President," *Boston Daily Globe*, February 28, 1919.
88. *Framingham News*, August 6, 1958.
89. Carol Kane, in conversation with author, August 7, 2009.
90. "Mayo Family Reunion with 80 Descendants Present," *Framingham News*, July 30, 1962.
91. "Square Dedicated to Framingham Women," *Metrowest News*, August 28, 2005.
92. "Framingham Storyteller Celebrates Town's Suffragist Past," *Boston Globe*, September 9, 2012.
93. Framingham History Center, *The Framingham Women's Suffrage Trail*, 2019.



In celebration of Women's Equality Day, August 26, 2020, this interpretive panel was installed on the last stop of the Framingham Women's Suffrage Trail. It tells the courageous story of Mayo and Collins. The panel was a collaborative effort of the Framingham History Center, the Framingham Centre Common Cultural District, and the Massachusetts Cultural Council.