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# Crystal Eastman

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## Crystal Eastman



Crystal Eastman, feminist and political activist

**Born** Crystal Catherine Eastman

June 25, 1881

[Marlborough, Massachusetts](#)

**Died** July 8, 1928 (aged 47)

**Nationality** American

**Occupation** Lawyer

**Known for** Feminism, socialism, [Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage](#), *The Liberator*, and as a co-founder of both the [Women's International League for Peace and Freedom](#) and [American Union Against Militarism](#)

**Spouse(s)** Wallace Benedict, Walter Fuller

**Children** [Jeffrey Fuller](#) and Annis Fuller

**Parent(s)** Samuel Elijah Eastman and Annis Bertha Ford

**Relatives** [Max Eastman](#) (brother)



**Crystal Catherine Eastman** (June 25, 1881 – July 8, 1928)<sup>[1]</sup> was an American [lawyer](#), [antimilitarist](#), [feminist](#), [socialist](#), and [journalist](#). She is best remembered as a leader in the fight for [women's suffrage](#), as a co-founder and co-editor with her brother [Max Eastman](#) of the radical arts and politics magazine *[The Liberator](#)*, co-founder of the [Women's International League for Peace and Freedom](#), and co-founder in 1920 of the [American Civil Liberties Union](#). In 2000 she was inducted into the [National Women's Hall of Fame](#) in [Seneca Falls, New York](#).

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## Early life and education

Crystal Eastman was born in [Marlborough, Massachusetts](#), on June 25, 1881, the third of four children. In 1883 their parents, Samuel Elijah Eastman and Annis Bertha Ford, moved the family to [Canandaigua, New York](#), where her brother Max was born. The following year their older brother died at age seven. In 1889, their mother became one of the first women ordained as a [Protestant](#) minister in America when she became a minister of the [Congregational Church](#).<sup>[2]</sup> Her father was also a Congregational minister, and the two served as pastors at the church of [Thomas K. Beecher](#) near [Elmira](#). This part of [New York](#) was in the so-called "Burnt Over District." During the [Second Great Awakening](#) earlier in the 19th century, its frontier had been a center of evangelizing and much religious excitement, which resulted in the founding of the [Shakers](#) and [Mormonism](#). During the [antebellum](#) period, some were inspired by religious ideals to support such progressive social causes as [abolitionism](#) and the [Underground Railroad](#).

Crystal and her brother [Max Eastman](#) were influenced by this progressive tradition. Their parents were friendly with the writer [Mark Twain](#). From this association young Crystal also became acquainted with him.

Main article: [Max Eastman](#)

She was the sister of the [socialist](#) activist [Max Eastman](#), with whom she was quite close throughout her life.<sup>[3]</sup> The two lived together for several years on 11th Street in [Greenwich Village](#) among other radical activists.<sup>[4]</sup> The group, including Ida Rauh, [Inez Milholland](#), [Floyd Dell](#), and [Doris Stevens](#), also spent summers and weekends in [Croton-on-Hudson](#).<sup>[5]</sup>

Eastman graduated from [Vassar College](#) in 1903 and received an [M.A.](#) in [sociology](#) (a relatively new field) from [Columbia University](#) in 1904. Gaining her law degree from [New York University Law School](#), she graduated second in the class of 1907.<sup>[1][6]</sup>

## Social efforts

Social work pioneer and journal editor [Paul Kellogg](#) offered Eastman her first job, investigating labor conditions for [The Pittsburgh Survey](#) sponsored by the [Russell Sage Foundation](#).<sup>[1][7]</sup> Her report, *Work Accidents and the Law* (1910), became a classic and resulted in the first [workers' compensation](#) law, which she drafted while serving on a New York state commission.<sup>[1]</sup>

She continued to campaign for occupational safety and health while working as an investigating attorney for the U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations during [Woodrow Wilson](#)'s presidency. She was at one time called the "most dangerous woman in America," due to her [free-love](#) idealism and outspoken nature.

## Emancipation

During a brief marriage to Wallace J. Benedict which ended in divorce, Eastman moved to [Milwaukee](#) and managed the unsuccessful 1912 [Wisconsin suffrage](#) campaign.<sup>[3]</sup>

When she returned east in 1913, she joined [Alice Paul](#), [Lucy Burns](#), and others in founding the militant [Congressional Union](#), which became the [National Woman's Party](#). After the passage of the [19th Amendment](#) gave women the vote in 1920, Eastman and three others wrote the [Equal Rights Amendment](#), first introduced in 1923. One of the few socialists to endorse the ERA, she warned that protective legislation for women would mean only discrimination against women. Eastman claimed that one could assess the importance of the ERA by the intensity of the opposition to it, but she felt that it was still a struggle worth fighting. She also delivered the speech, "Now We Can Begin" following the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, outlining the work that needed to be done in the political and economic spheres to achieve gender equality.

## Peace efforts



Crystal Eastman was a noted anti-militarist, who helped found the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

During [World War I](#), Eastman was one of the founders of the [Woman's Peace Party](#), soon joined by [Jane Addams](#), [Lillian D. Wald](#), and others.<sup>[8]</sup> She served as president of the [New York](#) branch. Renamed the [Women's International League for Peace and Freedom](#) in 1921, it remains the oldest extant women's peace organization. Eastman also became executive director of the [American Union Against Militarism](#), which lobbied against America's entrance into the European war and more successfully against war with Mexico in 1916, sought to remove profiteering from arms manufacturing, and campaigned against [conscription](#) and imperial adventures.

When the United States entered World War I, Eastman organized with [Roger Baldwin](#) and [Norman Thomas](#) the [National Civil Liberties Bureau](#) to protect [conscientious objectors](#), or in her

words: "To maintain something over here that will be worth coming back to when the weary war is over." The NCLB grew into the [American Civil Liberties Union](#), with Baldwin at the head and Eastman functioning as attorney-in-charge. Eastman is credited as a founding member of the ACLU, but her role as founder of the NCLB may have been largely ignored by posterity due to her personal differences with Baldwin.<sup>[6]</sup>

## Marriage and family

In 1916 Eastman married the British editor and antiwar activist [Walter Fuller \(British editor\)](#), who had come to the United States to direct his sisters' singing of folksongs.<sup>[9]</sup> They had two children, [Jeffrey](#) and Annis. They worked together as activists until the end of the war; then he worked as the managing editor of *The Freeman* until 1922, when he returned to [England](#). He died in 1927, nine months before Crystal, ending his career editing [Radio Times](#) for the [BBC](#).

After Max Eastman's periodical [The Masses](#) was forced to close by government censorship in 1917, he and Crystal co-founded a radical journal of politics, art, and literature, [The Liberator](#) early in 1918.<sup>[3]</sup> She and Max co-edited it until they put it in the hands of faithful friends in 1922.<sup>[10]</sup>

## Post-War

After the war, Eastman organized the [First Feminist Congress](#) in 1919.

She traveled by ship to [London](#) to be with her husband at times. In New York, her activities led to her being blacklisted during the [Red Scare](#) of 1919-1920. She struggled to find paying work.

During the 1920s her only paid work was as a columnist for feminist journals, notably [Equal Rights](#) and [Time and Tide](#). Eastman claimed that "life was a big battle for the complete feminist," but she was convinced that the complete feminist would someday achieve total victory.

## Death

Crystal Eastman died on July 8, 1928, of [nephritis](#).<sup>[6]</sup> Her friends were entrusted with her two children, then orphans, to rear them until adulthood.

## Legacy

Eastman has been called one of the United States' most neglected leaders, because, although she wrote pioneering legislation and created long-lasting political organizations, she disappeared from history for fifty years. [Freda Kirchwey](#), then editor of [The Nation](#), wrote at the time of her death: "When she spoke to people—whether it was to a small committee or a swarming crowd—hearts beat faster. She was for thousands a symbol of what the free woman might be."<sup>[6]</sup>

Her speech "Now We Can Begin", given in 1920, is listed as #83 in American Rhetoric's Top 100 Speeches of the 20th Century (listed by rank).<sup>[11][12]</sup>

In 2000 Eastman was inducted into the (American) [National Women's Hall of Fame](#) in [Seneca Falls, New York](#).

## Work

### Papers

Eastman's papers are housed at [Harvard University](#).<sup>[13]</sup>

### Publications

The Library of Congress has the following publications by Eastman in its collection, much of it published posthumously:

- *'Employers' Liability,' a Criticism Based on Facts* (1909)
- *Work-accidents and the Law* (1910)
- *Mexican-American Peace Committee (Mexican-American league)* (1916)
- *Work accidents and the Law* (1969)
- *Toward the Great Change: Crystal and Max Eastman on Feminism, Antimilitarism, and Revolution*, edited by Blanche Wiesen Cook (1976)
- *Crystal Eastman on Women and Revolution*, edited by Blanche Wiesen Cook (1978)

## Footnotes

1.

- ["Crystal Eastman"](#). *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved 18 October 2011.
- • Ida Harper Husted, "A Woman Minister Who Presides Over a Large Eastern Church." *The San Francisco Chronicle*, 27 January 1901.
- • ["Crystal Eastman"](#). *National Women's History Museum*. Retrieved 18 October 2011.
- • Robert E. Humphrey, *Children of Fantasy: The First Rebels of Greenwich Village* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1978)
- • Max Eastman, *Love and Revolution: My Journey Through an Epoch*, (New York: Random House, 1964): 79–81.
- • ["Crystal Eastman"](#). *Vassar College: Innovators*. Retrieved 18 October 2011.
- • ["Labor Center: Crystal Eastman"](#). *Indiana University of Pennsylvania*. Retrieved 18 October 2011.
- • ["Women and Peace: The Legacy"](#). *Ms. Magazine*. Retrieved 18 October 2011.
- • G. Peter Winnington, *Walter Fuller: The Man Who Had Ideas*. Letterworth Press, 2014. pp.188–90
- • G. Peter Winnington, *Walter Fuller: The Man Who Had Ideas*, p.307
- • Michael E. Eidenmuller (2009-02-13). ["Top 100 Speeches of the 20th Century by Rank"](#). *American Rhetoric*. Retrieved 2015-10-27.

• • Dawn Keetley (1 January 2005). *Public Women, Public Words: A Documentary History of American Feminism. 1900 to 1960. Vol. II*. Rowman & Littlefield. pp. 238–. [ISBN 978-0-7425-2225-1](#).

13. • ["Eastman, Crystal, 1881-1928. Papers, 1889-1931: A Finding Aid"](#). Harvard University Library. Retrieved 9 September 2011.

## See also

### People

- [Alice Paul](#)
- [Lucy Burns](#)
- [Jane Addams](#)
- [Lillian D. Wald](#)
- [Roger Baldwin](#)
- [Norman Thomas](#)
- [Walter Fuller](#)
- [Jeffrey Fuller](#)
- [Max Eastman](#)

### Political groups

- [National Woman's Party](#)
- [Women's International League for Peace and Freedom](#)
- [Woman's Peace Party](#)
- [Women's International League for Peace and Freedom](#)
- [American Union Against Militarism](#)
- [National Civil Liberties Bureau/American Civil Liberties Union](#)
- [First Feminist Congress](#)

### Other

- [The Pittsburgh Survey](#)
- [Workers' compensation](#)
- [U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations](#)
- [1912 Wisconsin suffrage battle](#)
- [19th Amendment](#)
- [Equal Rights Amendment](#)
- [The Liberator](#)

## Additional reading

- [Blanche Wiesen Cook](#), ed., *Crystal Eastman on Women and Revolution*. (1978).

- Cook, Blanche Wiesen, "Radical Women of Greenwich Village," in *Greenwich Village*, eds. Rick Beard and Leslie Cohen Berlowitz. Newark: Rutgers University Press, 1993.
- Sochen, June, *The New Woman in Greenwich Village, 1910-1920*. New York: Quadrangle Books, 1972.
- Read J., Phyllis; Witlieb L., Bernard: *The Book of Women's Firsts*. New York Random House 1992.
- Kerber K., Linda; Sherron DeHart, Jane: *Women's America: Refocusing The Past*, Oxford University Press, 1995, 4th Edition.

## External links



Wikimedia Commons has media related to [\*Crystal Eastman\*](#).

- [Works by or about Crystal Eastman](#) at [Internet Archive](#)
- [Crystal Eastman Papers Finding Aid](#), [Schlesinger Library](#), Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.