

## **Political Equality Clubs of Richmond**

Richmond, in the southwest corner of Ontario County, was home in the early years of the twentieth century to two important communities: Allen's Hill in the north, and Honeoye in the south at the foot of Honeoye Lake. Each of these localities formed a Political Equality Club in 1906, following the lead of many other communities across the state.

By 1900 Richmond bore a potent legacy regarding abolition, temperance, and the rights of women, established in the work of William Goodell, the Pitts family, Samuel Chipman, and Theodosia Gilbert among many others. In the 1800s local people had turned out in droves to hear Frederick Douglass, friend and (later) son-in-law of Gideon Pitts, speak at the Congregational Church. Thanks in large part to home-grown lobbying, Richmond voters elected to go "dry" well before the Civil War. Activist Mrs. William (Theodosia) Chaplin – abolitionist and women's advocate – was born in Richmond Center. And in the summer of 1873, Honeoye was host to speaker Matilda Joslyn Gage, a noted civil rights supporter, the co-author, with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, of *The History of Woman Suffrage*. She recounted for her Richmond listeners, perhaps, her failed attempt a few months earlier to vote in the Presidential election. With such a heritage of civic involvement, it is not surprising that two groups promoting the rights of women emerged in town.

Local political equality clubs were established across the nation to highlight the need for women's political and public parity. Dedicated women – and not a few men – strove to bring attention to the issue of women's suffrage through education, political action, and social reform. Those few faithful Richmond women who took on the task worked tirelessly for several years to bring the initiative to the attention of their community. In Honeoye, club meetings were held quarterly in the homes of different members on a rotating basis. An annual dues was collected (fifty cents was a suggested amount). After opening the meeting with prayer and a song, business was attended to.

Clubs received pre-printed pamphlets and literature from the state organization which members distributed around town. School teachers carried their message to civics classes at Richmond's district schools. Members took turns reporting news of the day pertaining to progress being made in the state and federal legislatures; they wrote to government officials. In January 1907 a letter from the Legislative Committee of New York State Woman's Suffrage Association was circulated to each Equality Club in the state. This communication "earnestly urged" each member "to give the Legislative Committee your full support" by writing to elected state officials, including the governor, asking them to vote in favor of the bill currently before the Senate to amend the state constitution by "strick[ing] the word Male from Section 2, Article 1."

It would be more than a decade before this was accomplished with the balloting on November 6, 1917, giving the women of New York the right to vote.

## **Members of Allen's Hill Political Equality Club**

The Allen's Hill Political Equality Club was founded in 1906 with fewer than half-a-dozen members; it was the smallest club in Ontario County. They were an enthusiastic group, for the newspaper coverage of the 1909 Ontario County Woman Suffrage Convention included the information that "the members [of the Allen's Hill Club] are all energetic and are doing excellent

work.” Four members attended the 1907 Convention of the Ontario County Woman Suffrage Association in Geneva: Mrs. Anna B. Sayre; Mrs. Horace Peck, Mrs. Emma Allen, and Mrs. Anna Patterson.

**Anna Bancroft Sayre** (1845-1924) was born in West Bloomfield, the daughter of David and Phoebe Bancroft. In 1882, at age 37, she married Dr. Ellis Sayre; they set up housekeeping in a home on CR 40, two doors south of the Allen’s Hill Methodist Church. The next year their only child, Grace, was born. Mrs. Sayre was 61 in 1906, a founding member of the Equality Club. A few years later the family moved to Canandaigua, where Dr. Sayre continued in practice.

**Margaret Arnold Peck** (1870-\_\_\_\_) was 36 and the mother of two young boys in 1906 when she joined the Equality Club in Allen’s Hill. Maggie was the second-born daughter of Henry C. Arnold and his wife Ann, both from Germany. The Arnold family settled in the Allen’s Hill area when Maggie was in her teens. In 1896 she married Horace Peck, scion of a prominent Richmond family. Their home was on the west side of CR 40, about a half-mile north of Belcher Road. Her eldest two boys were Gilbert (1899) and Desmond (1902). In 1908, the year Maggie attended the Ontario Woman Suffrage Convention in Clifton Springs, her third son, Conrad, was born. When the baby was a few years old Horace and Maggie moved their family to Summit View (Yakima County), Washington State, where she died sometime after 1940.

**Emma Garlinghouse Allen** (1860-1952) was enumerated on the 1860 Federal Census for Richmond as “Infant Female; age 0.” She was the daughter of John Nelson Garlinghouse and his second wife Lucy Bothwell, born in March of that year. She grew up in her family’s home in Allen’s Hill, on the corner of CR 40 and Bell Road. At age forty-two she married childless widower Richard Allen. Eighteen months later Emma gave birth to her only child, Tracy. It was two years later, in 1906, that she helped form the Allen’s Hill Political Equality Club. Tracy was nine in 1913 when his father died; Emma took her son and moved to Rochester, where she supported them by working as a saleslady in a store.

**Anna McGreevey Patterson** (1860-1942) was nearly forty when she married George (“Edward”) Patterson in 1899. The only daughter of James and Forbes McGreevey (both of Ireland), Anna was born in Allen’s Hill, sandwiched between older brother James, and younger brother George. She and Edward lived on their farm on the east side of CR 40, a mile north of Allen’s Hill. They had no children. In 1906, at age 46, Anna was a founding member of the Political Equality Club in Allen’s Hill.

## **Members of Honeoye Political Equality Club**

The Honeoye Political Equality Club was formed in January 1906 with about a dozen members. In the spring of that year they sent a delegate to the New York State Suffrage Association in Syracuse. By 1909 club membership had increased to twenty-two. As far as is known these were all women; there is no record found of men among the ranks. Many of the early members were related to club organizer and president, Miss Alice Ashley.

**Alice Lorena Ashley** (1864-1952) was a descendant of one of the oldest families of Richmond. Her father George was the grandson of early settler Noah Ashley, and her mother the daughter of Alden Adams (the younger); George and Deborah were married in 1863. For the first two years of their wedded life they lived on a farm in Lima, where Alice was born on December 10, 1864. A few years later George bought his father-in-law’s 200-acre farm in Richmond (on Ashley Road

near the corner of White Road) where two more children were born: Mary in 1876 and William three years later.

Alice was a schoolteacher and active socially in the Honeoye community. In January 1906, at age 42, she was instrumental in forming the Honeoye Political Equality Club. She was elected the first president of the club and held that office for several years. A letter from Harriet May Mills, of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association, to her colleague Anne Fitzhugh Miller dated January 13, 1906, gives details of the club's formation:

I have splendid news for you. Honeoye organized with Miss Alice Ashley as president and 15 members to start with. [My visit to their club] proved a delightful experience. The Ashleys are lovely people, true blue, and they made me so welcome that I had a beautiful, restful day in their home. Alice is a fine woman, capable and interested in all forward movements. She is a born leader and is already president of the literary club at Honeoye. I am very happy over the club and feel confident that it will live, thrive and be a help to the county, state and national. [If you could go this summer and visit them] it will be a great encouragement, I know. It is a pretty region with a small lake in sight from the Ashleys' window. What an inspiration it is to have such fine people in the world scattered all about and what a pleasure it is to find them!

Her father died in the spring shortly after the formation of the Equality Club, and she and her mother moved to a house in downtown Honeoye near the Briggs Street School. In 1908 Alice was elected Vice-president of the Ontario County Woman Suffrage Association, held in Clifton Springs. She gave a talk to the 50 members attending the Conference called: "What Will the Ballot do for Women?" In May of the following year she presided, in the absence of the president, over the county associational meeting in Phelps. That same year she was a delegate to the New York State Women's Suffrage Convention.

Then about 1912, with her mother, her sister, and her sister's two children, Alice moved to San Diego, California. She found a new home at Lomaland, on the grounds of the Universal Theosophical Society. The Society was devoted to the study and practice of theosophy: a philosophy of life based on the principles of morality, with a goal of stimulating independent thinking and a search for the truth. In 1896, two decades after its founding, the Theosophical Society purchased 330 acres at Point Loma in San Diego and moved their headquarters there. They established a resort, an arts and crafts colony, a horticultural station, and an elementary school.

For the remainder of her life Alice lived there in a rented bungalow and worked for a small wage. She died in California April 8, 1952.

**Mary Jane Ashley Abel** (1867-1957) was Alice's younger sister. She was born in Richmond June 26, 1867, and lived at home until her marriage in 1900 to Dr. Herman Abel. Mary was forty-one in 1906 when the Honeoye Political Equality Club was formed. She was Captain of the First Election District of Richmond, and in 1909 served a term on the Executive Committee of the Ontario County Woman Suffrage Association. That same year she attended the State Convention as a delegate. Her daughter Theresa, at age six, was recognized in 1910 as the youngest member of the Honeoye Political Equality Club.

In January 1907 Dr. Abel succumbed to tuberculosis; Mary was left a widow with two small children: Theresa was three and young Herman a mere babe. For some years she lived with her mother in San Diego, California, where her children attended boarding school, then returned to Canandaigua later in life. She died there July 28, 1957.

**Deborah Adams Ashley** (1838-1920) was related to several members of the Club: she was the mother of Alice Ashley and Mary Abel, the grandmother of Theresa Abel, and the sister of Maria Ashley and Prudence Franklin. In her late sixties she joined the Equality Club.

Born in Richmond, Deborah was the daughter of Alden Adams, Jr. and Lorena Short. She lived nearly all her life on the farm where she was born. In the winter of 1863, at age 24, she married neighbor George Ashley. Five years later she and her husband purchased her father's Richmond farm. She lived there for forty years. It was only after the death of her husband in May 1906 that she moved, going first to Honeoye, then about six years later to San Diego, California, with her two daughters. There she died in late June 1920.

**Maria Adams Ray Ashley** (1843-1916) was born in Richmond, the daughter of Alden and Lorena Adams. In her early twenties she married Wesley Ray; after his death in 1890 she married widower Clinton Ashley, cousin of George Ashley her sister Deborah's husband. Maria, who had no children, was widowed a second time shortly after she joined the Political Equality Club. After the death of Clinton, she moved to Honeoye where she shared a home with her sister Deborah. In 1909 she served the club as vice-president and was an auditor to the Ontario County Convention in May of that year. Maria died in Honeoye in 1916, a year before the women of New York State were granted the right to vote.

**Prudence Adams Franklin** (1849-1928) was born in Richmond February 3, 1849, the youngest child (of seven) of Alden and Lorena Adams. For many years Pru taught at the Briggs Street School in Honeoye. On September 22, 1876, at age 27, she married Alfred Franklin (1852-1907). Confusingly, there was more than one man of that name who lived in Richmond. Prudence's husband was a cousin of "other" Alfred Franklin – the more-well-known man who owned the Franklin General Store on Main Street in Honeoye. They had no children, but a few years before Alfred's death, they adopted a daughter, Mary. In 1906, when Mary was five and Prudence 57, she became a founding member of the Honeoye Political Equality Club. The next summer she served as a delegate to the Ontario Woman Suffrage Convention in Geneva. She died in Rochester June 20, 1928.

**Mildred Taber Pierce** (1874-1959) was born in Canada, the daughter of James Taber and Helen Bramble. She was a year old when her parents came to Richmond, where they both had family. Millie grew up in Honeoye in the home of an aunt and uncle, went to school on Briggs Street, and later married. She worked for some years as a telephone operator. When she was twenty she became Mrs. William Pierce. Their only child, Helen, was born in July 1896. It was twenty years later that Millie joined the Honeoye Political Equality Club. She served as secretary of the club for many years, and in 1909 was sent as a delegate to the Ontario County Convention. She was widowed in 1944 and died in 1959.

**Ann Eliza Sleight Briggs** (1851-1941) was a child of ten when the Civil War began. An anonymous newspaper story of 1938 celebrating Ann's eighty-seventh birthday reported that she was still able to recall her childhood, and "the flurry of excitement in [Honeoye] during the abolition period." She remembered that a "line of underground stations for runaway slaves extended across that stretch of the country" and "the large contingent of soldiers that marched away to war."

Born near Canandaigua, Ann Eliza was the daughter of Theodore and Julia Sleight. She was their first daughter, in a family that included four sons and another girl. When she was still a baby the Sleight family moved to Richmond. Not quite nineteen, Ann Eliza married Zachary Briggs, son of Cyrus and Emmaline Briggs. They had three children: Irving, Fannie, and Harry. In January 1906 she was 55 years old when she joined the Political Equality Club. Three years later

she was elected treasurer of the Club, and was sent as a delegate to the County Convention in Phelps. Ann Eliza died in her home May 7, 1941, one week before her ninetieth birthday.

**Fannie Whitaker Paul** (1826-1916), at age eighty, was the oldest member of the Honeoye Political Equality Club. She was born in New Jersey, the daughter of John and Phebe Whitaker. The family came to the Canadice area when she was ten and a dozen years later she married John M. Paul. They lived in South Dansville where their three children were born: William, Jennie, and Fred. When the youngest was a toddler, the Paul family moved to Battle Creek, Michigan. They lived there for about fifteen years before returning to New York in 1885 and settling in Canadice. Five years later John died and Fannie moved to Honeoye, where her husband had family still living. Fannie was an active member of the club, but she did not live to see the vote awarded to New York women, as she died in 1916.

**Bertha Bray Pingrey** (1878-1959) was a lovely young woman, the eldest of three daughters of Andrew Jackson Bray and his wife Emma Skinner. She was born March 19, 1878, in Richmond and grew up to become the head teacher at the Honeoye Union School in the closing years of the nineteenth century. On August 13, 1902, she married the school's principal, Professor William Pingrey. Both she and her husband continued to teach – William at Honeoye and Bertha at the "Gull School" in Canadice. At about the same time as Bertha's marriage, her youngest sister Katie married Honeoye's doctor, Elihu Standish.

Three-and-a-half years married and the mother of two little children (Donald and Helen), Bertha was a founding member of the Honeoye Political Equality Club. She continued a member for the next three years. In that time she attended the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the New York State Suffrage Association in Syracuse, one of seventeen Ontario County delegates representing five Equality Clubs of the county.

In 1909 the Pingreys moved to Andover in Allegany County, William's hometown. There they remained, teaching school together and adding another child to their family – Karl was born in 1911. After William's death in 1930, Bertha returned to live in Honeoye, near her sister Katie. A decade later she weathered a difficult tragedy, when she was the victim of a robbery in her home. Her neighborhood on West Lake Road lived in fear for some time after the incident, suspecting a local handyman. No one, however, was brought to justice for the crime.

In 1958, at the request of the Historical Society, Bertha recorded her memories of Honeoye "as it used to be" in her youth. She returned to live in Andover less than a year later, where she died April 12, 1959.

**Mabel Morley Kenyon** (1830-1915), at age 76, was the second-oldest member of the Honeoye Political Equality Club. Mabel was born August 24, 1830, in Springwater, the daughter of Harvey Morley and his second wife Sarah Crosswell. She grew up in that community, only coming to Richmond after her marriage to Sam Kenyon of West Bloomfield. They had no children. In February 1910 Mabel hosted the quarterly meeting of the club at her Honeoye home.

**Miss Jane "Jennie" Morgan** (1867-\_\_\_\_) was born in eastern New York of German-immigrant parents. She became a school teacher at a young age, moving around quite a bit in her early years, before coming to rest in Honeoye about 1900. She taught German at the Honeoye High School, and was well beloved by her students. She boarded with the Clifford Plimpton family on Briggs Street, in a home across the road from the school. She was 39 when she joined the Equality Club, and served the next year as a delegate to the 4<sup>th</sup> Ontario County Conference in Geneva. She served again as an auditor at the County Conference of 1909, held in Phelps.

**Mrs. Swan** was mentioned in a 1909 newspaper article as a member of the Political Equality Club. There is, however, not enough information given to determine whether this was Mrs. Juliette Swan, age 64, or her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Jane Swan, age 36, both living in Honeoye at the time.

**Mrs. Howcroft** was another Honeoye resident listed as belonging to the Club. But the same difficulty identifying her arises. Was this Mrs. Ella Howcroft, age 46; or her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Eliza Howcroft, age twenty-eight?

## Sources

### **Federal Census Records**

Richmond: 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930

San Diego, California: 1910, 1920, 1930

Yakima County, Washington: 1920, 1930, 1940

Calhoun County, Michigan: 1870, 1880, 1900

### **N.Y. State Census**

Richmond: 1892

### **Newspapers**

Daily Messenger: August 18, 1938; June 17, 1940

Democrat & Chronicle: March 23, 1942

Honeoye Falls Times: November 5, 1915

Livonia Gazette: May 21, 1909; July 2, 1909; February 18, 1910; April 8, 1910

Naples Record: April 21, 1882

### **Books**

Landmarks of Steuben Co., N.Y. Lewis Cass Aldrich, D. Mason, 1896

### **Web Sites**

[www.pointloma.edu](http://www.pointloma.edu)

[www.blavatskyhouse.org](http://www.blavatskyhouse.org)

[www.theosociety.org](http://www.theosociety.org)

[www.memory.loc.gov](http://www.memory.loc.gov) (Suffrage Scrapbooks 1897-1911; New York State Woman Suffrage Association: Letter from Harriet May Mills to Anne Fitzhugh Miller, January 13, 1906; 1908 Program of Ontario County Convention)

### **Cemeteries**

Richmond: Lakeview Cemetery; Allens Hill Cemetery; Richmond Center Cemetery

Bloomfield: Pioneer Cemetery; West Bloomfield Rural Cemetery

Buffalo: Forest Lawn Cemetery

Livonia: Union Cemetery

### **Family Records on File at Richmond Historian's Office**

Adams, Allen, Ashley, Bancroft, Bray, Briggs, Franklin, Gilbert, Patterson, Paul, Peck, Sayre, Swan, Willson