

NO POLITICS ALLOWED: NEVADA CLUB

WOMEN AND SUFFRAGE

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This study is dedicated to the Club women in Reno, Nevada's early Twentieth Century Club. Whether suffragists or *antis*, you stood out as strong-minded, articulate advocates for your cause. Diminished by history, it is time to recognize the indelible mark that members of early women's Clubs left on the fabric of feminism.

Early Twentieth Century Club member Miss Echo L. Loder left the following memorable note attached to the Club's minutes from June 7, 1894 to April 30, 1897.

This is a valuable book to preserve for future years when members have forgotten the history and want to look into the past. Mrs. Anna Wardin took care of the book for many years and handed it to me before she died. I feel that it will be safer to be kept in the steel locker in the basement of the Club house. Please keep it there? There always comes a time when people want to know the origins of organizations.

A very much interested member,

(Miss) Echo L. Loder

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the early history of Reno, Nevada's Twentieth Century Club and its relationship to the state suffrage movement. Several Club women attempted to introduce the idea of female equality to members with speeches, paper presentations, and literary works. However, since the founders of East Coast women's clubs forbade political discussion, several Reno Club members insisted on adhering to the rule. Consequently, Club women were required to lobby men in power for real change. Those members who rejected suffrage acted against self-interest. An understanding of women in the West, the Nevada suffrage movement, and early women's clubs was essential for this study. Critical resources included archival evidence such as Club and suffrage documents, current academic works, and local newspaper accounts. As traditional conservatives, suffrage opponents proved successful in delaying Club suffrage support. However, as a Twentieth Century progressive reform, suffrage was ultimately endorsed by Nevada women's clubs and passed by state voters in 1914.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study explores the experience of late nineteenth, early twentieth century urban, elite Reno, Nevada Club women by comparing their activities as members of Reno's Twentieth Century Club to those of the Nevada equal franchise movement. Prominent Club suffragists such as Hannah Clapp, Anne Martin, and Florence Church persevered to present members with the arguments for suffrage during Club meetings. However, several Club members, basing their opposition on the long-held women's club policy of avoiding discussion of politics or religion, consistently blocked the Club support or endorsement of a Nevada woman's right to the ballot. Using procedural techniques and the effective use and support of the local print media, the Reno Club *antis* managed to resist accepting the notion of female suffrage until 1914 when both the national and Nevada women's clubs' organizations endorsed the franchise. Though as Reno Club members, the *antis* did engage in advocating for political reforms such as lobbying to implement child labor laws, the idea of suffrage did not raise their self-interest in or commitment to either social justice or political expediency. As traditional conservatives, the Twentieth Century Club women opposed to suffrage sought to maintain an elite position in Reno society by retaining a gender identity of persuasive influence yet ultimate dependence on male political decision-making.

Between 1880 and 1925, according to the General Federation of Women's Clubs, an estimated two million women, more than 5% of the American female population, belonged to women's clubs (Gere 5). However, the voices of these elite, white, urban

western women are missing from public memory. This absence may be due to an inability to locate these women in either the domestic or the public sphere instead placing them midway between the two, leaving them without a specific social identity. These women studied literary and cultural subjects as well as actively adopting civic and political reforms. Yet, at a time in American history when suffragists Susan B. Anthony, Jane Addams, and Carrie Chapman Cott dominated the news, Club women followed their East Coast sister clubs by forbidding any political discussion which included suffrage. However, even though Reno's Twentieth Century Club closely adhered to a position of no-politics, as the franchise became a Nevada reality, Club suffragists guaranteed it made its way into the Club house. This study reviews the histories of Nevada suffrage and the Twentieth Century Club revealing a resistance of the latter to an obvious intersection with a shared aspiration for suffrage.

For nearly 130 years following the ratification of the United States Constitution women were barred from the ballot box. It was not until 1919, with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, that American women achieved full suffrage. As author and journalist Ida Husted Harper pointed out, "No man in the United States has lifted a finger to earn the franchise for himself," arguing that suffragists needed to make the lives of every member of Congress miserable until every American woman had access to the polls. As encouragement, Harper reminded her readers that women in thirteen western states already enjoyed full suffrage (897).

Nevada was one of those thirteen western states to grant early suffrage to its female citizens. In November 1914, Silver State male voters supported equal

enfranchisement, predating the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment by five years. The Nevada constitution sets the bar high for the passage of an amendment. It requires the passage of a proposed amendment occur during two biennial sessions of the state Legislature, Senate, and Assembly, in Carson City before reaching the electorate for ratification. In an early attempt in 1897, a suffrage amendment failed by one vote in the Nevada Senate. The second attempt at securing the female franchise was successful with legislative approval granted in 1911 then again in 1913 followed by voter acceptance in November 1914.

Committed to victory, Nevada's passionate suffragists worked within activist organizations devising and implementing successful campaign tactics. The women spoke in halls and on street corners, traveled to every corner of the state, wrote letters and newspapers articles, and hosted every conceivable fundraising activity. Besides working directly with sister advocates, Nevada suffragists looked to broaden the outreach of their cause by bringing awareness to the attention of potential female converts in other local organizations in which they were members. These groups included, among others, church and mothers' groups, the newly formed Women's Christian Temperance Union, and with the largest membership the highly popular women's clubs.

Emerging in the 1860s on the East Coast of the United States, women's clubs aspired to foster cultural and intellectual self-development in their membership by the researching, presentation, and discussion of literary topics. To avoid divisiveness, the clubs forbade discussion of politics or religion. Adopting a similar apolitical stance,

urban women's clubs in the American West followed suit and prohibited controversial topics to avoid dissension among their members.

Reno's Twentieth Century Club was the first and largest woman's club in Nevada. Following in the footsteps of its eastern sisters, the Club banned political discussion and activity. As a result, any discussion of what was considered the radical cause of female suffrage was prohibited. This policy remained securely in place until Nevada women found their state surrounded by several western states which had approved suffrage including Idaho in 1896, Utah in 1896, California in 1911, Oregon in 1912, Washington in 1910, and Arizona in 1912. That left Nevada as a glaring black hole in the center of suffrage states. As the reality of suffrage spread across the West, so did the pressure Twentieth Century Club suffragists applied to sister Club members to join the struggle. The Club suffragists' goal was to capture the endorsement of the Nevada Federation of Women's Clubs (NFWC). Such a prize would herald a massive show of unity among the state's women's clubs and would represent a potent campaign message.

Although the Twentieth Century Club listed many persuasive, committed suffragists as members, several vocal, influential anti-suffrage Club women exercised a powerful influence over the Club to block support. The anti-suffrage women, nicknamed *antis*, like their sister Club members were wealthy, socially commanding, highly educated club women. Yet, these opponents refused to embrace suffrage as a powerful tool of self-interest whether for its expediency in taming the West or, simply, judicial fairness. These *antis* were successful in restricting most suffrage discussion in Club

meetings and activities. However, overwhelming pressure from a growing number of Twentieth Century Club suffrage supporters combined with a bit of trickery at the NFWC's 1914 convention captured the organization's franchise endorsement only weeks before the critical state election for ratification of the suffrage amendment.

Limited research into American women's clubs indicates that serious discussion of the early record of their cultural and political impact on feminism and reform in United States history has been mostly disregarded (Blair ix). Public perception has dismissed these clubs as literary and social gatherings of wealthy white women interested at least as much in flower arranging and fashion as Shakespeare and Browning. In addition, many women's clubs' records such as meeting minutes have been withheld by the club members fearing disclosure would lead to negative judgment by outsiders at their ordinariness (Gere 251). But, these women were anything but ordinary.

Karen J. Blair defined club women as domestic feminists, those women bridging two worlds by transferring their agency from the domestic to the public sphere. These women, by inserting the traditionally thought domestic nature of female moral superiority into a needy male world, advanced reforms in fields long associated with the female gender such as education and health issues (Blair 4, 5). The typical early American club woman represented the poster child for domestic feminism. However, as the exception, when faced with the notion of suffrage, opinions differed wildly as each Club woman made up her own mind. This study outlines the early history of Nevada suffrage while at the same time recounts the origination, growth, and activities of Reno, Nevada's Twentieth Century Club.

Chapter II describes American women in the West, offering a keen understanding of their uniqueness compared to Eastern sisters. Chapter III examines women's clubs in the United States, setting the stage for the establishment of Reno's Twentieth Century Club. Chapter IV covers 1864 to 1909 recounting early Nevada suffrage activity including the first serious legislative attempt at passage in the mid-1890s and the parallel activities of the newly established Twentieth Century Club. Rather than merging evidence, the suffrage campaign and Twentieth Century Club activities are described separately to more clearly represent the common and conflicting actions taken by each.

Chapter V covers 1910 and 1911 describing the rise of a new Nevada suffrage movement, the work of Twentieth Century Club suffragists, and Club activity. In addition, this chapter reveals the control exerted by the Club's anti-suffrage members who took advantage of the Club's apolitical stance to discourage suffrage discourse. Chapter VI covers 1912 and 1913 illustrating the extensive and dedicated Nevada suffrage campaign, presaging a suffrage victory in the Nevada Legislature and at the polls. This chapter also reveals hints of suffrage activism in Twentieth Century Club meetings. Chapter VII describes the final activities of the suffrage movement and the Twentieth Century Club as Nevada women achieve victory in November 1914. Chapter VIII reviews the work of Twentieth Century Club suffragists and reasons are given as to why the anti-suffrage Club women, highly educated and comfortable with being indirectly politically active in their community, assumed a position against suffrage.

This study makes extensive use of Twentieth Century Club meeting minutes, member letters, Club--related documents, relevant books, journal articles, and local

newspaper accounts. There is a gap in recovered Club minutes, missing those from 1900 to 1908 though Reno newspaper accounts provide ample information. Fortunately, the Club minutes which are available represent those critical years during which suffrage had the full attention of Nevada women and men. Unfortunately, researchers are not privy to those defining personal conversations that took place in the women's Club house over tea, with only hints given in the existing primary documents.

CHAPTER II

HISTORIOGRAPHY: WOMEN IN THE AMERICAN WEST

The western woman's place in American history began entering the public memory in the mid twentieth century. Previously, credit for frontier settlement and growth was given to Horace Greeley's young man who bravely emigrated West. In 1893, American historian Frederick Jackson Turner took to the podium at a meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago and declared America's frontier closed. He continued by delivering his *frontier thesis*, which posited that as civilization encountered savagery, effective Americanization emerged (Bogue 13). Turner identified the process of westward movement onto the frontier as the country's most significant event in its short history. He further argued that it molded American character along with the country's social and political institutions. As civilization moved westward, Turner's image cemented into history the notion of the white male pioneer's unique individualism.

Turner's frontier represented a masculine environment far more democratic than that of the East Coast--a haven radiating freedom and opportunity. Yet, his image failed to acknowledge the presence of a feminine community. As Elizabeth Jameson notes, "The perspective was always white, always masculine" (7). Frederick Turner's *frontier thesis* of male-driven American exceptionalism stood as established western historical theory until challenged sixty-five years later by Dee Brown in his seminal work, *The Gentle Tamers* (1958).

Brown questioned the missed presence of the American western woman and asked, “Who has written her story?” (11). While it is true that American authors such as Willa Cather and Laura Ingalls Wilder recounted the lives of women of the West, these remain fictional works. It should be noted, however, that there is a comparative lack of historiography about the women in American western novels. Based on personal diaries and journals, Brown recounted the lives of nineteenth century female pioneers, army wives, rodeo ladies, entertainers, and prostitutes. He argued that women acted as the gentle mediators of the West rescuing the wild frontier from violent and uncontrollable males. Whether describing “white goddesses” or “petticoated pioneers,” the author opened the historical door for western women (11). Though, his narrative failed to present a more complete picture as it lacked discussion of working women, leisured women, or women of color. Fortunately, Brown’s work did initiate more careful academic examination of the American western woman.

T.A. Larson agreed with Brown’s narrative of the western woman as the gentle tamer. He described the “pious, virtuous, sober Eastern women” migrating as hardy pioneers to become urban and rural housewives faced with the challenges of the “obstreperous, uninhibited men of the West” (3). The author mentioned that these women are missing from current college history textbooks which only include popular female examples such as rodeo queen Calamity Jane and author Helen Hunt Jackson.

Joan Jensen and Darlis Miller, in their 1980 landmark paper “*The Gentle Tamers Revisited: New Approaches to the History of Women in the American West*” recognized the presence of western women from all walks of life. The authors advocated the

rewriting of western history based on “a newer, ethnically broader and more varied image of women in the West” by looking at the impact of these women on society (174). Jensen and Miller took issue with Brown’s categorization of the stereotyped images of western women as “tamers, sun-bonneted helpmates, hell-raisers, and bad women” (179). However, William Deverell remarked that these cliched images refuse to die in popular culture as a “protected narrative embedded in the national psyche” (205). Instead, Jensen and Miller suggested ways to address those incomplete images by treating them as literary symbols, testing the images against the reality of women’s lives, and providing new images based on a plethora of regional documents (182).

In the 1990s, Jensen and Miller returned to the discussion of the history of women in the American West noting that there was a need for more inclusiveness regarding diverse classes and ethnic groups. The authors repeated the unchanging narrative. “Visibility has not decentered the Anglo male from his traditional place in western history and Anglo women have become much more visible than ethnic women or women of color” (Jensen and Miller 558). Elizabeth Jameson supported the lack of diversity arguing that study needed to be made of how relationships of race, class, and gender functioned on historical frontiers. She encouraged an academic discourse on multiple western frontiers as well as the need to recognize gender relationships rather than limiting the focus on women (6). This notion of gender interaction signaled a shift in nomenclature and scholarship for some researchers from women’s studies to gender studies.

In 1996, Susan Armitage posed the question “Are We There Yet?” referring to an historically accurate discussion of women in the West. She answered by arguing that current academic research continued treating women as “add-ons” with male bias still present (70, 73). Armitage contended that tokenism remained when writing about exceptional western women, leaving out those with ordinary names whose support was crucial for movements such as suffrage and temperance. However, mention of these movements shifted the discourse again to white women who were the main actors.

The narrative of the western white woman, however, continues to demand inspection. Conveniently, her story is liberally documented in personal diaries and journals signifying valuable primary evidence and research tools (Schlissel 29). This rich source of writings reveals the lives of hard working, gritty women as pioneers, entrepreneurs, entertainers, farmers, and ranchers. Yet, for as much as has been written by and about these women, white upper-class urban western women are often overlooked. As immigrants, many acted as the carriers and interpreters of East Coast or European social tradition and behavior, while embedded in dusty western towns. Though others as western born white elite urban women were at home in those same towns. Each of these upper-class women armed with a higher education and a significant amount of leisure time occupied the highest social strata in their community and commanded considerable collective power (Stankiewicz 325). These were the elite western women whose faces and names frequently dominated the town newspaper’s society page.

Jameson, in her discussion of the influence the Victorian Cult of Womanhood on western women, suggested that many of these elite urban white women modeled Cult

behavior. They fulfilled the role as “the submissive, passive, symbolically moral woman in the private sphere partnered with the physical, political male occupying the public sphere” (Jameson 1). These women, however, were faced with a conundrum. For the woman to exert her role as the guardian of moral authority, she needed to move into the public sphere. In Reno, Nevada the easy availability of divorce and the unlimited access to alcohol while living in a dusty desert town that needed beautification worked together to provide a motive for these women to exert their moral authority in the public sphere.

Little research has been devoted to early American women’s Clubs, in particular, the western urban women’s Clubs. Nearly forty years ago Blair depicted early club women as domestic feminists who, becoming comfortable with their collective power, waded into the public sphere bearing their moral authority (4). Twenty years ago, Anne Ruggles Gere examined a range of the early women’s clubs and their cultural work--Mormon, Jewish, African American, white upper class, and working class. She argued that club women with their literary projects and writings played a major role in modifying the American consumer culture, altering the view of womanhood and professionalizing English studies (1, 16). These older, narrowly defined studies of the American women’s club movement prompt more study. At the turn of the twentieth century, one in twenty American women belonged to a women’s club. Without question, the activities of these club women as they entered the public sphere impacted the early fabric of feminism. The works of Blair and Gere though admirable in their undertaking are dated. More recently, with the continuing recovery of additional evidence of club work, there exists the

opportunity for more extensive research into the valuable role played by these women's clubs and their members.

CHAPTER III

EARLY WOMEN'S CLUBS AND RENO, NEVADA'S TWENTIETH CENTURY CLUB

In 1868, East Coast women founded the first well-known women's literary groups, Boston's New England Woman's Club and New York City's Sorosis. The clubs were organized as forums for the intellectual and social self-improvement of their members. White, Protestant, and mostly wealthy, the club women did not welcome men since the latter belonged to political organizations which doubled as social groups (Blair 66). Sorosis founder Jane Croly wished for "a more intimate companionship with women . . . whose deeper natures had been roused to activity, who had been seized by the divine spirit of inquiry and aspiration, who were interested in the thought and progress of the age and in what other women were thinking and doing" (Scott 116, 117). These early clubs appealing to personal growth emphasized the study of literary classics and music appreciation. However, Sorosis founder Jane Croly actively discouraged discussion of "potentially incendiary topics of suffrage and religion" (Blair 23).

In 1890, sixty-one East Coast women's clubs assembled to create the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), its mission to unite the energy and goals of American club women. Blair described these white club women as snobbish, autocratic, and cliquish, exhibiting religious preference, class position, and racial privilege (71). GFWC President Sara Platt Decker depicted club women as "a potent force in this generation, transmitting to the next a vigor and strength which have never been given by any race of women to their inheritors" (6). Mrs. J. H. Young shared a view of her

woman's club: "The Clubs among the women are a blessing to the world and more so among our race" (Gere 248). The focus was on solidarity as Mrs. A.O. Granger wrote of club women in 1906, "Women have been safeguarding humanity--and they have done it as club women without regard to other affiliations--it is the greatest force for making us all one, without regard to creed or politics" (36).

The format of women's clubs' meetings across the country was strikingly similar, taking the lead from the East Coast originators. Membership-elected leaders chaired the meeting under parliamentary procedure with club women setting the program. The reading and discussion of member-prepared essays represented the primary item on the agenda (Scott 118). Each club member was called upon to research and present a paper on cultural subjects such as noted novelists, poets, current events, and travel experiences. Significantly, the essays were not only informational, but also represented a new avenue for women to engage in original thinking, express themselves writing, practice public speaking, and participate in debate (Scott 120). There is no question that while some women had great difficulty with this task, others discovered innate abilities that had not been tapped. It was these women, for whom the task was an enjoyable challenge, that became leaders in the suffrage movement and in community and governmental politics. Since research material for the essays was scarce in western towns, many clubs founded and subsidized a community's first public library (Blair 68). Common to all club meetings were musical interludes with instrument-playing and singing. Each women's club meeting concluded with members retiring for tea and dessert to tables artistically decorated with vases of freshly cut flowers.

By joining a club, Blair argued that the women did not abandon those female assets considered required for household management. She referred to this broadening of personal experience in the home extended to club activity as *domestic feminism*. Blair posited that as women escaped the confines of the home into collective social clubs they, nonetheless, retained domestic tendencies which benefited their community. Society expected a woman to set the moral standard in the home. As a club member, her status as a moral oracle merged with her role as municipal housekeeper, bridging the gap between the private and public sphere (Blair xi). Club women carried the managerial framework of home care into civic actions, social reform, and political activity.

Blair acknowledged the club domestic feminists as the precursors to the New Woman of the American Progressive Movement. She noted “women’s concern for social services and civic improvements on the part of the government preceded the Progressive era by decades” (105). Custodians of morality, curators of community corruption, engaged public educators, and strong supporters for one another, these early club women were the forerunners of the turn-of-the-twentieth-century female reformers. However, without suffrage, club women were compelled to promote civic campaigns for reform by indirectly approaching those males with political power.

Hostile critics attacked women’s clubs by introducing a false narrative that clubs were silly, superficial, and unwelcome, imprinting an inaccurate public memory in American cultural history. Attacked by many men and clergy, club women were depicted as masculine, with the club an “incubator for trouble” (Blair 105). Some detractors expressed concern that female literacy caused “infertility, a loss of religious

conviction, nervous disorders and the destruction of family life” (Gere 34). During church sermons, women were advised to restrict their role as God’s moral guardian to the family and home. Regardless of the derision, an army of American urban white women continued to leave their homes to organize women’s clubs and to speak out loud to one another and in public.

Shifting away from the dominance of literary and cultural topics and without internal controversy, club women did engage in discussions of local political matters and social reform upon which they all agreed. Yet, achieving women’s suffrage which would present the logical path to direct political involvement for a woman’s club lacked any urgency. The idea of capturing the ballot box as an issue of expressed self-interest was not a club priority. The notion of suffrage was kept out of most club meetings honoring the long-established women’s club ban on addressing radical, potentially contentious questions. According to Gere, an avoidance of suffrage discussion enhanced club membership. “Framing women’s Clubs as socially acceptable for ordinary women unwilling to pay the social costs associated with radical behavior and specifically linking the Clubs’ mission to women’s domestic role no doubt contributed to their dramatic growth” (qtd. in Woodmansee and Jaszi 383). Though many club women were active suffragists, the clubs maintained a staunch refusal to endorse female enfranchisement. It was not until 1914 that the GFWC officially endorsed suffrage at its Chicago convention (Blair 113).

More and more, club records including meeting minutes are being recovered. Gere remarked that in examining these records, “Living, as we do, in a time when

feminism has given new prominence to women's organizations ... we find the texts in Club women's records look very different than they did to the women who produced and consumed them" (269). Considering the advent of critical studies of feminism and cultural diversity, a new lens may be applied when examining the cultural and political setting in the records of early twentieth century club women. Access to the minutes of Reno's Twentieth Century Club meetings provides insight into its activities and limited relationship to the western town's suffrage movement.

Reno, Nevada sits nestled east of the Sierra Nevada Mountains on desert land adjacent to the Truckee River. With the discovery of silver in 1859, Reno rapidly became a permanent settlement of miners, railroad workers, small businessmen, ranchers, and farmers. As the town grew, it prospered from lenient divorce laws, legalized gambling, and prostitution. What prevented Reno from becoming yet another dusty Nevada settlement doomed to ghost town status was the presence of the University of Nevada (UN). A land grant college, UN attracted faculty and equal numbers of female and male students.

In 1894, Reno's elite white women founded what was to become Nevada's first and ultimately largest women's club, the Twentieth Century Club. These women, mostly highly educated, were either the wives, mothers, or daughters of Reno's wealthiest men with a few unmarried professionals. They made the decision to enter the public arena of club life, trading the isolation of their homes to join in collective assembly for literary and cultural knowledge and community service in a town much in need of urgent civic housekeeping.

Unitarian minister and Christian Socialist Mila Tupper Maynard provided the initial inspiration and leadership necessary to encourage Reno's urban elite women to establish the Twentieth Century Club. Maynard taught at UN and lectured to the community on women's rights and the relationship between religion and education (Oakley). In the *Nevada State Journal*, she posted a call for action to all Reno women, listing the names of nearly fifty supportive local women signifying their intent to meet the next day to unite and organize for personal improvement and the public good ("An Important Call" 3).

Eighty-four women gathered in the Odd Fellow's Hall to create the Twentieth Century Club, with the first step, the formulating of its mission statement. In the *Reno Gazette-Journal*, the stated purpose of the Club was to promote culture, the general welfare, and the spreading of historical, scientific, and general education knowledge ("Twentieth Century Club" 3). Mrs. F.O. Norton described Mila Maynard at the inaugural meeting as the "moving spirit in the meeting, a very bright, intelligent woman" (Letter to Nardin 1931).

Monthly meetings of the Twentieth Century Club quickly assumed an agenda modeled after its eastern sister clubs. Following Robert's Rules of Order, the president called the meeting to order with minutes and the committee reports read. Members then presented and led discussions on topics of literary and cultural interest. Mrs. Norton explained, "The papers on current events and literature were very acceptable as they gave many busy women and tired mothers who had not time to read for themselves the chance to know what was going on in the world!" (Letter to Nardin 1931). When asked to

provide memories of the Twentieth Century Club's early days, first president, Helen Miller (1894-95) recalled thirty-five years later, "Those were the days any effort of women to organize outside their missionary or church societies was looked at askance" recalling that the women were labeled too "strong-minded and more." She reported that it would be difficult for current club members "to understand with what fears and misgivings this first adventure in group thinking and group action was undertaken." Miller concluded that "group thinking was a real adventure and that only by this method could the world be shaped to human uses--the modern conception of a democratic form of government" (Letter to Nardin 25 Feb. 1931). However, Miller's democracy failed to consider the woman's vote outside the club. Charter member Echo Loder pointed out that politics was not a priority. "Without entering into politics, the Club always worked for a cleaner city, morally and physically" ("20th Century Club" 9).

Living up to its motto to embrace opportunities for service, the Twentieth Century Club was committed to assisting its western community. Among its many early civic projects, the club established the first public kindergarten and public library, offered scholarships to university young women, and advocated for domestic science and manual classes in high school. Club women managed to convince Reno businessmen that their stores should close at 6 p.m. Past President Alice Michael (1897-98) remarked that one businessman failed to agree to the closing time yet "was forced to yield (as the) Club had grown too important to offend" (Letter to Nardin 1931).

As the American Progressive Movement secured a foothold in the West, early Twentieth Century Club agenda shifted to include local and national socio-political

reforms such as advocating the enactment of child labor laws, mothers' pensions, prison reform, and the safety and treatment of juvenile delinquents. However, without the power of the vote to directly remedy civic injustices, Reno club women needed to relentlessly lobby politicians, local businessmen, their husbands, and male relatives.

Early in the club's existence, Reno suffragists, including several members, came very close to achieving suffrage, missing success by one misguided vote in the Nevada Senate. However, following that stunning loss in 1897, the Twentieth Century Club veered away from any suffrage advocacy or even discussion, slipping into routine meetings with no mention of what was considered radical politics.

CHAPTER IV

SUFFRAGE'S FIRST ATTEMPT AND CLUB EXPANSION 1894-1909

The introduction of a new amendment to the Nevada Constitution was time consuming and difficult. Approval by two biennial Legislative sessions followed by voter consent was required. During the early years of statehood, two suffrage attempts were made to remove the word *male* from voting requirements, but each failed. Following the second defeat, major advocacy for suffrage within the state slipped, for several years, into dormancy.

The establishment of Reno's Twentieth Century Club in 1894 coincided closely with the state's second attempt at suffrage. Inheriting its eastern sister clubs' zealous stand against political discussion, the Reno club focused on literary and cultural interests, remaining adamant in its refusal to acknowledge let alone support for the female franchise. However, some members did attempt to introduce suffrage conversations into the club house. As the issue of a woman's right to the ballot faded during the beginning of the twentieth century, the size and prestige of the Twentieth Century Club grew. Yet, any mention of suffrage by many of these highly educated Reno women was rejected as the issue was perceived as political, not personal.

Ratified in 1864, the Nevada Constitution limited the franchise to white males. Five years later, Assemblyman C.J. Hillyer addressed his fellow colleagues with a two-hour landmark speech in favor of female suffrage. He challenged his colleagues, "Shall we continue to live in and breathe the foul vapors of this political dungeon, or shall we

open the portals and bid enter, with woman, the sweet light and pure air?" (Hillyer 6).

Subsequently, the 1869 Assembly and Senate passed a suffrage amendment. However, it failed to pass the 1871 Assembly by only a few votes leaving Nevada women to wait forty-three more years for the vote.

In 1894, Reno community interest in female suffrage escalated. Female students at the University staged "A Look into the Future," a humorous glimpse at a session of the 1950 United States Senate during which the all-female body considered giving suffrage to males ("For the Gymnasium" 1). To assess public opinion, the *Reno Gazette-Journal* issued an invitation to all citizens to weigh in on the pros and cons of suffrage.

Encouraged by the passionate letters from its readers, the paper requested that its female readers submit a ballot either for or against suffrage. Quickly, the straw vote grew to 668 to 15 for suffrage ("How the Vote" 2).

Nevada women came the closest to realizing the vote in 1895. Invited by the Assembly to speak, the Reverend Mila Tupper Maynard, founder of the newly organized Twentieth Century Club, spoke eloquently in favor of the suffrage amendment. The Senate passed the amendment 10 to 3 and the Assembly, 19 to 10 ("The State Legislature" 3). Optimistic that the 1897 Legislature, as required, would also approve the amendment, Reno women acted to increase community awareness and interest in the issue. Hannah Keziah Clapp, pioneer, educator, and charter member of the Twentieth Century Club, became one of the early suffrage leaders.

Described as an opinionated woman with abominable will, Hannah Clapp traveled with her family by wagon train in 1859 from Michigan to the West (Zanjani 148). In

1861, she established Carson City's Sierra Seminary, a private, coeducational boarding school. In an act that was to change her life, Clapp hired Eliza Babcock as the Seminary's assistant principal. The two women became inseparable companions for the next thirty-five years until Babcock's death (Totton 169). In 1887, Hannah Clapp was hired as the first faculty member at the University of Nevada to teach English and history. Moving to Reno, the couple, as charter members of the Twentieth Century Club, founded the town's first, free kindergarten convincing the club to subsidize the teacher's salary. Clapp continuously encouraged women to commit to "helping in all efforts tending to public advancement, political, intellectual or social" (Proceedings of Suffrage convention 25 Sept 1896). Therefore, it was no surprise that she was a devout suffragist, as evidenced by her long friendship with Susan B. Anthony. In May 1895, to focus community attention on suffrage, Hannah Clapp invited Anthony to speak. In her letter to Clapp, Anthony confirms her visit, then adds, "I shall be delighted to see you once more and live over those snowy December days that I passed in Virginia City and Carson twenty-four years ago" (Letter 13 Apr. 1894). With Clapp presiding, Anthony spoke to a packed audience in the Reno Opera House. The solemn seventy-year-old Anthony overwhelmed listeners with her passionate arguments, reminding them that, forty years ago, she was not allowed to speak in public ("Distinguished Women" 3). Years later, in a letter to Clapp, Anthony enclosed a little blotter as a gift with her face on it "just to remind you that I still live and am just as homely as ever at almost 84," signing it "Affectionately yours" (Letter 11 Dec. 1912).

In Nevada history, Hannah Clapp remains a prominent early state-builder, a gritty pioneer, dedicated educator, avid club woman, and passionate suffragist. Active in local politics, she counted Nevada governors, senators, and judges among her friends. Her life has been memorialized with tributes from sister club women in the Twentieth Century Club, a lecture series at the University, and in Nevada's history books (Walton-Buchanan).

In 1895, the Nevada Legislature passed the suffrage amendment, thereby placing the burden of the final passage on the 1897 Legislature. Therefore, that year, encouraged by the passage of female suffrage in Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, and the territories of Washington and Montana, Nevada suffragists stepped up their fight. Suffrage organizations began appearing across the state. Clapp's friend, Susan B. Anthony, returned to Reno with nationally known suffragist Carrie Chapman Cott to speak to a packed audience in the Opera House ("Last Night's Lecture" 3). In support, the *Nevada State Journal* reported that legislators during the 1897 session favored the amendment and that the subsequent voter referendum was representative of the people. There should be no fear when submitting "any question of public interest to the people" ("Woman Suffrage" 2).

At the decisive session of the February 1897 Legislature, Nevada women, anticipating a victory, presented a pro-suffrage petition containing nearly fourteen hundred signatures to the legislators. The Senate voted in favor of the amendment 9 to 5 to great applause from the women in the gallery ("The Nevada Legislature" 3). However, the vote in the Assembly was split down the middle, 15 to 15. In a mistake that would

exclude Nevada women from the ballot box for seventeen more years, newly elected, suffrage supporter Senator Norcross changed his vote to *no* to force *reconsideration* as a tie was a negative outcome. But before he could move for a repeat vote, anti-suffragist Speaker Allen adjourned the meeting leaving the 16 to 14 negative results standing. Following adjournment, a physical fight nearly ensued outside the chambers (“Equal Suffrage” 3). A disappointing conclusion for the many women who fought for early passage especially Norcross’ mother and wife, both keen suffragists.

Though the disappointing results of the 1897 Assembly inflicted a serious blow, the Nevada suffrage movement moved forward. Late that same year, the Nevada Equal Suffrage Association (NESA) held its convention. Twentieth Century Club member Elsa Orr was elected NESA president and Hannah Clapp delivered a “hard sense talk” (“The Suffrage Meeting 3). The delegates, weary from the losing battle, determined that a silent campaign of fund raising, letter writing, and petition signing would replace speeches and events. Unable to demonstrate restraint, the *Reno Gazette-Journal* responded, “Silence will be a novel weapon when wielded by the Suffragists” (“A Silent Campaign” 4).

The *Nevada State Journal* published an appeal from the NESA to state legislators to reconsider the amendment during the Legislature’s 1899 session. When it was introduced in the Senate, the politicians faced women in a packed gallery decorated with “pronounced war paint and feathers to inspire the potent and grave Senators to do effective battle on behalf of their cause” (“State Legislature” 3). Though the amendment passed in the Senate 7 to 5, the vote did not represent a majority as there were several

absentees; therefore, the bill failed. With the beginning of the twentieth century, the issue of Nevada suffrage, with few exceptions, retreated from public view. Instead, newspapers printed frequent reports of the fierce struggle for suffrage in England engendering visions of British suffragettes throwing stones, smashing windows, and setting unoccupied buildings on fire (“Woman Suffrage” 4). While the Nevada suffrage movement shrank from public view, Reno’s Twentieth Century Club grew in size and reputation.

Founded in 1894 as a female collective to expand cultural knowledge, the Twentieth Century Club was a women’s club, not a suffrage association. Shadowing tradition, the Club maintained its eastern club sisters’ aversion to politics. For many members, suffrage was a political issue, not a personal one. Remembering the past, the Club’s first president, Helen Miller, recalled that strong-minded women, not without reason, didn’t consider suffrage a primary concern (Letter to Nardin 25 Feb. 1931). Since the Reno women modeled the Twentieth Century Club agenda after the eastern literary societies which refused to engage in direct political advocacy, this western women’s Club did not deviate. As well, by assuming an apolitical stance in a community cemented along rigid gender lines, the Club women’s cultural quest provided an acceptable excuse for them to step into a public venue without male criticism.

Many early Twentieth Century Club women such as Hannah Clapp, Eliza Babcock, and Mila Maynard were suffragists. As chance would have it, the Club was created less than one year before the first passage of the suffrage amendment by the 1895 Legislature. This coincidence in timing gave the club suffragists an opportunity to

participate in Nevada's first significant suffrage movement. Maynard passionately advocated for the amendment before the Assembly, while Clapp and Babcock furthered the cause with an invitation to Susan B. Anthony to speak in Reno. Though, these actions were not carried out in the name of the club.

Very early Twentieth Century Club records did indicate an initial desire to present relevant social and political issues including suffrage before members for examination. At the club's inaugural meeting in September 1894, the women reviewed author Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* and *A Century of Dishonor* commenting on her "sympathy for the red men." Though, "Mrs. Doten said it was hardly possible for those who knew only the Piutes and the Washoes to feel for them any sentiments save those of contempt or aversion" (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 21 Sept. 1894). The club's second meeting that year addressed the status of women with papers presented on anti-slavery, suffrage, women workers, temperance, and politics. Mila Maynard presented the suffrage paper with Hannah Clapp reading an essay declaring that women should enter public life (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 5 Oct. 1894). At the November meeting, Hannah Clapp opened the discussion of Mila Maynard's paper on the development of social purity, though there is no record of the paper's content. The *Reno Gazette-Journal* predicted, "This Club, as it becomes more used to the round of study, promises to be of great interest and benefit" ("Twentieth Century Club" 3).

Also, at the November meeting, club woman and suffragist Florence Church, wife of University of Nevada Professor J.E. Church, presented her paper on educational reform (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 30 Nov. 1894). Church was not only a member

of the Twentieth Century Club, she was also an active participant in her church group, the Equal Franchise Society, University wives, female students' groups, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and numerous civic beautification groups. She was an avid outdoorswoman, traveling by horseback with her husband to Yosemite and Lake Tahoe as he pursued his celebrated work of snow sampling. As a lifelong member of the Twentieth Century Club, Florence Church presented numerous essays, on topics from education, prison reform, world peace, and suffrage to Browning's poetry and Shakespeare's plays. A dedicated volunteer, Florence Church worked side by side with Nevada's most renown suffragist, Anne Martin, both in the Twentieth Century Club and the NEFS, giving speeches and organizing suffrage groups. Church was president of both the Twentieth Century Club and the Nevada Federation of Women's Clubs (NFWC).

As the community presence of the Twentieth Century Club grew, the group captured the attention of Nevada's premier politicians and Reno's most notable citizens. Yet, as the club women escaped the entrapment of their homes to the public sphere, they remained second class citizens as they lacked the ballot. At the *Reno Gazette-Journal's* suggestion, Twentieth Century Club efforts may now "be made effective in no better way than to assist their companions of the sterner sex in their endeavors" ("Helpful Hands" 1). The women were to remain help-mates.

In February 1895, the Nevada Legislature sat in session to decide the fate of a proposed suffrage amendment. At the invitation of the Assembly, Club member Mila Maynard spoke passionately on women's rights. However, thirty miles to the north in

Reno, the club's February meeting did not mention the legislative proposal. Instead, the women gathered to criticize the work of John Ruskin, study Byzantine and Gothic architecture, and admire the works of J.M.W. Turner (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 1 Feb. 1895). By the end of February, the Nevada Senate and Assembly had passed the suffrage amendment, yet without any recorded celebration or discussion in the club's minutes. It was noted that there was a brief talk by Mila Maynard, but the topic was not identified. Instead, the meeting agenda consisted of member papers on novels and poems (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 1 Mar. 1895).

Following the passage of the suffrage amendment by the Legislature, the club paid little attention to the crusade. Meeting agendas continued with discussions of novels and topics such as heredity versus environment (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 1 Mar. 1895). The group entertained Reno by staging George DuMaurier's popular novel *Trilby*, a tale of Bohemian life in Paris. The *Nevada State Journal* praised the performance. "The Twentieth Century Club supplies a long felt want in our town in ministering to the literary tastes of our people" ("Trilby Evening" 4). Miss Ray Frank spoke on art and was entertained by "the Jewish people of Reno" ("The Lecture Last Night" 2). Though suffragists Susan B. Anthony and Dr. Anna Shaw spoke at the Reno Opera House in May 1895, no mention was made of the event in club minutes. However, at the meeting following the event, Alice Michael read an article written by Dr. Anna Shaw, president of the national Equal Franchise Society, assumed to be on political female empowerment, but there was no reported discussion (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 24 May 1895).

In September 1895, the first order of club business was to lament the departure of the well-liked founder, Mila Maynard. Extremely influential and persuasive, Maynard's loss was possibly a motivating factor in an observable shift in agenda programming which returned from more political topics to strictly literary and cultural interests. Subsequent topics included studying Hawthorne, Kipling, Emerson, Huxley, "that strange religion" Mormonism, the war in Cuba, and whether fairy tales were appropriate reading for children (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 20 Sept., 4, 18 Oct. 1895). The idea of suffrage was raised when members studied the life and works of British novelist and anti-suffragette Mrs. Humphrey Ward who argued that female emancipation would lead to a loss of women's moral influence (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 1 Nov. 1895). Advocacy for suffrage, though a heated subject among many Reno citizenry during the mid-1890s, was rarely addressed by the Twentieth Century Club.

In early 1896, club women presented papers on domestic reform, a woman's advance in the affairs of life, wisdom for the homemaker, and interior decoration (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 10 Jan. 1896). Typical agendas also included popular novel reviews and studies of composers' lives. Club officers were elected at the final spring meeting including President Mrs. W.O.H. Martin, a suffragist and mother of Nevada suffragist Anne Henrietta Martin who was to become a key actor in gaining the reluctant suffrage endorsement of Nevada women's clubs (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 12 June 1896).

The second attempt at the passage of suffrage vote in the February 1897 Nevada Legislature went down in defeat. The Senate voted in favor of the amendment 9 to 5, but

it lost in the Assembly 16 to 14. In an interesting choice of timing, the Twentieth Century Club held a suffrage debate following the loss of the amendment. For the first time since its founding, the group held a meeting that was devoted entirely to suffrage. Formatted as a debate, Mrs. Orr and Mrs. Webster argued for the affirmative. Alice Michael and Frances Williamson also volunteered presenting the affirmative position. “The negative of the debate was sustained very well indeed by Mrs. Gulling and Mrs. Bray, although the latter was inclined to change her argument for an *aye*” (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 26 Feb. 1897). According to the minutes, no decision was rendered. Club interest in suffrage as a meeting topic quickly waned, instead turning to Shakespeare, historical drama, and novels (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 5, 19 Mar., 2, 22, 20 Apr. 1897).

As the nineteenth century ended, the Twentieth Century Club meeting agenda, falling in line with the country’s Progressive Movement, began focusing on issues of socio-political reforms. Club women studied the *American New Woman*, committed to working for civic improvement, and moved to establish Reno’s first public library and public kindergarten (“Club Meeting” 3). Never failing to address a lack of social justice, Alice Michael presented an essay on the newspaper in the home pointing out that the audience of the paper was merely “half the world” (Letter to Nardin 1931). The last meeting of the Twentieth Century Club in the nineteenth century highlighted the theme: “Live while you live and seize the pleasures of the present day,” striking a note of pleasure not politics (“Twentieth Century Club” 3).

With the beginning of the twentieth century, the Nevada suffrage movement, marked by the legislative failure of the suffrage amendment, languished while Reno's Twentieth Century Club thrived. By 1900, it was the largest club in the state. Its wide-ranging choices of meeting itineraries, civic projects, reform activities, and community events proved highly successful. Occasionally, the Club did venture into politics though nothing that wreaked of controversy, at least among the club women. In February 1905, the Club sponsored a meeting to secure opinions on bills to be presented to the Nevada Legislature though the only bill mentioned was one to enact more stringent anti-gambling laws ("Mass Meeting" 5). Club President Ginny Thurtell's husband spoke of the dangers of bribery and nepotism in political appointments. He joked that by endorsing suffrage, there would be twice as many votes to buy ("Would Give" 4). At the June 1907 literary breakfast, Susan B. Anthony was toasted for working to end discrimination against female wage earners, while Mrs. Sol Levy toasted women in science ("Century Club" 2). In March 1908, club woman Mrs. Ferris, sister of inventor George Ferris, presented a paper on women in government, "understandingly handled" with no details given (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 27 Mar. 1908). Though there were a few signs of suffrage in the club house, most meetings continued to cover topics such as Nevada history, authors, composers, and the ever-popular Italian cities. That year Florence Church suggested to members that they undertake the formation of the Nevada Federation of Women's Clubs (NFWC) to create a greater collaborative force of women's clubs in the state. The Twentieth Century Club followed up with letters to other

Nevada clubs requesting the formation of a state federation offering “far greater service and broader ways” (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 27 Mar. 1908; “Women Plan” 5).

Continuing into 1909, the Twentieth Century Club persisted in dismissing suffrage conversation even though several of Nevada’s surrounding states had adopted the female franchise. Resuming routine programming, the club year began with a paper reminding the women of the responsibility of their position in the home (“Century Club to Meet” 2). Florence Church organized a Shakespeare night, a rummage sale that lit up the “happy faces of the needy women” was held, and the wealthy Club explored bond investments. Always extremely popular and well attended were card parties and dances (“Shakespeare to be” 8; “Much Good” 2).

Suffragists Hannah Clapp and Eliza Babcock had died and Mila Maynard had moved away. The first significant attempt at the passage of suffrage had failed and, for over ten years, the issue lay dormant. Though the Twentieth Century Club meeting minutes indicate a rejection of any serious consideration of suffrage, the club did enter, in its eyes, the world of non-controversial politics. The newly organized Parliamentary Committee traveled to Carson City to sit in on the 1909 legislative session. Committee members attended the Assembly to support bills of which they uniformly approved including those addressing anti-gambling, protection and treatment of juvenile delinquents, and the regulation of child labor. The club’s political positions were strengthened by a physical presence in the gallery. The women then sent written resolutions to the Senators and Assemblymen from the Twentieth Century Club supporting each bill (Twentieth Century

Club Minutes 19 Feb. 1909). The Club was not shy about supporting hand-chosen political issues, but these did not include suffrage.

CHAPTER V

CLUB RESISTENCE TO SUFFRAGE REVIVAL
1910-1911

Beginning in 1910, the issue of suffrage resurfaced among Nevada citizens, particularly among the women. The passage of suffrage in neighboring western states combined with the founding of the Nevada Equal Franchise Society (NEFS) set the long-awaited stage for Nevada women's successful march to the ballot box in 1914. With legislative approval given to the suffrage amendment in 1911, suffragists accelerated their campaign across the state. However, the powerful Twentieth Century Club failed to acknowledge the suffrage movement, remaining staunchly resistant to what it considered controversial politics. The club, influenced by the progressive politics of the times, however, did address social reforms and civic responsibilities. Not unexpected, members were not unanimous in their dismissal of suffrage as several club women succeeded in introducing suffrage into meetings. The campaign for suffrage had begun in Nevada and this time it would triumph.

By 1910, the notion of female enfranchisement re-entered the public discourse. However, not all dialog was supportive. The *Reno Gazette-Journal* argued that suffragists "who say they can't keep busy at home are bluffing" and that "wealthy suffragettes only seek excitement" ("Women Who Would Not" 4). Anarchist and political activist Emma Goldman, speaking to a large, curious crowd in Sparks, contended that the ballot will not do any good for women until they learn how to think ("Emma Goldman Lectures" 5). When Sparks suffragists paraded and spoke in

downtown Reno, the *Reno Gazette-Journal* suggested that Professor Makeover wave his magic wand and transform “the stern visage spinsters into their own sweet selves” (“Suffragettes Will Appear” 3). One of the prevailing anti-suffrage narratives reflected a general fear that Nevada women would follow in the footsteps of Emily Pankhurst’s suffragettes, “the vixens of Britain” who are “less capable of exercising a calm, dispassionate franchise than a grizzly bear” (“Attain a Little Sense” 4).

Nevada women’s successful march to suffrage began with a request from Katharine Mackay to University of Nevada history professor Dr. Jeanne Wier. Mackay was the socialite wife of Clarence Mackay, son of the co-discoverer of the silver-rich Comstock Lode in Virginia City. Living in New York, the Mackays remained emotionally and financially tied to Nevada. In 1908, Katharine Mackay founded the New York’s Equal Franchise Society arguing that there be “no sheet of crystal” separating women from their rights, but she adamantly rejected any notion of British violence. In her 1909 letter to Wier, Mackay encouraged her to establish an NEFS. Though Wier admitted that she was “loathe to undertake another line of work,” she agreed (Letter Nov. 1909). In January 1911, she circulated an invitation to select Reno citizens to assist in establishing the suffrage organization. The pledge was signed by Wier and eighteen prominent Reno women and men with six of the women, including Wier and Florence Church, members of the Twentieth Century Club. The *Reno Gazette-Journal*, downplaying any excitement, declared that “very little interest is manifested” by a suffrage movement (“Local Option” 1).

Yet, the notion of female suffrage in Nevada gained serious traction among women, the first since the loss of the suffrage amendment in the 1897 Legislature. The first meeting of those interested in suffrage, far too large a number for Jeanne Wier's home, was held on January 28, 1911, at Reno's Odd Fellow's Hall. Reports were that the room was packed by an audience which overflowed into the lobby and onto the stairs. Several compelling questions were asked. Why can all men vote and your mother and sister cannot? Should not women be treated with justice and equal rights? Would not women morally uplift the law and improve society's conditions? ("Suffrage Movement is Launched" 1). The enthusiastic new Franchise Society elected Twentieth Century Club member Margaret Stanislawsky its first president. The *Reno Gazette-Journal* reported, "It is proposed (by the NEFS) to enlist the co-operation of the Twentieth Century Club (to) go to Carson with a strong dedication and lobby a suffrage bill through the legislature" ("Campaign Starts For" 6). There is no evidence, though, that the Club cooperated with the statement of the NEFS.

The fight in the 1911 Nevada legislature for the passage of the suffrage amendment had an inauspicious start. Esmeralda Assemblyman Arnold "fired the first shot for woman's suffrage" and while reading the resolution the fire alarm mysteriously went off ("Arnold of Esmeralda Fires" 1). Interested women, mostly suffragists, flocked to the legislative chambers to follow the proceedings. Local newspapers joked about the women, their apparel, their so-called innate ability to speak at length, and the danger of their hat pins and umbrellas. Accused of storming the chambers, the women took to the floor with their speech making. A *Nevada State Journal* headline cautioned,

“Assemblymen Fear to Go Home Without Letting Fair Ones Have a Hearing” (Women Suffragettes to Storm” 7). By March 5, the amendment was passed by the Senate, yet remained to be considered by the Assembly with only four days left in the legislative session. After many purposeful delays, the amendment, written by Carson City attorney and NEFS member Felice Cohn, passed both chambers, in the Senate 16 to 2 and in the Assembly 31 to 13 (“Suffrage Resolution Wins” 1). With its passage, the women present “formed a ring and danced a war dance” (“Woman’s Suffrage Has Friends in Senate” 1). It was then signed by suffrage supporter Governor Tasker Oddie. State law, however, required the amendment pass a second time in the 1913 Legislature before submission to Nevada voters.

Unfortunately, dissension arose in the ranks of the newly organized NEFS. Jeanne Wier, in a lengthy letter to Katherine Mackay, complained that a small Carson City clique was taking credit for the legislative win. Wier then pleaded that she was burdened with work and had to withdraw from the Society’s Board of Directors (Letter 12 Apr. 1911). Opportunely, Jeanne Wier’s retirement from leadership and active participation in the NEFS opened the door for Nevada’s most noted suffragist, Anne Henrietta Martin, to step in and lead. Martin, the catalyst who sparked Nevada women’s final march to suffrage, had been in London fighting alongside suffragette leader, Emily Pankhurst. Martin returned to Nevada at the end of 1911 and quickly assumed a position of power in the NEFS. However, many Nevada suffragists were wary of Martin as she had the reputation as an agent of the highly castigated British suffrage tactics.

Resistant to change, several anti-suffragist newspaper editors continued denigrating the movement. A sharply negative editorial unusual for the Democratic *Nevada State Journal* attacked the “silly suffragettes” for banishing the old-fashioned mother, accusing the women of making a choice to vote over taking care of their children, husband, and home (“The Serpent” 4). In an absurd moment of irony, the Newspaper Editors’ Association refused to accept the offer of a luncheon suffrage speaker remarking that it wished to “eliminate everything of a political nature from the association” (“Association Will Be Formed” 6).

Though suffrage conversations in Nevada towns escalated following passage of the amendment, Reno’s Twentieth Century Club continued to address cultural and civic issues without mention of women at the ballot box. Florence Church led a discussion on the religion/philosophy of Tennyson and Browning and plans were made to establish a Great Philharmonic Course as part of the free extension course lectures coordinated with the University of Nevada. President Stubbs spoke on Japan, Professor Martin lectured on the ruins of Pompeii, Professor Hill revealed the symbolism of Maeterlinck, and Professor Frandsen, famous for introducing members to the world of birds, discussed Napoleon (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 6 Mar., 24 Oct. 1910). Community service remained a priority. When the postal rate increased, the women voiced their concern to Nevada Senators Nixon and Newlands (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 25 Feb. 1910). Keeping Reno from appearing “unkempt and straggling” by undertaking various beautification projects continued as a club goal (“The City Beautiful” 4). A “spicy” discussion ensued at one meeting regarding card parties which, for no given reason, were

suspended, a surprising move since these competitive social affairs were extremely popular (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 24 Oct. 1910).

As a sign of the progressive times in the country, the club investigated reform politics. Florence Church led a discussion on prison reform, while Professor Adams outlined the current Nevada divorce laws in need of examination (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 10 Nov., 30 Dec. 1910). Nevertheless, at that year's October 1910 convention of the Nevada Federation of Women's Clubs (NFWC), Twentieth Century Club minutes report the presentation of a single paper, "The Club Woman as Mother" (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 4 Nov. 1910).

Twentieth Century Club meetings and activities carried on as before. Mrs. Meskimmons proposed that women's clubs take steps to purify the press. Card parties were resumed without prizes to remove the appearance of gambling, and there was a request to lobby legislators on prison reform (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 27 Jan. 1911). On February 10, the same day local suffragists were flooding the Nevada Legislature in support of the suffrage amendment, the club sponsored Nevada Day. At the same meeting, it was suggested that a bill advocating for a detention home for juvenile delinquents, keeping them off the streets and safe, be presented to the Nevada Legislature currently in session (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 10 Feb. 1911). It is quite possible that several Twentieth Century Club members missed that meeting and, instead, were with like-minded Nevada suffragists in the legislative chambers.

On the same day the suffrage bill passed in the Assembly, records of the club's March 6 meeting shared nothing of the victory. Instead, it was business as usual with

minutes read, reports made, resignations announced, papers presented, and the next concert planned. During that spring, Bishop Robinson spoke on the Passion Play at Oberammergau, Germany while suffragist Eunice Hood presented a paper on civic beauty encouraging the planting of a vine at every house and business (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 10 Apr. 1911).

The fall 1911 meetings continued with arrangements for typical club events such as the inevitable card parties, musical programs, dances, and clothes collection for poor families (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 8 Sept. 1911). Papers were presented on composers and the modern drama along with readings of original short stories written by locally-famous member Mary Doten. The club women rallied around local businesses to discourage catalogue shopping. A *Reno Gazette-Journal* editorial questioned, “Why is it that the women are made to do all the work?” referring to the Twentieth Century Club carrying the burden of city beautification while the men’s Reno Commercial Club sat back and watched. Not surprisingly, the newspaper had an ulterior motive, warning that if the men didn’t start sharing the burden woman suffrage might pass “And then see what we have went and gone and done” (“The Women Do The Work” 4).

Holding its October 1911 convention in Reno, NFWC delegates heard papers addressing “Home Economics and Food Sanitation,” “Public Playgrounds,” and “Sex Hygiene in the Schools.” However, the final paper presented during the convention’s last session was “Women’s Status and Inherent Rights” written and read by Bird Wilson, attorney, business woman, and avid suffragist from Sparks (“Federation to Convene” 8). Wilson, Vice President of the NEFS and Twentieth Century Club member, along with

Anne Martin, was to play a critical role in winning a late, reluctant suffrage endorsement from the NFWC.

CHAPTER VI

SUFFRAGE ADVANCES AS CLUB MEMBERS
DISAGREE 1912-1913

While the suffrage campaign in Nevada became increasingly more conspicuous, the Twentieth Century Club continued pursuing its traditional agendas. Though club suffragists, like Anne Martin and Florence Church, acted to convince sister members that suffrage was in their best interest, not all members supported the cause. Predictably, the opponents perceived the franchise as a political issue not a personal one. The *antis* consistently reminded the women of the no-politics clause. Even among suffragists inside and outside of the club, conflicting tactics created unwanted divisiveness.

The establishment of the Reno Nevada Equal Franchise Society (NEFS) encouraged by Jeanne Wier represented the incentive that Nevada suffragists needed to organize. Clearly, with suffrage gaining ground in neighboring states, the Nevada suffrage narrative was shifting to become an acceptable notion. A friend of first NEFS President Margaret Stanislawsky remarked on her return to Reno, “When I was here before they looked for your hoofs & horns if you so much as mentioned it (suffrage) but now they discuss it at bridge parties” (Letter to Shaw 1912). The *Nevada State Journal* announced that the “Suffrage Fight Has Commenced” and leading that fight was Nevada native Anne Henrietta Martin (“Suffrage Fight has Commenced” 8). The story of successful Nevada suffrage is the story of Anne Martin.

Anne Martin was born to privilege in Empire, Nevada in 1875. Her father William O’Hara Martin was a prominent businessman, banker, and Republican State

Senator (Valkenburgh). Considered one of the founders of Nevada, W.O.H. Martin was a populist who supported women's suffrage. Martin's mother, Louise, was a dedicated suffragist and proved to be one of her daughter's most faithful supporters, emotionally and financially. Louise was a founding member of Reno's Twentieth Century Club and its third president. Anne would join the club during Nevada's successful suffrage campaign, but withdraw after its passage. During Anne's teenage years, suffragists Hannah Clapp and Eliza Babcock were frequent visitors to the Martin home engaging the teenager in intellectual conversations (Howard 7, 25). Martin continued a lifelong friendship with Clapp.

Academics and travel were important components in Martin's earlier years. She earned a Bachelor of Arts from University of Nevada, then another and a Master of Art's degree in history from Stanford University. In 1897 she established the University of Nevada's history department, becoming its first professor. In 1903, Martin moved to England where she joined the British women's suffrage movement where, in 1910, she was arrested and sent to prison for storming the House of Commons. (Mead 160). However, Martin explained to nervous Nevada residents afraid of British militancy that American law was fairer than that in England, therefore those methods were not necessary ("A Nevada Girl in London Jail" 5). Her liberal upbringing, higher education, travels, and participation in the British suffrage movement proved to be Martin's training ground for effective suffrage leadership.

Returning to Reno in 1911, Martin immediately volunteered to work with the fledgling NEFS. Dedicated, strong-willed, and demanding, Martin directly set to work to

build a successful political action organization. In her letter to Dr. Anna Shaw, President of the National Equal Franchise Society, local President Margaret Stanislawsky worried that Anne Martin would bring her militant tactics to the Society instead of “quiet, reasonable methods” (Letter 1912). In February 1912, Stanislawsky resigned and Martin was elected to replace her.

As a confirmed micromanager, Martin developed persuasive strategies for an elaborate network of state suffrage supporters, expecting the women to work selflessly. Many women with families pleaded that time was scarce or that male family members were worried about losing their jobs because of their political activity. Canvassing house to house brought complaints of gender inappropriateness from both men and women. But, these excuses, generally, fell on Martin’s deaf ears. Her aggressive campaign strategies may have frightened off some Nevada women while, on the other hand, she encouraged many to step up and act in a public manner before thought impossible.

Martin reminded her followers that every vote counts. Twenty thousand male voters were spread over Nevada’s 112,000 square miles with only one voter for every five square miles and Anne Martin intended to reach every one of them. She traveled by train, car, stagecoach, and horseback to nearly every cow town and mining camp in the state, speaking to miners, cowboys, and railroaders. Her dedicated activism gave Martin a fierce demeanor that many could not handle. She did not tolerate rivals, employed pressure tactics, and suffered accusations of perfectionism. Though hundreds of women across Nevada worked tirelessly for suffrage, Anne Martin, with her powerful leadership and organizational skills, delivered the driving force.

Martin suffered a major disappointment following her suffrage speech before the large and powerful Twentieth Century Club. Immediately following her talk, Martin expected an overwhelming and enthusiastic response from the over two hundred women present. At least, there would be a lively discussion if not a suffrage endorsement. Instead, the Club President quickly adjourned the meeting for afternoon tea. Martin blamed the three unnamed club *antis* whom she said stood in loud opposition to an obvious majority (“Woman Suffrage Department” 3 Feb. 2).

In February 1912, the NEFS held its first convention in Reno. On the agenda was the establishment of the coordinated effort and wide-ranging strategies necessary to assure the required second passage of the suffrage amendment by the 1913 Nevada Legislature. Approval would be followed by a concerted effort to convince Nevada male voters to favor the 1914 referendum. Without debate, delegates re-elected Anne Martin as NEFS President. Following the convention, in a clever move, the NEFS’s executive committee announced in the *Nevada State Journal* that the Society maintained a non-party, non-political position, a wise tactic allowing legislators and party-owned newspapers to not take sides (“Senator Newlands Accepts” 8).

In August 1912, attorney and NEFS Vice President Bird Wilson authored the popular leaflet, “Women Under Nevada Laws” (Wilson 1912). The suffragist reminded Nevada citizens of women’s “unjust discrimination between the rights of women and the rights of men” by pointing out that, among many unfair laws, women are tax payers and could not vote for tax law. Anne Martin praised the leaflet as “an effective piece of educational literature in rousing the women to a sense of their rights and wrong” (Nevada

Equal Franchise Society Yearbook 1911-1912). Martin together with Wilson was to play a key role in capturing the reluctant suffrage endorsement of the Nevada Federation of Women's Clubs.

1913 proved to be a crucial year for securing a Nevada suffrage victory. As the January vote in the Legislature neared, support for suffrage escalated. The Democratic *Nevada State Journal* reasoned that if Nevada was to continue its image of progressiveness and liberality in the West, suffrage must be first on the agenda and passed. With pledges of support from Governor Oddie and most Senators and Assemblymen, the suffragists trusted a positive outcome. The Assembly quickly passed the bill 49 to 3 and a week later with suffragists filling the chamber, the Senate passed the bill 19 to 3 ("Equal Suffrage Bill Now Ready" 1). In a thinly guised warning, the Republican *Reno Gazette-Journal* expressed its hope that the subsequent suffrage campaign would be a dignified campaign as the fickle public "must be dealt with wisely and thoughtfully," not in the countenance of those "cousins on the other side of the sea" ("One More Lap" 10).

Immediately following the passage of the suffrage amendment by the Legislature and the 1913 NEFS convention, at a time when suffrage solidarity among members was of paramount importance, the first sign of dissention appeared in an announcement in the *Reno Gazette-Journal*. The paper reported that a group of Carson City NEFS women, led by attorney Felice Cohn who authored the suffrage amendment, planned on holding a *rump* convention to create an alternate suffrage party. Cohn's group accused Martin and Reno delegates of using a steam roller at the NEFS convention to dominate outcomes,

arguing they were left out of the decision-making process (“A Rebuff for Suffragettes” 6). Martin described Cohn’s action as a betrayal by disloyal women (“Official Explanation of Steam Roller” 10). Because of a personal power struggle between Anne Martin and Felice Cohn, the committed Carson City suffragists withdrew from the NEFS.

Anne Martin was NEFS President and the hard-working Florence Church, its First Vice President. The two women were also Twentieth Century Club members. Though, the two differed on personal paths of activism with Martin favoring the more aggressive tactics. For example, when the directors of the Nevada State Agricultural Association Fair agreed that the NEFS might provide a comfort booth for women, the NEFS members decorated it with a variety of suffrage materials including a photo of Susan B. Anthony (“No Suffrage Literature” 1). Two of the Fair directors objected to the trimmings claiming that suffrage was a political issue and insisted that the women take them down, leaving the women incensed. With Anne Martin out of town, Florence Church yielded to the demand declaring that she thought it better not to argue. Immediately upon her return, the more militant Martin attacked the decision contending that the suffrage literature was educational, intended to provoke reform, no different than school Fair exhibits with literature advocating healthy eating (“Open Parliament” 4). Martin indicated that she would have refused to comply with undressing the booth, whereas Florence Church did not think it a battle worth fighting.

For a while, Martin and Church set aside any differences to champion the cause. However, their personal relationship between finally collapsed under Martin’s relentless yoke of expectations. In a letter to Martin, the dedicated suffragist Church requested, “I

hope you will not scold or hold me accountable for everything which has not been done.” With that, Church resigned as First Vice President of NEFS remarking, “I am so tired, I don’t care.” Church also chides Martin for arguing that weather was no excuse to limit campaigning. “You say let-not-excuse of weather hinder--you can’t make women wade in water in their boots and that is what we have been doing for a month” (Letter 22 Jan. 1914).

Suffrage was not without organized opposition. In October 1913, New York’s Minnie Bronson, secretary of the National Association Opposed to Woman’s Suffrage spoke to a Reno audience, assuring them that most women did not want the vote. Bronson maintained that suffrage was not necessary since “the Federation of Women’s Clubs has done more than any other agency to write into the statute books laws favoring women and children” (“Thinks Suffrage Cause” 5). The *Nevada State Journal*, not impressed with Bronson’s arguments, contended that if women remained silent on the issue, it did not mean that they abrogated their right to natural justice based on birth and citizenship (“The Right to Vote” 4). Remaining resistant to the rising tide of suffrage, the *Reno Gazette-Journal* described the national opposition organization as running a dignified campaign. “If the majority of intelligent and thinking women do not want and demand the ballot, certainly the men will not insist that it be thrust upon them” (“Farewell to Sentimentalism” 4). In an article from the *Western Nevada Miner* reprinted in the *Reno Gazette-Journal*, Minnie Bronson was described as a “real American girl,” comparing her to Anne Martin who had “forgotten her Americanism” while engaging in

those “wild-eyed antics” of those “female hooliganism in London” (“Voice of the State Press” 4).

Addressing the notion of suffrage managed to make small advances onto the Twentieth Century Club’s agenda, though, those who wished to keep the club from openly endorsing suffrage managed to prevail. In her letter to Dr. Anna Shaw, Margaret Stanislawsky mentions that Anne Martin “has a Suffrage day at the Century Club our large Women’s Club” (Letter 1912). A *Reno Gazette-Journal* announcement for Martin’s presentation to the Club anticipated a very large audience (“Society” 8). However, the day before the event in an open letter to the paper, Mrs. F.N. Fletcher, ex-club president and wife of the Secretary of the Nevada Tax Commission, sought to rectify a “slight misunderstanding.” Fletcher made it clear that the Twentieth Century Club was neither a political nor religious organization, open to any women with a good moral character. Pandering to personal beliefs “would be resented by all who have the best interests of the Club at heart” (“Communicated” 3). In other words, the invitation to Anne Martin was not to be considered a club endorsement of suffrage, not unexpected since Fletcher opposed the female franchise.

As has been noted, Martin’s suffrage presentation to the Twentieth Century Club was well-received holding the attention of the nearly two hundred women and men who listened to her “perfectly splendid ideas” (“Society News” 8). Yet, the meeting was quickly adjourned for tea before any suffrage discussion could take place. Martin, though puzzled, was not discouraged by the tepid response. Instead, the women’s club members became the challenge and, seeing the potential for highly influential converts,

she joined the Twentieth Century Club. At the next club meeting, Martin was officially thanked with a letter of appreciation for her speech, but without any mention of the content. However, inspired by Martin's convincing arguments, it was moved and seconded that, since suffrage was "trending in public opinion," the Club should adopt an equal franchise resolution. But, after much discussion, with a rising vote, the motion was tabled (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 22 Mar. 1912).

Along with Anne Martin, there were other Twentieth Century Club suffragists who continued bringing suffrage awareness to members, though cultural and literary interests continued to dominate the agendas. Florence Church presented a paper on Jane Addams emphasizing the social reformer's advocacy for women's voting rights and better conditions for working women ("Woman Suffrage Department" 26 Mar. 5). Encouraged by California suffragist Charlotte Whitney, the club subscribed to the NEFS magazine, *Woman Citizen* (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 13 Sept. 1912). At a spring meeting devoted to Civics' Day, Eunice Hood presented a paper focused on a woman's modern place and work in civics, introducing club members to the pro-suffrage position taken by several state conventions of Federations of Women's Clubs. Hood asked, "If the home is the women's sphere, why should she not have the power to protect that sphere?" She encouraged her sister members to join the fighting army of suffragists such as Susan B. Anthony, Julia Ward Howe, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Jane Addams. Emboldened by Hood's address, members moved and seconded a motion that those progressive ideas be endorsed by the club. But, Mrs. Fletcher moved to change the motion to a simple vote of thanks to Mrs. Hood as she could not, personally, support

suffrage. However, Fletcher's motion lost and Hood's carried though no further club suffrage action was taken ("Woman Suffrage Department" 9 Apr. 3).

Twentieth Century Club suffragists were disappointed by the failure of a suffrage endorsement at the 1912 General Federation of Women's Club's (GFWC) convention held in San Francisco. When convention delegates were faced with a chance to champion suffrage, President Pennypacker set aside a motion to adopt the work of Susan B. Anthony. As the *Reno Gazette-Journal* observed, "and with a smile she put the steam roller in motion and when she was through the motion had been flattened out" ("Suffrage Given Vital Blow" 2). Pennypacker, though a suffrage supporter, privately remarked that, since the clubs are composed of women of all political beliefs, suffrage should not be a major issue.

In her letter to Dr. Anna Shaw requesting money from the National Equal Franchise Society, Anne Martin, stung by the GFWC's suffrage rejection, mentioned that she had made a study of "the psychology of the situation" and blamed Nevada club women's timidity (Letter 24 Aug. 1912). She suggested that all they must do is "come out bravely and say they want it" and not be put off by "three *antis* of determined spirit," a reference, no doubt, to Twentieth Century Club anti-suffrage members including Mrs. Fletcher ("Woman Suffrage Department" 3 Feb. 2).

Twentieth Century Club members, nevertheless, embraced political issues that avoided controversy, an arrangement which met with Mrs. Fletcher's approval. The club continued to petition legislators to limit the state's lenient divorce residency requirement, lobbied for the establishment of safe treatment facilities for juvenile delinquents, and

supported prison reform. The women appealed to the Reno City Council to pass a law forcing owners to clean up their properties. In a move that offended no member, the women created a committee to investigate cruelty to animals (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 9 Feb. 1912).

1913 witnessed the Twentieth Century Club agenda increasingly addressing suffrage. Club and NEFS member Anne Martin continued attempting to bring equal suffrage to the attention of sister members. However, when scheduled to speak to the club at the end of January, Martin opted to attend the introduction of the suffrage amendment into the Legislature in Carson City. In her place, Eunice Hood read a paper by Jane Addams on why women should vote. Then Miss Gale, visiting Chair of the Civic Department of the GFWC, read a story about why very busy women still have time for the ballot (“20th Century Club Meeting” 6). The *Reno Gazette-Journal*, though, persisted in identifying club members as outside the political arena. When the paper announced the crusade for a new, more restrictive divorce law, it reported that the women “are working individually and not as club members” (“Crusade for New” 8).

When the Twentieth Century Club extended an invitation to Gail Laughlin to speak at its October meeting, newspaper announcements characterized her as a prominent Denver club woman. However, the papers failed to mention that she was also an attorney and a very popular suffragist speaker (“Society Page” 10). At the club meeting, Laughlin spoke on “The Hustling Business and Club Women,” not suffrage (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 9 Oct. 1913). The club continued to remain averse to any discussion of controversial issues, no doubt, encouraged by anti-suffrage advocates like Mrs. Fletcher.

However, the banning of suffrage discussion in women's club's meetings worked both ways. Tonopah's Mrs. G.M. Riohanclin happily reported to Anne Martin that anti-suffrage Minnie Bronson was refused permission to speak at her women's club since "they (club women) taboo politics and suffrage" (Letter 6 Nov. 1913).

At the October meeting, Twentieth Century Club members nominated delegates to the 1913 NFWC convention to be held in Carson City. Fifteen women, including Anne Martin and Florence Church, were chosen, with Club President Lena Norton given the power to choose the alternates (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 9 Oct. 1913). Two weeks later, Norton again presided over a special club meeting whose purpose was to elect the delegates and alternates "in proper parliamentary form correcting an acknowledged lapse of a technicality." It was moved that, since Norton didn't have the power to appoint the alternates, nominations be reconsidered. According to club minutes, after "much discussion," polite code for substantial arguing, delegates and alternates were re-nominated and selected. Each of the delegate lists contained the names of several club members who also belonged to the NEFS (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 20 Oct. 1913). At the subsequent regular meeting, Mrs. Fletcher, who had not attended the special meeting, questioned its legality. She was told that the meeting was announced in the newspaper and the appropriate by-law read from the club's constitution. Suffragist Mrs. Mack submitted a motion, which carried, to accept the delegates and alternates chosen at the special meeting. Mrs. Fletcher moved to reconsider the vote, but lost (Twentieth Century Club 24 Oct. 1913). This heated debate over parliamentary procedure as applied to delegate selection clearly indicated a power struggle between the

club suffragists and their opponents. With female suffrage in Nevada becoming a reality, deeply entrenched personal opinions were creating divisive moments in the club house.

The delegate-debated 1913 NFWC convention included the usual official welcomes, procedural items, and program reports. As chair of the NFWC's Civic Committee, Twentieth Century Club member Eunice Hood, submitted the organization's proposed mission statement. Though details of Hood's speech are unavailable, the *Nevada State Journal* reproduced a statement which read as follows: (Club women needed to) Understand the laws for which your representative will vote; know the male legislators; study city ordinances; invite political speakers; insist on having women sitting on important committees; and request permission to use public venues such as schools to encourage community debate and discussion of local issues ("Notes from Women's Clubs" 6). Though the statement clearly reinforced the authority of the male vote, it also suggested that club women take full initiative and enter the political arena.

On the night of the last session of the NFWC convention, NEFS and Twentieth Century Club member Bird Wilson, chair of the organization's Legislative Committee, presented a report that "proved one of the most comprehensive and far reaching presented at any woman's club" ("Women's Federation Endorses Suffrage" 7). It proposed endorsing legislation for mothers' pensions and equal parental shares of a child's estate, an amendment to the community property law, raising the age of consent to eighteen, enacting minimum wage laws for women and men, the abolition of capital punishment, stricter gambling laws, and, buried at the bottom of the list, a united support of equal suffrage. Wilson's report was adopted by the Nevada women's clubs' delegates though

no information was given as to the vote. This acceptance suggested that the more vocal anti-suffrage Club women, Mmes. Fletcher, Lee, and Humphrey, found it difficult to raise enough votes to reject the report in the larger body of the NFWC. Though, convention proceedings resulted in the support of extraordinary forward-thinking legislative endorsements, the only mention of the 1913 NEWC convention in Twentieth Century Club records was a thank you to the Leisure Club in Carson City for “the good time they gave us” (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 21 Nov. 1913).

Regardless of suffrage support by delegates at the GFWC convention, discussion of the franchise remained censored as a prominent topic on the Twentieth Century Club’s agendas. Cultural enlightenment, civic duty, and reform continued to take precedence. The first lecture in 1913 covered eugenics and legislation with Washoe Senator Ascher arguing that sterilization should be carried out on “idiots, the insane, habitual drunkards and paralytics and the like” (“Washoe Senator” 4). Subsequent meetings covered topics ranging from the cost of living, a trip to Constantinople, and Clara Barton to Professor Frandsen’s yearly bird lecture (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 7, 21 Mar.; 18 Apr. 1913). Preaching to an educated choir, University Professor Ross lectured the women on how to read food labels so “they may distinguish at a glance the good from the bad” and avoid being defrauded (“Food Labels His Subject” 7).

The final meeting’s minutes of 1913 recorded suffragist Mrs. Sadie Dodson Hurst as a new Reno Club member (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 5 Dec. 1913). A widow, Hurst moved from Iowa with her theatrically-inclined young adult sons who became theatrical entrepreneurs contracting entertainment for Reno’s Grand and Majestic

Theaters. Advocates for their mother's politics, the brothers offered the theaters as suffrage venues *pro bono*. A Women's Christian Temperance Union and NEFS member, Sadie Hurst quickly became active in the Twentieth Century Club.

In 1918, with the endorsement of the NFWC, Sadie Hurst won a seat in the Nevada Assembly becoming the first female member of that body. Throughout her political tenure, she successfully addressed legislation that benefited women and children. As its only female member, Hurst was chosen to introduce the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution to Nevada's 1919 Legislature (McMenomy). Sadie Hurst represented one of many Twentieth Century Club members, like Hannah Clapp, Eliza Babcock, Anne Martin, and Florence Church, who did not think her suffrage beliefs and being a member of a traditional women's club were mutually exclusive.

CHAPTER VII

SUFFRAGE VICTORY WITH CLUBS' ENDORSEMENT 1914

1914 was the year Nevada voters erased the black hole that labeled it one of the only non-suffrage western states. The suffrage campaign, with Anne Martin as its resolute leader, had reached maximum activity and was encouraged by legislative support that a victory in the November election was more than possible. Suffragists needed to reach every voter in the large state which was a difficult proposition. However, Martin's cadre of dedicated suffragists from inside and outside the state worked tirelessly to convince male voters of the justice of their cause. Success became increasingly achievable as the national and Nevada women's clubs' member organizations endorsed suffrage, though the latter's endorsement which came late required a bit of trickery.

During this critical year for Nevada women, records indicate that Reno's Twentieth Century Club continued, for the most part, with its long-established meeting agendas and activities. However, many active and vocal members did align on either side of the suffrage question, working to either reinforce the no-politics rule or advocate for franchise equality. It was the activist pro-suffrage club members Anne Martin and Bird Wilson supported by several other members who played a central role in capturing the valuable endorsement of the Nevada Federation of Women's Clubs.

Following the second passage of the suffrage amendment by the 1913 Legislature, Nevada women faced conquering the final obstacle, a victory in the November 1914 referendum. The crusade would need to spread to every corner of the state with the goal

of reaching each voter. In addition, those voters needed to receive postcards, phone calls, suffrage letters, and access to daily newspaper articles supporting the cause.

Anne Martin hired Wisconsin's Maude McCreery as state organizer and press contact. Her first job was to send a letter to each of the state's forty-five newspaper editors requesting their paper's position on suffrage and whether it would publish suffrage copy. In a humorous vein, the *Carson City News* responded: "A large amount of stuff has been sent us for publication which has generally found its way to the waste basket as it told of suffrage among the small-foot women of China, or what the Prince of Whales (sic) said to the Duke of Fuzz Wuzz about equal rights for women. Give us good Nevada dope and we will find space for it." The editor of the *Western Nevada Miner* wrote that "this paper is against woman suffrage to the full limit of its power, and the editor intends personally to campaign the state to aid in averting any such calamity to this grand old state." Eleven newspapers gave their support, five did not, four were neutral and two agreed to print if the suffrage information was presented as paid-for ads (Letters to McCreery 1914).

The January 1914 NEFS convention held in Reno's Majestic Theater drew delegates from throughout the state to listen to suffrage speakers from New York and California as well as local citizens including University President Stubbs. Anne Martin, recently returned from an East Coast tour, shared with delegates her successful fundraising. She was easily re-elected NEFS president. Florence Church, though, as she warned Martin in her letter, resigned as NEFS Secretary. Following a series of passionate speeches to a packed audience, the *Nevada State Journal* reported that

“Clearly the people of Reno look with favor and earnest enthusiasm upon the proposal of Votes for Women” (“Equal Suffrage Wins Applause” 6). On the final day of the convention, Twentieth Century Club members Mrs. Belford and Mrs. Bray led the discussion covering campaign tactics (Nevada Equal Franchise Society Convention 23-25 Feb. 1914). Notably, the Republican *Reno Gazette-Journal* failed to file a single report on the NEFS convention and was to remain doggedly anti-suffrage through the November election. About the local women’s club, the newspaper boasted, “Inasmuch as the Twentieth Century Club attempts no radical political reforms--it is an organization to be encouraged by the husband and father” (“There Should Be” 4).

The suffrage message continued to spread throughout the Reno community. The town’s free public library, founded by the Twentieth Century Club, published a list of recently secured works which included *Women in America*, *Woman and the Republic*, *The Woman’s Club Movement in America*, *Anti-Suffrage: 10 Good Reasons*, *A Survey of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the United States*, *Women and Labor*, *History of Woman Suffrage* (3 volumes) and *Woman and the Law*, among others (“Additions to Library” 3). An open-to-all tea, hosted by the NEFS and held at Sadie Hurst’s home, combined food, recitations, music, and songs along with speeches by Anne Martin, Florence Church, and Maude McCreery (“Reno Suffrage League” 8). Intent on demonstrating its patriotism as well as advertising the cause, the NEFS entered a float in Reno’s Fourth of July parade. Standing on the flowered float drawn by four white horses were ten young women, in classical robes, representing the western states with female suffrage, while other women stood behind a gate waiting for the vote. Nevada was

represented by a young woman with her hand unlatching the gate. On the side of the float were the words, “Nevada--Do not keep your women out” (“Equal Suffrage News” 6 July 4).

In the July desert heat, Anne Martin and national suffrage leader Mabel Vernon embarked on a speaking and fundraising tour, canvassing the citizens in Nevada’s northeastern section. Warned of Martin’s temperament, Vernon observed, “(Anne) was very able and quite a perfectionist ... a rather rigid sort of person to start with,” though she and Martin did become fast friends (Howard 92). For two weeks, driving unreliable automobiles which displayed the sign “Votes for Women,” traveling in buckboards and on horseback, Martin and Vernon stopped in town after town. The couple held rallies in theaters, churches, mining camps, on dusty streets, and in ranchers’ hayfields though, judiciously, avoiding the ubiquitous saloons (Earl 51). After a short rest, the two women spent another scorching week carrying the suffrage message to Churchill and northern Washoe Counties (“Suffrage Workers Tour” 4).

Committed suffragists from across the United States devoted time and energy to the crusade throughout the Silver State, seeing it not only as a victory for Nevada women but also a stepping stone to national suffrage. Socialist Laura Gregg Cannon offered her services to Anne Martin, but warned that since she was a socialist that women with less radical opinions should speak to the middle class, while she focused on laborers (Letter 19 Feb. 1914). McCreery spoke to the citizens of Wadsworth where she mounted a chair and spoke next to a bonfire (“Bonfire Draws” 3). Jane Addams, activist and founder of Chicago’s settlement Hull House, spoke to large Nevada crowds arguing that, in Chicago

where women voted in municipal elections, reforms occurred. Boston suffragist Margaret Foley began her speaking tour at an open-air meeting at the popular corner of Reno's Virginia and Second Streets. To those who asserted that women would be contaminated by going to the polls, Foley countered that no such arguments were made when a woman entered the workforce ("Suffrage Speaker is Effective" 7). Dr. Anna Shaw spent nine days touring Nevada. The last time she was in the state was to accompany Susan B. Anthony during the first attempt at enfranchisement in 1896. Chicago lawyer and suffragist, Antoinette Funk, hosted by Florence Church, walked through a 6,000-foot tunnel to the mine to reach the men at the Aurora mining camp ("Woman Lawyer" 8).

The narrative of the Nevada 1914 suffrage campaign would not be complete without considering the anti-suffrage movement. In May, the *Reno Gazette-Journal* announced that Reno women were opposed to suffrage and that all women in the state did not want the vote. Mrs. Frank Lee, the new president of the Twentieth Century Club, had held a meeting at her home to establish the Nevada Association of Women Opposed to Equal Suffrage (NAWOES). At the meeting, Minnie Bronson, General Secretary of the national association, described the group's work. The forty women present at the initial NAWOES meeting included Twentieth Century Club members, Mrs. F. N. Fletcher, Mrs. Frank Lee, and Mrs. Fred Stadtmuller, wife of Anne Martin's favorite cousin ("Reno Women are Opposed" 2). During the closing weeks of the Nevada campaign, suffrage opponents called on national speakers. When speaking to a packed Majestic Theater audience, New Jersey native Mrs. O.D. Oliphant argued that only ten percent of

American women desired the ballot, describing suffragists as “the masculine woman with a chip on her shoulder” (“Theater is Packed” 1). The *Weekly Bulletin of the NEFS* countered that Mrs. Oliphant “came all the way from New Jersey to tell the women they ought to stay home” (“The Antis Did It”). Bronson returned to Nevada, after speaking in several non-suffrage states, reporting that the wish for female enfranchisement was on the decline everywhere (“Suffrage Losing Says” 1). The *Reno Gazette-Journal* reported that militant suffragists present at Bronson’s Goldfield speech hissed, booed, and “talked so loudly that it was evident they had come for the sole purpose of disrupting the meeting” (“Distinguished Women” 1).

The Sunday before the Tuesday November 3 election showcased the final rallies for both sides of the suffrage issue. At the opposition rally, Bronson painted a vividly dismal picture of women thrown into the turmoil of party politics. She declared that a woman’s role as a mother was to “train and develop the character of the men who are to hold office.” She continued that the “worst grafter in politics was the son of a mother who found bridge and whist of more importance than the training of her boy,” no doubt, an unpopular notion with Twentieth Century Club card players. Bronson ended by calling the suffragist a “menace to the institutions of the country” (“Much to Lose” 2). That evening the NEFS held its final pre-election public meeting with patriotic band music and songs followed by speeches from both female and male suffragists (“Suffrage Plans Outdoor” 8).

The suffrage position taken by Reno’s two newspapers the day before the election confirmed the unrelenting view of each. The Democratic *Nevada State Journal* posed the

question, “If they (women) work alongside of men, they pray alongside of men, they study alongside of men, they pay taxes alongside of men so why cannot they vote alongside of men?” (“Vote for Suffrage” 2 Nov. 4). On the other hand, the first sentence of the Republican *Reno Gazette-Journal*’s report on the final NEFS rally pointed out that a socialist leader and an English militant suffragette had spoken. When the NEFS placed an ad in the *Reno Gazette-Journal* encouraging voters to put an “X” next to the amendment, the editors positioned it at the bottom of the paper’s last page (“What’s the Matter” 8).

On election day, the *Reno Gazette-Journal* reported that “some of the women working for the passage of the suffrage amendment had supplied themselves with chairs and seemed to be enjoying the experience of sitting out in the sunshine.” All saloons were closed by law and any male poll worker complaining of thirst was given a bucket of water and a tin cup (“Victory for Republicans” 1). Anne Martin, predicting a win, received a touching note from a supporter in Baker, Nevada. “There were forty-four votes cast in all. Thirty-two were for women. Six of the other votes were No and six didn’t vote either way. Yours for women rights. Esta Bellander” (Letter 4 Nov. 2014). The official results of the election were not known for several days as counting the results of hand written ballots from a large state was a time-consuming proposition.

By November 6, it was official--the suffrage amendment passed, 10,936 to 7,258. Nevada’s twelve mining and agricultural counties voted overwhelmingly in favor, while the four urban counties, Eureka, Ormsby, Storey, and Washoe, rejected the amendment (Reno “The Vote”). Those agonizingly long, hot, and dusty campaign trips taken by

suffragists crisscrossing the state to reach Nevada's rural workers proved successful. At an open-air rally at Reno's Virginia and Second Streets, the "dead black blotch on the suffrage map was erased--amid much rejoicing." Immaculate white now covered the entire West ("Nevada Now White" 12). Unhappy with the election results, the *Reno Gazette-Journal* warned women that, whether they wanted it or not, they now had the responsibility of the ballot and cautioned them against being indifferent and not pass laws from "excitement" ("Woman's New Responsibility" 4).

The Nevada battle for suffrage was over, the result of several years of a hard-fought campaign. Unfortunately, the sisterhood between Reno suffragists fostered by a shared belief in equality frayed in the face of future ambitions. Anne Martin and her followers insisted on transitioning the NEFS into the Nevada Woman's Civic League to take an active part in the partisan struggle for national suffrage. Sadie Hurst, Florence Church, Eunice Hood, and other more moderate NEFS and Twentieth Century Club members, opted to create the Nevada Citizen's Club to address state issues on a strictly non-partisan basis.

During 1914, since many Twentieth Century Club members were active suffragists, the cause finally made its way into the club house. Florence Church penned a special suffrage program, "Woman's Work," in which Club members performed in-costume character sketches of notable women with Church portraying Susan B. Anthony. NEFS Members were invited to view the performance which was also presented to delegates at the NEFS convention ("Club Women Give Program" 3). In her interview with the *Nevada State Journal* Club President and suffragist Lena Norton's

description of her organization reflected a near perfect platform for the logical introduction of suffrage. “The Twentieth Century Club wishes to stand for a modern, democratic, broadminded, inclusive organization.” Norton suggested, to encourage the passage of the suffrage amendment, that club members support laws compelling every male voter to cast his ballot in the November election (“Century Club to Meet Today” 8). Club woman Mrs. Belford announced that a tea given by the NEFS would be held at her home and extended the invitation to all Club members (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 3 Apr. 1914).

Controversy, however, among Twentieth Century Club members surfaced at a spring meeting surrounding the question of whether to re-join the General Federation of Women’s Clubs (GFWC). The Club had dropped its membership several years previously. Club records indicated a lengthy discussion that included the anti-suffragists, Mrs. F.N. Fletcher, Mrs. Humphrey, and Mrs. Frank Lee, which inferred an opposition to the rejoining effort, perhaps fearing a suffrage endorsement by the national body. The three women had in common husbands who were directors in the Bank of Nevada Savings & Trust Co., owned by fervent anti-suffrage advocate George Wingfield (“Liabilities” 3). Still, the club elected to rejoin the Federation and, in preparation for the GFWC’s convention in June, members selected suffragists Lena Norton and Eunice Hood as delegates (Twentieth Century Club Minutes 6 Feb. 1914).

The GFWC held its annual convention in June 1914 in Chicago. President Pennypacker personally a fan of suffrage remarked, “I approve of it because I think the highest type of women are interested in politics and everything that is vital in life.”

However, as GFWC President, she did not approve of the matter being brought up for discussion before the body (“Equal Suffrage Stirs” 1). In a letter to Anne Martin from acolyte Minnie Flannigan, a delegate to the convention, she reported that during early convention proceedings, when a Twentieth Century Club member tried to describe the Woman’s Party “you would have thought a bomb dropped on the convention. They are watching everything and call it politics and no politics is allowed to be discussed” (Letter June 1914).

However, during the GFWC convention’s final session, the motion to support the female franchise was raised by a San Francisco club woman. It was such a popular request among most of the delegates that discussion was waived and the motion accepted by acclamation, though a few negatives were heard. The club women “broke their silence and by their endorsement of woman’s suffrage declared in a chorus more than a million strong that women in and out of Clubs need the ballot” (“Federation Supports Suffrage” 1). No record exists of the Twentieth Century Club’s response to the national body’s endorsement, though, given that the club’s two convention delegates were suffragists, a celebration might have been in order.

Meanwhile, aside from members like Florence Church, Anne Martin, Eunice Hood, Lena Norton, and others who continued bringing suffrage awareness to the Twentieth Century Club, programming and activities during the pre-election months reflected previous agendas. Invited speakers and members presented papers supporting cultural, literary, and civic interests. Eunice Hood spoke informally on “Town Improvements,” an important civic mission for club women (Twentieth Century Club

Minutes 20 Mar. 1914). Speakers from the University of Nevada were always popular. Professor Turner treated members to readings from American authors, while Florence Church's husband, Professor J.E. Church, instructed his audience with stereopticon illustrations of his winter trip to Lake Tahoe and Mount Rose ("The regular meeting" 8). Activities that year highlighted a new and popular interest, current dance moves. The frequent and very popular card parties continued uninterrupted.

In spring 1914, Club President Lena Norton read a communication to members from the Nevada Federation of Women's Clubs (NFWC) accepting the Twentieth Century Club's invitation to host its September convention in Reno. The outcome of this gathering was to become, in dramatic fashion, the notable exception to the club's and NFWC's strict no-politics rule which was becoming more and more difficult to enforce considering the intense suffrage campaign being staged in Nevada. Held six weeks before the election in which suffrage was to be decided, the NFWC convention represented the final battleground between Nevada women's club's suffragists and their opponents.

In late summer 1914, the Twentieth Century Club members began planning for the arrival of the NFWC delegates to its town. 150 delegates, representing nineteen hundred Nevada women in twenty women's clubs from eleven counties, were expected. The Twentieth Century Club, as the largest women's club in the state and founder of the NFWC, sent the most delegates. All Federation meetings, luncheons, and receptions would be held at the Twentieth Century Club. The *Nevada State Journal* boasted that the

convention would be “one of the most notable gatherings of representative women ever seen in Nevada” (“Women of State to Meet” 6).

NFWC President Mrs. F.G. Patrick, a Twentieth Century Club member, promised “that several matters to which the federation is committed would be brought forward for discussion and action” (“Women of State to Meet” 6). The convention’s keynote speaker was Mrs. Kent, wife of a California Representative and a club woman. Kent listed the good works accomplished by the women in her state following the 1911 passage of suffrage. More traditional presentations followed with invited speakers and delegates reading papers on home economics, civics, public health, birds, and the Bible (“Mrs. C.P. Squires Federation” 6).

On the convention’s second day, delegates were to simply listen to the Legislative Committee’s report, presented by club woman and attorney Bird Wilson, also First Vice President of the NEFS. With Twentieth Century Club member and suffragist Mrs. O.H. Mack presiding, Wilson read the legislative proposals supported by the previous year’s NFWC convention. The lengthy list included several ambitious goals and, lastly, promoted a united support of equal suffrage. Though the legislative objectives were approved by the NFWC delegates to the 1913 convention, there was not a contentious state suffrage election looming. In 1914, an endorsement from Nevada’s women’s club organization represented a powerful campaign message to male voters. Following Wilson’s reading, in rapid succession, a motion was made by Anne Martin to adopt the report, seconded by several delegates, and passed by a voice vote. In its account of the endorsement, the *Reno Gazette-Journal* complained, “In the rapid reading of the report

by Miss Bird Wilson of Goldfield, the delegates opposed to women's suffrage did not recognize the *joker*" ("Suffragists Put Through Report" 1). The newspaper was convinced that Mrs. Mack and suffragist delegates knew the *joker* was coming and were programmed to react quickly. An anti-suffrage delegate, taken by surprise by the near instantaneous motion followed by the quick vote, concluded, "Well, I suppose we will have to neglect our Saturday baking tomorrow morning and come here to oppose an endorsement of women's suffrage" ("Mrs. C.P. Squires Federation" 6).

At Saturday morning's session, vigorous efforts were taken to both confirm and overturn the suffrage endorsement. "Mrs. McCarthy of Hawthorne spoke so vigorously in favor of votes for women that delegates surrounding her pulled her down into her seat" ("Women's Suffrage Delegates" 6). To calm convention waters, newly elected NFWC President Mrs. Squires along with club member and suffrage opponent Mrs. Frank Humphrey encouraged those women opposed to suffrage to let "the question of endorsing suffrage be passed by," but their request was ignored. Mrs. Humphrey, pleaded with delegates, "Let us have one organization where we don't have to collect in little groups on account of our differences of opinion on the suffrage question" ("Women's Suffrage Delegates" 6). But, a motion to reconsider the report endorsement failed 41 to 19. When a delegate complained that the report the previous day had been read so rapidly that she didn't understand it, Bird Wilson took great exception responding that she "had made a special effort to speak very distinctly." When a question arose as to the exact meaning of the vote, Anne Martin clarified that it directed the NFWC's Legislative Committee to act furthering the success by endorsing all measures on the list. At that point, Martin placed

a motion on the floor that the NFWC endorse female suffrage. The motion, seconded by a chorus of suffragists, prevailed 37 to 25 (“Federated Clubs Favor Suffrage” 6).

The *joker* at the convention had worked, but not without severe criticism. “It didn’t take the Suffragettes very long to learn the uses of the steam roller” observed the *Reno Gazette-Journal* which reported the suffrage endorsement as a conspiracy (“Women’s Suffrage Delegates Win” 26 Sept. 1914). The paper advanced the idea that “the Franchise Society had been very active in laying the ground work for the thing that actually came to pass, not only through the selection of the delegates, but in their later efforts to influence the delegates toward an endorsement of the suffrage propaganda” (“Trick Turned” 1). A suffrage opponent charged the Twentieth Century Club with duplicity noting that it had not submitted a convention report on its year’s work, unusual for the largest club in the state. She conjectured, though wrongly, that “the report--would have been but a report on suffrage activities” (“Trick Turned” 1). Headlined “State Suffragists Sandbag the Club Women of Nevada,” the *Tonopah Bonanza* scolded, “Anne Martin may think this was a sharp trick but the Clubwomen are saying, Nay, nay, Anne” (“State Suffragists Sandbag” 1).

Anne Martin responded that “No, it wasn’t a *Joker*; it was perfectly plain.” She was backed by Lena Norton, who boasted, “We were just smarter than the *antis*, that’s all. We didn’t want a fight in the convention. We got just what we were after” (“Trick Turned in Convention” 1). The *Nevada State Journal* defended the voice vote. “There is no law of a free organization stronger than the law of the rule of the majority” (“The Majority Rules” 7). Anne Martin, remaining annoyed at the lack of response to her

speech by the Twentieth Century Club, accused the club women of their “characteristic timidity” by furnishing a belated endorsement so close to the election (Martin 11).

For the remainder of 1914, the Twentieth Century Club filled its agendas with a customary variety of activities. Jeanne Weir organized a tableau representing a half century of Nevada women’s progress in the state with Hannah Clapp represented as Education (“Club Women in Tableaux” 8). To celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the club, Mrs. Lewis wrote an historical review of the organization which included a litany of its good works, a list of past presidents and current members, though no mention of suffrage (“Century Club Annals” 4). Always a club supporter, the *Reno Gazette-Journal* remarked that the state should be “indebted to these splendid women for the service rendered” (“Women’s Good Work” 4). The final action of the Twentieth Century Club, in the year that recognized Nevada women’s right to equality, was to investigate erecting an electric sign to advertise Reno to travelers (“Eighty Children” 8).

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION: OPPONENTS AS TRADITIONAL CONSERVATIVES

By the 1894 founding of the Twentieth Century Club, several western states had passed female suffrage, a fact that did not go unnoticed in Reno, Nevada. With Club members Hannah Clapp and Eliza Babcock among its leaders, an early suffrage movement gained momentum in the desert town. However, when the first serious attempt failed in the 1897 Legislature, the issue of suffrage remained mostly dormant for the next thirteen years.

During those same early years, Reno's Twentieth Century Club grew in membership with ambitious civic and legislative goals. To achieve these without suffrage, club women needed to lobby politicians with personal pleas, petitions, and letter writing. Even though discussion of politics was not supported by the club, suffragists knew that by being a club member, they could introduce others to the justice and benefits of the franchise.

Such was the case with Twentieth Century Club members Anne Martin and Florence Church. Anne Martin became Nevada's most memorable suffragist as it was her passion and organizational skills that moved the campaign to victory in 1914. A born leader with a sharp tongue and high expectations, Martin encouraged her disciples to follow her example by traveling, speaking, writing, subsidizing, doing whatever necessary to promote the cause. Martin, with one purpose in mind, joined the Twentieth Century Club to draft converts to her cause. As a delegate to the 1914 Nevada Federation

of Women's Clubs convention, Martin played a pivotal role in capturing the organization's prized suffrage endorsement. Florence Church represented the hard-working volunteer extraordinaire ready to fill any need of the many clubs in which she was a member. As an outspoken suffragist and active Twentieth Century Club member, Church often brought the issue into the club house with her public speaking and literary skills. However, there were several members strongly opposed to suffrage who could stifle discussions by relying on the women's clubs' traditional ban on politics. By adhering so closely to an inherited limitation, Century Club opponents failed to recognize that the country's unstoppable shift towards progressive reform included female suffrage.

The most vocal and prominent anti-suffrage Twentieth Century Club member was Mrs. F.N. Fletcher who often aligned with Mrs. Frank M. Lee and Mrs. Frank E. Humphrey. Each stood firm in her objection to suffrage. It is notable that each woman's husband was a director in a large Reno bank owned by vocal anti-suffrage advocate George Wingfield which could be considered a factor in their opposition. Convinced by no speaker, these women known as *antis* were not persuaded to support suffrage, either as the righting of a social injustice or an expedient way to tame wild Nevada. Unlike other members who agreed that suffrage had no place on club agenda yet belonged to outside equal franchise organizations, Fletcher, Humphrey, and Lee did not believe in the female franchise. Although these three women supported club activities that included progressive reforms such as divorce law extension, stricter gambling laws, the safety and treatment of juvenile delinquents, prison reform, and control of child labor, they argued that suffrage was political, therefore, too controversial for discussion or support.

Mrs. Fletcher, wife of Nevada's Secretary of State Tax Commission and the club's most identifiable *anti*, played a conspicuous role in its refusal to consider suffrage. In her response to the announcement of Anne Martin's suffrage speech to club members, Fletcher made it clear that it was not an endorsement of suffrage. Following her speech, Anne Martin angrily pointed to three *antis* who suppressed any discussion, no doubt describing Fletcher, Lee, and Humphrey. During that meeting Eunice Hood entered a motion supporting the ideas of Susan B. Anthony. However, Fletcher moved to change the motion to a simple word of thanks to Hood for her paper.

Unabashedly assertive in her anti-suffrage action, Mrs. Fletcher clearly wielded much power within the club. She was the 1910-11 president with a loyal following. When a special meeting was held to confirm the delegates and alternates to the 1913 NFWC convention, Fletcher objected to the results saying she had not attended that meeting and questioned its legality. Since the delegates included several Nevada Equal Franchise Society members including Martin and Church, Fletcher feared a convention controlled by suffragists. She also argued against re-joining the General Federation of Women's Clubs, fearing a suffrage endorsement at the body's 1914 convention which is exactly what took place. Only moving to Reno in 1908, Fletcher was a persuasive leader with a commanding personality, yet the progressive times in American history foiled her attempts to resist a movement that was rapidly spreading across the country. Though a formidable foe of suffrage, Mrs. Fletcher was outnumbered.

Mesdames Fletcher, Lee, and Humphrey were delegates along with several Club suffragists to the 1914 NFWC convention. During the special session called to address

the controversial suffrage endorsement, Mrs. Humphrey, to avoid more heated discussion, requested letting it stand. She confessed her concern for club divisiveness. However, the *antis* failed in overturning the endorsement. In mid-1914 and not unexpected, Mrs. Fletcher attended the first meeting of the Nevada Association of Women Opposed to Equal Suffrage held at Mrs. Frank Lee's home.

Mesdames Fletcher, Humphrey, and Lee represented typical Twentieth Century Club members--propertied, upper class, white, Protestant, well-educated, with prominent husbands. Among Nevada's elite, the women were invested in Reno's classist social order. To maintain that order meant preserving the traditional role of a woman's moral purity. Suffrage would mean an unwanted dilution at the ballot box by women that were uneducated, poor, non-white, and common workers which included prostitutes. The *antis* considered party politics a dirty business. The women argued that, as an elite class, they would lose control of political decision-making and were content to leave political power in the hands of men. Acknowledging they had the power they needed, the suffrage opponents were secure in petitioning men for political change. The women expressed their voices in traditional gendered ways, submitting to male decisions.

Though Reno's Twentieth Century Club existed in a western state surrounded by suffrage states, its rules and meeting agendas closely followed those of its eastern predecessors. Mrs. Fletcher grew up in Maine and may have carried with her those eastern club traditions, particularly, the no-politics rule which was nonnegotiable. It is possible that western-born club women like Anne Martin and Florence Church were more influenced by the independence, superior educational opportunities, and life options

offered to them in the West. The idea of suffrage to native western women would have been the logical next step in their gender's social evolution in a western environment.

A reminder of the Victorian Cult of Womanhood, the expected female etiquette of the time must be considered. The idea of speaking in public especially while standing on a car on a street corner or marching in the street with a sign was an anathema to some. Simply, the idea of campaigning door to door disturbed many. Anne Martin and others when speaking across the state endured situations unimaginable to many elite Reno women.

By rejecting suffrage, the Mesdames Fletcher, Lee, and Humphrey were traditional conservatives. They cherished their role as women fearing that a denial of those century long traditions of female submission would weaken the fabric of society. They represented the old ways of their ancestors' culture by sustaining a hierarchy within which they were entitled to the highest tier. If these long-standing values were not upheld, they risked losing their sense of self, finding themselves in an unstable society. Clinging to the notion that a government was run by men supported by women, access to the ballot was unnecessary. These women acknowledged that their power was sufficient, even desirable. Fanning the flames of opposition was the consistent anti-suffrage stance of the traditionally conservative, Republican *Reno Gazette-Journal* which failed to encourage Nevada women to move forward.

Traditional conservatism may be understood in more recent American elections. In 1978, Nevada voters rejected by a margin of 2:1 the Equal Rights Amendment which assured that equality of rights should not be denied based on sex. No doubt, voters were

swayed by conservative activist Phyllis Schlafly's prediction that women would be drafted into the military. In the 2016 United States presidential election, 53% of white women voted for the more conservative male candidate over the female candidate even though the male candidate's behavior towards women was put into question. Labeling those white women as traditional conservatives may be a simplistic argument as it avoids consideration of policy differences including abortion. Yet, the rejection of the female candidate indicated a demographic that feared breaking tradition.

From suffrage opponents like the Twentieth Century Club's intractable Mrs. Fletcher to a slight majority of white women today, the notion of traditional values of a woman's role remains deeply seated. Yet, tales of women who fought for gender equality, such as Nevada's Hannah Clapp, Eliza Babcock, Florence Church, Sadie Hurst, and Anne Martin describe an optimistic history of persistent achievement.

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