The following documentation should only be included in the final draft of your Honors Capstone. DO NOT turn this in with your proposal.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

(Ideology and Alliances: How Illinois Equal Suffrage Association Combated Female Opposition and Won the Vote)

A Thesis Submitted to the
University Honors Program
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Baccalaureate Degree
With Upper Division Honors
Department Of History

By
Janet Gatz

DeKalb, Illinois
Fall 2015
HONORS THESIS ABSTRACT

Guidelines

Your abstract should begin with a definitive statement of the problem of project. Its purpose, scope and limit should be clearly delineated. Then, as concisely as possible, describe research methods and design, major findings, including the significance of the work, if appropriate, and conclusions.

Students whose thesis involves “creative” work (original, fine art, music, writing, theatre or film production, dance, etc.) should describe process and production. Indicating the forms of documentation on file as “thesis” materials.

Please have your advisor review your abstract for organization, content, grammar and spelling before submission.
University Honors Program

Capstone Approval Page

Capstone Title (print or type)

_Ideology and Alliances: How Illinois Equal Suffrage Association Combated Female Opposition and Won the Vote_

Student Name (print or type) ___Janet Gatz___

Faculty Supervisor (print or type) ___Beatix Hoffman___

Faculty Approval Signature ___Beatix Hoffman___

Department of (print or type) ___History___

Date of Approval (print or type) ___5-4-2015___
ABSTRACT (100-200 WORDS):

This project attempted to find how suffragists in the Illinois Equal Suffrage Association combated opposition from the woman run Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Woman’s Suffrage. I hoped in this thesis to shine a light on a little discussed part of Illinois history. Mainly, how suffragists combated opposition from some of the very people they were trying to help. I was able to find a great deal of articles and pamphlets through the Regional History Center, microfilm, and online archives. I went through these documents in chronological order to find arguments by both the Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Woman’s Suffrage and the Illinois Equal Suffrage Association that seemed to be responses to each other. There was a correlation between propaganda showing the IESA changing their published work to indirectly answer the propaganda of the IAOEWS. The IESA also gained alliances with Woman’s Clubs and trade unions as a way to gain a united front, and mobilization.
Ideology and Alliances: Combating Female Opposition to the Vote in Illinois

Janet Gatz

In March 1911, Grace Wilbur Trout, the newly elected president of the Illinois Equal Suffrage Association arrived in Springfield for the 47th General Assembly of the Illinois Legislature. She and the other suffragists had arrived by train from Chicago after first stopping in nine towns for rallies. Jane Adams, Vice President of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, and future Vice President of the IESA, was scheduled to speak in front of the Senate and House. The Daily News Band also accompanied the suffragists on their trip from Chicago to Springfield.¹ The suffragists designed these methods to make their plight noticed by the public.

However, this spectacle brought more than just awareness. During this first visit to the capital, Trout became “indignant at the way the suffrage committee was treated.”² Anti-suffrage sentiment was high, and many considered the subject unimportant or a joke. Those few legislators who openly promoted women’s suffrage were also treated negatively by their peers. Homer Tice, the representative in charge of presenting the 1911 bill to the House became so unpopular that every other bill he introduced that session was killed, and Trout noted that it “required moral courage for an Illinois Legislator to be an active suffragists at the time”.³ Change needed to occur for the IESA to succeed in getting the vote.

¹ “Court Chambers’ Suffragettes’ Fort” Chicago Tribune, March 6, 1911 pg. 1 Accessed March 30, 2015, http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1911/03/06/page/1/article/court-chambers-suffragets-fort
³ Ibid. pg. 150
Just two short years later, Illinois granted women the right to vote in municipal and presidential elections. During the 70 years that it had taken the state to obtain suffrage for women, regional suffrage organizations went through many conflicts and changes. These conflicts were internal, such as a debate about how to implement the ideology of the organization, but were also response to external forces attempting to keep the status quo. Obtaining the vote was a difficult task to begin with, but this difficulty increased when those opponents were part of the very group the suffrage advocates were trying to enfranchise. The Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Women’s Suffrage (IAOESW) was one of these opponents.

The IAOESW believed that the current duties of women secured their place in society. They “protest[ed] against all efforts to infringe upon our rights by imposing upon us those obligations which cannot be separated from suffrage, but which, as we think cannot be performed by us without the sacrifice of the highest interests of our families and or society.”

This belief had the benefit of the status quo on its side. This paper utilizes pamphlets, documents, and newspaper editorials from members of both the Illinois Equal Suffrage Association and the Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women to argue that opposition from the IAOESW forced the main suffrage organizations in Illinois to shift their ideological focus. Their methods moved to focus more on how voting would aid women within their current socially acceptable roles as housewives and mothers, rather than using the vote as a stepping stone for full equality. They also obtained alliances with other women’s organizations in an effort to increase their mobilization and political influence.

---

Several historians have researched the delicate balance needed to keep a suffrage organization alive. Holly J. McCammon, in her work on suffrage organizations in New York, Arkansas, and North Carolina, discerned three elements of success, of which at least two were required: political opportunity in the state, resources for mobilization, and an argument that individuals were able to relate. While McCammon’s parameters meet the needs of Illinois suffrage, her conclusion that organizations succeeded in part due to resource mobilization by the national suffrage movement, is incorrect when looking at Illinois. Illinois’ suffrage organizations seem to have already been in existence long before the national organization set their sights on assisting the state. McCammon also noted that variables such as the percentage of women with paid employment or the presence of suffrage opposition resulted in little or no impact to the survivability of an organization. The survivability of an organization did not necessarily mean that it was successful.

McCammon’s article “Winning Votes in the West” also does not focus on Illinois, but instead gives a breakdown of which western state campaigns were successful based on their method of mobilization. The methods that she found effective in the west were, successful fundraisers, framing rationales promoting suffrage in ways that coincided with already existing gendered roles, and the blurring boundary between the domains of men and women. Illinois had a high level of mobilization shortly after the Civil War. This was possibly due to a blurring boundary caused by women’s work in the abolition movement, and their successful ability at fundraising. This mobilization would decrease after 1870, but never completely disappears. Later primary source documents show change in rationale. There is focus on suffrage as a

---

benefit for women in their home lives. This coincided with gender roles of the middle and upper classes in early 20th century and helped increase the number of people in support of the vote.

Stephen Buechler’s *The Transformation of the Woman Suffrage Movement: The Case of Illinois, 1850-1920* separates the Illinois movement into three periods, 1840-1870, 1870-1890, and 1890-1920. Buechler shows how the changing of the guards during the second period left a time of uncertainty. This uncertainty may have helped the newly formed Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women gain an advantage for a time. Buechler does bring up the work of Illinois’ foremost anti-suffragist Caroline Corbin. He specifically focuses on the IAOEWS’s emphasis on the connection between suffrage and socialism, and how much effort the IESA put into quelling rumors of socialist influence in their organization.7

Adade Wheeler’s work focuses on the relationship between Grace Wilbur Trout and Catherine McCulloch during 1913. She discusses the conflict between the two women, and gives a detailed account of Trout’s methods for obtaining that elusive vote. Wheeler explains that Trout’s success was due to her innocence of the frustrating legislative process. This is the persona both Trout and others presented, however I believe that Trout used her perceived naiveté to political advantage when dealing with legislators. Wheeler used several primary sources that I have also obtained, and I feel that she takes the article written by Trout at face value. However, this article does show an internal political turmoil that the IAOESW could have exploited, but did not.

Susan Marshall’s *Splintered Sisterhood* attempts to show the suffrage and anti-suffrage factions as a split not just of ideals, but also of class. Marshall’s book primarily focuses on the

---
overall national movement by women against suffrage. It also contains a profile of who most anti- suffragists were demographically. However, Marshall’s focus on the motivation and actions of the anti-suffragists means that she does not provide extensive detail on how the state and national suffrage organizations combatted this opposition. She notes the increasing numbers within the suffrage movement over time. She does give some insight into the founder of the IAOEWS, Caroline F. Corbin, and her work with both the Illinois Association and the national organization. However, there is very little beyond general information presented. The focus is more on an overview of the anti-suffrage movement, rather than any specific details from one state or organization.8

Scholars have published research about suffrage and anti-suffrage organizations throughout the United States, and some focusing specifically on Illinois. Buechler’s book gives a historical overview of the suffrage movement in Illinois, while Wheeler focuses on the political conflict between the IESA’s old and new guard during 1913. However, neither has looked at how the IAOEWS may have influenced the movement in any significant detail. Buechler does mention Corbin and her organization a handful of times in his book, but he primarily focuses on the suffragists’ inaction concerning Corbin’s anti-socialism rhetoric. Wheeler, on the other hand, focuses solely on the political maneuvering of two powerful women within the IESA, and does not give anti-suffrage organizations any more than a brief comment. No scholar has yet analyzed the conflict between suffrage and anti-suffrage organizations in Illinois.

8 Susan E. Marshall, *Splintered Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Campaign Against Woman Suffrage*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997) Pg. 27
Early Suffrage in Illinois

The movement to grant full suffrage to American women begins in the early part of the 19th century. Women began expressing a “critical awareness of the importance of their sex in determining their experience” as early as 1820. Many became aware of this through their work in the Abolitionist movement. Women’s rights organizations often formed because of the discontent caused by this awareness. Illinois was about ten years behind the Northeast in political and social organization. When the Civil War began, only the organizations in Boston and New York continued their activities though in a more limited capacity. They sent lecturers throughout the country and promoted the formation of state and local groups. By the end of the Civil War, the women’s rights organizations of the Northeast identified themselves the vanguards of the movement, and believed that they spoke for the nation.

Feminist activity in Illinois takes place as early as the 1840s. This is due, in part, to the building of 27 seminaries for women between 1830 and 1860. A shortage of teachers for these schools facilitated a recruitment drive in 1847 of educated women from the east. These seminaries produced many women who would be part of both the pro and anti-suffrage movements. The students and other women also gained experience in organizing, fundraising, and promotion through humanitarian efforts designed to assist people during the Civil War. These skills would be invaluable to the IESW and other smaller groups that appeared in towns and cities throughout the state once the war was over.

---

11 Catherine Waugh McCulloch, Chronology of the Woman’s Rights Movement in Illinois, Chicago: Illinois Equal Suffrage Association, ca. 1912 pg. 1
Anti-suffrage activity existed as far back as the movement itself. The first women’s anti-suffrage organization formed in 1882 to monitor the Massachusetts legislature. The Committee of Remonstrants in Boston was exceptionally successful in their work. Over time, they began to follow the progress of other states, and send new anti-suffrage organizations information and support for their cause. The average anti-suffragist was a woman of the upper middle to upper class. Their beliefs in what role women should embark on in society varied. Some believed in access to higher education, while others thought women should be public servants, and help create a more wholesome society. Still others thought that a woman’s only job should be that of wife and mother. What they did have in common was the belief in a segregation of the political world. Anti-suffragists thought that the “keen rivalry” that existed between political parties made appeals by voters heavily scrutinized and often ignored by members of their opposing party. However, since women did not have the vote, their appeals had no political motive, and consequently “little difficulty in having them granted. Women, [had] thus come to occupy an independent position above all parties- a position of which the right to vote would rob them immediately.”

Early suffragists in Illinois also varied in ideological belief. Some, like German immigrant and active member of the early national suffrage movement Mathilde Franziska Anneke, believed in full equality between the sexes, and considered suffrage one step in gaining

12 Susan E. Marshall, Splintered Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Campaign Against Woman Suffrage, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997, Pg. 23-24
13 Ibid Pg. 24
15 Caroline F. Corbin, “Woman’s Rights in America: A retrospect of Sixty Years 1848-1908” Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women, 1908. Pg. 3
justice for women. Equality was a natural right for all.\textsuperscript{16} Others were like abolitionist, humanitarian organization member, and aspiring lawyer Myra Colby Bradwell, who pushed for equality after the state, denied her a law license due to her married status.\textsuperscript{17} Still others followed a similar path as Mary Ashton Rice Livermore. While her abolitionist and humanitarian background was similar to Bradwell, Livermore was initially one of the many anti- suffragists in the country. However, her opinions changed “during the war, and as a result of [her] own observations, [she] became aware that a large portion of the nation’s work was badly done… because woman was not recognized as a factor in the political world.”\textsuperscript{18} Her focus then moved to obtaining the vote for the moral reformation of society.

A common goal did not necessarily mean camaraderie between suffragists. Members of Sorosis, a woman’s club whose goal was to “advocate anything that will, in any way, tend to promote the welfare of both sexes-the female sex especially” argued over the organization and platform of a suffrage convention.\textsuperscript{19} This caused a split, with members Mary Livermore and Mary Walker dropping the name and organizing the convention that would form the Illinois Women’s Suffrage Association.\textsuperscript{20} The women of Sorosis, who based their platform on the view that suffrage should be universal no matter what race, class, or gender, was unable to gain sufficient support, and was viewed negatively by newspapers compared to the newly formed

\textsuperscript{16} Steven M. Buechler, \textit{The Transformation of the Woman Suffrage Movement: The Case of Illinois, 1850-1920}. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986 Pg. 60-61
\textsuperscript{17} Catherine Waugh McCulloch, \textit{Chronology of the Woman’s Rights Movement in Illinois}, Chicago: Illinois Equal Suffrage Association, ca. 1912 pg. 1
\textsuperscript{18} Mary Livermore, \textit{The Story of My Life}, (Hartford: A. D. Worthington & Co, 1897) pg. 497 Accessed April 7, 2015 https://archive.org/details/storymylife00livegoog
\textsuperscript{19} “Sorosis”, \textit{Chicago Tribune}, June 19, 1868 Pg. 1. accessed April 22,2015, http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1868/06/19/page/1
\textsuperscript{20} Steven M. Buechler, \textit{The Transformation of the Woman Suffrage Movement: The Case of Illinois, 1850-1920}. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986 Pg. 67-69
IWSA.\textsuperscript{21} The organization eventually collapsed. Despite this fracturing, early suffragists were highly mobilized and had political momentum on their side. They considered the Constitutional Convention in 1870 to be a chance for a quick victory. The IWSA’s petition for a constitutional convention went unopposed. However, anti-suffrage members reacted when the Convention took place. The law to grant suffrage to women was added and subtracted multiple times to the constitution before being dropped and only adding suffrage for Negros. Anti-suffrage supporters had not only sent a petition with over 1300 signatures, but also sent several smaller petitions as the debates continued.\textsuperscript{22}

\textit{Shifting Social Sentiment}

The failure of the 1870 Illinois Constitutional Convention was a shock to the IWSA’s momentum. A new Constitutional Convention could not occur legally for at least twenty years. The 1870s did see an increase in some rights for women but the movement would remain stagnant for some time. Over the next twenty years humanitarian organizations such as the temperance movement bled members away from the IWSA. Members hoped these new movements would be more successful than the floundering suffrage association. Suffrage in Illinois had lost its mobilization, and its political opportunity.

The new ideology of the emerging middle class was also in direct conflict to the equality arguments of the Illinois Women’s Suffrage Association. A wife who did not work was a status symbol for men, which placed their household above the working class. Englishwoman Margaretta Greg wrote that a woman “must not work for profit, or engage in any occupation that


\textsuperscript{22} Steven M. Buechler, \textit{The Transformation of the Woman Suffrage Movement: The Case of Illinois, 1850-1920}. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986 Pg. 102-105
money can command, lest she invade the rights of the working class, who live by their labor.”

Propaganda from ladies magazines during the time also emphasized the role of woman as a domestic homemaker whose main job in life was to be the family’s moral compass. The notion of full equality as part of the natural order, or suffrage being a stepping stone for social change, did not sit well with this new ideal. Elizabeth Harbert, President of the IWSA during the 1870s and 80s, shifted the ideology of the club to a more conservative approach. Instead of pushing for general women’s rights, the organization would focus solely on suffrage. She was able to keep the suffrage association active, but these changes caused a rift between the middle class and the working class. It was not until 1890, and the alliances of three women’s organizations, that momentum began to turn back in their favor.

The IWSA also showed evidence of this separation between the middle and working class. During the 1880’s, the NWSA assumed that their Illinois counterpart had not yet expanded to include Chicago. In reality, Chicago had the Cook County Suffrage Association, an organization that was part of the Illinois Woman’s Alliance. The Alliance was a major part of the labor movement and many of its members were socialists. This disassociation between the working class Cook County Suffrage Association and the IWSA came to a head when the magazine “Woman’s Kingdom” printed a letter criticizing the lack of Chicago suffrage associations. The IWSA said that the working women could not afford the one dollar dues to join the organization. Susan B. Anthony responded by publicly shaming the group. Publishing

---

26 Ibid. pg. 128
her thoughts in “Woman’s Kingdom,” Anthony explained, “Somebody blundered because the sympathies and intense interest of every officer of the National Woman’s Suffrage Association center about our working women.” Working class women would continue to be suspicious about the IWSA for decades due of this snub.

Alliances and pushing forward: 1890-1913

Catherine McCulloch joined the Illinois Women’s Suffrage Association, now called the Illinois Equal Suffrage Association, in 1886. She was elected the legislative superintendent by 1890, and began an almost yearly tradition of traveling to Springfield to present pro-suffrage legislation to the state congress. Anti-suffragists were also becoming more active in the late 1880s and 1890s. Caroline F. Corbin, an educated woman of Chicago’s upper class, had been publishing her anti-suffrage arguments since at least 1888. She and other upper class women of Illinois formed a loose association known as the Women Remonstrants of the State of Illinois. The Remonstrants believed that they were “defenders of the true progress and advancement of women.” Mrs. Corbin would also contribute to The Remonstrance, the journal of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage. Her organization argued that they were continuing the tenets of the women’s rights movement, and not those who were pushing for suffrage. This was a unique stance in the movement, as other organizations described themselves as forming

http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/JtZq1
only “when the issue was forced upon [them] to either speak or become implicated in the suffrage movement.”

In 1891, the fervent writing of Caroline Corbin met the legislative writing of Catherine McCulloch. The letter Corbin sent against McCulloch’s bill was passionate and full of self-righteous anger, not at this bill in particular, but at suffragists in general. These were the words of an indignant woman, affronted that these new “zealots” would dare to say that they speak for her. She also referred to their views as “false and unnatural.” Further stating, “They have called us slaves, and compared us to the ignorant and degraded Negros on Southern Plantations. They belittle our home interests…treat us with scorn and contempt our prerogatives as wives and mothers and home-loving women.”

In 1891, the IESA succeeded in passing a bill granting women the right to vote for elective school offices. However, this was not the first bill that the IESA attempted to pass that year. The legislature had struck down a more powerful suffrage bill earlier in the session, and the passage of this law may have been one way to appease the suffragists. This law did set a precedent. Constitutional conventions were no longer required to grant suffrage. Both pro- and anti-suffrage members would later use this law in their debate. Historically, this event is a win for suffrage, but the failure of the IESA to pass the stronger bill was also a win for Corbin and her Remonstrants.

30 Mrs. Winslow Crannel, quoted in History of Anti Suffrage Movement in the United States From 1895 to 1920 by Anne M. Benjamin, (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991] pg 20-21
Two years later McCulloch and the IESA brought a township suffrage bill to the Illinois legislature. They attempted to follow the same pattern used for the 1891 bill. McCulloch would write later “Senator Charles Bogardus reported that there were more [people] for woman suffrage than for all other subjects put together.”33 Corbin’s Remonstrants sent their letters and pamphlets of protest. They also requested a hearing before the Senate and House to speak their case against the bill. Their argument was twofold. They protested the political actions of their adversaries, and considered their efforts “incompatible with those functions of women which men can never assume in her stead …needed to the progress of the race than any other human agency”. They also argued that suffragist were the minority. They noted that only a small percentage of the 20 million women in the United States were working towards suffrage. Anti-suffragists, as those who followed the proper order of the world, “could not come before you with lengthy petitions…competitive array of names, or seek to impress you with our personal power and prestige.”34

Corbin and her associates painted themselves as the common people who had little influence other than the hope that legislators would listen to them. They failed to mention that their names did give them a level of personal power and prestige. However, the anti-suffragists did break one of their primary tenants during this fight. In order to persuade legislators to their side, the IAOEWS requested to meet the members of the Senate and House in person to air their grievances. This was a level of political interaction that the group had prided themselves in

---

never practicing. Their attempt to meet lawmakers in person to explain their objections shows fear that the suffragists would succeed. Success was with the anti-suffragists. The bill never made it past the Senate despite a letter writing campaign and petition with twelve thousand signatures.\textsuperscript{35}

Both the IESA and Corbin herself brought their views to the Women’s Congress at the 1893 Columbian Expedition. The association used the Congress to gain support amongst those women in prominent organizational roles. Corbin was there as a presenter.\textsuperscript{36} The IESA was able to gain new members from women of the upper class due in part to the congress. However, this proved to be both a blessing and a curse. These new members could provide increased funds and political pressure through their social position. However, their greater influence would also mean that the IESA would need to change to keep their members happy.

The influx of new members of the upper-class gave the IESA a boost, and the anti-suffragists responded. Caroline Corbin and her loose group of associates formed the Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Woman’s Suffrage.\textsuperscript{37} The National Women’s Suffrage Association’s decision to have their convention in Chicago in 1886 may have been one of the reasons for Corbin to form an official organization. After legislation was submitted, and defeated, in 1895 the IESA began bombarding Springfield with bills based on the 1891 school

\textsuperscript{35} Steven M. Buechler, \textit{The Transformation of the Woman Suffrage Movement: The Case of Illinois, 1850-1920}. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986 Pg. 150


The increased work it would take to fight these new suffrage bills may have also contributed to the IAOEWS’ formation.

The IAOEWS employed a well-organized method for promoting anti-suffrage. The organization prided itself on the amount of success it had with very little manpower. The normal mode of operation was for the members to keep an observant eye open for any township or city that seemed close to approving suffrage for women. They would then send “literature…by many thousand copies to congress, various legislatures, more than 1000 newspapers in this country and Europe, and to libraries, colleges, and individual clergymen” explaining their adamant opposition to the idea of suffrage. The status of the IAOEWS members also aided them in their anti-suffrage campaign. On occasion, the members of the IAOEWS would have parlor meetings to spread their views. They separated themselves from their pro-suffrage rivals by not participating in public debates or appearing in public to spread their political platform.

The women of the Illinois Equal Suffrage Association were defeated on every bill until 1900. This even included a suffrage bill that they snuck into a special session of congress that was supposed to focus on taxes. Legislators argued that while Illinois women may want the
vote “men voters would not approve, and we, the servants of the present voters, must obey.”

The IAOEWS claimed victory for each of these defeats, and proclaimed in their propaganda that pro-suffrage groups had no notable victories in the United States since the formation of the Illinois, Massachusetts, and New York anti-suffrage associations. However, Corbin never explains their organizations involvement in these failed legislative measures. There is also no information on other possible anti-suffrage influences, like liquor lobbyists, that may have helped to stop those laws from passing.

There is an implication that this argument had some basis in truth, or at least the public believed Corbin’s words enough that the IESA needed a response to the claim. Catherine McCulloch wrote the counter argument to the IAOEWS’ statements, stating that while they had not succeeded in increasing suffrage beyond the 1891 law, “no law giving women greater liberty [had] been repealed.” There were also some minor successes for the group from 1900 to 1905. These laws focused on women’s rights but did not involve suffrage. This included legislation such as increasing the age of consent from 10 to 16 years old. Ironically, these bills may have had the support of their anti-suffrage opponents. Caroline Corbin herself believed in education and increased humanitarian assistance.

A piece of contention that anti-suffrage opponents used often after 1891 was the continued low voter turnout of women in school elections. Chicago’s first election after the

---

43 Corbin, Caroline Elizabeth Fairfield. *The Anti-Suffrage Movement*. Chicago: [Chicago Daily News], 1908. pg. 1 Microfilm
45 ibid pg. 3-4
46 Caroline F. Corbin, *Woman’s Rights in America: A retrospect of Sixty Years 1848-1908*, Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women, 1908. Pg. 4-5
passage of the law had 29,815 registered women with an 80% turnout. Four years later the number of registered women voters was only 5,636 with only a 50% turnout. By 1898, the number registered was 1,488, and only 1,000 voted. Catherine McCulloch wrote a response to these complaints in the Boston based magazine, *Woman's Journal*. Her goal was to put the lack of voters into context with male-voter turnout. McCulloch noted that a vote had occurred recently for a proposition in Evanston Illinois. However, “The total number of votes cast was 141, though population of the election district is 25,000.” She argued that if we were to follow the argument of the anti-suffragists, then all 25,000 registered voters of Evanston should be disenfranchised for not exercising their rights. She also noted that in those states that had full suffrage between the sexes, participation of women exceed the men.

In the early 1900s there was a change in both the IESA’s method of attack with suffrage legislation and the anti-suffrage argument against it. The IESA had been searching for new members and allies beyond the upper-class women from the World’s Fair. Women’s clubs were on the rise at the end of the 19th century, and had shifted their focus from self-improvement to fill in the space left by the many humanitarian organizations during the Civil War. It was socially acceptable for women of the middle class to be members of clubs like this. The Illinois Federation of Women’s Clubs (hereafter IFWC) contained approximately 24,000 members in 1904 who were part of 246 clubs. This association’s constituents were mainly middle-class

---

47 Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women. *A Protest Against the Granting of Municipal Suffrage to Women in the City of Chicago: Addressed to the Honorable Committee on Municipal Elections of The Charter Convention*. (Chicago: IAOEWS, 1903]. Pg. 3-4
women. Their association with the IESA began tentatively in the early part of the twentieth century, and continued on and off until passage of the municipal suffrage legislation in 1913.

One of the bigger alliances for the IESA was thanks to the work of Jane Adams and Hull House. The settlement house workers were able to bridge the gap between the predominantly middle-class women of the IESA and the working class women of Chicago. Adams chaired a meeting at Hull House in 1903 that formed the Chicago chapter of the Women’s Trade Union League (WTUL). While the primary purpose of this organization was to “investigate the conditions of working women, to promote the best type of trade unionism in existing organizations, and to assist in organizing trade unions among women,” it also took a great interest in the suffrage movement. Between the New York, Boston, and Chicago affiliates, the WTUL had approximately 600,000 members by 1918. The WTUL were conscious of the class divide between the more upper class state members of the IEWS and themselves. The IESA’s treatment of working women in the 1880s contributed to this caution between the groups. They instead chose to form their own suffrage associations that tentatively worked with the NAWSA and the IESA.

This association with the working class proved to be advantageous to the IAOEWS. Caroline Corbin had strong opinions on socialism ever since she met Karl Marx’s daughter Eleanor in 1886. Socialism was already a political movement that Caroline’s social class may

have made her uneasy about, but her conversations with Eleanor about the nature of love and marriage in socialism turned that uneasiness to absolute terror for the future of marriage. The young Marx was the mistress of Dr. Edward Aveling who was the foremost expert on socialism. Corbin was appalled when Eleanor explained, “love is the only recognized marriage in socialism.”  

She believed that it “threatened the purity of women and the integrity of the home.”

This new association between the IESA and WTUL allowed Corbin to express her own socialist fears into IAOEWS’s propaganda. Many of their pamphlets began to show increases in anti-socialist rhetoric. Some documents only showed minor mentions of socialism, such as referencing the socialist revolution of 1848 in conjunction to when the “so called political rights of women [were] formulated.” Other writings began to focus directly on the connection between the socialist and suffrage movements. IAOEWS propaganda began to refer to suffrage as the “cornerstone of socialism,” and that, if successful, would have eventually resulted in a society in which women would not need the aid of men or marriage to survive. Corbin wrote, “it would result in the marginalization of marriage, and thus the relationship between men and women would be even less than those between animals,”

Response from the IESA was not immediate. The organization needed the alliance between the WTUL and themselves to succeed if they wanted enough total support to sway Springfield. The WTUL and Woman’s Clubs helped to show that the IESA had the support of

---


54 ibid, pg 5


56 Caroline Corbin, Socialism and Christianity with the Reference to the Woman Question. (Chicago: n. p, 1905) Pg. 1, 6-7 (microfilm)
all classes and races of women. They stood united for universal suffrage for women. However, this alliance with working women was a times a distraction in the fight. Corbin’s relentless focus on suffrage as the cornerstone of socialism was an argument that the IESA constantly had to debate, and eventually resulted in their suffrage focus to be even more conservative in nature. This in turn caused tension with their allies in the WTUL.57

An opportunity arose for suffragists in Chicago in 1905. The city called a convention to establish a new charter, and Chicago suffragists thought this would be a great opportunity to add municipal suffrage to women in the city. All of their effort went into this venture. However, these attempts were thwarted, first at the city level where the Charter Convention was delayed for over a year.58 When it the charter finally made it to a vote in September 1907, it failed by a two to one margin.59 In 1908, Chicago again attempted to create a new charter for the city. The support behind this third attempt was extensive, with almost 100 Chicago women’s organizations behind adding suffrage to the charter. This time failure was due to state-city animosity and not anti-suffrage sentiment. Anti-Chicago sentiment by legislators in Springfield caused the charter to be thrown out.60

The IAOESW also sent literature against adding suffrage to the Chicago charter. This time they focused on showing how granting suffrage to women in other areas of the country had ultimately failed. They returned to the use of low voter turnout. This time focusing on not only


school suffrage but on Wyoming, where suffrage was granted because of the “agitators from outside the state… and the Mormon influence”. They also showed how, in Boston, politicians used anti-Catholic fervor push women either for or against a particular candidate. Finally, they set their sights on the state of voter turnout in Illinois school elections. In the eyes of the IAOESW women had, “neglected and abused,” the vote granted to them, and therefore should not be gain further voting rights. The IAOESW also feared women voters blindly following the leadership of unscrupulous men. They argued that the city’s mix of “races and creeds, the later ranging all the way from the most racial infidelity and Socialism…[to aggressive Catholicism]…would be a [good place] for the exploiting of such a scheme.” The protest also gave testimonials by women claiming that they were from suffrage states, but were “compelled to admit that political conditions have been in no way improved by it.”61

The IESW responded to the criticisms by mobilizing suffragists to assist in expanding their numbers, and motivate women to use whatever voting rights they had in their area. Helen Congor Stewart, an IESW member, wrote “Whenever a Woman’s club or some other organization was doing civic work and had a vision of the needs of the community, [they] asked that club or organizations to affiliate with us [the IESA]” 62 Many of these clubs were small, with no more than a dozen or so members. However, some, like the Chicago Women’s Club, could reach over a hundred. This increased the overall number of suffrage supporters, but not the number of IESA members. The average number of members in the IESA was only 2.31 for every 10,000 people in the state.63 Most of the movement’s numbers came from associated

61 Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women, A Protest against the granting of Municipal Suffrage to Women In the City of Chicago. Addressed to the Honorable Committee on Municipal Elections of the Charter Convention., 1906. Pg. 6-7,10-13
62 Helen Congor Stewart, “What Illinois Women have Accomplished with the Vote”. [Chicago, ca. 1915] pg.1
63 Holly J. McCammon and Karen E Campbell, “Winning the Vote in the West: The Political Success of Women’s Suffrage Movements, 1866-1919”, Gender and Society, Vol 15, No. 1 (Feb, 2001) Pg. 60
Women’s Clubs, the WTUL, and members of the long established, but small Chicago Political Equality league.

After the disastrous 1911 general assembly, the alliance between IESA President Grace Wilbur Trout and her legislative committee chair was strained. For years, McCulloch had brought her legislation to Springfield, and for years her delegation received a hospitable reception in the Senate but the House of Representatives would kill the measure. Members of the legislature would agree to assist to their face, but “laughed behind [their] backs at [their] optimism.”64 The IESA focused their 1912 campaign on forcing a popular vote on women’s suffrage in Chicago. A united force of social workers, socialists, IESA members, women’s club members, and the WTUL succeeded in putting the measure on an advisory ballot. However, the ballot was placed in a separate area at the polls instead of adding it to the current election. Members of all pro-suffrage organizations pushed to promote the ballot. Twenty years of political alliances working together and focused on one goal. The vote failed by a ratio of two-to-one.65

The members of the IAOEWS probably felt vindicated after such a disastrous result in Chicago. In their annual report, Corbin reported the ever increasing number of destinations to which their documents were being sent. She also gave the good news about the hardships of the National Women’s Suffrage Association. The most recent national meeting of the NWSA had “deplored the existence of $60,000 for salaries and traveling expenses.”66 Her report did not

64 Homer Tice, in The Transformation of the Woman Suffrage Movement: The Case of Illinois, 1850-1920. By Steven Buechler. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986 Pg. 103
discuss plans for the organization. It reiterated the belief that “If woman’s work in the home were always properly performed, there would be far fewer bosses, ringsters, and grafters in the world at large”. They also gave blame for the state of American society not on their forefathers, but the influence of European socialism. They emphasized the desire to keep up the fight, but they felt that momentum was with the anti-suffrage camp.

The IESA’s strategy for the 1913 legislature was designed differently than those of previous years. Arguments over strategy resulted in Catherine McCulloch stepping down from the Legislation committee, and Trout ally Elizabeth Knox Booth replaced her. The strategy would be different from 1911. There would no longer be large, extensive parades and trains holding several dozen suffragists and a brass band. IESA President Grace Wilbur Trout had a small lobbyist group headed by herself go to Springfield. There was not just one suffrage bill proposed, but three; one by the Progressive party, a constitutional amendment written by McCulloch, and a suffrage bill submitted by the IESA. McCulloch’s bill wished to remove the word ‘male’ from all voting laws. The Progressive party’s bill granted municipal and presidential suffrage to women. There is no mention of what the IESA proposed in their suffrage bill, but it was probably similar to the law proposed by the Progressive party. The WTUL agreed to mobilize in Chicago while the IESA focused on Springfield. WTUL members stood on street corners wearing votes for women banners, selling pro-suffrage pamphlets, and recruiting suffrage support.

68 Steven M. Buechler, The Transformation of the Woman Suffrage Movement: The Case of Illinois, 1850-1920. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986 Pg.177
In February, McCulloch’s suffrage bill was submitted to the Senate. This went against a previous agreement between Trout and the head of the Progressive Party which agreed that the IESA would submit the bill written by the Progressives as a show bipartisan support. With the agreement broken, the Progressive’s bill was also submitted. McCulloch continued to go against Trout’s plan and urged an early submission of her suffrage bill to the House before there were any results in the Senate. One of Trout’s lobbyists, Ruth Hanna McCormick, was able to convince her husband, Progressive leader Medill McCormick, to get the bills pulled.

This undermining of Grace Wilbur Trout’s authority continued into the spring. Trout had established support from the Governor for a suffrage bill, but only on the grounds that it must be non-constitutional. However, McCulloch submitted her constitutional amendment in April. This measure could have jeopardized their chances for that year, but the amendment went to committee and disappeared before it could cause any damage.

When Trout and her lobbyists arrived, they focused on persuading enough of the undecided members of the legislature to confirm their allegiance to the suffrage cause. They would use politeness and courtesy instead of bullying and force against the men of the legislature. All of her lobbyists were women of the upper class who, despite never being a part of true politics, were accustomed to the social politics of their station. They were able to flatter and cajole multiple members of the Illinois Congress to “be fair”. Grace Wilbur Trout chose to put it upon herself to guarantee the men of the House would keep their promise.

---


Everything was prepared. Elizabeth Booth quietly canceled the train loads of suffragists that were scheduled to descend upon Springfield in April. She and Grace Wilbur Trout believed that increased suffrage presence would do more harm than good, as it did in 1911. The bill passed the Senate easily. When it arrived at the house, a fortuitous conversation in an elevator kept the bill from ending up buried in committee. Grace Wilbur Trout overheard two legislative opponents joking on “how surprised some folks would be later on,” and deduced that they were attempting to place the bill in the hands of the Judiciary committee which anti-suffrage opponents controlled. This allowed members of the pro-suffrage Elections Committee to preempt their opponent’s move, and pass the bill to first reading.

Trout then called IESA Press Charmian Margaret Dobyne to have as many members telegraphs and letters sent to Speaker McKinley to bring the bill up to the vote. She also established a telephone brigade to call the Speaker every 15 minutes by pro-suffrage men and women with social and political influence. This was to combat the dozens, if not hundreds, of anti-suffrage missives that had begun to arrive the closer the bill came to becoming a reality. Since this response was the standard practice for the IAOEWS, it would not be surprising if these missives came from them.

On the days up to the vote, Trout sent telegrams to those men who had agreed to vote yes to their bill reminding them to be there to vote. She had also assigned women whose job was take an account of all their votes, and let her know who was missing and had to be hunted down.

Once everyone was in the hall, Trout stood at the doors of the House of Representatives watching for both anti-suffrage lobbyists who may wish to sway votes and men who agreed to vote in their favor but were trying to get out of doing what they promised.\textsuperscript{75} Her perseverance paid off, and the bill passed in the House by a vote of 83 to 58.

**Conclusion**

The Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women was not quite finished, but their influence was greatly diminished after the passage of what was known as the Illinois Bill. Anti-suffrage opponents, including Corbin and the IAOESW, tried to kill the bill in the Supreme Court, but it was upheld as constitutional. The NSAW tasked McCulloch with writing a planned national suffrage amendment. The IESA shifted in the next few years to organizing voter education and turnout, and showing the humanitarian and social laws that had passed due to their influence. Caroline Corbin’s organization didn’t last until the ratification of the 19\textsuperscript{th} Amendment. A few years after the passage of the 1913 law Corbin moved to Michigan. She died in March 1918, and never had to see what she fought so hard against become reality.\textsuperscript{76}

The Illinois Equal Suffrage Association went through many changes in order to gain the vote for women. They had to shift their focus from women’s rights to solely the vote. The early ideology, that the vote was one step towards full equality, did not sit well with the newly emerging middle class of the 1870s and 80s. Only when they shifted their strategy to how suffrage would assist in the already established social structure did they begin to see an increase in members of the middle and upper classes. However, this increase in members was not the


\textsuperscript{76} “Mrs. C. F. Corbin, Foe to Woman Suffrage, Dead” Chicago Tribune, March 30, 1918 Pg. 15. Accessed April 5, 2015 http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1918/03/30/page/15/article/mrs-c-f-corbin-foe-to-woman-suffrage-dead
only way they worked towards their goals. They also worked to gain alliances with other
women’s associations and unions to help solidify the view that the majority of women were pro-
suffrage. These members and alliances crossed race, gender, and class to allow the IESA, with a
little subterfuge, to combat the status quo and obtain the vote.
Bibliography

PRIMARY SOURCES


Corbin, Caroline Elizabeth Fairfield. Socialism and Christianity with Reference to the Woman Question. Chicago: n.p., 1905. Microfilm


http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1909/05/20/page/1/article/hope-of-charter-gone-for-present


Illinois Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women, A Protest against the granting of Municipal Suffrage to Women in the City of Chicago. Addressed to the Honorable Committee on Municipal Elections of the Charter Convention. 1906. Regional History Center and University Archives at NIU. Pamphlet


http://publications.newberry.org/frontiertoheartland/items/show/293 Digitized Pamphlet


McCulloch, Catherine Waugh. “The Bench and Bar of Illinois on Equal Suffrage,” Chicago: IESA, 1903 Regional History Center and University Archives at NIU. Pamphlet


http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/XkF2X

http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1918/03/30/page/15/article/mrs-c-f-corbin-foe-to-woman-suffrage-dead

http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1868/06/19/page/1

http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1868/06/21/page/2/article/sorosis
Stewart, Helen Congor. “What Illinois Women have Accomplished with the Vote”, Chicago: n.p, ca. 1915. Microfilm


http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/uhic/PrimarySourcesDetailsPage/PrimarySourcesDetailsWindow?displayGroupName=PrimarySources&prodId=UHIC&action=e&windowstate=normal&catId=&documentId=GALE%7CEJ2161000235&source=Bookmark&u=k12_histrc&jsid=860433de8d61ecd79394614e1cd2fb32

http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/WVWs7

SECONDARY SOURCES


