

Chapter 6:
History of Woman Suffrage:
An Iowa Reassessment

Woman suffrage in Iowa has been slighted due to insufficient reporting, as well as the tendency to focus on women who present strong affiliations with Eastern suffrage leaders. The first written collective history of woman suffrage was published as the *History of Woman Suffrage* in six volumes, and therefore it is only natural to begin the early account of Iowa suffrage with volumes one through four covering from 1844 to 1900. After examining the master narrative, it is important to evaluate Iowa woman suffrage centered histories. Critically evaluating Louise Noun's *Strong-Minded Women*, centered on Amelia Bloomer and Carrie Chapman Catt, this Iowa specific work lends itself to perpetuate the over inflation women associated with the East. Bloomer's participation in Iowa woman suffrage overshadows other important local participants in the states fight for female enfranchisement. The incomplete history of Iowa becomes apparent through the analysis of Western and Midwestern suffrage narratives. Finally, scrutinizing records specifically on Iowa, this chapter points to the prevalent gaps within the scholarship and provides a corrective work for the early woman suffrage movement in Iowa.

When researching early woman suffrage in Iowa, the natural progression is to first examine the *History of Woman Suffrage*. In the *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 1*, covering from 1848 to 1861, Iowa is mentioned twice, once in relation to married

women's property rights established in 1853, and again discussing a woman's will.²³⁸ The information in this volume on Bloomer focuses on her suffrage work at the national level. While moving to Iowa in 1855, Bloomer is only mentioned in the *History of Woman Suffrage* on two occasions after her relocation. The first reference to Bloomer's activism is found in comments written from Council Bluffs, regarding support for Jane G. Swisshelm, a suffragist and outspoken newspaper woman; these comments appear in the appendix of the text and are incorrectly dated.²³⁹ The second recognition, in 1856, was made by Lucy Stone who identified the petitioning effort made by Bloomer in the state of Nebraska.²⁴⁰

Volume 2 of the *History of Woman Suffrage* focuses on the efforts of woman suffrage from 1861 to 1876. In this volume, the Iowa legislature is shown to support amendments to the state constitution demanding rights regardless of sex or color. While identifying that the legislature claimed to support these issues, studying the legislative history tells a different story. Fully aware of the initial unsuccessful attempts to pass woman suffrage, Judge William Loughridge of Iowa continued to argue in support of female enfranchisement via the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. National suffragist Mary A. Livermore expressed her belief that Iowa was at the forefront of political change. In a letter to Anthony, Livermore stated, "matters are being prepared and when the movement is made in the West, it will sweep onward majestically. Kansas

²³⁸ Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 1*, 256, 564.

²³⁹ Volume I of the *History of Woman Suffrage* is encompassed in work completed between 1848-1861. The Swisshelm commentary made by Bloomer is dated July 30, 1880. No other letter in the appendix goes beyond the set year range and 1850 is likely when the letter was supposed to be dated. See, Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 1*, 844-845.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 632.

and Iowa will first give women the right to vote before any other States, East or West."²⁴¹ While this electrifying statement was expressed, it lay hidden within the appendix of the volume. In fact, the majority of the documentation on suffrage in Iowa is not mentioned in the actual body of the text but within the footnotes.

Volume 2 is missing key information pertaining to individuals and events. Covering 1861 to 1876, the absence of the free-love debacle is apparent. Instead of speaking to the ill feelings associated with Victoria Woodhull and her sudden rise to suffrage advocacy, the volume erases the scandal. Filling the void is the "action on part of Mrs. Woodhull...taken without consultation with, or even knowledge of the movers of the Convention...spoke with power and marvelous effect."²⁴² Woodhull wanted a declaratory resolution passed, centered on the idea that enfranchisement already existed through the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Iowa is discussed more frequently in the second volume, with Bloomer making continual appearances in the footnotes. Among the excluded individuals is Annie Savery, whose activism was boiled down to one footnote.²⁴³ She is identified in one footnote as the representative from Iowa on the Business Committee for the National Convention in Washington 1873.²⁴⁴ Savery's position as the corresponding secretary of IWSS in 1870 and 1871, as well as a hard-fought attempt to petition the Senate are left out of the volume. Savery's refusal to rebuke Woodhull led to her denouncement. The free-love debacle was a splintering issue, so much so that Susan B. Anthony edited Savery's efforts right off the page.

²⁴¹ Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 2*, 921

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 484-485.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 484.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 522.

Volume 2 instead focuses on Bloomer. Maintaining her vice presidency for Iowa in the American Equal Rights Association from 1867 to 1869, Bloomer was a figurehead for woman suffrage in Iowa. After receiving a call to action from Lucy Stone, Bloomer signed the call for the necessity of the American Woman Suffrage Association in 1869. Bloomer was then appointed Vice President for Iowa in AWSA in 1869 and maintained that status until 1872 when she was then identified as Vice President Ex Officio of AWSA.²⁴⁵ The authors fail to mention Bloomer's continued absences from both national and local proceedings and her noted refusals to serve Iowa as a petitioner, lecturer, or representative. Bloomer failed to promote Iowa suffrage, and in turn the entire suffrage movement.

History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 3 focuses on woman suffrage from 1876 to 1885. This is the first volume that dedicates a chapter to the efforts of women in Iowa and is the first to discuss the existence of Mary Jane Coggeshall. Written by Amelia Bloomer, Chapter XLV describes Iowa as a Republican, dry state with some laws affording women's rights, including property ownership. A lecturer in 1854 introduced Iowa women to the question of female enfranchisement, although it was not until 1869 that the first woman suffrage society in Iowa was formed.²⁴⁶ While these statements may be true, as discussed in Chapter 2, the legislative proceedings reveal the idea of woman suffrage was alive in Iowa prior to 1854.

Amelia Bloomer's lack luster involvement in Iowa suffrage can be revealed from Chapter XLV. Taking the credit for the formation of the Polk County Suffrage Society,

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 222, 309, 379, 757, 765, 827, and 886.

²⁴⁶ Northern Woman Suffrage Association was established in Dubuque on April 17, 1869; Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 3*, 614.

Bloomer exaggerated her role in the founding of the society. Claiming that the society “always maintained the most successful organization” and described by *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 3* as “never fail[ing] to hold its meetings regularly each month since that time [October 1870],” Bloomer attempts to associate the success of the society to a result of her efforts.²⁴⁷ In actuality, this successful society was started and maintained due to the efforts of Annie Savery and Mary Jane Coggeshall. While this chapter was written by Amelia Bloomer, for the *History of Woman Suffrage*, its content underwent heavy editing by Anthony in order to promote the Eastern suffrage agenda.

After a failed attempt in the Senate, woman suffrage endured with the support of the Protestant clergy, the Republican Party platform, and Governor C. C. Carpenter. The Methodist Episcopal church of Des Moines supported women suffrage because it promoted moral reform. By striking out male from the canon, the Episcopal church allowed for women to vote for leadership positions within the church. The Republican Party followed suit with their tenth “woman’s plank” resolution.²⁴⁸ While the *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 3* places Carpenter’s initial support of woman suffrage in 1876 at the Sixteenth General Assembly, Governor Carpenter had already pledged his approval during the Republican campaign of 1875, declaring he had “never been able to discover any argument to sustain his own right to vote that did not equally apply to women.”²⁴⁹ Chapter XLV skips a four year period from the 1876 General Assembly until 1880, then goes on to list Iowa suffrage activity by discussing separate instances within local suffrage meetings, the Republican caucus, the Greenback state convention, and church

²⁴⁷ Stanton, Anthony, and Gage. *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 3*, 614

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 620-621.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 622; Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*, 186-187.

proceedings. Bloomer created an unstructured narrative about the fight for Iowa enfranchisement from 1880 to 1884.²⁵⁰

While Bloomer provided an overview of legislative proceedings, many important proposals, petitions, and General Assembly sessions are excluded. Claiming that 1870 was the first time that woman suffrage was proposed in the House, Chapter XLV does not account for the steps taken towards woman suffrage before the Iowa constitution was in place. In reporting that the Fourteenth General Assembly debated the suffrage proposal, Bloomer eliminated the wavering Senate suffrage battle which dragged on to an inevitable defeat in 1872. Disregarding the Sixteenth General Assembly, 1874 is completely left out of the legislative narrative. Stating that the resolution of woman enfranchisement was defeated by one vote in 1876, the chapter excludes the initial passing of the proposal by both the House and the Senate. Reporting that suffrage “lost on engrossment” in 1880, the partial enfranchisement through school suffrage proposal is erased.²⁵¹ Ignoring the passed resolution regarding equal suffrage in 1882, Bloomer bounces directly to 1884 reporting that the House defeated the woman suffrage resolution by a small majority. However, the measure was postponed not defeated.²⁵² Focusing on Iowa women in the workplace Bloomer digressed from the actual story of the fight for woman suffrage occurring in Iowa legislative proceedings.

²⁵⁰ The Greenback Party was an agrarian-based party expressing the interests of the working class for antimonopoly. Focusing on labor, the Greenback Party called for shorter work hours and immigrant restrictions.

²⁵¹ “Lost on engrossment” can be interpreted as the draft of the suffrage proposal being lost at the final stages. See, Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 3*, 625.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

If one values quantitative history, it should be noted that within *Volume 3*, Bloomer is identified twenty-five times, Savery ten, and Coggeshall a mere four times for their efforts in woman suffrage.²⁵³ Within Bloomer's chapter on Iowa, she mentions her own contributions seven times.²⁵⁴ Savery's accomplishments are largely overlooked. Of the contributions Bloomer identified, she gave Savery credit as a lecturer, a suggestion made about an opera-house, her role as a practicing attorney, and her request for an urgent meeting, necessary due to Bloomer's own misjudgment. Bloomer admitted, "[n]otwithstanding this kind of proposal of Mr. Kasson, I did not act upon his suggestion [that Bloomer represent an agreement for woman suffrage before the General Assembly]. But...Mrs. Savery feeling that something must be done, had the courage and the conscience, on their individual responsibility to call a mass-meeting at the capitol...."²⁵⁵ The other two references are letters written to Savery as the Iowa Woman Suffrage Society's corresponding secretary.²⁵⁶ Associating the work of Coggeshall as an editor and reporter, Bloomer only discusses her efforts with regard to *Woman's Hour* and the *Daily Iowa State Reporter*.²⁵⁷

The final volume to discuss in the *History of Woman Suffrage* is Volume 4, 1883 to 1900. Within this volume, when reviewing lists of attendees to the national conventions or defining speakers at other state conventions, Iowa is mentioned numerous

²⁵³ Breaking down these references, of the twenty-five, Bloomer is mentioned within the body of the text fourteen times and in the footnotes eleven instances. Savery is technically mentioned six times and referenced in the footnotes four. Coggeshall is only mentioned twice within the body and twice within the footnotes.

²⁵⁴ Bloomer's other seven instances are regarding her work in the state of Nebraska.

²⁵⁵ Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 3*, 620.

²⁵⁶ Savery is actually mentioned nine times within Chapter XLV, but three of these instances are letters written to Savery because she was the corresponding secretary.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 615, 629.

times as an indication of where an individual was from. The introduction makes a striking comparison between Iowans' suffrage efforts and the liquor interests. This observation is, in fact, one of the main reasons behind the failure of legislative approval for female enfranchisement, but it is not discussed in further detail later in Volume 4. Bond suffrage, a partial suffrage technique that was accepted in the General Assembly, is the only specific legislation addressed. This volume focuses on bond suffrage as a single issue and fails to identify the three-prong, "bonds, borrowing money or increasing the tax levy,"²⁵⁸ partial enfranchisement measure that passed. This volume, also, fails to recognize all that the municipal and school suffrage resolution of 1894 entailed, and merely identifies this partial suffrage as, "all women may vote on the issuing of bonds."²⁵⁹ Volume 4 diminishes the local work of Coggeshall, choosing to evaluate the roles of Carrie Chapman Catt and Margaret W. Campbell as vital because of their extensive involvement on the national level and at AWSA conventions. Further downgrading the suffrage work in Iowa, at a national convention in 1897, Catt separated herself from the state by stating, "I have a deep and tender love for Iowa...But this state no longer occupies first place in my heart."²⁶⁰ Catt distanced herself both figuratively and literally, moving out of state in 1890. Vaguely alluding to extensive amounts of work being done in Iowa in 1898, the *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 4* fails to identify "this work" and belittles any efforts at the state level through Catt's disillusionment of the suffrage movement in Iowa.

Volume 4, Chapter XXXIX condenses the seventeen-year span of woman enfranchisement work into nine pages. Written by Clara M. Richey, recording secretary

²⁵⁸ Gahaller, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*, 202.

²⁵⁹ Anthony and Harper, *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 4*, 461, 634.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 274.

of the Iowa Equal Suffrage Association, this chapter focuses exclusively on the IESA. In 1897, Des Moines held the National Equal Suffrage Association convention. Identifying the existence of ninety-four Equal Suffrage Societies, there were only five counties throughout the state of Iowa that did not have an Association.²⁶¹ The number of clubs throughout the state was identified as over 100 clubs in 1897, and showed a significant increase, 250 by 1899.²⁶²

Many attempts at legislative reform are ignored. During the Twentieth General Assembly, *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 4* claims that in 1884 a suffrage measure was lost in the House but carried in the Senate. Failing to recognize other aspects of the suffrage debate in the General Assembly, Chapter XXXIX does not explain the legislative loophole that would have enabled female enfranchisement to be presented to the voters. Focusing solely on municipal suffrage for 1886 and 1888, joint resolutions for a constitutional amendment are overlooked. The Twenty-Fourth General Assembly is boiled down to, "a bill allowing women to vote for Presidential Electors was introduced...and indefinitely postponed. In the Senate, it was referred to the Committee on Suffrage and never reported."²⁶³ In 1892 alone, seven different suffrage proposals came before the Assembly. Two years later Volume 4 reports that municipal and school suffrage was amended and, this adoption was said to "give women the vote only when bonds were to be issued."²⁶⁴ Incorrectly identifying the partial suffrage that was granted to women, the *History of Woman Suffrage* lessens the gain granted to Iowans. Ignoring

²⁶¹ Ibid., 632.

²⁶² Ibid., 632.

²⁶³ Ibid., 633-634.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 634.

the hearing between pro- and anti-suffrage women, the legislative session of 1898 only focuses on a joint resolution which lost.

Quantitatively, the *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 4* mentions Bloomer three times and Coggeshall eight.²⁶⁵ It is interesting to note that while Bloomer is discussed, both of these references are in conjunction with her work in *The Lily*, which she abandoned after moving west. Specifically, with regard to Coggeshall's work in Iowa, Volume 4 identifies her role as chairman on the executive committee of the IESA, presider at the State Agriculture Society for Woman's Day, and editor of the *Woman's Standard*.²⁶⁶

Louise R. Noun, a historian of feminism in Iowa and the United States, provides the first complete history of woman suffrage in Iowa. While this narrative was groundbreaking, it is not without its faults. Attempting to describe the history of Iowa female enfranchisement within the national context, much of *Strong-Minded Women* is focused on the Eastern movement. As a result, Noun places special emphasis on the work of Bloomer due to her connections with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Lucy Stone. By focusing on Eastern women lecturing in Iowa, Noun spends less time on the actual women who lived and worked within the state. Failing to account for the work of the Grange, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Greenback Party, and the

²⁶⁵ Of these instances, Bloomer is mentioned twice within the body text and once within the footnotes. Coggeshall is discussed three times within the text and identified five times within the footnotes.

²⁶⁶ Anthony and Harper, *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 4*, 629-630.

Iowa Federation of Women's Clubs, as well as the differences in rural and urban Iowa, much is left out of Noun's narrative.²⁶⁷

Noun focuses the bulk of the later suffrage movement in Iowa 1872 to 1920 to the work of Carrie Chapman Catt. Attributing the start of Catt's suffrage career to a debate with her father, Noun identifies Catt's suffrage career beginning in 1872. However, Catt did not espouse her feelings towards suffrage in the public until 1885 via her editorial in the *Republican*. Reporting on her first meeting in November of that same year, it is surprising that Noun considers the thirteen years between 1872 and 1885 to have had no value for Iowa suffrage history. Furthermore, Catt left Iowa in 1890 and no longer served as a state organizer in 1892. Leaving behind Iowa, Catt focused her efforts on the national movement. Noun justifies the continuance of Catt as the figurehead in Iowa through her occasional visits to the state regarding suffrage happenings. By focusing on Catt, Noun erases portions of Iowa history, filling in the blanks with Catt's shift to the Eastern movement.²⁶⁸

There seems to be no complete history of Iowa woman suffrage. Recent works such as Rebecca J. Mead's, *How the Vote was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States 1868-1914*, provide a complex story of the West that can then be applied to the movement in the Midwest.²⁶⁹ Mead divides the woman suffrage movement in the West into three phases: frontier fluidity, pioneer suffrage, and the Progressive movement.

²⁶⁷ The Grange is mentioned once for receiving praise from Annie Savery for their support of the ballot; WCTU is referenced for Annie Wittenmyer, Frances Willard, Martha Callanan, Mary Darwin, and Mattie Griffith Davenport biographies; Iowa Federation of Women's Clubs is discussed regarding the biography of Mary Newbury Adams.

²⁶⁸ Noun, *Strong-Minded Women*, 225-261.

²⁶⁹ Mead, *How the Vote was Won*.

Discussing the ideas of isolation, farm-labor support, and the participation of middle-class women, Mead identifies themes within the Western states that can further be applied to the state of Iowa. Identifying the distrust of Eastern suffrage associations from the newer generation of suffrage workers, a parallel can be drawn from these Western states to Iowa. After the loss of the 1872 proposal in the Iowa General Assembly, suffrage women thought that the defeat from the legislature was due to the Eastern women's lack of understanding of the West. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler mentions Iowa in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*, for the state reaction to the Woodhull scandal.²⁷⁰ When Iowa is explicitly discussed within the context of the history of suffrage, such as with Wheeler, the state is typically used as an example. The narrative of Iowa rarely surfaces in woman suffrage history, and when it does only single instances are chosen to be representative of what happened for the whole movement.

The works of Sara Egge and Dorothy Schwieder assess the Iowa woman suffrage movement. Studying Iowa suffrage specifically, Egge argues that the rural women of Iowa wanted enfranchisement to improve family life and rural conditions. While Egge's thesis, "The Grassroots Diffusion of the Woman Suffrage Movement in Iowa: the IESA, Rural Women, and the Right to Vote," examines Iowa, she only discusses Mary Jane Coggeshall, "the mother of woman suffrage in Iowa," three times. This account failed to identify the work of Coggeshall on behalf of rural women in her newspaper, *The Woman's Standard*, a newspaper which Egge directly references. Instead, she simply addresses Coggeshall as a prominent woman, which Egge gleaned from Noun's accounts.

²⁷⁰ Wheeler, *One Woman, One Vote*, 74, 76.

Furthermore, Egge "begins" woman suffrage in Iowa in 1870 with the state convention. While Egge's thesis is limited in scope, her scholarship starts the conversation of the role of rural women in the fight for enfranchisement. Egge studies the work of the Woman Christian Temperance Union and the General Federation of Women's Clubs making a strong argument for the interconnectedness of the question of female enfranchisement. Studying the "inextricable link between equal suffrage and prohibition in the minds of Iowa voters," Egge identifies the moral reform being performed on behalf of temperance decreased as the reformers increased their focus on earning female enfranchisement.²⁷¹ This is extremely intriguing granted that the argument of Eastern suffrage workers revolved around the enemies associated with prohibition, but through the lessening of their temperance activity one would assume that the opposite affect would occur. Woman suffrage in Iowa was about "equality, cooperation, and rural improvement" developed through the position of "rural women [as] vital partners on the farm."²⁷² These sentiments are evident throughout the attitudes of Annie Savery and Mary Jane Coggeshall. Egge then continues her investigation of the Midwest through Clay County Iowa, Yankton County South Dakota, and Lyon County Minnesota in "When We Get to Voting: Rural Women, Community, Gender and Women's Suffrage in the Midwest."²⁷³ Similar to "The Grassroots Diffusion," Egge identified the important links between temperance and woman suffrage in local communities. "When We Get to Voting" found that it was local women in these small communities who helped spread and fight for woman suffrage. The temperance connection is further found in the works of Schwieder who focuses on the

²⁷¹ Egge, "The Grassroots Diffusion of the Woman Suffrage Movement in Iowa," 73.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 101.

²⁷³ Egge, "When We Get to Voting."

social, economic, and politics of the state of Iowa. Claiming that progressivism was overshadowed by prohibition and woman suffrage, Schwieder argues that it must be separated from the latter issues. While this historian did not discuss the details of woman suffrage in Iowa, Schwieder did connect suffrage and temperance.²⁷⁴

The history of woman suffrage in Iowa has not received proper study, and to remedy this, it is important to look at local suffrage workers. Through examining the work of Annie Savery, the connections between woman suffrage and the work of the Grange and the Knights Templar was apparent. Mary Jane Coggeshall explored the work of the Woman Christian Temperance Union, Woman's Clubs, and various religious organizations with their relationship to female enfranchisement. While Amelia Bloomer's work for woman suffrage in Iowa is not as impressive as the Eastern narrative depicts, Bloomer's suffrage work can still be indicative of broader Iowa suffrage tendencies.

²⁷⁴ Schwieder, *Iowa the Middle Land*, 222-230.

Conclusion:

Still today, historians of woman suffrage continue to use the *History of Woman Suffrage*, as the base text. Creating the national narrative demonstrated by Eastern women, the historiography is then skewed with the Eastern framework and Eastern narrative. By questioning this narrative and filling in the gaps, the story of woman enfranchisement becomes much more than Eastern women helping the whole United States. Deconstructing the Eastern narrative then shifts the focus to other women who were major players but fell off the pages of *History of Woman Suffrage*. While it is necessary to critically evaluate the role of Amelia Bloomer in her efforts toward Iowa, her work should not be completely thrown out. Instead, she must be compared to local women such as Annie Savery and Mary Jane Coggeshall in order to recreate a broader narrative for the history of Iowa suffrage.

When studying the work that Amelia Bloomer actually performed in Iowa, it is surprising that she is one of the pivotal characters examined for early Iowa suffrage history. How is it that a woman who focused her efforts on temperance, began to speak in woman suffrage circles? Only after continual coercion on the part of an Eastern leader, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, did Bloomer become one of the most well-known champions for female suffrage. Stanton advocated for Amelia Bloomer through her established connections and willingness to be directed. This led to her notoriety, and positions of power regarding Iowa woman suffrage. Women of the East and West wanted to rely on Bloomer to be a strong force for change in Iowa suffrage. Instead, disappointingly, Bloomer was a lack luster advocate. How many more state narratives have been

incorrectly shaped due to the control of the Eastern women? By reexamining the Iowa suffrage narrative through the actual work of Bloomer, the overshadowed efforts of Annie Savery and Mary Jane Coggeshall. Serving as moral enforcers of changes, Savery and Coggeshall began their suffrage work in Iowa and focused specifically on gaining Iowa enfranchisement. While the efforts of Savery and Coggeshall clearly outweigh the work of Bloomer, there are broader connections for woman suffrage in Iowa that can be drawn from all of these women. Becoming voices for temperance and morality through local newspapers, Bloomer, Savery, and Coggeshall all left an impact on the female enfranchisement in Iowa.

One outlet that enabled women in Iowa to express their thoughts on woman suffrage, as well as spread their message throughout the state, was through the newspaper. Acting as editors, writers, and lecturers, local women were able to make a difference by bringing the legislative debates to the forefront. Bloomer, Savery, and Coggeshall knew the importance of the press in expressing their suffrage sentiments. With Iowa's vast landscape, the press allowed for these women to expand their message beyond where they resided. The importance is cemented in Gahaller's identification of "one hundred and fifty newspapers [that] had signified their willingness to print suffrage articles" in 1884.²⁷⁵ Gahaller's suffrage support through local newspapers is echoed in the work Coggeshall, who contacted over fifty newspapers in Iowa, and recorded that forty-six papers were in favor of printing suffrage articles.²⁷⁶ Newspapers were an

²⁷⁵ Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*, 191.

²⁷⁶ Mary Jane Coggeshall, "Responses by Iowa Editors to Publishing Suffrage Articles," 1882, Reel 10, Document 18, Coggeshall Papers, Women's Studies Collection, Schlesinger Library, 1990, Microfilm.

approach to spread mass messages, and the suffrage movement began to embrace this tactic with *The Revolution* and *The Woman's Journal*. According to Stephanie Grossnickle-Batterton, "scholars have identified several key functions of the suffrage press, including the ability to reach larger, more geographically diverse audiences than lecturers and to connect local suffragists with national and state action. Publications also created community among suffrage supporters, reminding readers of shared burdens and successes."²⁷⁷ While these Eastern newspapers were popular and allowed women to stay connected with other suffrage movements across the country, they did not directly represent Iowa women.

Instead, Bloomer, Savery, and Coggeshall took to local newspapers to inform their fellow Iowa suffrage workers. All three of these women had ties to the *Daily Iowa State Register*. Coggeshall acted as a reporter for the *Register*, while Bloomer and Savery submitted articles to the newspaper. The *Register* informed its readers of the monthly meeting held by the Polk County Suffrage Society, and the status of woman suffrage in the Iowa General Assembly. Due to the *Register's* unwillingness to consistently post the suffrage sentiments, Coggeshall helped form the *Woman's Standard*. The *Woman's Standard* is described by Grossnickle-Batterton as "a space...for some rural women to articulate concerns, air grievances, and find validation for their lives on farms."²⁷⁸ Created to promote communication between the state suffrage association and the local clubs scattered throughout the Iowa landscape, the *Standard* attempted to bridge the Western divide. Setting up shop in Des Moines, the *Standard* acted as the official organ

²⁷⁷ Grossnickle-Batterton, "Lock the Granary, Peggy," 353.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 352.

for the Iowa Woman Suffrage Society.²⁷⁹ Expressed within the pages of the *Woman's Standard*, the arguments of Iowa suffrage workers mirrored Bloomer, Savery, and Coggeshalls' emphasis on moral reform and temperance.

The issues of moral reform and temperance explored through the rhetoric of Bloomer, Savery, and Coggeshall utilize what sociologist Holly J. McCammon terms the "expediency" argument. According to McCammon this argumentative style promotes "that women should have the vote because women bring special, 'womanly' skills to the voting booth...[and] would know how to fix societal problems."²⁸⁰ Utilizing this tactic, Bloomer, Savery, and Coggeshall focused on women's ability to act as moral enforcers. "Expediency arguments...did not present such a direct challenge to these traditional beliefs...extolling the virtues women would bring to politics."²⁸¹ By not challenging traditional beliefs, the expediency argument expanded the women's role instead of destroying it. This presented women suffrage in a more positive light for public consumption. Looking to the responses received by Coggeshall from Iowa editors, one wrote, "I believe as a principle looking at it from a high moral standpoint that Woman Suffrage is right even though society & women suffer by it."²⁸² Widespread support was felt throughout Iowa for the moral reformer mentality. Coggeshall furthered her moral argument exclaiming, "We have been the world's moral scavengers long enough. It is

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 374.

²⁸⁰ Holly J. McCammon, "Stirring Up Suffrage Sentiment: The Formation of the State of Woman Suffrage," *Social Forces* vol. 80, no. 2 (Dec., 2001): 460. Another argument commonly identified is that of the "justice" argument. While these three women did employ this argument tactic, the expediency agreement was utilized more frequently.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 461.

²⁸² Coggeshall, "Responses by Iowa Editors to Publishing Suffrage Articles," 39.

well to heal the bruises made by sin but to prevent [sic] these bruises is far better."²⁸³ Without preventative measure put in place via suffrage, women could only help society in a limited sense. Savery fervently supported the moral argument of women in the *Daily Iowa State Register* stating, "to the ballot have been transmitted...we feel confident that when this talisman of power is placed in the hands of woman, that she, because of her pure instincts and her motherly interests, will regard it as solemn responsibility, that in her hands it will become a tongue of justice, a voice of order, securing rights, abolishing abuses, and erecting new institutions of truth and love."²⁸⁴ Expressing the responsibility of women as moral beings to protect the population by way of the ballot, Savery furthers Coggeshall's argument for preventing future wrongs.

The most important reasoning behind the necessity of the ballot for women in Iowa was to protect the community from intemperance. Savery fervently expressed this reasoning in an address to the Templar Society, equating intemperance as "[a] curse greater than slavery itself," she identified that while "[s]lavery once affect[ed] the body, [intemperance] eats up the soul."²⁸⁵ Utilizing temperance as the largest and most significant moral issue, Coggeshall advocated for saving the souls of individuals through female enfranchisement. "You talk about the angelic influence of woman correcting vice, and then go to the ballot box and vote a license to the rumsellers [sic] to put the cup to her husband's lips!"²⁸⁶ Unlike Coggeshall and Savery, Bloomer believed above all else that temperance was the key to improving society, not the ballot. She saw suffrage as a

²⁸³ Coggeshall, "Is Philanthropy a Science or a Fad," 11.

²⁸⁴ Annie Savery, "The Grand Result," *Daily Iowa State Register*, October 21, 1871, 4.

²⁸⁵ *Daily Iowa State Register* February 26, 1870, 4.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

means to an end. Bloomer's temperance reformer background fueled her reasoning for the promotion of female enfranchisement.

Regardless of order of importance, Bloomer, Savery, and Coggeshall all are examples of the connection of temperance and female enfranchisement in Iowa. Carrie Chapman Catt called the brewing interests "The Hidden Enemy."²⁸⁷ In many Midwestern and Western states, liquor interests opposed woman suffrage, in part, because many suffrage supporters in these areas also sought to impose temperance or prohibition measures. Recognizing the strong "general sentiment...in favor of woman suffrage in Iowa," Coggeshall asserted that the legislature was unable to secure submission of the vote because, "the politics of the State [was] practically controlled by the great brewing interests."²⁸⁸ Historian Dorothy Schwieder echoes Coggeshall's sentiments in stating, "prohibition would demand attention as early as the 1840s and continue to plague Iowans until national Prohibition began in 1920."²⁸⁹ Temperance workers saw the strong liquor interests in Iowa and found that the only way to attempt to prevent the drunkard was through woman suffrage.

Reshaping the early history of woman suffrage in Iowa is a difficult task due to the heavy reliance on the broad national narratives. Perpetuating women connected to the Eastern suffrage movement, these histories are incomplete and must be critically evaluated. Holding the image of Bloomer up to the light, while her efforts in Iowa are less than impressive, she did represent the interests of temperance and morality being explored in the Midwest. The interconnections of newspapers, moral reform, and

²⁸⁷ Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 217.

²⁸⁸ Anthony, and Harper, *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 4*, xxi.

²⁸⁹ Schwieder, *Iowa the Middle Land*, 210

temperance work by Bloomer, Savery, and Coggeshall in Iowa provide a regional picture that can be further studied with other local Iowans in their fight for woman suffrage.

Appendix I:

Woman Suffrage Timeline in Iowa

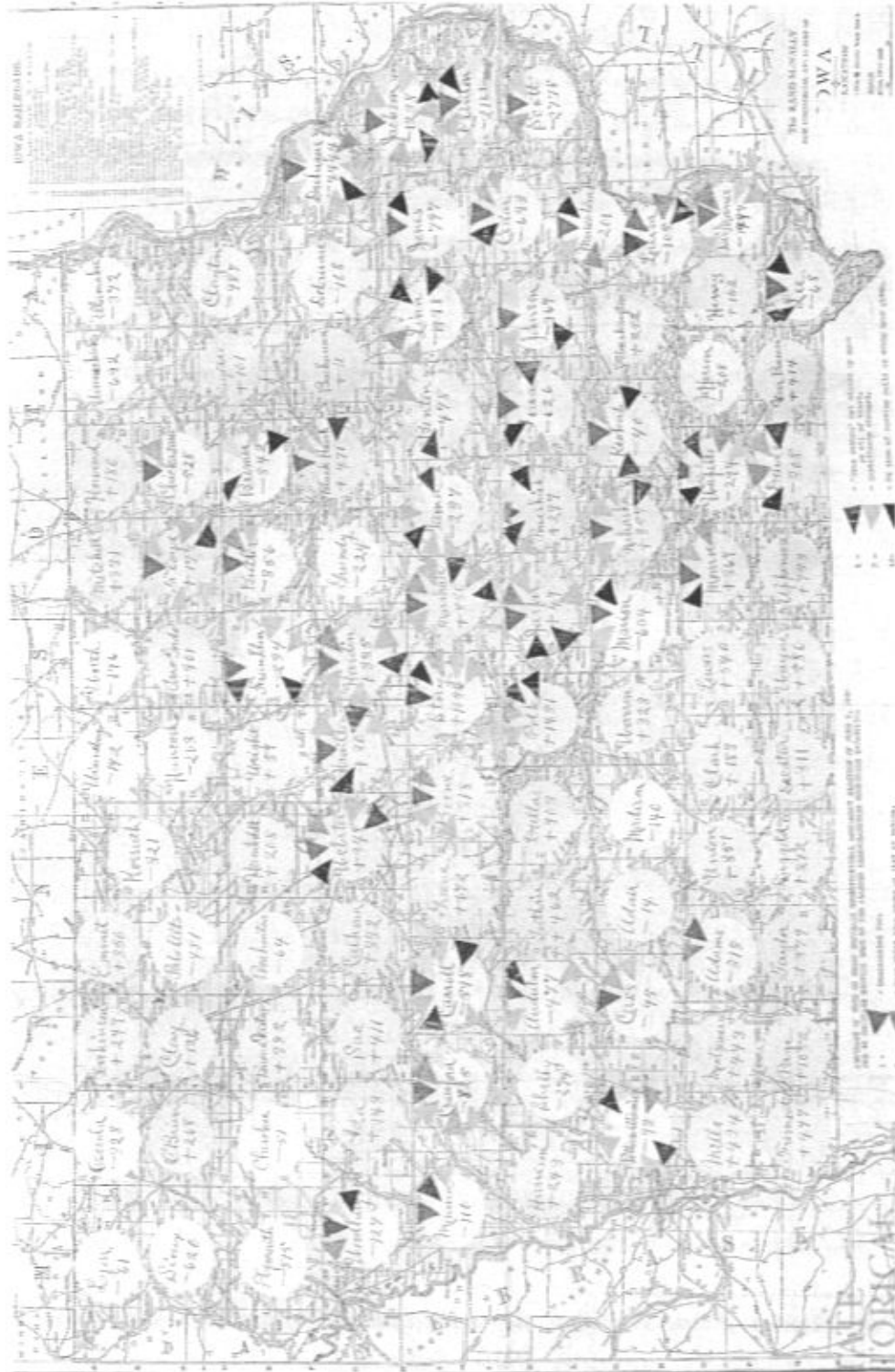
- 1838 Iowa Became Separate Territory
- 1843 Legislative Session Discussed Equal Suffrage
- 1844 Equal Suffrage Rejected
- 1846 Iowa State Constitution Adopted
- 1866 Eleventh General Assembly
James Crookham's Proposal
George M. Maxwell Resolution to the House
Benjamin Palmer's Petition for Suffrage
- 1867 John Loomis Equal Suffrage Proposal at Republican Convention
- 1868 Twelfth General Assembly
Wilson's Resolution
Reported favorably
Not Voted On
- 1870 Thirteenth General Assembly
John Irish's Resolution for Constitutional Amendment
House passed
Senate passed
- 1871 Approval by Republican State Convention to Submit Amendment to Voters
- 1872 Fourteenth General Assembly
House 58 to 39
Senate 26 to 20
Third Reading
23 to 23
Suffrage Proposal Failed
- 1874 Fifteenth General Assembly
Equal Suffrage Amendment
House 56 to 38
Senate 27 to 21
- 1875 Carpenter's support of woman suffrage at Republican State Convention
- 1876 Sixteenth General Assembly
Carpenter's Proposal
House passed 54 to 40
Senate passed 26 to 20
Re-tally 22 to 24
Proposal Failed 22 to 23
- 1878 Seventeenth General Assembly

- House 55 to 42
- Senate did not vote
- 1880 Eighteenth General Assembly
 - Right to vote and sit on legislature
 - House in favor
 - Senate refused
 - School suffrage
 - House committee in favor
 - House refused
 - Senate in favor
- 1882 Nineteenth General Assembly
 - Passed resolution to Equal Suffrage
- 1884 Twentieth General Assembly
 - House Postponed Measure
 - Senate Passed 26 to 24
 - Should have been sent to voters via loophole
 - Buren R. Sherman refused to approve, but favored submitting to voters
- 1886 Twenty-First General Assembly
 - Joint resolution for constitutional amendment
 - Senate 29 to 17
 - House failed to act
 - Municipal and School Suffrage
 - Senate did not pass committee
 - House failed to act
- 1888 Twenty-Second General Assembly
 - Municipal suffrage
 - House defeated 44 to 53
 - Senate did not pass committee
 - Joint resolution rejected
 - Then adopted in House 66 to 26
 - Senate did not address resolution
- 1890 Twenty-Third General Assembly
 - School Suffrage
 - Senate did not vote on school suffrage
 - House Committee defeated school suffrage 8 to 31
 - Municipal Suffrage
 - Senate did not vote on municipal suffrage
 - House defeated municipal suffrage
- 1892 Twenty-Fourth General Assembly
 - Senator Engle suffrage by statutory enactment
 - Senate died at Committee
 - Revival of Irish's Presidential enfranchisement
 - Senate died at Committee
 - Joint resolution to constitutional striking out "male"
 - Senate died at Committee
 - Municipal suffrage













- House 27 to 54
- School suffrage
 - House 29 to 53
- General suffrage
 - House postponed
- Presidential enfranchisement
 - House postponed
- 1894 Twenty-Fifth General Assembly
 - Municipal and School Suffrage
 - House passed
 - Senate passed
 - Municipal Suffrage
 - Introduced in Senate but not voted on
 - School Suffrage
 - Introduced in Senate but not voted on
 - Joint resolution to amend Constitution
 - Defeated in Senate 20 to 26
- 1896 Twenty-Sixth General Assembly
 - House no action
 - Joint Resolution
 - Defeated in Senate 23 to 23
- 1898 Twenty-Seventh General Assembly
 - Joint Resolution
 - House Failed in Committee
 - Joint Resolution
 - House did not receive majority 49 to 48
 - Resolution to strikeout "male" from section 1, article 3
 - Senate no action was taken
 - Hearing February 3
 - Pro and Anti Suffrage Spoke in front of the General Assembly
 - Tax Suffrage
- 1900 Twenty-Eighth General Assembly
 - Joint Resolution
 - Failed to received Senate majority
 - House 43 to 56
- 1902 Twenty-Ninth General Assembly
 - Joint Resolution
 - House indefinitely postponed
 - Senate passed 28 to 16
- 1904 Thirtieth General Assembly
 - House defeated
 - Senate buried in sifting committee
- 1906 Thirty-First General Assembly
 - Defeated Joint Resolution
 - Defeated Presidential Suffrage Bill
 - Senate passed

- 1907 Thirty-Second General Assembly
 Gale Constitutional amendment for equal suffrage
 Senate defeated 21 to 26
 C. A. Meredith school suffrage
 House passed 77 to 9
 Senate did not consider
 Presidential Suffrage proposed
 Smothered in committee
- 1909 Thirty-Third General Assembly
 Bill introduced granting right of vote regardless of sex
 Senate Indefinitely postponed
 Similar resolution
 House failed in committee
- 1911 Thirty-Fourth General Assembly
 Equal Suffrage Amendment
 House defeated 48 to 53
 Bill to vote regarding establishment of county hospitals
 House no definite action
 Senate defeated in sifting committee
 School suffrage
 Senate indefinitely postponed
- 1913 Thirty-Fifth General Assembly
 Not eligible for service in General Assembly
 House 81 to 26
 Senate 31 to 15
- 1915 Thirty-Sixth General Assembly
 House 84 to 19
 Senate 38 to 11
 To Voters
- 1916
 Submitted to Voters June 5, 1916
 Election fraud
 Defeated 162,849 to 172,990
- 1917 Thirty-Seventh General Assembly
 Resolution for women suffrage
 House 86 to 20
 Senate 35 to 13
 Clerical Error- Not resubmitted to voters.
- 1919 Thirty-Eighth General Assembly
 Presidential Suffrage
 Governor William Harding Vote to Ratify Nineteenth Amendment
 House and Senate Passed
 Woman Suffrage in Iowa July 2, 1919

Appendix II: Map of Voting Irregularities in 1916



ABSTRACT OF VOTE ON WOMAN SUFFRAGE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ELECTION OF JUNE 5, 1916
FOR 44 COUNTIES SHOWING SOME OF THE ALLEGED IRREGULARITIES CONNECTED THEREWITH.

- 1 -  - Unaccounted for.
- 2 -  - More votes than names on list of voters.
- 3 -  - More votes than names marked (X) on list of voters where any are so marked.
- 4 -  - No. of votes where none are marked with (X) as voting on amendments.
- 5 -  - "Yes" and "No" more than total in certificate.
- 6 -  - Majority in cities not legally registered for amendments.
- 7 -  - Majority in cities not legally registered against suffrage.
-
- 8 -  - "True return" not signed by some or all of board.
- 9 -  - Certificate changed.
- 10 -  - No time of opening polls or wrong hour given.
- 11 -  - One ballot box only.
- 12 -  - Amendment and public measures not on same ballot.

Total Vote against Suffrage 173,020
Total Vote for Suffrage 168,679
 Majority Against - - 10,341

Appendix III:

Amelia Jenks Bloomer

1855 Arrived Council Bluffs; Lectured

1856 Member Frontier Lodge Independent Order of Good Templars.

1860 Editorials to Council Bluffs newspapers

1870 Vice President of Iowa Woman Suffrage Society

1871 President of Iowa Woman Suffrage Society

1872 President of Iowa Woman Suffrage Society

1873 President of Iowa Woman Suffrage Society

1880 Wrote history of Iowa suffrage movement for *The History of Woman Suffrage*

1894 Died in Council Bluffs

Appendix IV:

Annie Nowlin Savery

1854 Moved to Des Moines

1868 Suffrage Speech in Des Moines

1869 Lecture on Woman Suffrage at Library Association Benefit

1870 Speech to the Des Moines Knights Templar

1870 Speech Polk County Pioneer Club; Corresponding Secretary of Iowa Woman Suffrage Society; Founder of Polk County Woman Suffrage Society; on Permanent Organization Committee

1871 Woodhull scandal

1871 Letters to *Daily Iowa State Register*

1871 Letter to the *Woman's Journal*

1871 Corresponding Secretary of Iowa Woman Suffrage Society

1871 Speech at Iowa Woman Suffrage Society

1872 Failed petition of Iowa Senate

1872 Letters to the *Daily Iowa State Register*

1873 Letters to the *Daily Iowa State Register*

1891 Died in New York

Appendix V:

Mary Jane Coggeshall

- 1865 Moved to Des Moines, Iowa
- 1870 Chairman of Permanent Organization Committee for the Polk County Woman Suffrage Society; Charter Member
- 1871 Recording Secretary of Polk County Woman Suffrage Society
- 1877 Editor of *Woman's Hour*
- 1878 Editor of *Woman's Hour*
- 1882 Responses to Editors of Newspapers Calculating Suffrage Support in Iowa
- 1886 Editor of *Woman's Standard*; The White Cross and Women's Purity Speech
- 1887 Editor of *Woman's Standard*
- 1888 Editor of *Woman's Standard*
- 1890 President of the Iowa Woman Suffrage Society
- 1891 President of the Iowa Woman Suffrage Society; Speech for IESA
- 1892 Speech for WCTU
- 1893 Speech for Eagle Grove Equality Club
- 1894 Speech "For What Purpose Do We Live"; "Men Tramps vs. Women Tramps"
- 1896 Speech for IESA
- 1898 President of Des Moines Equal Suffrage Club; Presented to Twenty-Seventh
General Assembly
- 1903 President of the Iowa Woman Suffrage Society; Speech for IESA
- 1904 President of the Iowa Woman Suffrage Society

1905 President of the Iowa Woman Suffrage Society; Honorary President of IWSS;

Speech for IESA

1906 Honorary President of Iowa Woman Suffrage Society

1907 Honorary President of Iowa Woman Suffrage Society

1908 Honorary President of IWSS; Initiated lawsuit when Des Moines women were denied ballots in a city bond election

1909 Honorary President of Iowa Woman Suffrage Society

1910 Honorary President of Iowa Woman Suffrage Society

1911 Honorary President of IWSS; Joint Campaign Committee, editor of *Woman's Standard*; Died from pneumonia—\$10,000 to NAWSA and \$5,000 to IWSA

Appendix VI:
Iowa Firsts²⁹¹

1863	First woman in dentistry
1864	First woman regularly employed and paid by the state for clerical services Woman as deputy clerk Woman as military secretary
1866	First woman as public notary
1869	Woman hold office of county superintendent of public schools
1870	Women were admitted women to practice law Woman elected to office of engrossing clerk
1872	One woman elected in House and Senate as officers
1874	Woman as commissioner
1875	Women holding school office
1876	Woman as notary public Educational offices to women opened by judicial ruling
1877	Woman as director of school board
1879	Woman as professor at University of Iowa
1880	Woman's right to hold office as county recorder Sub-director of district First woman president of a school board
1884	Woman president of First National Bank
1885	Office of superintendent of schools

²⁹¹ Gahaller, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa*, 222-227; Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage: Volume 3*, 627-635.

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