

# Waukesha County Woman Suffrage Trail



Waukesha County women played an active role in the Woman Suffrage Movement. Follow in their footsteps on the Waukesha County Suffrage Trail and learn how their contributions helped American women win their equal voting rights in 1920.

Take a picture of yourself at any or all of these sites! Make it more fun by wearing suffrage white, purple, or yellow - the color of Wisconsin Suffrage. Add a fancy hat, decorated with flowers in the suffrage colors.

Share your photos with us by tagging the Waukesha County Historical Society & Museum in your posts and by using the hashtags: #waukeshahistory #WIVotesforWomen #WomensVote100 #waukeshasuffragehistory.

Also, join others across the country by ringing a bell at noon to honor the suffragists whose unceasing toil brought us Women's Equality Day!!



# 1

## Waukesha County Courthouse, 1893-1920 101 W Main St.

### Currently Waukesha County Historical Society & Museum

**B**uilt in 1893, the Waukesha County Courthouse represents a government where women were denied equal rights as citizens. Women had no rights to participate as voters as or candidates for political office in school, city, county, state, congressional, or presidential elections. When an accused woman faced a jury, she saw none of her peers, because, without the franchise, women were barred from servings as jurists.

In one of the most famous murder trials in Waukesha County, accused murderer Grace Lusk was tried in 1918 by an all-male jury and found guilty. Five years later, the Governor pardoned her. In 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment

guaranteed women the right to vote, thus opening the door for them to run for public office and serve on juries.



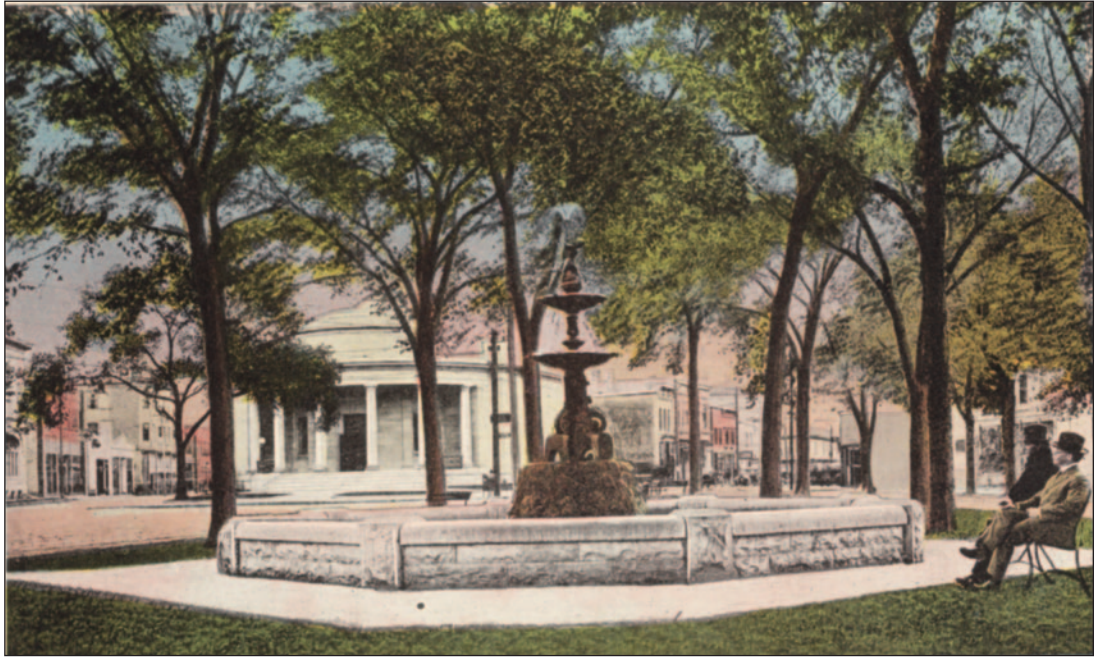


# 2

## Theodora Winton Youmans Park, 1989 220 W. Broadway.

**Y**oumans Park honors the Wisconsin suffragist Theodora Winton Youmans (1862-1932) of Waukesha, one of the most influential women in Wisconsin to lead the charge for suffrage. In her position as reporter and associate editor of the *Waukesha Freeman*, as President of the Wisconsin Federation of Women's Clubs, and later, as President of the Wisconsin Woman Suffrage Association (WWSA), Theodora Winton Youmans played a pivotal role in the fight for Wisconsin Suffrage and the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.

In 1989, the City of Waukesha renamed a small central-city park as Theodora W. Youmans Park

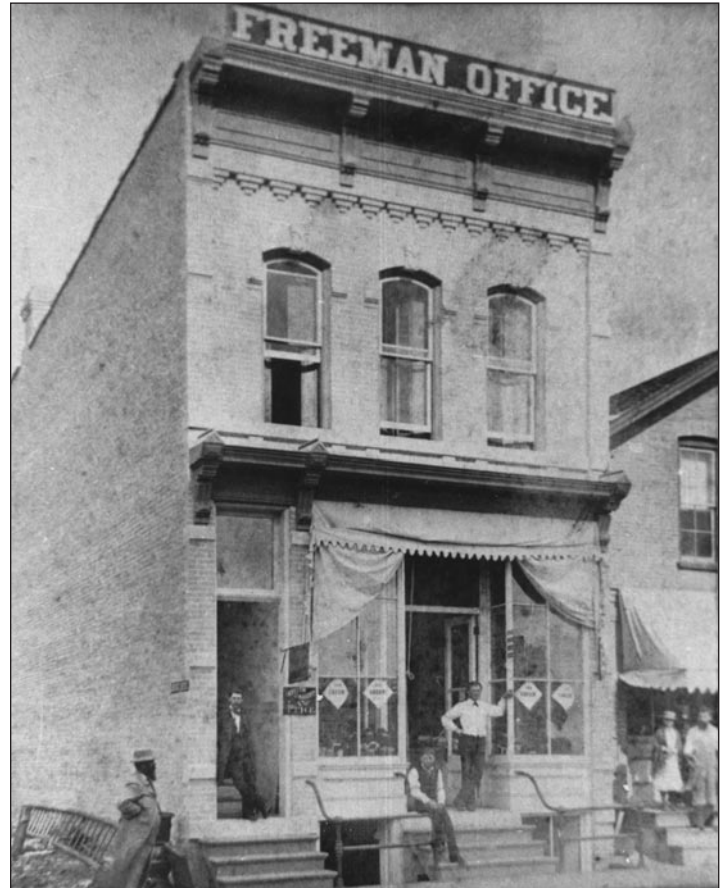


# 3

## Waukesha Freeman Building, 1875 - 1914 831 N. Grand Ave.

### Currently, a Private Business

From this location, Theodora Winton Youmans marshaled the power of the press to educate and advocate for the cause of suffrage throughout the state. In the 1880s, Youmans wrote freelance articles for the weekly *Waukesha Freeman* before being hired as their first female staff writer, one of only a few female journalists at that time. By 1887, she was writing her own influential weekly column, “Woman’s World” that covered women’s political progress and women’s suffrage. Two years later, Youmans married the editor, Henry Mott Youmans, assuming the role of associate editor the following year. In 1912, when Wisconsin held a public referendum on woman suffrage, Youmans’ syndicated column kept voters throughout the state informed about the progress of the campaign.



*The bottom photo shows the approximate location of the Freeman building, then addressed as 29 Putney Block or 609 Grand Avenue. It was demolished in 1952.*





# 4

## Wisconsin Women's Suffrage Association, 1914 - 1916 831 Grand Ave. 2nd Floor Currently, Prairieville Apartments

State headquarters for the Wisconsin Women's Suffrage Association (WWSA) moved to the upper floor of Hoehle's Drugstore in Waukesha in 1914, one year after Theodora Winton Youmans started her reign as president of the organization. The Waukesha County Suffrage Association also met in this building.

Helen Haight, a relative of Youmans, managed the office and the WWSA Press Bureau. From this office in 1915, WWSA promoted three suffrage laws; full suffrage, municipal suffrage, and presidential suffrage. All three lost. In addition, mean-spirited legislators revoked women's right to vote in school elections by making school offices appointive. To save money, the headquarters moved to Milwaukee in 1916, requiring Youmans to take the train almost daily.

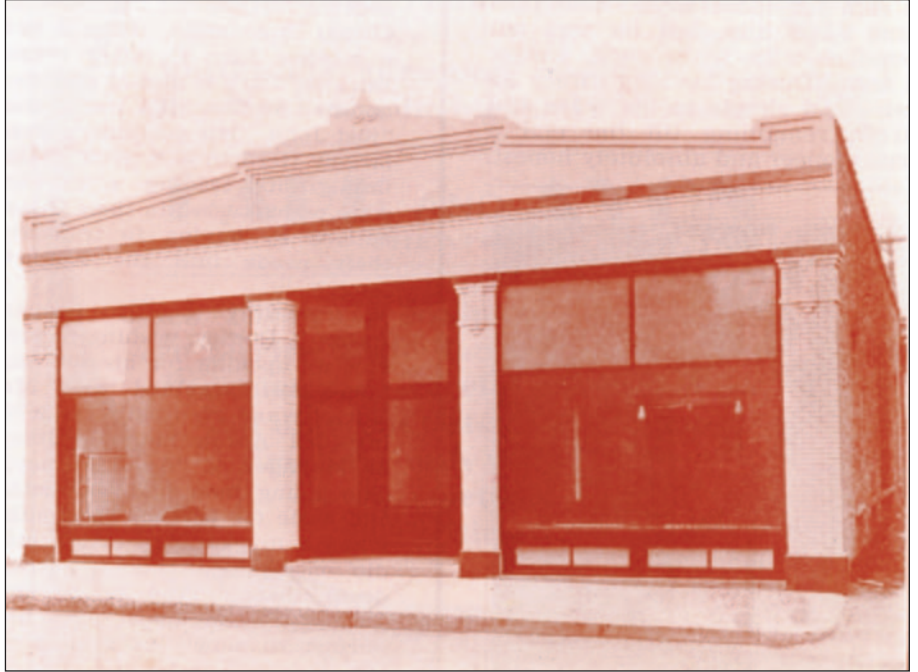
*Hoehle's Pharmacy is seen next to the Freeman building in the top photo. The Hoehle name is seen on the striped canvas awning, then addressed as 28 Putney Block. 607 Grand Ave. The approximate location of the building is shown in the bottom photo. The building was demolished in 1952.*



# 5

## Waukesha Daily Freeman Building, 1914 - 1937 259 South St. Currently, Thrive Architect

After the *Waukesha Freeman* moved its press offices to this newly constructed building in 1914, Theodora Winton Youmans continued to write her weekly column, now called “Votes for Women.” Youmans also started editing, and the *Freeman* printed, the four-page monthly *Wisconsin Citizen*, the official newsletter of the Wisconsin Woman Suffrage Association (WWSA). In her role as president of that association, Youmans worked to maintain suffrage morale by organizing parades and suffrage schools and by advocating for a national amendment. As soon as Congress passed the Nineteenth Amendment, she led Wisconsin suffragists into quickly pressing Wisconsin lawmakers to be the “First to Ratify,” an honor earned on June 4, 1919.





# 6

## Waukesha Public Library, 1910 - 1914 321 Wisconsin Ave.

The Waukesha Women's Club held regular meetings at the library from 1910-1914, actively campaigning for the woman suffrage referendum of 1912. Wisconsin's most effective suffrage foot soldiers and leaders came from the women's club movement. Civic and politically minded women joined women's clubs to educate themselves and participate in the public square. Working for reform without the vote convinced them they needed suffrage to achieve their goals.

The Waukesha Women's Club organized as the Waukesha Magazine Club in 1894, changing names after the first year. The club joined the Wisconsin General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) in 1896. Youmans served as president of the local club for four terms, 1897-98, 1898-99, 1903-04, and 1927-28. After taking on the presidency of the state GFWC in 1900, she successfully led an effort in 1901 which fixed the school law allowing women to vote in school elections. Youmans convinced the state GFWC to formally endorse the suffrage referendum of 1912.



# 7

## Theodora Winton Youmans and Henry Mott Youmans Home, 1885 - 1932 337 Carroll St.

**Demolished @1990 Currently, Les Paul Middle School Parking Lot**

Theodora Winton Youmans moved to this house after marrying the editor of the *Waukesha Freeman*, Henry Mott Youmans, in 1889. Unusual for women of that era, Youmans continued to work after marriage. While living here, Youmans pursued her career as a journalist, provided leadership as a clubwoman in Waukesha and as president of the state General Federation of Women's Clubs. Her broad-ranging leadership made her one of the most influential women in the state's woman suffrage movement. In addition, she helped found the state League of Women Voters. In 1922, Youmans ran unsuccessfully as a candidate for a state senate seat. Youmans died in 1932, at the age of sixty-nine, twenty months after her husband died.

*The house is seen to the right of the now-demolished Edison Building in about 1940. The second photo shows the house from the back.*





# 8

## Carroll College, 1885 - 1920 100 N. East Ave. Currently Carroll University

Carroll College served as Theodora Winton Youmans' alma mater and as host for both a college suffrage club and the county's first League of Women Voters' organization. When Theodora Winton graduated from Carroll Academy in 1880, the valedictorian of her class of five, she earned the equivalent of a high school degree. In 1911, a suffrage club was formed at Carroll College and likely promoted the 1912 Woman Suffrage referendum.

After the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, suffrage organizations throughout the country transitioned themselves into the League of Women Voters. The non-partisan group organized to educate new voters, to encourage women to run for office, and to develop good public policy. In 1920, the first League in Waukesha County was organized on the campus of Carroll College.



*The photos show the original Carroll building which Theodora Youmans attended in 1880. The building burned in 1885 and was rebuilt in 1887 and enlarged in 1901.*



# 9

## **Alice Hanlon Oatway and Dr. William Oatway Home, 1913-1919 205 Wright St. Currently, a Private Residence**

**A**n active Waukesha suffragist, Alice Hanlon Oatway marched in the notable 1916 Chicago Woman Suffrage Parade wearing a suffrage yellow tunic that is now on display in the Waukesha County Museum. Marching in step with “drums beating and banners flying,” 10,000 women walked that day, parading for two miles past hostile crowds despite pouring rain and gale force winds. Soaked and wind-blown, the women’s determination to finish testified to their heartfelt desire for the national vote and, thus, earned the respect of the crowd. Joining her from Waukesha were Mrs. E. L. Thomas, Helen Hayden Haight, and Theodora Winton Youmans. Mrs. David Roberts and Mrs. J. B. Noble also attended the parade but did not march.



Alice Hanlon spent her early life on a farm, near today’s Oak Creek. She worked as a nurse until marrying Dr. William Oatway in 1900 in Lake Mills. The family relocated to Waukesha in 1913, moving to a home at 144 S. East Avenue in 1919.



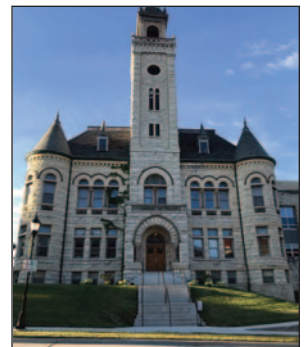
# 10

## Waukesha County Courthouse, 1920-1959 101 W Main St.

Currently, Waukesha County Historical Society & Museum

Since winning their voting rights a century ago, many women from Waukesha County have cast ballots in school, city, county, state, and national elections. They have run political campaigns and won elective office in all jurisdictions except national. Women in the county started serving on juries in 1921, when Waukesha County selected four female jurors, and thus seated the first mixed jury in Wisconsin.

Women worked for decades to gain access to the ballot box – to give voice to their issues and public policy choices. The battle was long and frustrating, but on August 26, 1920, finally, the women won! As Theodora Winton Youmans wrote, “The careless world will probably continue to think that woman suffrage just happened, that it was ‘in the air.’ But we know that the changes in the opinions of society which made it possible are the result of ceaseless, unremitting toil.



## OTHER WAUKESHA COUNTY LOCATIONS

**Helen Hayden and Frank Putney Haight (Theron W. Haight) Home,  
1914-1916.**

**728 St. Paul Ave., Waukesha**

**Demolished, date unknown**

**Currently, an Apartment Building**

**H**elen Hayden Haight managed state operations for the Wisconsin Woman Suffrage Association (WWSA) during the years its president, Theodora Winton Youmans, located the headquarters in Waukesha. Soon after returning to Waukesha, in 1913, from a two-year stint in Japan with her reporter husband, Haight took on the role of president of the Waukesha County Suffrage Association and began working for the state WWSA.

Youmans appointed thirty-two-year-old Haight as manager of the WWSA office in Waukesha, business manager of WWSA newsletter, the *Waukesha Citizen*, and state organizer for local suffrage clubs. Haight helped conduct suffrage training, spoke at small town fairs, and took on the title of Press Correspondent of the WWSA Press Service. Special letterhead was printed with Haight listed as the on-site contact for reporter's queries. For the famous Chicago Parade (see Oatway story), Haight made the special flag and acted as Marshall in that parade, where she marched at the head, alone, bearing the banner. After budget cuts reduced her salary, Haight resigned in 1916 and then managed the Little Theater in Milwaukee. By 1919, she and her husband were living in Illinois, and by 1948, in Los Angeles, California.

Related by marriage, Haight and Youmans promoted woman suffrage while another shared relative wrote anti-suffrage editorials for the *Waukesha Freeman*. Haight's father-in-law, Theron Wilbur Haight, a well-respected newspaperman, founded the *Waukesha Freeman* and, in 1874, sold half interest in the paper to his brother-in-law Henry Mott Youmans. Theron Haight remained an open and ardent anti-suffragist.



## Theodora Winton Youmans Childhood Home. 1863-1889 19885 W National Ave, New Berlin

Moved to Current Location at the New Berlin Historical Society

Theodora Winton Youmans' childhood home, rescued and restored by the New Berlin Historical Society, now includes one room devoted to the suffrage fight. The house is one of many restored buildings in the society's Historical Park, situated in the Prospect Hill Settlement District since 1970.

Born in a log cabin in Ashippun, Dodge County, Winton and her three siblings grew to adulthood in Prospect Hill, near today's New Berlin. She was taught to read and write by her mother Emily. Her father Theodore, shopkeeper, postmaster, and an early supporter of the Republican party, exposed her to politics at a young age by encouraging reading and discussion on the topics of the day.

After graduating from Carroll Academy in Waukesha in 1880, Youmans became a journalist at the *Waukesha Freeman*, married the editor Henry Motts Youmans, and moved to Waukesha, where she became a very influential figure in Wisconsin's fight for woman suffrage.



**Alura Collins Hollister Home, 1850-1936**  
**Prospect Hill, Mukwonago, Big Bend, and Town of Vernon**  
**Addresses yet unknown**

**A**n ardent suffragist, Alura Collins Hollister, became the first female lobbyist in the Wisconsin legislature and helped draft the 1884 state law granting school suffrage to women. The press reports that Collins issued on this matter were so well received by readers of the *Waukesha Freeman*, that the editor, Henry Mott Youmans, endorsed school suffrage, and soon after, hired the first women reporter, Theodore Winton.

Five years after her birth in 1850 in Rhode Island, Collins' family moved to Prospect Hill, Wisconsin, and then to Mukwonago, where her father Dr. William Penn Collins practiced as a homeopathic physician. At the age of fourteen, Collins started teaching, then attended Whitewater Normal School and taught for many years in Milwaukee. After her marriage to Alfred N. Hollister, in 1886, she lived in Mukwonago, Big Bend, and on the Hollister farm near the town of Vernon with her husband and four children. In public life, she actively supported woman suffrage and prohibition, but reduced that involvement to care for her invalid son Clark. Alura Collins Hollister died in 1936, at the age of 86.



The 19th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America

*“The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”*



**Waukesha County Historical Society and Museum**

**101 W. Main St. Waukesha WI 53186**

**262 521 2859**

**Email: [info@wchsm.org](mailto:info@wchsm.org)**

**Website: [www.waukeshacountymuseum.org](http://www.waukeshacountymuseum.org)**

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