

ERIE SUFFRAGISTS

A Tour of
Erie Cemetery to
Celebrate the
Centennial of the
19th Amendment



Notes Regarding the History of the Suffrage Movement in Erie

"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.

Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."

Erie has a proud place in the history of the women's suffrage movement in Pennsylvania. On July 8, 1913, Erie suffragists held the one of the first marches for suffrage in Pennsylvania, stepping off from their headquarters near 8th and Sassafras Streets, then marching south to 18th Street to join the Mother's and Children's Day Parade that was part of the Perry Week celebrations. One hundred members of the local Equal Franchise Association pulled a float featuring a plaster replica of the Liberty Bell. That bell had been drawn by a suffrage contingent in Woodrow Wilson's inaugural parade in March 1913 and was shipped to Erie for the parade here. Just as the parade disbanded "a tall woman sprang from the ranks of marching suffragists and ran up the steps of the courthouse", and impromptu, addressed the crowd. She was followed by two others. "The crowd went fairly wild. It cheered the speakers in turn, it cheered the cause and it cheered the city while it waited for another speaker to take the steps." (*The Erie Dispatch*, July 9, 1913)

Suffragists in Erie, as elsewhere, had always been united in their belief that the welfare and protection of women and children in society was important, and the only way to assure this was through the expression of women's voice and will via the vote. It's therefore not surprising to see the scope of activities related to human welfare in which Erie's suffragists were engaged. They were the 19th Century leaders in abolition, the Woman's

Christian Temperance Union, and the founders of Erie's first social service organizations. In the 20th Century, they led the civic garden and beautification movement, promoted public health and hygiene, and supported the Young Women's Christian Association's mission. They also stepped up in times of disaster and war, creating suffragist relief committees that sewed clothing, collected blankets, knit socks, and planted war gardens.

Erie's early suffragists reflected the national movement in that generally they were affluent, white, and educated. By the 20th Century, more working women appear among the membership.

No documentation for women of color has yet been found in the Northwestern Pennsylvania Equal Franchise Association membership, but this tour includes three of Erie's prominent black women leaders. They were most active in Erie's civic and community affairs at the same time that Erie's suffrage movement was most active. These women's contributions undoubtedly included efforts to encourage Erie's black women to register and vote as a part of achieving the goals they so passionately worked for. Like many of the suffragists on this tour, all three black women's obituaries appeared on the front pages of our local newspapers, recognizing and honoring their work.

Women's suffrage was finally granted on August 18, 1920, and Erie's suffragists continued their work by almost immediately founding the League of Women Voters, Erie County Chapter. The League worked to educate women regarding the voter registration process and made certain women in Erie were able to cast their first vote in the November 1920 presidential election.

It would be naïve to think that there was not a need for continued struggle to achieve equal franchise for all. It was only with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that equal franchise for all, regardless of race, color or creed was made law.



A few notes about the design of the Suffrage Centennial markers at gravesites: The six white stars signify those states that had ratified the 19th Amendment prior to Pennsylvania. The gold star represents Pennsylvania's ratification on June 24, 1919. The Keystone motif was used by Pennsylvania suffragists throughout the state, and the colors purple, white and gold were adopted by suffragists nationally.

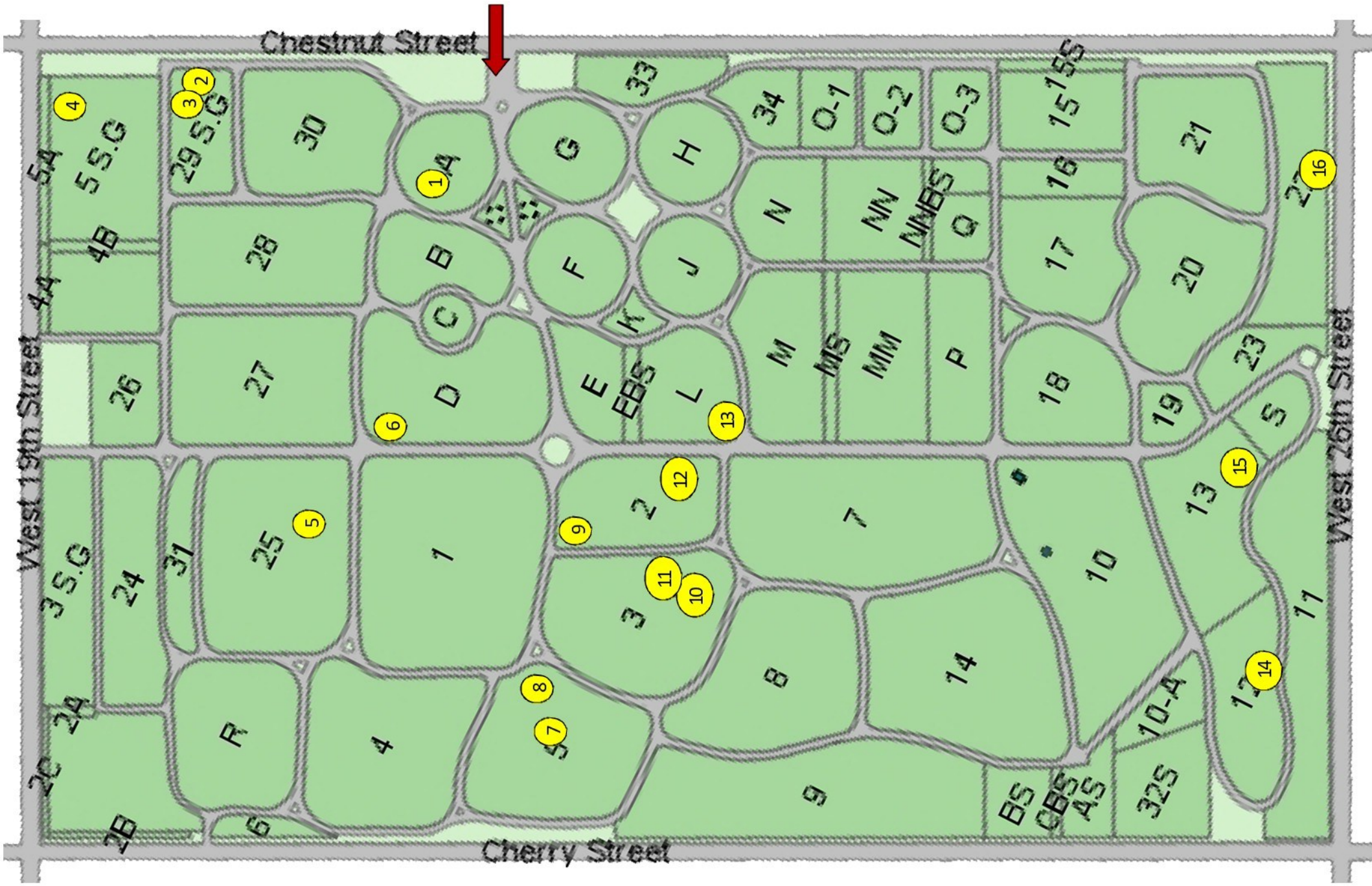
A few more notes regarding the tour text and route: The Equal Franchise Association and the Northwestern Pennsylvania Equal Franchise Association are one and the same group, changing the name to better identify the group at state and national conventions. Also, it is only coincidence that the black women honored on this tour rest in sections of the cemetery apart from other sections of the tour. These sections of Erie Cemetery are integrated; the practice of segregating burials by race here was abandoned shortly after the Civil War.



When this tour was quietly published on August 18, 2020, it was a different world. Thanks to the staff of the Blasco Library for their efforts to open the library safely during COVID-19 so that primary sources such as period newspapers could be used in research. This tour could not happen without the Erie Cemetery staff's support and guidance. The marker design was a gift from Amanda Daniels Creative, and production of the markers was assisted in part by donation from Naomi Stutzman of Fast Signs, which manufactured them. Finally, with much gratitude to Lori Morse Dolan for her enthusiastic leadership in supporting all of Erie's 2020 Suffrage Centennial events.

Linda Bolla
Summer 2026

Comments regarding the tour may be emailed to ErieSuffrage100@aol.com.



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| 1. Sarah A. Reed | 7. Lavina "Lovey" Nelson
Clarke | 13. Sarah Scott Hubley |
| 2. Carrie Williams Lawson | 8. Marvin E. Griswold | 14. Mary Dupuy Spencer |
| 3. Jessie Forney Wright Pope | 9. Louise Wilson Shirk | 15. Jane Weir Pressley |
| 4. Emma Toll Lawrence | 10. Lillian Kelsey Arbuckle | 16. Adella Brindle Woods |
| 5. Katharine "May" Wallhau-
ser Klund | 11. Carrie T. Watson | |
| 6. Augusta Brown Fleming | 12. Jennie Ruth Cleveland | |

1. Sarah A. Reed

Born March 17, 1838, Died January 27, 1934
Section A, Lot 8

Sarah Reed's service as an officer and member of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Suffrage Association Advisory Board has been overshadowed by the legacy of the "Home for the Friendless" that she and 30 other women founded in 1871. Today a retirement center and children's center have grown directly from the organization she presided over for decades as President, renamed for her only after her death. She took great interest in the children and elderly women who resided in the Home, personally providing education and entertainment for them while seeing to their comfort and welfare.

Her service was not limited to the Home; she was actively involved in numerous organizations, most notably the League of Women Voters, the Erie Art Club, the Young Women's Christian Association, and the Presque Isle Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, for which she served as Regent for 15 years. A world traveler, she shared her experiences by conducting weekly classes on world cultures and literature for 50 years, and through the novels she wrote. Themes of family, duty and patriotism are important in all of her stories, as these were important values in her own life.

2. Carrie Williams Lawson

Born May 23, 1875, Died August 25, 1940
Section 29 Singles, Row B, Grave 15

Carrie Lawson's obituary headlined her as Erie's "Most Active Negro Worker". She was a charter member of the Mothers of Democracy, having four sons who served in World War I, and a charter member of the Estelle B. Jordon Army and Navy Union, for which she served as a National Deputy and an Adjutant.

Mrs. Lawson was active in her church and community, especially during World War I, after which she was honored by the government for her

service. Her beautiful soprano voice graced services at St. James A.M.E. Church, often in solo presentation. One of her most important achievements was the organization of Black Girl Scouts in 1936, and until illness at the end of her life, she served as supervisor of the scouts and was a hands on header of the group.

3. Jessie Forney Pope

Born April 24, 1889, Died July 13, 1942
Section 29 Singles, Row C, Grave 34 (temporary marker)

Jessie Pope was the co-founder and first President of the Erie Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. It was a very active chapter from its inception in 1918, and she attended the NAACP National Convention that same year.

Mrs. Pope is best remembered now as co-proprietor of the Hotel Pope at 1318 French Street. She managed the hotel on her own, one of very few black women business owners at that time. It opened in 1928, and later became a major cultural institution in Erie, bringing top black entertainers such as Duke Ellington, Jackie Wilson, and Pearl Bailey to perform there. Pope welcomed an interracial audience to the hotel's floor shows.

4. Emma Gertrude Toll Lawrence

Born April 18, 1858, Died May 10, 1934
Section 5 Singles, Row O, Grave 53

Emma Lawrence's involvement in civic organizations such as the Red Cross and the Young Women's Christian Association began a legacy of vigorous work in and for our community by generations of her descendants. She was a National Deputy Commander of the Army and Navy Union, a Commander of the Army and Navy Union Auxiliary, and sectional President of the Needlework Guild.

Matriarch of the Lawrence Family, Emma Lawrence descended from African and Native American parents, arriving in Erie in 1881. After

her husband John's passing, Emma was left to rear four young children. She took in the laundry to support her family, and by 1906 established the Lawrence Cleaning and Dyeing Company — the first business operated by a black woman in the city of Erie.

5. Katharine "May" Wallhauser Klund

Born July 6, 1875, Died Apr 25, 1962
Section 25, Lot 200, Grave 3

One of Erie first female automobile drivers, May Klund was a real asset to many community organizations for which she volunteered, including the early League of Women Voters and the Erie County Council of Republican Women.

At a time when women were just beginning to enter the business world, May Wallhauser attended business college and then worked as a secretary until she married and had a family. Her active participation in church and women's affairs remained a part of her life, however. She served for many years on the board of the Florence Crittenden Home, was a member of the International Institute, the Young Women's Christian Association, and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and took a prominent part in the Auxiliary of the Erie County Tuberculosis and Health Association.

6. Augusta B. Brown Fleming

Born May 1876, Died July 24, 1949
Section D, Lot 11

Augusta Brown Fleming exemplified the ideals of the organization she led for over a decade, first as President of the Erie Woman's Suffrage Association, then founding President of the League of Women Voters in 1920. She opened her own home as headquarters for suffrage meetings and activities, and when Erie women marched on July 8, 1913 -- one of Pennsylvania's first marches for women's suffrage -- the march stepped off from her home at 8th & Sassafras Streets.

After women had been granted voting rights on

August 18, 1920, under her leadership the newly formed League of Women Voters made certain women were registered and able to vote in the November 2, 1920, presidential election. Mrs. Fleming served many years as President of the Erie County Council of Republican Women and Vice-President of the state organization. She was a delegate to three Republican national conventions. She also served two terms as member of the Pennsylvania Board of Labor and Industry, and one year as trustee of state normal schools.

7. Lavinia "Lovey" Mills Nelson Clarke

Born February 25, 1848, Died Aug 7, 1939
Section 5, Lot 100

Lovey Nelson was an early participant in the women's suffrage movement. She discovered ways to secretly slip out of her parents' home to march with the other women. She was reputed to be the first female telegrapher in Pennsylvania, having learned the trade before marriage. Throughout her life she was active in the League of Women Voters, the Democratic Women's Council, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Women's Club.

Along with her friend Sarah Reed, she was deemed one of Erie's "grand old ladies", but her active life, right up until its end, betrayed a youthful spirit. In 1935, at the age of 87, she became the oldest woman ever to serve on an Erie County jury. She proved keen-minded, was aware and interested in the world around her, and was always ready to serve.

8. Marvin E. Griswold

Born November 18, 1868, Died Jan 3, 1927
Section 5, Lot 121

Marvin Griswold served on the Advisory Board of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Suffrage Association. An executive who ultimately became president of his family's Griswold Manufacturing Company, he was a leading businessman in the community, and active in politics.

He was an elected member of the Erie Board of Education for 14 years, serving a term as its president. He supported initiatives that provided both an academic and a vocational education. Griswold was elected to the Pennsylvania State Senate in 1924, and was serving the second year of his term when he died.

9. Louise Wilson Shirk

Born November 1, 1844, Died Mar 25, 1925
Section 2, Lot 22

A member of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Suffrage Association, Louise Shirk was a devoted wife and mother who never felt her Christian duty to serve others ended in her home. She gave untiring, cheerful service to the community, and took an active part in every movement that had for its object the moral and spiritual uplift of Erie.

A charter member, Mrs. Shirk served as the Board Secretary of the Erie Home for the Friendless for 43 years. She was a founder and longtime secretary of the Erie Chapter of the Needlework Guild, and found joy in working through many other charitable societies to serve those in need.

10. Lillian Gross Kelsey Arbuckle

Born October 4, 1866, Died April 7, 1948
Section 3, Lot 50

As part of the Erie Woman's Equal Suffrage Association delegation, Lillian Arbuckle represented the local district at the Pennsylvania's state convention for Woman's Suffrage associations held in Pittsburgh in November, 1917. She was also named delegate to attend the national convention in Washington D.C. during the week of December 12, 1917, when the suffrage amendment was brought before Congress.

Mrs. Arbuckle worked elbow-to-elbow with fellow suffragists in their Flood Relief group, working to aid families left destitute by the Mill Creek Flood in 1915. As part of her efforts, she collected clothing in Corry and Union City for the flood

victims. During World War I, she served as chair of the local branch of the Council of Defense. She recruited women to serve as registrars to go into the schools to recruit young women for patriotic service.

11. Carrie Tracy Watson

Born September 4, 1853, Died February 15, 1923
Section 3, Lot 45

The Northwestern Pennsylvania Suffrage Association is only one of many organizations in which Carrie Watson served the Erie community. She was its auditor, as well as an officer and member of its board.

Mrs. Watson pioneered in garden work and civic beautification. She was one of the leaders of the Women's Land Army during World War I and worked tirelessly in the interest of soldiers. Erie's first garden club, organized in 1925 and still active today, was named in her honor. She was a charter member of the Women's Club, and a leader in civic, religious, and social life in the community. She served on the war council of the Young Women's Christian Association, supporting women immigrants. In her service through numerous club organizations, she aligned with those who would not only make Erie a better place to live, but strengthen its educational health and religious facilities.

12. Jennie Ruth Cleveland

Born May 4, 1859, Died June 12, 1937
Section 2, Lot 3

A member of one of Erie's pioneer families, Jennie Cleveland transitioned from a suffragist to becoming one of the founding members of the League of Women Voters, Erie County.

She was a teacher at the old Erie High School, and helped many students as a private tutor. She served the community as a charter member of the Women's Club, and was a prominent member of the Art Club of Erie.

13. Sarah Scott Hubley

Born September 30, 1851, Died December 22, 1934
Sec L, Lot 1

Sarah Hubley, then in her 60's, was still a leader in the suffrage movement on both the local and state level during the nineteen-teens. She was one of the first women to accept the franchise when women were given the vote in 1920, and her interest in women's activities in elections never wavered.

Miss Hubley was involved with civic and philanthropic activities all her life, but was best known as a teacher who served over a half a century before retiring from the Erie public school system, a beloved educator and principal of two elementary schools. Tens of thousands of men and women came under her guidance and influence during her career.

14. Mary Richards DuPuy Spencer

Born February 16, 1858, Died September 26, 1933
Section 12, Lot 9

Mary Spencer was an early member of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Suffrage Association, and one of the founding members of the League of Women Voters. Her service through many of the suffrage relief groups reflected her interests in other charitable organizations in Erie.

A moving force in the Needlework Guild, Mrs. Spencer also served the community through the Women's Club, the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Carrie T. Watson Garden Club. She was a leading figure in civic and cultural activities in Erie, and worked passionately in her role as Vice-President of the Home for the Friendless for 37 years.

15. Jane Weir Pressly

Born October 19, 1858, Died January 20, 1942
Section 13, Lot 1

Having served as vice-president of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Suffrage Association,

Jane Pressly went on to help organize the Erie County League of Women Voters in 1920. She remained active in the League until the time of her death, an honorary president of the chapter and a member of the state board.

A charter member and twice president of the Women's Club, Miss Pressly was an active civic leader who served the community through involvement in women's clubs in Erie. Starting in the United Presbyterian Church, her sphere of interest grew to embrace causes that bettered the lives of women and children. She served on the Erie Social Hygiene Board, and began a family day school for underprivileged children of working mothers. She was on the Board of Directors of the Young Women's Christian Association and was a welcome speaker at many groups' meetings.

16. Dr. Adella Brindle Woods

Born November 27, 1851, Died January 6, 1930
Section 22, Lot 62

A member of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Suffrage Association, Dr. Woods served on the suffragists' Flood Relief Committee in 1915, collecting clothing and funds to assist families who lost their homes in the Mill Creek Flood. She was a firm believer in women, and desired equality with men in all respects.

Adella Brindle was a member of Erie High School's first graduating class in 1868. After teaching in Erie public schools for three years, she sought admission to medical school at a time when female students were almost unheard of.

Completing her course in 1876, she later returned to Erie to become the city's first female physician. In her 35 years in practice, she was known for her careful attention to the duties of her profession and her kindly ways. Dr. Woods was actively involved in organizations that worked to make Erie a better city. She was a prominent member of Erie County Medical Society, the Women's Club, and many other church and club groups.