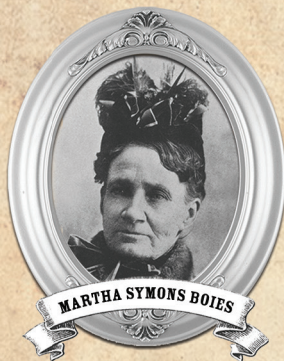




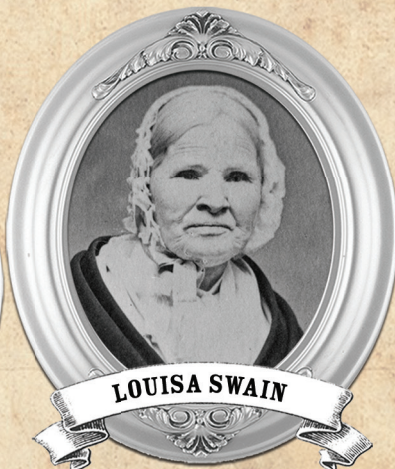
150TH ANNIVERSARY

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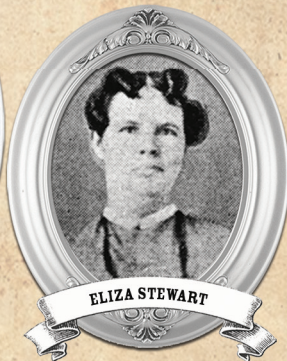
VOTES FOR WOMEN



MARTHA SYMONS BOIES



LOUISA SWAIN



ELIZA STEWART

LARAMIE WYOMING WOMEN MADE WORLD HISTORY

A PUBLICATION OF THE
LARAMIE PLAINS MUSEUM

IN COOPERATION WITH CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS



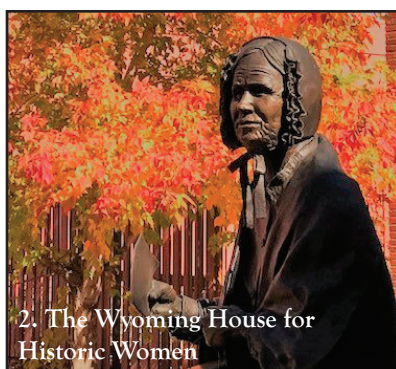
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EST. 1868



6. Breakin' Through Sculpture



2. The Wyoming House for Historic Women



1. Laramie Plains Museum



4. Wild West Social Justice Mural

SITES TO VISIT IN LARAMIE



1. Laramie Plains Museum at the Historic Ivinson Mansion

(Location: 603 Ivinson Ave.) (307) 742-4448

2. The Wyoming House for Historic Women with Louisa Swain statue by John Baker. (Location: 317 South 2nd St.) (307) 742-2919.

3. First Women to Serve on a Jury Tablet, March 1870. Placed in 1922 by the Jacques Laramie Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution. (Location: North end of Depot Park)

4. Wild West Social Justice Mural by Adrienne Vetter (Location: Alleyway between Grand Ave. & Ivinson Ave. and 2nd/3rd St.)

5. University of Wyoming, American Heritage Center and UW Art Museum (Location: 2111 Willett Drive, Centennial Complex, University of Wyoming) (307) 766-4114

6. Breakin' Through Sculpture by D. Michael Thomas (Location: War Memorial Stadium Parking lot at the intersection of 22nd St. and Arrowhead Lane)



SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTORS

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Museum Docent

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John Bellamy, “Laramie-Gem City of the Plains” Mary Godat Bellamy
MK Mason, Editor

Sidney Fleming, Mike Massie, Annals of Wyoming, vol. 62, pp 2-73

Kewanee Historical Society, Photo of Judge John Howe **Kewanee, Illinois**

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INTRODUCTION

I remember that it was quite by accident I found myself standing where those first, hope-filled women had stood, breathing that same eastern-seaboard air on a crisp December morning. I was not on a quest to see where a fist might have been raised in defiance for freedom, where flags were marched, whipping erratically in the wind, symbolic of the new fight for rights that all who are created equal should certainly have. My son and I had taken a simple night flight into Rochester, New York from Laramie, Wyoming, and then a late night drive to our hotel in Seneca Falls for a holiday getaway. Yet as we stood on the bridge, with hundreds of bells tinkling, we came to realize that we stood just a block from the place where a handful of women, and a man, first publicly stood in 1848 to address the inequities women were accustomed to and what that small band could do about such inequality.

Our first clue that this charming, but not overly impressive, small town held major nuggets of truth and vision and goodness was an inconspicuous sign. It said First Amendment Area, so we left the bridge and followed the sidewalk, through a back alley, up a snow covered slant, to an entire wall of engraved words over a churchyard. Here in the glint of upstate New York sunlight, with streets crunchy after an icy rain the night before, we viewed the impressive Declaration of Sentiments that was 161 years old. Here in the Wesleyan churchyard and then inside the simple gathering room, I stood where those first idealists dreamed that women and people of color would have the same rights as the white men who were leading their lives and their nation. "That all laws which ...place women in a position inferior to that of man...; That woman is man's equal...; That it is the duty of the women of this country to secure...their sacred right..." were just some of the beginning words of the straightforward resolutions on the wall.

Riding the wave of shouts of freedom from slavery, this first small group—Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Louisa Mott, Carrie Chapman Catt among the few others, with some of their daughters and Fredrick Douglas!—stood with the abolitionists and others of their gender for equality of rights. I was humbled to stand where their vision and enthusiasm took root. It felt like sacred ground, not just because of Divine Providence hallowing the churchyard, but that this was the place where those early American voices spoke clearly so that a First Amendment of Freedom was stated aloud.

Fast forward and 1637 miles from Seneca Falls and I can easily stand near the place where the first woman, Louisa Gardner Swain, actually placed the first vote on equal terms with men. Twenty-two years after that group gathered in the churchyard of an Eastern state, Louisa walked to cast that first vote in the Western town of Laramie, Wyoming. More than 150 years ago Wyoming's Territorial Legislature granted women the ground-breaking Act of Suffrage December 10, 1869, and I can travel down another alley to an inconspicuous place where that soft-spoken Quaker woman of conscience cast that first remarkable, legal vote with no repercussions, because the men of our Territory allowed that right.



I am still amazed that I live in the Western community where that Suffrage Act was first given, where the first woman voted with full equal rights because of it, where the first women bailiff and jurists were assigned as a result. I get to live in the state where there was vision to place women on equal footing with men in political representation and with property ownership. No one can quite believe it when I tell that tale to our visitors who come to Laramie's stunning historic house museum to learn of Laramie, Albany County and Wyoming's unique history. Some say, "Yeah, but didn't that Legislature use that Act to strengthen the Territory and its population, bolster their potential for representation as an eventual state in the Union? They were just trying to attract women to come West." SO? Why not lure new citizens—men and women—with the notion that their vote can count, they can hold public office and property on equality footing?

I think of those stalwart pioneers, some of those first women who stepped up. Most of them stepping off the trains out West were not fighting the glorious equality fight alongside the suffragettes on the Eastern side of the nation. They were simply digging in, doing what needed to be done to settle towns, create homesteads, build schools and churches for the new folks landing at end-of-tracks villages. They rolled up their sleeves to work hard because it needed to be done. They served sandwiches and supplies, started restaurants, laundries and stores because they were needed. Someone had to do it. Our women and our men did what needed to be done.

When Kim Viner and I first pulled this booklet together, we were part of the representatives of the Laramie Plains Museum, helping to showcase the Wyoming House for Historic Women. We were hoping to offer a handy reference on the women of Laramie and Wyoming since the House sits just a stone's throw from where the first woman voted on equal terms with men, and the first women were able to serve on a jury **ever**. We wanted to show visitors that their visit here reinforces just how incredible it was for the Wyoming Territorial Legislature to choose to do what it did in 1869. In an era when women were still considered less-than, that Legislature gave women rights equal to men—to vote, to hold office and property. We wanted to give insight into how women of Wyoming Territory, Laramie City and Albany County were significant in women's efforts to represent for the "fairer sex" as early as 1869.

The nation celebrates the fact that women were given the right to vote in 1920, but this western territory, because of men in the Wyoming political arena standing firm in their conviction on women's rights, and Wyoming women stepping up, was a unique place in our nation and world history more than 50 years before. It's a tale worth telling and women's names that are worth remembering as some of the "first" to offer actions as convictions for equal rights.

Mary Mountain, Executive Director

Laramie Plains Museum at the Historic Ivins Mansion



There's a story here....

AND TOM REA, WYOHISTORY.ORG EDITOR TELLS IT THIS WAY: THE FIRST MAN TO PUSH FOR WYOMING'S SUFFRAGE

Thanks to an uneducated Virginian who had no use for black people, Wyoming Territory became the first government in the world to guarantee women the right to vote. No one person could have done such a thing by himself, of course. A territorial legislature, made up entirely of men, had to be persuaded that votes for women were a good idea. The most interesting of all those men was a saloon keeper from South Pass City, a frontier mining town nearly as big as Cheyenne at the time. William Bright never went to school. He grew up in Virginia, a southern state, but served in the Union Army all through the Civil War. Gold was discovered in 1867 in South Pass, and a gold rush started. William Bright moved to South Pass City that summer, hoping, like everyone else in town, to strike it rich. He staked a lot of mining claims, and then made good money selling the claims as more and more miners flocked to the gullies and gulches around South Pass. In the spring of 1868, Julia Bright and their baby son, William Jr. moved from Salt Lake City to join the boy's father.

William Bright was a Democrat. At the time Democrats continued to oppose some of the most important changes the war had brought about. In particular, they opposed full citizenship and voting rights for black people. These measures were, however guaranteed by the 14th and 15th amendments to the U.S. Constitution proposed in 1866 and 1869 respectively (adopted 1868/1870).

In May 1868, Democrats in South Pass City called a meeting to choose a person to travel to the national Democratic Convention. William Bright was one of 17 men who signed a notice in the newspaper calling people to come to the meeting. Only strong Democrats should attend—the notice warned—men who opposed votes for black people and opposed the so-called Radical Republicans who were running Congress. Bright chaired the meeting. That fact gives us a glimpse of his political feelings—and probably his racial ones.



WYOMING'S FIRST LEGISLATURE

In the fall of 1868, Ulysses S. Grant appointed Republicans to run the brand-new Wyoming Territory. These included the governor, John Campbell; Campbell's second in command, Secretary Edwin Lee; and Attorney General Joseph A. Carey, the top government lawyer in the state. They arrived in May 1869 and soon Carey issued an official legal opinion that no one in Wyoming could be denied the right to vote based on race.

A territory-wide election was held in early September. Many Democrats saw Carey's opinion as a move to make sure Wyoming's black people voted Republican. But to the Republican Gov. Campbell's surprise and embarrassment, only Democrats were elected. The territory's new delegate to Congress was a Democrat, and all 22 members of the new territorial legislature were Democrats, too.

One of these was William Bright who won a seat in the Council, or upper house of the Legislature—essentially a senate. He must have been well liked, because the other councilors elected him president of the Council, which meant he would get to run the meetings and decide which bills got voted on, and when.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE AIR

The Legislature met in October 1869 in Cheyenne. All those Democrats seem to have had it on their mind not to protect black people's rights, like the Republicans wanted to do, but to protect women's rights. They passed a resolution allowing women to sit inside the special space where the lawmakers sat. They passed a law guaranteeing that teachers—most of whom were women—would be paid the same whether they were men or women. And they passed a bill guaranteeing married women property rights separate from their husbands.

The idea that women deserved the same rights as men had been growing steadily in the United States since the 1840s. For a long time, many people who supported the abolition of slavery also supported women's rights. Both feelings were strong in the Republican Party before the Civil War. But after the war, Republicans felt they had to do all they could to make sure the freed slaves got the right to vote and were able to keep it. So, the Republicans put women's rights on the back burner. Some women were furious about this and felt betrayed by the party.

In 1854 the legislature in Washington Territory tried and failed to give women the right to vote. Nebraska Territory did the same in 1856. In Congress, a senator introduced a bill after the Civil War to give women in all the territories the right to vote. This failed, too, as did bills in 1868 that would have amended the U.S. Constitution to give all women in the United States and territories the right to vote. Early in 1869, Dakota Territory came within one vote of passing a so-called woman suffrage bill.

BRIGHT'S BILL

William Bright, fairly late in the legislative session, introduced a bill to give Wyoming women the right to vote. Unfortunately, no record was kept then (or now) of what Wyoming lawmakers actually said while they were debating bills. But what was on Bright's mind and on the other legislators' minds can be gleaned from newspaper articles and from people's memories reported years later. First, lawmakers wanted to get Wyoming some good publicity, so that more settlers would come to the territory. With the railroad built, and the gold mines at South Pass producing less and less gold, it seemed as though more people were leaving than coming in. Positive news stories published throughout the nation, legislators thought, might reverse the trend. The lawmakers especially hoped the news would bring more women. There were six adult men in the Territory for every adult woman, and there were very few children. Second, these Democrats in the legislature hoped that once these women came to Wyoming, they would



When the territory of Wyoming applied to join the union, congress demanded they stop letting women vote. Their response was "We will remain out of the Union one hundred years rather than come in without the women". Thus Wyoming became the first state to allow women to vote.

continue to vote for the party that had given them the vote in the first place. Third, the Democrats wanted to make John Campbell, the Republican governor, look bad. If they passed the bill, many assumed, Campbell would veto it. Here he was, their thinking went, a member of the party that supposedly championed the voting rights of the ex-slaves, but given a chance to extend the vote to women he wouldn't be able to bring himself to do it.



A RACIAL ARGUMENT

Fourth, many of the legislators believed strongly that if blacks and Chinese were to have the vote, then women especially white women —should have it, too. The following spring, a Cheyenne newspaper reported this as “the clincher” argument. William Bright, president of the Council and the man who had introduced the bill to give women the vote, was one of the main backers of this argument.

The Wyoming Territorial Legislature gave women the right to vote late in 1869, and Gov. John Campbell signed it into law Dec. 10. Stories also circulated in later years that the whole thing had been a joke, that the lawmakers were mostly kidding and the entire idea went further than anyone had expected. That may be partly, or slightly true, but it goes against the fact that they spent a great deal of time debating the issue—hardly something the legislators would have done if they hadn’t taken it seriously.

And finally, some lawmakers wanted to give the vote to women simply because it was the right thing to do. Bright was among this number, as well.

THE BILL'S BUMPY RIDE

The Bill passed the Council six votes to two. In the House, lawmakers tried and failed to attach various amendments. Some of these were attempts to make the bill so unattractive to the other legislators that it would fail. One such amendment, which did fail, would have extended the vote to “all colored women and squaws.”

The House did pass an amendment to raise the voting age for women from 18 to 21. The House then passed the woman suffrage bill seven votes to four, with one abstention. Governor Campbell took several days deciding what to do. He finally signed the bill into law Dec. 10, 1869. As many as 1,000 women appear to have gone to the polls. To the disgust of the Democrats who had given them the vote, a great many voted Republican. A Republican was elected territorial representative to Congress.

A REPEAL ATTEMPT

The new legislature decided votes for women weren't such a good idea after all, however, and passed a bill to repeal the 1869 law. To his credit, Gov. Campbell vetoed the repeal. Some Assembly members pushed to override his veto, but the Council fell one vote short. That left the new law standing, and it was never challenged again.

The actual act was very succinct and is shown below as it appeared in the published records of the first Legislative Assembly.

FEMALE SUFFRAGE.

CHAPTER 31.

AN ACT TO GRANT TO THE WOMEN OF WYOMING TERRITORY THE RIGHT OF SUFFRAGE, AND TO HOLD OFFICE.

Be it enacted by the Council and House of Representatives of the Territory of Wyoming:

SEC. 1. That every woman of the age of twenty-one ^{Women's} years, residing in this territory, may, at every election to be holden under the laws thereof, cast her vote. And her rights to the elective franchise and to hold office shall be the same under the election laws of the territory, as those of electors.

SEC. 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.

Approved, December 10th 1869.

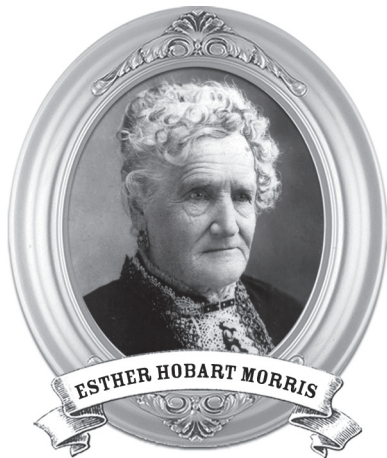
Condensed and used with permission from Tom Rea's article
"Right Choice, Wrong Reasons: Wyoming Women Win the Right to Vote."



WYOMING'S LEGISLATIVE ACT CAUSED SIGNIFICANT "FIRSTS"

First Woman Justice of the Peace

Esther Hobart Morris was probably the first woman in the new Wyoming Territory (formerly Dakota Territory) to be directly impacted by the Suffrage Act. She was appointed as a justice of the peace in South Pass City, Wyoming Territory in the early part of 1870 and served in that capacity from February 17, 1870 until November 14 of that same year. Interestingly, two other women were asked by the governor to serve as justices of the peace but declined to do so. Morris was well received in her role and ruled on more than two dozen cases brought before her.



AMERICA'S FIRST WOMEN ON A JURY. FIRST WOMAN VOTER. FIRST FEMALE BAILIFF. AND OTHER EQUALITY ACTIONS HAPPENED IN WYOMING!

The first impact upon Laramie/Albany County was in the territorial court system. On March 7, 1870, at the direction of Judge John Howe, women were called to be empaneled on a grand jury for the first time in the world. This action caused another first when Martha Symon Boies was appointed the first woman bailiff to preside with the mixed jury. Yet another world first would occur in Laramie in September 1870. Mrs. Louisa Gardner Swain became the first woman in the world to vote under laws that granted equal voting and political rights with men, when on the 6th of that month she cast her ballot in the election for territorial and county officials. The personal histories of these Laramie women—so significant to the growth of women's suffrage, through service in Wyoming and for the nation's progress with equality—are recounted in the following pages.



In 1899, notable women in the equal rights movement posed in a re-enactment at the Laramie site where Wyoming women had been empanelled on the first jury in the world that included women.

Photo courtesy of the American Heritage Center



Wyoming House for Historic Women at the Louisa Swain Plaza, Historic Downtown Laramie, Wyoming, sits on 2nd Street, just a stone's throw from where the first woman's vote was cast in 1870 and the first women were seated on a jury in 1870.

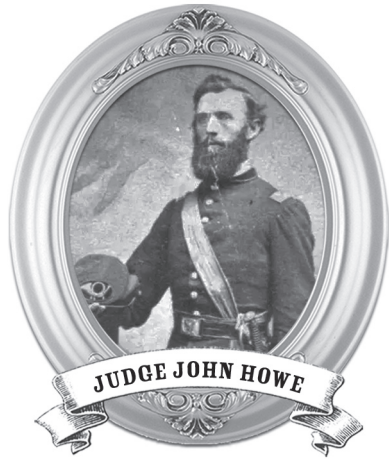
The House also heralds Wyoming women of the 20th and 21st Century who continue this first-in-equality legacy.

FIRST WOMEN ON A JURY

Laramie women were to play an equal, if not more, important role in the march of women to political equality with men. **On 7 March, 1870**, at the direction of Judge John Howe who presided over the district court in Laramie, Wyoming, and following Albany County Commissioners listing of the ladies' names on the prospective juror list, women were called to be empanelled on a grand jury for the first time in the world. In his remarks, as reported verbatim in the 8 March 1870 Cheyenne Leader, Judge Howe stated:



Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury: It is an innovation and a great novelty to see, as we do today, ladies summoned to serve as jurors. The extension of political rights and franchise is a subject that is agitating the whole country. I have never taken an active discussion, but have long seen that woman was a victim to the vices, crimes and immoralities of man, with no power to protect and defend herself from these evils. I have long felt that such powers of protection should be conferred upon women, and it has fallen to our lot here to act as pioneers in the movement and to test the question. The eyes of the whole world are today fixed upon this jury of Albany county.



Thus a conscious decision was made by Judge Howe to fully empower women under the 10 December 1869 Suffrage Act. Six women were summoned on that day to sit alongside 10 men. This marked the first time in the history of the world that women were given the opportunity to serve their community in such a manner.

Judge John Howe
Photo courtesy of
Kewanee Historical Society
Kewanee, Illinois

JURY CONTINUED


Unfortunately, Judge Howe was taken ill the next year and after he left the bench his successor would not allow women on “his” juries. He contended that the act which described the makeup of juries (passed before suffrage act on December 7) read “He knew the act that listed jury qualifications (passed December 7) stated only males could serve took precedence.” would be qualified to serve, superseded the suffrage act. This was to be the norm for many years in Wyoming – only men serving on juries—and a significant setback to the suffrage progress already made. The service of those women on the first jury was not without cost. The eastern press pilloried them, contending that they had deserted their families. The Cheyenne Leader ran a column-long diatribe about the woman jurors stating that “the female mind is too susceptible to the influence of emotions to allow the supreme control of reason. Hence the judgment of the woman is liable to warped by pathetic appeals to the feeling.” Those women, however, persevered and, according to Judge Howe, acquitted themselves very well.

MISS ELIZA STEWART (LATER MRS. BOYD). JUROR

Eliza was born in Pennsylvania on September 8, 1833. Hers was the first name drawn for jury duty that March. While her “first” makes her noteworthy in history, her many other accomplishments seem lost to contemporary historians. Stewart was the eldest of eight children. Her mother died soon after the birth of the last child. Stewart took on the role of raising her seven younger siblings. Despite the hardships, she graduated in 1861 from Washington Female Seminary in Washington, Pa., as class valedictorian. Her valedictory address, ten typed pages of rhymed verse titled “Entering Service,” was published in the newspaper in Meadville, Pa. For the next eight years, she taught school in her native Crawford County. In December 1868, she decided to move West, arriving in Laramie just as the town was about to open its first public school. When it was learned she was a veteran teacher, she was hired—the first teacher in



Photo courtesy of
American Heritage Center
Grace Raymond Hebard Collection
Date unknown



the Laramie public schools. First classes began in February 1869. Shortly after that, she met Stephen Boyd, a machinist in the Union Pacific car repair shops who had come to Laramie before the first train arrived in 1868 and whom she would soon wed. Before her marriage, however, Stewart received the call to serve on the jury. Stewart's unique position as the first woman selected gained worldwide fame and made her a celebrity. Nonetheless, when jury service ended, Stewart returned to teaching. Two months after her marriage, Eliza was named to the organizing committee for the Wyoming Literary and Library Association. She helped draft the constitution of the organization and became a charter member, one of the first in Wyoming to promote libraries and the arts. She also continued to write poetry. In August 1873, Eliza became the first woman in Wyoming (and probably the entire United States) to be nominated to run for the territorial legislature. For unknown reasons, she declined nomination, withdrawing her name from the ballot. Eliza Stewart Boyd retained an active interest in politics, however. Part of her interest came in her support for prohibition of liquor. In November 1883, she was a charter member of the newly organized Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in Laramie, serving for many years as the organization's secretary. In the Prohibition Party's state convention in February 1888, she was selected as one of two Wyoming delegates to the party's national convention, held that June in Indianapolis. She continued to play an active role in Laramie's "society." In the winter of 1912, she read a paper at ceremonies opening Whiting School in Laramie, in honor of Miss Whiting, a long-time teacher and administrator. Three weeks later, Eliza Stewart Boyd slipped in a patch of ice in front of her home and broke her hip. Within a week, the 79-year-old pioneer died.

"Condensed and reprinted with permission from Professor Phil Roberts' online history of Eliza Stewart"

MRS. MARY MACKEL, JUROR

Mary Mackel (often spelled Mackle) was born in New York about 1847. She was the wife of Joseph Mackel, a clerk at Fort Sanders, when she was called to serve on the grand jury in March 1870. Although she did serve, little is known about her or her family. Both of the Mackels appear in the census of the fort in June 1870, and Mr. Mackel was listed as serving on a jury in March 1871. Subsequent to that date both of the Mackels disappear from all available records.

MRS. AMELIA HATCHER. JUROR

Amelia Hatcher (later Heath) was born in England in 1842. The 1870 census shows that she was in Laramie and living in the house of her father Robert Galbraith with her 8 year old son Robert. Her father was the pioneer master mechanic of the Wyoming division of the Union Pacific Railroad. She moved here after the death of her first husband. Little is known of her life before arriving in Laramie. While in Laramie, she was the owner of a millinery store in Laramie which was located on Second Street. She listed \$1000 as the value of her estate in the 1870 census, making her one of the wealthiest women in town. She owned the shop through the summer of 1871. Mrs. Hatcher married



Photo courtesy of
American Heritage Center
Date unknown

Nathan A. Heath not long after she concluded her jury duties. He was a conductor on the Union Pacific Railroad for many years and thereafter ran the drug store at the corner of Second and Thornburgh streets (now Iverson Avenue). They lived at the corner of Fremont and Third streets. The family left Laramie in the late 1880's and moved to Hebron, Nebraska, where Mr. Heath was a banker. From Hebron they moved to Ogden, Utah, where he died in March 1921. Amelia died that same year on 17 October, also in Ogden. She was the last of the original women jurors. Interestingly, she died within a week of Sheriff Nathaniel K. Boswell and "Aunt Mary" Erhart, noted early Laramie pioneers.

MRS. JANE HILTON. JUROR

Jane Hilton was born 1829 in New York. In 1870, she was living with her husband George F. Hilton and daughter Nellie Hilton in Laramie. They had arrived in 1868 and her husband, who was a physician, was also a minister and organized the Methodist church in Laramie. Her husband also ran a drug store in town through 1873 but then the family drops out of local newspaper accounts. It appears that they may have moved on to California just after that. A very brief obituary was published in the Laramie paper on May 24, 1884. It mentioned that news from "elsewhere" noted that she had passed away. No details of her life were given. Records do show that Jane also served on another grand Jury in 1871.

MRS. SARAH PEASE, JUROR

Sarah Pease moved to Laramie from Crystal Lake, Illinois, in 1869 with her husband Lorenzo Dow Pease whom she had married in 1867. Mr. Pease was a prominent attorney and judge during his time in Laramie and was deputy clerk of court when Sarah was called to jury duty in 1870 as a replacement for Mrs. Baker who asked to be excused. Sarah's interest in public service was again noted in 1884 when she ran for superintendent of public schools on the Democratic ticket. She was defeated by Helen Bradshaw. However, shortly after the death of her husband, she was nominated again in 1892 on both the Democratic and Populist tickets and won a two year term. She ran again as a Democrat in 1894 and was re-elected. Of note, her election in 1892 resulted

in a lawsuit brought by her defeated opponent, Mrs. Lizzie Sawin, because Mrs. Pease received votes as both a Democrat and a Populist. The case was eventually heard by Wyoming Supreme Court which rejected Mrs. Sawin's complaint. After completing her last term, Sarah moved to Battle Creek, Michigan. There she was also elected superintendent of schools. She died in April 1909. Mrs. Pease was the only member of the original grand jury who wrote an extended firsthand account of those momentous events (printed in the Laramie papers on October 17, 1889). It is through that account that historians are able to accurately judge the tenor of the community and the nation as the women served their community. Mrs. Pease made it clear that the women took their charge seriously, despite the ridicule and rancor that they faced. She noted that the women carefully studied the laws that they were asked to rule on and were not reluctant to correct the jury foreman, Mr. Frederick Laycock, when he misinterpreted the territorial statutes.



Photo courtesy of
American Heritage Center
Date unknown

MRS. ANNIE MONEHAN, JUROR

Annie Monehan was born in Ireland in 1845. Although not listed in all reports of the first women on the grand jury, in her very detailed 1889 personal remembrance of the jury, Mrs. Sarah Pease stated that she looked up the court record of the jury proceeding and found Mrs. Monehan as

one of those who served. It is possible that this is the Anna Monnahan listed in the 1870 census as living in Laramie with her two-year old daughter, Frances, in the household of John and Louisa Franz. No further information on Mrs. Monehan has been found.

Interestingly, there are no pictures of the ladies when they were serving on that first mixed jury. Juror Sarah Pease recalled that all of the women felt that such pictures would be used for adverse publicity so were careful to veil themselves when going to and from the court. We include the caricature below because it is one of the few visual records of what the nation was exposed to as these actions for equality within the political system were taking place. This sketch is from Frank Leslie's famous **Leslie's Illustrated** in 1870. Note that there are even mothers with babes in arms, which was certainly not the case for these Wyoming women who took their charge in the courtroom very seriously.



The World's first woman jury, Laramie City 1870. The jury was mixed male and female. Eastern cartoonists saw the event as a lark and caricatured it as all-female, with babes in arms. But King William of Prussia was impressed enough to send President Grant a cable congratulating him "upon the evidence of progress in America." Illustration from Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper one of the most prolific periodicals of the time.

FIRST WOMAN BAILIFF

MRS. MARTHA SYMONS BOIES (LATER ATKINSON)

The first woman in the world to be appointed a court bailiff of record, she was appointed to serve to the Laramie City, Wyoming, court in March 1870. Her appointment was necessitated by the fact that the first mixed jury had been appointed. That first mixed jury was a grand jury and having heard testimony in a murder case was unable to reach a decision on an indictment by nightfall. Thus rooms were engaged for the jurors at the Union Pacific Hotel, one for the men and one for the women jurors. It was this situation that led to Martha's appointment as bailiff so she could sit outside and guard the lady jurors' room during the evening. The following morning she is purported to have announced that the "men were well behaved during the course of the evening." It is interesting to note that Mrs. Boies also sat as a juror in subsequent grand and petit juries.

Born in England on April 10, 1830, she moved to America with her parents as an infant. Growing up in Wisconsin, she married John Symons and to this marriage was born a daughter and two sons.

Having married Jeremiah Boies in 1866 after the untimely drowning death of her first husband, Martha arrived in Laramie in a prairie schooner with her children on May 9, 1868 soon after the Union Pacific Railroad had arrived in town. Mr. Boies, a well-known local businessman, died at age 96 in 1900. Martha then married prominent local rancher, James Atkinson, the following year.

During her life of almost 87 years, Martha Symons-Boies (later Atkinson) had crossed an ocean, married three times, raised two sons, served as an assistant to her undertaker husband, managed a boarding house and had a large role in the history of the attainment of full rights for the women of the United States. She died in Laramie on March 23, 1917, at her home at Second and University and is buried in Greenhill Cemetery. Her direct descendants, through her son John, have been residents of Wyoming for six generations.



FIRST WOMAN VOTER

MRS. LOUISA GARDNER SWAIN

Early in the morning on September 6, 1870, Louisa Swain, a seventy year old Quaker lady, became the first woman in the world to cast a ballot under laws giving women the right to vote with full political equality with men. Her history-making vote was cast in Laramie, Wyoming and is memorialized within a plaza not far from that first voting place, in Laramie's historic downtown.

There is no conclusive evidence regarding why Louisa was the first to vote that day. Some accounts indicated that the ladies in town selected her because of her age and the fact that she was a pioneer in the county. Others contend that it was merely happenstance. No matter which is true, her vote marked a true victory on the path to equal rights. Moreover it was noted on the other side of the globe with Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm praising America for its step forward.*

Born in Norfolk, Virginia in 1801, Louisa was the daughter of a sea captain who left on a voyage, never to return when Louisa was but an infant. Louisa then moved to Charleston, South Carolina with her mother. Not long thereafter she became an orphan upon her mother's death. Finding her relatives after reaching the age of maturity, Louisa moved to Baltimore, Maryland where she met and married Stephen Swain. To their union was born three sons and a daughter. The Swains began their journey towards the west when their youngest child was but six weeks old.

The Journal of American History quotes an eyewitness to Louisa Swain's voting as saying 'Putting on a clean apron over her house dress, she walked to the polls early in the morning, unaided, carrying a little bucket for yeast to be bought at the bakeshop on her return home'. Shortly after casting this historic vote, Louisa Swain and her husband moved back east to Lutherville, Maryland to live with their daughter. It was there that Louisa Swain died on April 25, 1880. She rests under a canopy of tulip poplar trees in the Friends Burying Grounds on the Old Hartford Road in Baltimore, Maryland.

*Ironically German women did not get the right to vote until 1918, and many restrictions were still in place in America on the right of women to vote. Nationwide suffrage was not enacted until the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified in 1920. Restrictions on the votes of minority voters would continue for many years, the last legal restriction being overturned in New Mexico in 1962 when it finally allowed Native Americans to vote.



Photo courtesy of
American Heritage Center
Date unknown

FIRST WOMAN IN WYOMING'S LEGISLATURE

MRS. MARY GODAT BELLAMY

Mary G. Bellamy, born Marie Godat on her "lucky" Friday the 13th of December, 1861 in Richwood, Missouri, was the youngest of seven daughters of Charles and Catherine Horine Godat. Her mother came from a long line of Virginians of Huguenot ancestry, and her father had Huguenot ancestors who manufactured jewelry in Bern, Switzerland, of which he had been mayor before he immigrated to the United States. When she was seven years old her father died and "Mollie" and her mother went to live with a sister in Galena, Illinois. They then moved to Laramie to help raise a nephew, Louis Murphey, after another sister had died here in 1873, only about five years after Laramie had been the "end-o'-tracks." Mary, as she was by then calling herself, became one of the three members of the first graduating class of Laramie High School.



She started her teaching career in 1878 when she went to live with another sister in Tybo, Nye County, Nevada. Three years later she taught in a rural school about twenty miles from Buffalo, Wyoming, before returning home to teach in Laramie in 1882. In 1886 she married Charles Bellamy, but she continued to teach until 1892 when they moved to Cheyenne for five years. Upon returning to Laramie she was elected to the office of Albany County Superintendent of Schools in 1902. In 1910, she became the first woman to be elected to the Wyoming Legislature, in which she served as chairman of the Credentials Committee and was a member of the Public Buildings and Institutions and of the Education and Public Libraries Committees. In 1915, she was a delegate to both the State and National Democratic Conventions, at which she was appointed to the committee that notified President Woodrow Wilson of his second nomination. She was also Wyoming's delegate to the National Suffrage Convention in Washington in 1918, at which she helped to ensure the passage of the woman suffrage amendment to the Constitution in 1920.

Mary Bellamy became a charter member of the Cheyenne Woman's Club in 1896, was a chief organizer and charter member of the Laramie Woman's Club in 1898, and was one of the founders of the Wyoming State Federation of Woman's Clubs in 1904. Some of the honors she received were the Casper Kiwanis Club's outstanding achievement award and an honorary membership of the Wyoming Press Women in 1948, plus her designation in 1951 by the state chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution as the Wyoming person to be listed in the inscriptions in the DAR's Memorial Bell Tower at Valley Forge. She was especially proud of being awarded an honorary Doctor of Law Degree in 1952 from the University of Wyoming for which she had worked so hard in the Legislature. She was able to savor it for the next three years before her full and eventful life ended in her 94th year.

John Bellamy
Gem City of the Plains, M K Mason, 1966, p. 325

Other significant positions were held by Wyoming's women following those distinct early footsteps of these pioneering 19th Century women taking first actions in gender equality.

Wyoming has the distinction of electing the **first woman governor** in the United States. Nellie Tayloe Ross took office in Wyoming when she was elected to complete her husband William Ross' term following his death in October 1924.

The state held a special election to select Ross' successor and without conducting a campaign, Nellie was elected and inaugurated on January 5, 1925. Mrs. Ross served well for two years but was defeated in her bid for re-election. Nellie Tayloe Ross served as an officer in the Democratic Party national organization for several years before being chosen by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to be the first woman ever to be appointed as Director of the U.S. Mint in 1933. She served in that capacity for 20 years and remained in Washington D.C. until her death in 1979, at the age of 101.



In 1894, **Estelle Reel** of Cheyenne won a landslide victory for the post of state Superintendent of Public Instruction. Her election made her the first woman in Wyoming to serve in an elected state-wide office. It was believed in her lifetime and for more than a century that Reel held the first statewide office by a woman in the nation, but it has recently been made clear that a North Dakota woman, Laura Eisenhuth, actually took that distinction two years before Reel's statewide office. We do know that based on her experience and excellent work in Wyoming, Ms. Reel would go on to become the first and only woman to serve as the nation's Superintendent of Indian Instruction. She was appointed to the office by President William McKinley, and unanimously approved by the U.S. Senate, taking her office in 1898. She was the first woman in American history to be confirmed by that body to a national office.



Harriet Elizabeth "Liz" Byrd was born in Cheyenne in 1926. After graduating from high school in Cheyenne in 1944, her application to the University of Wyoming was rejected. Undaunted, she attended West Virginia State college. She earned an education degree in 1949. Upon returning to Cheyenne she applied for a position in the local school district. Again, a Wyoming institution rejected her application. Instead she got a job as an administrator at Fort F. E. Warren where she met and eventually married James Byrd.



In 1959, she was finally hired by the Laramie County School district becoming **the first full time certified black teacher in Wyoming**. She ran for the Wyoming legislature in 1980. Her platform was based on increasing the benefits for teachers and better classroom conditions. She was successful and served through 1988. She was then **elected to the Wyoming Senate in**

1989, serving until 1992. In both instances she was the first female African American to so serve. She was instrumental in the establishment of Wyoming's Martin Luther King/Wyoming Equality Day, She retired from teaching in 1996 and died on 27 January 2015.

Though settled after most areas of America, Wyoming holds a unique position in the establishment and maintenance of the right of women to vote, serve in government and to judge the guilt or innocence of fellow citizens charged with crimes. Wyoming was first to enact the legislation that allowed women to assume their rightful place in their community. Moreover, Wyoming preserved those rights in the face of stiff opposition from ill-informed politicians. Most dramatically, when statehood for Wyoming was being debated in the United States Congress in 1889-90, certain members demanded that Wyoming overturn the rights it had granted women before it could be admitted to the Union! The overwhelming response from Wyoming was a resounding “no.”

The reason for the Wyoming response is clear: Wyoming women had proven beyond any doubt that they were capable of exercising their established privileges. Wyoming politicians (all males at the time) would not stand for any challenge to their rights. President of the Wyoming State Constitutional Convention, Melville C. Brown, put it this way, “It (referring to female suffrage) has become one of the fundamental laws of the land, and to raise a question about it at this time is as improper in my judgment as to raise any question as to any fundamental right guaranteed to any citizen in this territory.” Wyoming women’s rights were guaranteed, and Laramie, Wyoming women deserve much of the credit for that success!



Young Louisa Gardner Swain, “first woman in the world to vote in a general election under the same political rights as men.” The vote she cast at the age of seventy years took place in Laramie, Wyoming, September 6, 1870

FIRST WOMAN PRISON CHAPLAIN

MAY PRESTON SLOSSON

May Preston Slosson accomplished many “firsts” in her life while working for social justice and women’s rights. One of those “firsts” happened in Laramie, WY. Born in 1858 in New York, May Genevieve Preston had enlightened views of social reform. She learned from her parents who worked persistently for temperance, equal suffrage, and higher education for women.

May Preston was the first woman to earn a Doctorate from Cornell University and became a college professor teaching Philosophy and Greek at Hastings College in Nebraska. Later Dr. May Preston met and married Edwin Slosson in 1891. They moved to Laramie, where Edwin became an Assistant Chemistry Professor at the University of Wyoming.

May Slosson became an integral part of Laramie’s community. As chair of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union Prison Committee, she visited the prisoners at the State Penitentiary in Laramie counseling them on alcohol abuse. Slosson’s concern with the human condition motivated her prison reform work. Unprecedented for the time, Prison Warden McDonald submitted her name for chaplain. On July 9, 1899, Dr. May Preston Slosson was appointed Prison Chaplain, the first woman in United States’ prisons.

Slosson wanted to instill self-respect in prisoners while developing a spiritual reality. Beyond leading religious services, she continued counseling prisoners, and created a literacy program. During her tenure, the prison punishment rate dropped fifty percent.

In 1903, Slosson resigned her post and her family moved to New York. She spoke publicly in the United States and in England on her reform work as the first female Prison Chaplain. Slosson marched with Carrie Chapman Catt campaigning for the right to vote. She was a presenter at the 1910 Suffrage Convention speaking about women’s suffrage in Wyoming which she had the honor of experiencing first-hand.

Throughout her life May Preston Slosson was a staunch activist for women’s right to vote; women’s role in the public sphere; property rights; social and political opportunities; education equal with men, and financial independence.

Dr. May Preston Slosson died at 85 and is buried in Laramie.



Photo courtesy of Wyoming Territorial
Prison State Historic Site

WYOMING STATE MUSEUM'S TRAVELING EXHIBIT SUFFRAGE WYOMING

The Wyoming State Museum's traveling exhibit, *Suffrage Wyoming*, is heading on a tour of State Parks and Historic Sites across Wyoming. The exhibit traces the history and impact of women's suffrage in Wyoming from 1869 to the present day. As Wyoming celebrates its 150th anniversary of universal suffrage in 2019 and the 100th anniversary of national women's suffrage in 2020, this exhibit examines both the major successes and long road ahead for women in politics.

Tour Schedule for Albany County - August 24 to October 31, 2020
Wyoming Territorial Prison State Historic Site
975 Snowy Range Road
Laramie, WY 82070
Contact: Deborah Cease - (307) 745-3733 or (307) 760-4914

Making History

150 years ago, something remarkable happened in Wyoming Territory. During its very first legislative session, the territorial government gave women the right of universal suffrage. Legislators, however, did not stop at just suffrage. They passed a number of bills that granted women several important rights: control of their separate property; the right to work in trade or business and to control their own earnings; and equal pay for equally qualified female school teachers.

Today the word suffrage is firmly associated with women's struggle to obtain the right to vote. In the United States, the national women's suffrage movement began in earnest in 1848, during the women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. It lasted for over seventy years, enduring major interruptions such as the Civil War and World War I. In the end, women's courage and persistence resulted in the passage of the 19th Amendment, which granted them the right of universal suffrage across the nation.

Beyond securing women's right to vote, the suffrage movement fundamentally changed how women participated in national politics. Through their relentless activism, women had proven themselves to be capable leaders, organizers, and administrators. Against great odds, they went from passive observers to a force to be reckoned with.



Women suffragists picketing in front of the White House, February 1917

**"Suffrage is a common right of citizenship.
Women have the right of suffrage.
Logically it cannot be escaped."**

— Victoria Woodhull



Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Newspaper*, 1888. Women at the polls in Cheyenne



The "petticoat government" in Jackson was the first US city government made up entirely of women. From left to right: Mae Deloney, Rose Crabtree, Grace Miller (Mayor), Fauslina Haight, and Genevieve Von Vleck, 1921

VOTES FOR WOMEN

150TH ANNIVERSARY 1870-2020

MARTHA SYMONS BOIES

Martha became the first woman in the U.S. appointed as a bailiff.

LOUISA SWAIN

Louisa was the first woman in the United States to cast a ballot under laws granting women and men fully equal voting rights, Sept. 6, 1870.

ELIZA STEWART

Eliza was the first woman formally subpoenaed to serve on a court jury. Laramie, Wyoming 1870.

Sept. 6, 1870 Laramie, Wyoming, Louisa donned an apron, a shawl and bonnet, grabbed a tin pail and walked to town on a shopping trip. While there she cast the first ballot by any women in the United States in a general election creating history and simultaneously changing the world.

LARAMIE WYOMING WOMEN

MADE WORLD HISTORY

Get your free copy of the book at the Laramie Area Visitor Center

SARAH W. PEASE

Sarah was one of six to serve on the first grand jury to include women, which convened in March 1870.

AMELIA HATCHER HEATH

Amelia was one of six to serve on the first grand jury to include women, which convened in March 1870.

GRACE RAYMOND HEBARD

Wyoming historian, suffragist, pioneering scholar, prolific writer, political economist and noted University of Wyoming educator.

MARY GODAT BELLAMY

Mary was the first woman to be elected to the Legislature in the state of Wyoming.

Learn more: visitlaramie.org/laramie150women
ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN HERITAGE CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

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Get you commemorative “Votes for Women” Poster, “Votes for Women” Postcard, and a “Votes for Women” Button at the Laramie Area Visitor Center, 210 East Custer (307) 745-4195

MONUMENT AT THE LARAMIE PLAINS MUSEUM HISTORIC IVINSON MANSION

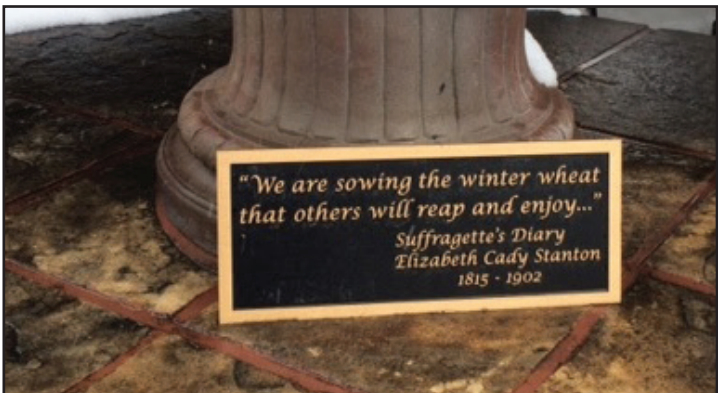
with plaques heralding some of Wyoming women's first actions in gender equality for the nation and the world.

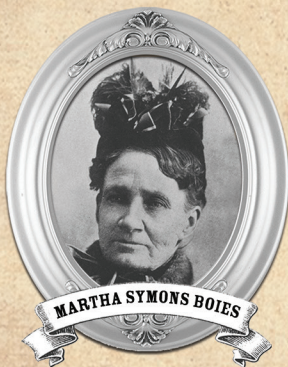


The monument was placed in the center of a garden on the east lawn of the Museum

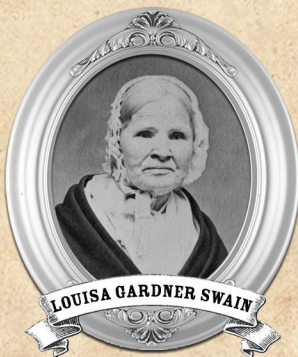
at 603 East Iverson Avenue Laramie, WY 82070 by Laramie Woman's Club.

The statue and plaque were provided by Laramie Plains Museum donors.

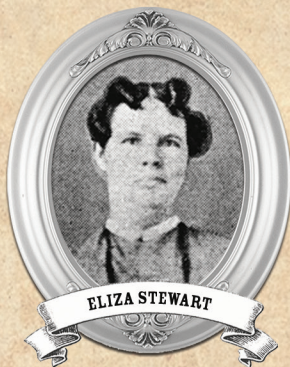




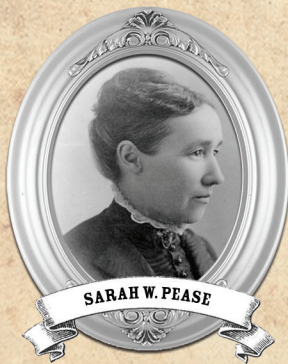
MARTHA SYMONS BOIES



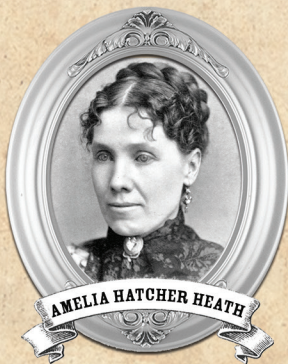
LOUISA GARDNER SWAIN



ELIZA STEWART



SARAH W. PEASE



AMELIA HATCHER HEATH



MARY GODAT BELLAMY



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