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Women's Suffrage is "Nothing Less than Treasonable:" an Analysis of Rural Women and their Group Activism in the Women's Suffrage Movement in the Jackson Purchase Area, 1838-1940

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Women's Suffrage is "Nothing Less than Treasonable:" an Analysis of Rural Women and their Group Activism in the Women's Suffrage Movement in the Jackson Purchase Area, 1838-1940

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May 2021

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Women's Suffrage is "Nothing Less than Treasonable:" an Analysis of Rural Women and their Group Activism in the Women's Suffrage Movement in the Jackson Purchase Area, 1838-1940

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for the Murray State University Honors Diploma

Ashleigh Deno

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Abstract

The 1910s was a decade characterized by technological advancement, World War I, and a global movement for women's suffrage, which would eventually culminate with legislation, most notably the 19th Amendment in the United States. In the United States, women staged protests throughout the country and were known to stand outside of the White House with taunting signs for President Woodrow Wilson to read. This movement came to the United States from other parts of the globe, particularly Britain, and suffragists from other countries were known to travel to the States to give presentations and provide guidance to suffragists on this side of the pond. The suffrage movement is most associated with the bigger cities in New York and the capital, but an unrecognized, albeit important, contribution came from the grassroots movements of rural areas. Here, women were less likely to stand out and preferred working under the relative safety of an organization. This holds true for many states that had their standout suffragists who started clubs and petitioned the government, but these states also had lesser-known suffragists who worked as a group within local organizations. This is seen within the state of Kentucky, as well, and in the rural area of the Jackson Purchase Area, the eight western-most counties of the state. In the Jackson Purchase Area, women joined grassroots organizations to aid in the Women's Suffrage Movement through group effort rather than individual contributions despite the generally negative perceptions of both the region and the media.

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Introduction

“Mr. President, how long must women wait for liberty?” was a popular sentiment and it adorned numerous signs that ran the stretch of street outside the front lawn of the White House in 1917.¹ President Woodrow Wilson was a consistent target of women struggling for equality as he stubbornly refused to grant women the right to vote. Throughout the country, women participated in parades, and occasionally riots, for the promotion of women’s rights. The fight for women’s suffrage was a decades-long movement that took off in the 1860s after African American men gained the right to vote with the 15th Amendment after the Civil War, although there were small roots to the movement before this. Spurred by jealousy that former enslaved people had the right to vote before white women, on paper at least, drove women to advocate for suffrage, although other factors would come to affect the movement.

The 1910s was a decade characterized by technological advancement, World War I, and a global movement for women’s suffrage. This decade formed the most active decade in terms of the fight for women’s rights which culminated in an abundance of legislation, most notably the 19th Amendment in the United States. Many other countries, primarily in South America, Australia and New Zealand, and Europe, began to grant women the right to vote in the years leading up to and following 1920. In the United States, women staged protests throughout the country and stood outside of the White House with taunting signs for President Woodrow Wilson to read. Generally, with few exceptions, the women’s struggle for suffrage in the States was relatively tame. In Great Britain, however, the Women’s Suffrage Movement was known for having some violent and aggressive tendencies and the women there received the right to vote a year prior to the United States.

¹ *The first picket line - College day in the picket line*, Feb. 1917, black and white print, National Women’s Party records, The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., accessed November 6, 2020, <https://lcn.loc.gov/97500299>.

The global movement, particularly the movement in Britain, inspired the movement in the United States with many of the methods they used, and suffragists from other countries traveled to the States to give presentations and provide guidance to suffragists on this side of the pond. Most studies of the suffrage movement associate it with the bigger cities in New York and Washington, D.C., but an unrecognized, albeit important, contribution came from the grassroots movements of rural areas. Here, women remained in the background of the movement and preferred working under the relative safety of an organization.

In larger urban areas, women often started with individual contributions to the suffrage movement and then they would search out organizations to work with, or often finding that no such club existed they would make their own. For smaller rural areas, like in the Jackson Purchase Area, however, women instead would often join women's groups that would then become pro-suffragist due to the nature of their members being women rather than from feminist ideology. This holds true for many states which had their standout suffragists who started the women's clubs and petitioned the government, but then these states also had lesser-known rural suffragist groups that gradually began to work toward suffrage within their local organizations. This trend permeated the state of Kentucky, as well, and the rural region of the Jackson Purchase Area, the eight western-most counties of the state. In the Jackson Purchase Area, women joined grassroots organizations to aid in the Women's Suffrage Movement through group effort rather than individual contributions despite the generally negative perceptions of both the region and the media.

Throughout the country, newspapers printed the latest news about the suffrage movement and general opinions about women's struggle for equality. Although some articles remained neutral, the opinion articles often perpetuated negative outlooks on women's new emerging role

in politics and how this removed their femininity. In the Jackson Purchase Area, newspapers occasionally reprinted these articles from larger papers throughout the nation, but they still served to showcase the negative perception of the region's populace in reference to suffrage. Unfortunately, authors often disguised these sentiments as genuine concern for women. A *Paducah Daily Register* article in 1907 bemoaned the fact that women slowly reached the vote because men were "incorrigibly romantic, even sentimental," and that these men "still [clung] to the bric-a-brac ideal of womanhood" despite the hordes of women workers during the war.² The author mourns the loss of traditional femininity and the weakness of man for giving in to these demands. The author worried about how women may come to lose themselves in their newfound masculine roles in politics and hoped that women would come to regain their womanhood.

Historians seldom study the perceptions and perspective of the people of the Jackson Purchase Area due to its distance from the mass population centers of Kentucky and its rural geography. As an understudied region in general, Women's Suffrage Movement historians have virtually overlooked the Jackson Purchase Area, and this paper serves to examine local evidence in an effort to explore the history of the Jackson Purchase Area more fully. As mentioned earlier, the women of the Jackson Purchase Area became more anonymous in their advocacy for women's suffrage in the sense that these women tended to act through a group rather than individually, a noted trend in rural regions. Specifically, rural women joined local women-based organizations as a way to interact with other women in society and their goals gradually shifted to become more pro-suffragist. Whereas for the urban movement, suffragists often began fighting for suffrage individually and only later sought out clubs. This is particularly evidenced in the rural suffrage movement of the Jackson Purchase Area. The efforts of rural women as

² "We Must Reckon with the Women," *The Paducah Daily Register*, March 10, 1907, 3, <https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/pdr/506/>.

opposed to the women of the bigger cities throughout the country has emerged as a topic of interest amongst scholars of women's history in an attempt to become more inclusive of women's history and diminish potential archival silences.

Throughout this paper, the focus is primarily on the advancement of women's suffrage in the Jackson Purchase Area, but there will also be a comparison between this movement and the wider movements both nationally and globally. This paper will move from a broad global examination of suffrage to a continually narrower focus on the efforts to aid this movement by women from the Jackson Purchase Area. First, an examination of the global Women's Suffrage Movement with an in-depth analysis of how this movement coincided with the movement of the United States. Following that, an analysis of the United States movement will lead into a discussion on the specific contributions of Kentucky to the overarching national movement. Finally, the paper will conclude with a thorough analysis of the movement in the Jackson Purchase Area, the local leaders and organizations that influenced the movement, and the perceptions of the region toward the advancement of women's rights. This examination will be done through archival documents from the Jackson Purchase Area from local families and organizations, along with a look at the writings of suffragists across the state of Kentucky and local newspapers. These writings will enable a more thorough analysis of the perspective of the region in regard to the movement as a whole and will help differentiate the different sectors of the Women's Suffrage Movement.

Historiography

On the general topic of women's suffrage in the United States, a multitude of academic writings exists. However, as the focus becomes narrower and narrower in terms of location, the academic writings become scarcer. Women's suffrage has become a popular topic of study for

historians, but they have had a tendency to focus on the well-known aspects of this history and to exclude certain perspectives from these historical writings due to a lack of evidence and, until recently, interest. No academic sources written solely on the Women's Suffrage Movement in the Jackson Purchase Area currently exist, but writings on the movement within the state of Kentucky can be readily found. Publishers print an immeasurable amount of new manuscripts on the movement within the United States every year.

There are some noted trends within the study of the movement with a tendency of historians to focus on the women most known with this movement, such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who started out with individual contributions to the suffrage movement and then began to work within clubs. It was the opposite in rural areas, which has led to rural areas drifting to the wayside in historical study. Historians have documented the lives and actions of these notable women using a variety of sources, and they have studied and analyzed the contributions of these women to the greater context of the suffrage movement extensively.³ Historians frequently use the writings of the noted figures of the movement, such as those above, to study the movement. These women, and other prominent leaders, traveled across the country in promotion of women's rights and gave speeches to many communities. These women passed out many pamphlets to promote the advancements of women's rights. Along with this, a popular source of study consists of the multitude of pictures from various women's marches and protests. Of special interest are the various pictures of suffragists protesting outside of the White House with mocking signs directed toward President Woodrow Wilson, who

³ This is shown in the fact that the 19th Amendment was nicknamed the "Susan B. Anthony Amendment," as well as her house having been turned into a museum for the suffrage movement. To learn more about her life and work toward suffrage, I would recommend Lynn Sherr, *Failure is Impossible: Susan B. Anthony in Her Own Words* (New York: Times Books, 1995), or Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The History of Woman Suffrage* (Published by Susan B. Anthony, 1889).

needed to be convinced of the need for women's suffrage. An in-depth analysis of the laws that excluded women from both the polls and also prevented them from participating in other aspects of life open to men are a common source in the examination of women's suffrage. These provide needed context for the origin and progression of the movement.

Demonstrating the trend that historians tend to focus on the individual contributions of women to the movement, Alice Paul who was the leader of the National Woman's Party (NWP) in 1912, frequently has her leadership and individual actions examined as much as historians look at the contributions of the NWP. Historian Christine Lunardini credits her as being the "engine that powered the militant suffrage movement," and as the only woman who "successfully mobilized both impatient younger women and discontented older women."⁴ From the viewpoint of many historians, such as Lunardini, the success of the suffrage movement and of women's organizations could not have been possible without the contributions from these women that worked independently as leaders of the movement. Often, these leaders would rise to prominence and work primarily from urban areas, such as Paul in Washington, D.C. or Laura Clay in Lexington, but these women served as an inspiration to other women throughout their states in the fight for suffrage.

For the United States movement, historians of the suffrage movement conclude that women more often joined volunteer organizations to fight for the advancement of women's rights and for suffrage rather than through electoral and political events. Women's suffrage can be most readily linked to the activism of women's organizations, and this is seen throughout the entire country. However, a particular emphasis can be placed upon the clubs in rural areas, an argument this paper will make for the Jackson Purchase Area. According to Nancy Cott, a women's

⁴ Christine A. Lunardini, *From Equal Suffrage to Equal Rights: Alice Paul and the National Women's Party, 1910-1928* (New York: toExcel, 2000), xiv.

historian, “women had built a tradition of exercising political influence and efficacy through voluntary organizations,” and she even brings up the point that women were even possibly “overorganized” with the multiple organizations essentially dedicated to the same cause.⁵ This reliance on voluntary organizations rather than exercised political influence reveals women's preference of working within groups to achieve their goals. The examination of these women's clubs, whether they specifically be designed for suffrage or for a different cause, can demonstrate the activism of women better than anything else.

In the past decade there has been a growing trend of focusing on the lesser-known, locally-based women and the foundation of the movement.⁶ This growing focus encompasses the actions of both local groups outside of large cities and also the women involved in them. Currently, a manuscript is being written that details the history of women in Kentucky and specifically focuses on their actions within the suffrage movement and local grassroots movements, working to draw the focal point away from the larger cities of Lexington and Louisville.⁷ This manuscript hopes to bring a greater focus to the lesser studied areas of the state.

Historians have analyzed these same trends in other states as well. In the state of New York, for instance, historians have focused on New York City and the larger movement in historical study rather than the rural areas outside of the big city which became incredibly influential in advancing the suffrage movement.⁸ Often, historians traditionally gloss over rural areas in favor of studying history in larger population centers. Admittedly, a higher population

⁵ Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 85.

⁶ Lee Ann Banaszak, “Building Suffrage Coalitions,” in *Why Movements Succeed or Fail: Opportunity, Culture, and the Struggle for Woman Suffrage* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 98.

⁷ “Randolph Hollingsworth, Ph.D.” College of Arts & Sciences, University of Kentucky, accessed October 28, 2020, <https://history.as.uky.edu/users/dolph>.

⁸ Susan Goodier and Karen Pastorello, “‘Ruffling the Somewhat Calm Domain:’ Rural Women and Suffrage,” in *Women Will Vote: Winning Suffrage in New York State* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 31.

size generally indicates that there are more primary sources and original documentation to look through there, but history still happened in rural areas with lower population levels. A current historical trend studying the contributions of these rural areas has recently emerged with historians bringing a higher focus to these areas and the women involved within them.

Additionally, another emerging trend focuses on the contributions of non-white suffragists, primarily African American suffragists who worked alongside white suffragists, to bring enfranchisement to all women. Historians have argued that many white suffragists, such as Laura Clay from Kentucky, worked to advance women's rights at the expense of African Americans. Current historical studies have worked to move away from this erasure of minorities.⁹ The growing trend of a more focused study on marginalized groups and smaller movements within the grand narrative brings up the question of archival silences and how much of the history of this movement historians truly know at this point. Notably, many of the studied suffragists popular in that time sought the promotion of women's rights at the exclusion of minorities, so how trustworthy are primary sources from them? A quality historian needs to read through and account for the bias present in these sources in order to establish the full picture of the movement. The question of whether there are any other excluded people whose story has fallen to the wayside or altered is also raised by this study.¹⁰

As the trends regarding the study of the Women's Suffrage Movement have evolved so too have the conclusions revolving around the movement. In the past, the study of this movement

⁹ This can be seen in Midge Wilson & Kathy Russell, *One of Divided Sisters: Bridging the Gap Between Black and White Women* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), and Faye E. Dudden, *Fighting Chance: The Struggle Over Woman Suffrage and Black Suffrage in Reconstruction America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁰ It is worthy to note that, despite searching multiple archival documents and newspapers from the time, no information could be found on the African American suffrage movement in the Jackson Purchase Area specifically. I discuss the movement within Kentucky, and the assumption can be made that the trend followed in the Jackson Purchase Area, but I have been unable to verify this yet.

attributed much of the success and the efforts from the movement toward white women located in big cities, but this has shifted more toward an appreciation of the efforts made by women of all races and from different localities toward equality. Historians have brought the grassroots organizations at the local and rural levels into a greater focus as they examined their efforts with the same critical eye as those of larger cities.¹¹ The general consensus, however, on the origins of the movement has been consistent in its inconsistency with the origins attributed to a variety of sources, such as the temperance movement, the global movement, and the Civil War, which granted Black men the right to vote before white women. With the temperance movement, women felt frustration with alcoholic and abusive men and sought the vote in order to achieve their dreams of temperance.¹² At the same time, different areas began campaigning for suffrage because of varied reasons and the temperance movement is only a singular cause of this. When the 19th Amendment passed in 1920, granting women suffrage, the United States became the 27th country to recognize the voting rights of women. Especially during the later era of the movement, a lot of influence and inspiration came from the effects of the global movement.

This paper in particular follows some of the aforementioned trends, such as the greater focus on the actions of rural women toward the overall suffrage movement. Growing steadily, the study of the movement in rural areas with women's organizations in comparison to more densely populated areas has become a topic of interest in recent years. In addition, this paper focuses on how the white and Black movement for suffrage differed in the state of Kentucky as white women pushed to remove African American women from the movement, citing them as "distractions." An examination of the Kentucky movement will follow an analysis of how these

¹¹ Holly J. McCammon and Karen E. Campbell, "Winning the Vote in the West: The Political Successes of the Women's Suffrage Movements, 1866-1919," *Gender and Society*, no. 15 (2001), 67.

¹² Goodier and Pastorello, "Ruffling the Somewhat Quiet Domain," 31.

current trends affected the national movement, which will flow into the main focus of the Jackson Purchase Area. This will analyze exactly how the suffrage movement found there both emulated and differed from the movement found in larger urban centers. The Jackson Purchase Area is not a widely studied region and the research shown here will go a long way toward illuminating the history of this region, especially by highlighting the contributions of local women and organizations. Bringing greater focus to this particular region will show how it emulated the trends shown in the state, national, and global movement

Global/National

At the same time that the Women's Suffrage Movement moved through the United States, a similar but quicker coalition swept the globe. The British suffrage movement in particular served as a source of inspiration for the United States and British suffragettes often visited the US to give speeches and tours. For the British movement, "many women had wanted something more than equal access to a male-controlled political system" and they readily demonstrated their "wish to change the system to reflect women's values."¹³ More than simply gaining the right to vote, women wanted to be better reflected in government and actually have the ability themselves to serve in Parliament. Despite the frequent insistence that misogynistic laws that limited women in society were designed to protect women, women wanted to be able to make laws for themselves and reflect their equal station. Even after women successfully gained the right to vote and hold office, politics remained a male-dominated arena where women were essentially not welcomed. Their success in gaining suffrage did not translate to removing all barriers in society for women.

¹³ Harold Smith, *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign 1866-1928* (London: Routledge, 2009), 3, ProQuest Ebook Central.

In Britain during the time of suffrage, the general perceptions of the country were very negative toward the suffragettes, and even the suffragists. The media regarded 'suffragettes' as deranged and as militant extremists for the movement, whereas 'suffragists' was less derogatory and were simply women who supported suffrage. At the time, many suffragettes were not taken seriously and their arguments for suffrage were often scoffed at for being exaggerated or unbecoming of a lady. When Christabel Pankhurst pushed for women's suffrage in a "highly visible and provocative manner," she exposed many of the "double standards of morality, prostitution, and the sexual objectification and abuse" that the women of Britain often had to endure.¹⁴ Her argument was brushed off for being absurd and provocative, although she revealed legitimate issues for women in Britain. Many women working toward suffrage were not taken seriously in their efforts.

An example of this attitude can be seen in Edward Raymond Turner's account of the suffrage movement in Britain. Written in 1913, his account forms an incomplete picture of the progression and true success of the movement. He wrote during the early days of the movement and he had yet to see the conclusion that would come a few years later. Turner believed that the suffrage movement in Britain was too "extreme" and unjustified in its responses to perceived injustices because "historically it seems certain that many of the inequalities were designed to protect women more than to depress them."¹⁵ He believed that the measures taken in the past that women claimed as injustices against them were actually meant for protection and stemmed from a place of paternalism.

¹⁴ Susan Kingsley Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 7.

¹⁵ Edward Raymond Turner, "The Women's Suffrage Movement in England," *The American Political Science Review* 7, no. 4 (1913): 590.

Turner thought that suffragists should not take offense to these measures that protected women and therefore contributed to the good of society. However, he did agree that women were undoubtedly “subordinate and inferior” in the eyes of the law to men.¹⁶ He agreed that women should fight for the advancement of their own rights, but disagreed with the methods suffragettes chose to work under and felt that the suffragists misplaced their anger. Women in Britain worked toward suffrage in women’s clubs and organizations. The first suffragist organization formed in Britain was the Sheffield Female Political Association in 1857.¹⁷ Turner attributed a lot of the success found in Britain to the organization of women’s clubs and their lobbying of Parliament to ensure that women received suffrage, an action that mirrors the United States movement.

The movement in Britain inspired the movement for women’s suffrage in the United States, but the movements had some key differences. They had the same goal in mind of achieving the vote for women, but the methods they used to reach this goal differed. In Britain, many of the protests for suffrage by suffragettes turned violent, and sometimes even deadly, whereas United States suffragists tended to favor more non-violent forms of protest. In one instance, on October 25, 1906, a group of 100 suffragettes stormed Parliament in London and put up massive resistance when ejected by the police, with record showing that one woman screamed, “You cowardly men dare not give us justice!”¹⁸ This came after the police forcibly carried several women out of the building after they ran from the police and even tried to break into Parliament itself.

In the same article that detailed the efforts of British suffragettes, some efforts in the US movement are outlined for comparison. On October 25, 1906, in the United States on the same

¹⁶ Turner, "The Women's Suffrage Movement in England," 590.

¹⁷ Turner, "The Women's Suffrage Movement in England," 589.

¹⁸ “Woman Suffragists in Europe and America,” *The Paducah Daily Register*, October 26, 1906, 3, <https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/pdr/401/>.

day as the British incident above, the women of Chicago scored a victory when the Illinois Association of Women, an anti-suffrage group, presented a petition that decried the extension of suffrage to women. However, a group of suffragists gathered at the municipal court and the judge overturned the petition after the suffragists peacefully plead their case for more than two hours.¹⁹ This newspaper article printed in Paducah clearly puts the two movements up against each other as it displays each movement in a separate column and extolls their differences. This displays the author's general disfavor for the Women's Suffrage Movement in the first place, but to the author, if it has to happen at all the women could continue to act like ladies at least. Britain may have achieved suffrage initially in 1918, but this law only gave suffrage to a select set of women. A second law passed in 1928 which finally granted full suffrage to women on the same basis that men had it.²⁰ The United States gained suffrage in 1920 with the passage of the 19th Amendment, two years after Britain's first suffrage law, but this law granted suffrage to all women.

Similarly, the French movement began to pick up pace at the same time as the British and the US movements. Although the movement differed from these others, it shares quite a few similarities with the US movement. As with most movements, the people working towards suffrage began to split into distinctive groups. For France, this included the "militant feminists" who "began the suffrage movement, created its ideology, fought its public battles, and captured the headlines," but more local, Catholic-based suffragism which "conquered the provinces" also emerged.²¹ In a similar thread, in the US, women split into distinctive organizations that,

¹⁹ "Woman Suffragists in Europe and America," 3.

²⁰ British Library Learning, "Women's suffrage timeline," British Library, accessed November 19, 2020, <https://www.bl.uk/votes-for-women/articles/womens-suffrage-timeline>.

²¹ Steven C. Hause and Anne R. Kenney, "The Development of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Movement in France, 1896-1922," *The Catholic Historical Review* 67, no. 1 (1981): 11.

although they both worked toward women's suffrage and the advancement of women's rights overall, they had different means of doing so.

A parallel exists across the French and US movements in the ways that historians remember and perceive these groups. Although not a perfect example, the militant feminists of France compare to the NWP led by Alice Paul in the US. Although they used different methods they equate due to their perception within the movement, while local and rural women's groups equate to the smaller Catholic movement in France. The NWP in the US utilized attention-grabbing methods, such as the Silent Sentinels who protested in front of the White House, whereas the rural campaigns worked more quietly and worked in more areas than the NWP. However, even historians now who have "tried to reconstruct the French suffrage campaign have remembered the efforts of the militants and not the contributions of the Catholics."²² Similarly, the efforts of local, rural women in the US movement have often been forgotten in lieu of bigger organizations that worked in urban areas, but a growing trend prevalent in each country to look at the efforts of women from across the movement and their contributions overall.

As in the US, the French movement allied itself with other movements across the nation in order to bolster the effort for women's suffrage. In the US, these other movements included abolition, temperance, and the labor movement. Whereas in France, they emphasized the labor movement, especially with the Catholic women's groups who frequently left home to join the workforce. Overall, for both movements, they "advocated a wide range of reforms to improve the situation of women, chiefly by revising passages of the civil code dealing with issues such as marriage contracts or legal guardianship."²³ Seen especially in the US where the suffrage movement, and the three movements it aligned itself with, all experienced success and the

²² Hause and Kenney, "The Development of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Movement," 11.

²³ Hause and Kenney, "The Development of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Movement," 13.

passage of legislation. Overall, these guaranteed more rights to women, and in Kentucky particularly women gained the rights to own property and to have guardianship over their children. However, a notable difference in the French and US movements, despite their similar forms, came from the fact that the US achieved their goal of women's suffrage in 1920 with the passage of the 19th Amendment whereas France, on the other hand, did not grant women's suffrage until 1944. This shows that, although their movements had some similarities, the movements and the countries themselves were different enough that achieving suffrage came at different times for them. However, the US still received inspiration from the French movement, as well as the British movement, in their own fight for suffrage.

The Women's Suffrage Movement in the United States picked up steam after the Civil War, but it really gained traction in the turn of the twentieth century around the same time that the global movement picked up. The Civil War brought about enfranchisement for African American men, but it excluded both white and Black women which caused intense frustration on their part. For white women, this frustration stemmed from the fact that Black men would get the right to vote before they would. This frustrated them because white women worked at the forefront of the abolitionist movement with the ulterior motive of gaining suffrage for themselves. For Black women, however, a deeper sense of unfairness that they had fought just as hard for freedom from slavery and deserved suffrage just as much as their male counterparts fueled their actions. They experienced the same discrimination as enslaved people and suffered under added prejudice as women. To advance their own rights, women began to lobby and form their own political groups in order to "shape social policy" and did this through the creation of women's groups, such as the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the National Women's

Trade Union League, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU).²⁴ The women's groups gave them a space to work toward suffrage with other women.

Women in the United States found that the easiest way to spread the ideas of suffrage came from forming these women's groups and dispersing the message that way. The clubs served as a quick way to distribute their ideology to a majority of women and gave women a safe space to express their opinions and advocate for the advancement of their own rights. When Emmeline Pankhurst, a prominent British suffragist, visited the US to give a tour and give speeches, she remarked that "the work of the women's clubs struck me very favourably, and I thought these institutions a perfect basis for a suffrage movement."²⁵ Many women in this time struggled to support suffrage as they feared public condemnation or censure from their male relatives and their community, which can be found in specific cases of the Jackson Purchase Area. Forming women's groups gave women a protective shield to work for suffrage en masse rather than individually and large cities in the United States as well as the smaller, rural areas emulated this.

Each of the states received suffrage at a different time, with most states receiving full suffrage with the national 19th Amendment. However, quite a few Western states had full women's suffrage before the amendment. A map published in 1916 in *The Lexington Herald* showed the advancement of suffrage across the continental US, with the majority of Western states having full suffrage, Midwestern states having partial suffrage, and most Southern states having no suffrage.²⁶ Despite the country and many states sharing similar organizations and

²⁴ Holly J. McCammon and Karen E. Campbell, "Winning the Vote in the West: The Political Successes of the Women's Suffrage Movements, 1866-1919," *Gender and Society* 15, no. 1 (2001): 66-67.

²⁵ Emmeline Pankhurst, *My Own Story* (Project Gutenberg, 2011), 161, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/34856/34856-h/34856-h.htm>.

²⁶ Randolph Hollingsworth, "'Map of United States Showing Progress of Equal Suffrage,' Lexington Herald, May 7, 1916," H-Net, accessed November 19, 2020, <https://networks.h-net.org/map-united-states-showing-progress-equal-suffrage-lexington-herald-may-7-1916-page-3>.

methods for achieving suffrage, it came at different times for different states. For the western states, it was easier to gain suffrage as the states and territories were new and therefore not as constricted by previous societal sentiments, like the woman's place in society. By 1916, roughly half of the continental US had at least partial suffrage for women. The movement in Kentucky specifically, and how it relates to the overall national movement, will be examined in detail along with how the state's rural movement differed from the urban movement.

However, the suffrage movement affected white women and Black women differently. Especially after the Civil War and the passage of the 15th Amendment, the movement between white women and Black women split over the issue of race. White women viewed adding race to their platform as a distraction from their pursuit of suffrage and they justified that success would come if they excluded Black women from their movement. Historians have seen this trend throughout the nation, but noticed it more in southern, formerly slave-holding states.²⁷ Despite this, the methods both white and Black women took to achieve the vote shared similarities. Since white women forbid them from interacting with white suffrage organizations, Black women simply made their own, or they became involved through their churches and sororities. Although the 15th Amendment granted enfranchisement to African American men, the government severely limited their right to vote by poll taxes, literacy tests, and the grandfather clause. The government designed these specifically in the south in an effort to prevent Black men from voting. At the time, many men in positions of authority did not want to grant Black women the right to vote because they did not want more non-whites voting. This was more evident in the Deep South, but it affected Kentucky as well.

²⁷ Gilmore, *Gender & Jim Crow*, 49.

Before women's clubs became segregated, both white and Black women worked together toward suffrage and abolition. However, Black women hoped to use this interracial cooperation, particularly in the WCTU, to “forge a structure that encouraged racial interaction” so that they “might later build on that structure,” but this fell through as white women often referred to their “sisters in black” as their “junior partners.”²⁸ Consistently looked down upon as lesser than their white female counterparts made collaborating in these women's clubs less and less of a possibility as time wore on, eventually becoming impossible after the Civil War when these clubs became segregated. Black women focused on improving their position in society and improving society in general whereas white women focused on improving the conditions for their own race and gaining suffrage for themselves, with the suffrage of Black women becoming an afterthought. Due to all of this, the white and Black suffrage movement essentially split, and they worked separately towards suffrage, although they used a lot of the same means with the use of women’s organizations.

Although both the national and global movements relied on the organization of women at the local level into women’s clubs they fought for the advancement of their rights despite widespread negative coverage by the media. As a lot of the movement in the United States centered around larger cities, such as New York City, it made a lot of sense for rural women to get involved in their own ways since they inhabited larger swaths of land. Throughout the country, the Women's Suffrage Movement gained a lot of negative press coverage as the country moved slowly to grant women this right. At the time, people viewed women gaining the right to vote negatively as many people perceived it as upsetting traditional gender roles and threatening the woman's role in the household. This larger national movement would eventually come to

²⁸ Gilmore, *Gender & Jim Crow*, 49.

influence the movements of the states, but Kentucky emerged as one of the first states to do work in the suffrage movement.

Kentucky

Many people do not often think of Kentucky as particularly progressive or as a leader for other states in the US, but during the nineteenth century Kentucky served as the leader of the southern states for women's suffrage. As early as 1838, Kentucky women had won the right to vote on issues of taxation and school board elections in rural areas, as long as they were both taxpayers and heads of households.²⁹ This came a full ten years before the Seneca Falls Convention, which called for more rights towards women and called for the national advancement of suffrage. This made Kentucky, at the time, the first and only place in the United States where women could vote in any capacity. Rural areas received suffrage, even partially, before the bigger cities of Lexington, Covington, and Newport, which would come in 1894 when women of these larger cities would win school suffrage. Kentucky would reverse this law and take away this partial suffrage in 1902. The Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs joined together to lobby the state government to get these rights back and they experienced success in 1912.³⁰ It was only through the combined efforts of these club members that the government reinstated their partial suffrage rights.

Many women throughout the state were members of various women's organizations and used these organizations to become involved in the larger movement for women's suffrage. Unlike some other states, the early suffrage movement in Kentucky that began after the Civil War hoped to gain suffrage for both white and African American women. However, in 1902

²⁹ "Kentucky and the 19th Amendment," National Park Service, last modified September 3, 2019, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/kentucky-and-the-19th-amendment.htm>.

³⁰ "Kentucky and the 19th Amendment."

when the state revoked this partial suffrage, the Kentucky suffrage movement became segregated as white women began to fight independently for their suffrage. Kentucky served as a leader in the South for national change in the pursuit of women's rights and helped guide the nation toward suffrage. In these segregated organizations, the white clubs found more success typically and had some local women emerge as leaders in the movement.

The most notable women of the suffrage movement in Kentucky all started as local activists and joined local organizations to promote the advancement of women's rights. Laura White worked with many Kentucky suffragists, and she is recognized for her writing and her promotion of legislation. In her widely distributed pamphlet, "What the Kentucky Equal Rights Association Has Done and What it Proposes to Do, 1896," she outlined all of the legislation that the Kentucky Equal Rights Association (KERA) had successfully passed thus far and outlined its goals for the future, which primarily consisted of reforming various injustices women faced in the state. Their first fight consisted of raising the age of consent from 12 to 16 years of age and then moving onto the wider fight for suffrage, first by fighting for a school suffrage law which would give women the right to vote in school board elections.³¹ Unlike many other sources published at the time, this pamphlet spoke positively of the work suffragists had performed for the state and the harmful laws they had changed successfully. White spoke only of the good KERA had done for women and girls in Kentucky and that "after years of toil, [they] rejoice that [they] have been able to present these just laws to the women of Kentucky."³² KERA distributed this pamphlet throughout the state to many local organizations, mostly the other branches of the KERA but also to Women's Clubs and other foundations meant for women. White, and the other

³¹ Laura White, "What the Kentucky Equal Rights Association Has Done and What it Proposes to Do," [1896], MSS 23, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, KY, 3, <http://www.kyhistory.com/cdm/compoundobject/collection/MS/id/14378/rec/27>.

³² White, "What the Kentucky Equal Rights Association Has Done and What it Proposes to Do," 2.

premiere suffragists of Kentucky, used these local organizations to distribute knowledge to women all over the state and provide guidance at all levels. Organizations served as the basis to rally rural women, who often needed to join women's groups first before they would start working toward suffrage, whereas urban women worked independently toward suffrage before they joined suffrage organizations. Rural women favored this method more so than other populations, as they experienced a disconnect from the central hubs of the state and needed the aid of organizations to spread news and to organize.

Laura Clay's complete dedication to the advancement of women's rights and her role in women's organizations has made her the most well-known Kentucky suffragist. From the age of 15, she realized that women should stand equal to men and she believed that "I am a woman, but I think I have a mind superior to that of many boys of my age, and equal to that of many more."³³ From such a young age, she realized that she could do everything that men could do except for the fact that society and the law prevented her from doing so. Her first exposure to the inadequate rights of women came from her parent's divorce when her mother struggled to have her rights to property and child guardianship recognized.³⁴ This formed part of the basis for why she created KERA in 1888, first to fight for the advancement of women's rights and then after experiencing success with that she promoted the suffrage activism of that club. Like many urban women, she began the fight for suffrage herself individually and this is what led her to start these suffrage organizations.

Clay is responsible for the organization of many suffrage organizations throughout Kentucky and, as a rural woman herself, she made sure to push suffrage organizations in the

³³ Paul E. Fuller, "Suffragist Vanquished: Laura Clay and the Nineteenth Amendment," *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 93, no. 1 (1995): 4.

³⁴ Fuller, "Suffragist Vanquished," 4.

rural parts of the state. She, along with 25 other women, formed the Kentucky Woman Suffrage Association (KWSA) in 1881 which became the first state suffrage club in the South, and she served as president of KERA from 1888 until 1912.³⁵ Along with these presidencies, she also held offices in both the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs. Clay organized many of the women's clubs in Kentucky toward women's suffrage. She started both KERA and the KWSA and used both of these organizations to persuade other women's groups around the state to begin working at the local level to achieve suffrage. Clay believed that the power to achieve suffrage rested more upon local and state levels than the federal level and she worked to make her vision of suffrage come true through these local groups by organizing women across the state.

Clay's advocacy accounted for and inspired much of the work for suffrage that came from these women's organizations throughout the state. Clay came from a rural background and moved to the bigger urban centers of Kentucky as she began her advocacy work. Due to her rural background, she always made sure to include rural women, and southern women in general, throughout her advocacy work, gaining her the nickname "Voice of the South."³⁶ She worked with women's groups her entire career and brought the National American Women's Suffrage Association (NAWSA) to Kentucky. Clay secured the passage of most legislation in regard to the advancement of women's rights from that era. The westernmost counties of Kentucky, known as the Jackson Purchase Area, followed the general trends of the state, although the actions of its suffragists did not get as much recognition as those from the bigger population hubs of the state.

³⁵ Randolph Hollingsworth, "Laura Clay (1849-1941), Kentucky Suffragist and Voice of the South," H-Net, accessed November 6, 2020, <https://networks.h-net.org/node/2289/discussions/1251910/laura-clay-1849-1941-kentucky-suffragist-and-voice-south>.

³⁶ Hollingsworth, "Laura Clay (1849-1941), Kentucky Suffragist and Voice of the South."

Another Kentucky suffragist, Eliza Calvert Obenchain, who more commonly wrote under her pen name Eliza Calvert Hall, called Bowling Green her home. Bowling Green, Kentucky is located relatively close to the Jackson Purchase Area, but the two rivers clearly separate them. These rivers serve as the official western boundary of the Jackson Purchase Area, but frequently these same trends spread throughout the state. Fostering a love of writing from a young age, Hall put these talents to good use as she grew older, and she began to write scores of articles in favor of women's suffrage. Before this, however, her notoriety as a poet brought her into the focus of KERA. The group approached her to ask for her help circulating a petition regarding laws concerning the property rights of women, but she felt reluctant to help at first until she read *The Woman's Journal*, a suffragist newspaper. She would later remark that "I knew just where I stood."³⁷ KERA had inspired her to begin working for the suffrage movement through her own talents as a writer, but also through the methods favored by Kentucky women.

Following a trend seen throughout most of the state and in the Jackson Purchase Area, she joined KERA with other like-minded women to help circulate petitions and promote lectures. She had not worked toward suffrage at all before KERA approached her to write that article and she might not have started her suffrage career without the intervention of KERA. Frequently seen in rural communities, women were approached by suffrage organizations like KERA who convinced them of the need for suffrage rather than women approaching the clubs themselves. In particular, Hall's position as KERA's press superintendent for nine years gave her the unique opportunity to distribute pro-suffrage articles, both original and republished, to over 100 newspapers across the state.³⁸ These methods of working with local women's organizations

³⁷ Lynn Niedermeier, "Eliza Calvert Obenchain ('Eliza Calvert Hall'), Kentucky Suffragist," H-Net, accessed October 8, 2020, <https://networks.h-net.org/node/2289/discussions/135376/eliza-calvert-obenchain-eliza-calvert-hall-kentucky-suffragist>.

³⁸ Niedermeier, "Eliza Calvert Obenchain."

occurred throughout the state and in rural areas such as the Jackson Purchase Area where, typically, women worked through these organizations to fight for suffrage rather than working on their own.

It was through this advocacy in KERA that Hall published her most well-known and popular series in 1907, *Aunt Jane of Kentucky*. In this, she blamed the treatment she received from men in her congregation for making her “think it’s better to be a Kentucky horse than a Kentucky woman.” This series received such acclaim that President Teddy Roosevelt declared it required reading for men “accustomed to mistreating the women in their lives.”³⁹ She vividly painted a picture of the typical sexism and opposition shown to women in this time through the fears men had that women would become too masculine with gaining the right to vote, that they were too physically and mentally weak to vote, and that voting burdened women and their gentle dispositions that it would corrupt them. Hall published over 90 essays and articles throughout her career specifically in favor of suffrage, many of which gained national notoriety with their publications in journals and papers such as the *Woman’s Journal*, *Womankind*, *The Woman’s Standard*, and *The New York Times*.⁴⁰ This distribution at the national level brought Hall more notoriety and spread her message of suffrage across the nation.

Known for her scathing wit and passionate discourse, her writings all had the common underlying theme of the advancement of women’s rights. She fought not just for suffrage but also for the rights of women to own their own property and also to have some legal custody of their own children. In Kentucky, women had no rights over their children whatsoever and men possessed complete custody. Even if a woman left her husband, he had “the sole right of guardianship over their children... even over an unborn child,” and he could even “separate the

³⁹ Niedermeier, “Eliza Calvert Obenchain.”

⁴⁰ Niedermeier, “Eliza Calvert Obenchain.”

children from their mother if he wished” and upon his death he could “will their guardianship to some other male” despite their mother still living.⁴¹ Women fought until 1910 for co-guardianship over their own children in Kentucky. In particular, laws concerning custody such as these, as well as those dealing with property, infuriated Hall. She railed against these injustices against women for her entire career through her many writings. Throughout her life, she constantly attributed her success as an author to KERA for showing her the Women’s Suffrage Movement and for leading her to embrace the advancement of women’s rights. The influence of women’s organizations on the lives of many women led to greater involvement in the women’s rights movement and throughout local communities.

All of the previously mentioned suffragists were white and therefore involved primarily in the white suffrage movement, which deliberately excluded African American women. This did not mean, however, that Black women “accepted their exclusion from white suffrage organizations or the racist tactics employed by white suffragists,” but formed their own organizations and fought anew with labelling race as a “defining factor in the denial of women’s rights.”⁴² As white men had the right to vote, and they prevented Black men from voting, white women did not see the effectiveness in involving Black women in the suffrage movement since they could not persuade their husbands and sons to vote for suffrage the same way that white women could. Essentially, “white middle-class women lobbied to obtain services *from* their husbands, brothers, and sons; black women lobbied to obtain services *for* their husbands,

⁴¹ Helen Deiss Irvin, *Women in Kentucky* (The University Press of Kentucky, 1979), 96.

⁴² Dr. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, edited by Edith Mayo, “African American Women Leaders in the Suffrage Movement,” Turning Point Suffragist Memorial, accessed October 15, 2020, <https://suffragistmemorial.org/african-american-women-leaders-in-the-suffrage-movement/>.

brothers, and sons.”⁴³ This perceived inability of Black women to sway the votes of white men made it so that white women felt that it best not to involve them in their organizations.

African American women throughout the state, and throughout the country as well, advocated for the combined power of both white and Black women suffragists. However, their pleas mainly “fell on deaf ears as black women were discriminated against” when trying to join these clubs.⁴⁴ To combat this, Black women in Kentucky turned to their churches and made them politically active spaces, as well as transforming Black sororities into more politically organized groups in order to fight for the advancement of women's rights. Despite their exclusion from many suffrage organizations, the creation of their own organizations provided Black women “autonomy and leadership opportunities they would have been denied integrated into organizations headed by white women.”⁴⁵ By forcing Black women to create their own spaces, it enabled them to create spaces specifically for the inclusion and advancement of Black women. Despite creating these bonds together, the exclusion of Black women from white suffrage organizations forced them to create these spaces and denied them equal access to equality.

Mary Ellen Britton demonstrated many of the same ideals and tactics used by these white suffrage organizations in order to further the role of Black women in society, and serves as an example of the work of Black female suffragists throughout the state of Kentucky. She was born free in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1855, and she gave a speech in 1887 on women's suffrage that was so well-received that the *American Catholic Tribune* published it on the first page.⁴⁶ This speech became one of her earliest actions within the movement, and she only grew more

⁴³ Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender & Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1826-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 149.

⁴⁴ Terborg-Penn, “African American Women.”

⁴⁵ Terborg-Penn, “African American Women.”

⁴⁶ Karen Cotton McDaniel, “Mary Ellen Britton,” H-Net, accessed October 15, 2020, <https://networks.h-net.org/node/2289/discussions/162766/mary-ellen-britton>.

involved after that. Most notably, she served as a “prolific journalist” and she followed the role of many suffragists in publishing to both local and national newspapers.⁴⁷ She mostly addressed social reform issues, particularly women's suffrage, but also areas such as education and social/racial equality. White organizations, such as KERA, favored tactics like publishing articles in newspapers and this was particularly evident with activists like Eliza Calvert Hall, as mentioned above. The publication of pro-suffragist literature happened throughout the state, not solely in the more highly populated areas of Lexington and Louisville, but also in more rural areas such as the Jackson Purchase Area. As white women excluded Black women from women's suffrage organizations, they would either make their own or would become involved in their churches or sororities. Britton herself chose to become a very active member of the Kentucky Association of Colored Women's Clubs and actually became president of the Women's Improvement Club.⁴⁸ Both of these clubs focused on the improvement of African American women. Despite the exclusion Black women received on almost all fronts, they persevered and fought for their right to suffrage just as much as any white suffrage organization had. The actions of Britton serve as an example for this, but also with other suffragists across the state and throughout the nation. The discrimination Black women received throughout the nation, mostly in the rural south, pushed them toward the creation of their own organizations.

Jackson Purchase Area

In the Jackson Purchase Area, rural women followed the trend set across the state and the country and fought for the advancement of their rights, despite negative press coverage and perceptions throughout the region. The attitudes of the people of the Jackson Purchase Area remained relatively negative, based on personal documents and newspapers of the time. A

⁴⁷ McDaniel, “Mary Ellen Britton.”

⁴⁸ McDaniel, “Mary Ellen Britton.”

scrapbook assembled in 1924 by Mary “Mollie” Bridges contains a variety of newspaper clippings from local papers with no clear rhyme or reason. Drawing the most logical conclusion, Bridges assembled this scrapbook as a form of entertainment and as a way to save newspaper articles she liked, evidenced by the multiple hymns and poems included in her collection. However, one article, “When Granny was a Bride,” takes a more political twist. The article seems lighthearted enough with a sweet description of how Granny would care for her children and her house. However, it quickly devolves into a commentary on how modern women are ruining the ideals of the old way with the emerging role of women’s rights and their effect on home life. The author even went so far as to call Granny and her generation of housewives “drudges” or “slaves to the house and family” but then justified the long hours and hard labor with Granny’s supposed love of her land and her pleasure with seeing it blossom.⁴⁹ The explicit mention of women’s suffrage and the author’s reaction to women taking an active role in politics reveals a decidedly negative reaction.

Although Bridges assembled this scrapbook in 1924, four years after the passage of the 19th Amendment, the author has a negative reaction to the idea of women exercising their political voice. The author continually insists that women did not truly need the right to vote as “[Granny] doubtless gave grandfather good advice when voting time came round” and was “an ardent advocate of her chosen party.”⁵⁰ According to the author, if women could already exercise a considerable influence over politics then no reason justified giving women suffrage. Women worked better in politics as a secondary voice persuading their male relatives rather than having the right to express their political opinions themselves. A local newspaper printed this article and widely circulated it at the time and thus used it as a measure for some of the sentiment regarding

⁴⁹ Mary Bridges, “Scrapbook,” [ca. 1924], MS 10-94, Pogue Library, Murray, KY, 9.

⁵⁰ Bridges, “Scrapbook,” 9.

women's suffrage present in the Jackson Purchase Area immediately following the legalization of suffrage. Although not representative of the entire populace's opinions on women's suffrage, it does provide a glimpse into the opinions of at least one segment of society.

Other personal documents, such as various methods of personal correspondence, can give the same insight into the perceptions of a region as Mary Bridges' diary. A postcard distributed to Lizzie Robinson of Georgetown, Kentucky, in 1907 came emblazoned with the message, "You couldnt please sum wimmin if you give em the job of cookin for angels."⁵¹ Handwritten on a small chalkboard, the exact author and origin of this postcard are unknown, but the context is unmistakable. At this time, women in Kentucky ramped up their fight for equality, not the least of which was suffrage. Just three years later, women successfully raised the legal age of consent from 12 to 16 and achieved legislation that granted co-ownership to women of their own children.⁵² This postcard implies that women's fight for equality and suffrage appeared absurd as they already had so many things to enjoy in life and were simply unpleasable. Women kept asking for more and more in terms of equality, and an evident fear in this time that life changed too quickly and that women eschewed their traditional gender role permeated society. This general discontentedness with the trajectory of society can be seen in both Bridges' diary and this postcard.

The personal papers of the Aden family also illuminate aspects of the movement within the region. They were a small family that lived in Henry County, Tennessee, which formed part of the original Jackson Purchase that included areas of modern west Tennessee. A singular mention to suffrage located within these documents takes the form of a small National Voter's

⁵¹ "You couldnt please sum wimmin if you give em the job of cookin for angels," [1907], MSS 59, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, KY, <http://www.kyhistory.com/cdm/compoundobject/collection/MS/id/4176/rec/5>.

⁵² Irvin, *Women in Kentucky*, 99-100.

Manual from 1908-1909 frequently carried around in a pocket. Not only does it provide detailed instructions on how to vote, but it also gives a breakdown of the political system and even a rundown on the eligibility of voting in each state, most notably containing an entirely separate section on women. For the state of Kentucky, “Citizens of United States” had the right to vote, and those not allowed to vote were “Persons convicted of felony, idiots, and insane.”⁵³ Lacking explicit detail and more information leaves the exact eligibility of voting almost open for interpretation. However, the section labeled “Where Women can Vote” mentions Kentucky law only with a short snippet of “in the form, mainly as to taxation or the election of school officers, woman suffrage exists in a limited way in... Kentucky” given and no other information.⁵⁴ The lack of women mentioned in this manual, particularly in Kentucky, shows that women did not have full suffrage yet and were not likely to get it soon.

Women only had the ability to vote in matters of taxation and school officials, as mentioned above, but women have such a short section in this manual in all mentions of Kentucky that they are basically an afterthought. The government typically only gave women this limited right to vote in these specific cases due to their role as the primary caregivers of children and should therefore have a say in their education. For matters of taxation, women exercised this right only when they served as the head of the household. This does not necessarily showcase a negative view of suffrage in the region, but it does show that the advancement of women’s voting rights did not constitute a priority although they achieved partial suffrage in some situations.

Along with all of the personal documents, another source that gauged the perceptions of the Jackson Purchase Area are excerpts from local newspapers during the Women's Suffrage

⁵³ “The Aden Family Papers,” [1846-1926], MS 78-02, File 15: Miscellaneous, Pogue Library, Murray, KY, 7-9.

⁵⁴ “The Aden Family Papers,” [1846-1926], MS 78-02, File 15: Miscellaneous, Pogue Library, Murray, KY, 8.

Movement. These newspapers cannot describe the sentiments of the entire population, but they can generate a sense of the feelings of certain sectors of the population. One such article, entitled “Why Should Women Vote? Woman’s Suffrage from the Viewpoint of Leading Farmers,” which the newspaper reprinted from Texas, explained the reason why farmers opposed women gaining the right to vote. They first insisted that “it is not the farmer's wife who is clamoring for the ballot” as she was “too busy trying to make happier homes... to indulge in political gossip.”⁵⁵ Their argument that gaining the vote would not let women escape the drudgery of farm life and that women had as much right to vote as men do as well as the right to do physical labor served as the basis for their negative views on suffrage. They believed that it was a shame to force women to do hard labor and insisted that men would “rather see [women] plant flowers than sow wheat; gather bouquets than pick cotton, rear children than raise political issues,” and they felt that women should not become involved in politics.⁵⁶ This provides yet another example of misogyny and the opposition to the advancement of women’s rights hidden behind flowery language and so-called concern for women.

Another newspaper article, again a reprint from a larger newspaper in the country, repeats similar sentiments from men that women do not truly *need* suffrage or any more rights than they already have. This article takes a slight twist, however, and instead simply insists that women do not desire suffrage enough yet. The article rapidly states that “when the American woman wants the suffrage she will get it” and that this has yet to transpire because “she has not proved herself invincible on to many points!”⁵⁷ The author believed that the reason that women did not have

⁵⁵ “Why Should Women Vote? Woman’s Suffrage from the Viewpoint of Leading Farmers,” *The Tribune-Democrat* (Benton, KY), November 23, 1917, 2, <https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/td/15/>.

⁵⁶ “Why Should Women Vote?,” 2.

⁵⁷ “American Women Can Have Suffrage When They Want It,” *The Paducah Daily Register*, February 21, 1907, 2, <https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/pdr/492/>.

suffrage yet was because they did not want it enough and had not proved themselves worthy, which was rectifiable at any point as women have always been capable of achieving it. The author goes into their second argument by stating that women should not want suffrage anyway as “men like feminine women, and are very jealous and grow more so of the rights which custom and the laws have accorded them in the past” and even further to say that “[men] will not passively accept any infringement by the weaker sex upon those rights.”⁵⁸ The achievement of suffrage by women would, according to this news article, make them inherently unattractive to men and would presumably greatly limit their chances at marriage. The author used this argument as a way to persuade women that they did not actually want suffrage and should stop fighting for it so that they would not damage their reputations. Many of the articles dealing with suffrage in the Jackson Purchase Area portrayed women’s suffrage from the masculine perspective and how men would feel threatened or concerned for women if they gave them the right to vote. Women seemingly did not have a voice in the news or elsewhere except in a local women’s only club. These organizations provided women with the ability to express their opinions and fight for their own enfranchisement, with some women emerging as leaders within the clubs.

One of these groups was the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), Graves County Chapter. This local chapter had a sister group in Calloway County, but they were not as active with suffrage as the Graves Chapter. This club serves as a common example of how rural women came to be involved in suffrage. The UDC was not created with suffrage in mind, but rather as a way for women to celebrate the Confederacy. The club only began to work toward suffrage because their membership was all women, an example of a club being more feminine

⁵⁸ “American Women Can Have Suffrage When They Want It,” 2.

than feminist, yet still working toward suffrage since it benefitted the members. Graves County does not have many records from the time of suffrage, but they do have records from years after suffrage passed that discuss the feelings of the organization and their affiliates. In one file, a newspaper article titled “Confederate Vets Chief Taboos Women at Parley” discussed the anti-women’s rights opinion of one Confederate veteran. General Julius Franklin Howell was a 95-year-old Commander-in-Chief of the United Confederate Veterans (UCV) and attended a meeting of both the UCV and the UDC in relation to Confederate veterans. While there he insisted that he “approved of women's suffrage but dictation by women is something else” and became “irritated” by what he described as “meddling by women” in the affairs of the UCV where he did not think that they belonged.⁵⁹ At one point he shouted, “but no women will be allowed” in reference to a vote in the UCV introducing an amendment to their constitution.⁶⁰ A stream of veterans followed him out of the building in agreement while the women gathered and began talks of impeaching General Howell.

This incident happened in 1940, 20 years after the women's suffrage amendment passed, demonstrating that although that amendment passed, it did not always receive favor in the region. Women pushed for recognition in these local organizations both before and after suffrage passed. Women joined these small, local organizations dedicated to women, such as the UDC, as a way for them to have their voices heard with like-minded women without the interference of men who were more likely to not support women’s suffrage.

More frequently, however, women joined organizations that had a direct focus on the betterment of society and cultural appreciation, specifically the Women’s Clubs and KERA.

⁵⁹ “United Daughters of the Confederacy - Graves County,” [1899-1969], MS 03-01, File 14, Pogue Library, Murray, KY.

⁶⁰ “United Daughters of the Confederacy - Graves County,” MS 03-01, File 14.

Most counties or cities had their own local chapter of these organizations that women could join to work toward the betterment of their own community. While KERA focused specifically on advancing women's rights and achieving suffrage, the Federation of Women's Clubs very frequently worked toward these same goals with the intention of bettering the lives of their members. Similarly to the UDC, the Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs did not form specifically to advance suffrage but rather that was something that came later; as opposed to the UDC, the Women's Clubs were formed upon the basis of extending women's rights while the UDC formed as a way for women to celebrate their Confederate heritage. This morphed into some work toward suffrage due to the nature of their members being women. For local Women's Clubs and KERA, their work toward suffrage tended to center around their local community and primarily consisted of circulating petitions, passing out pro-suffrage pamphlets and other literature, successfully publishing news articles promoting suffrage, and inviting speakers from across the state to give speeches in favor of women's rights.⁶¹ These actions mirrored what both state and the national movements did to promote suffrage by engaging in group efforts.

In 1915, the Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs based in Louisville, Kentucky, officially took up the mantle of women's rights. They "indorsed the movements for woman suffrage, segregation homes for epileptics and the feeble-minded, and a detention home for girls" and promoted local clubs to do all they could to achieve these while their official legislative committee worked on doing "everything possible to aid in putting suffrage measures through the next legislative."⁶² Along with suffrage, they promoted measures that improved life for

⁶¹ Jennifer Walton-Hanley, "Sallie McConnell Hubbard, 1842-1922, Fulton County ERA President and NAWSA Delegate" H-Net, accessed November 6, 2020, <https://networks.h-net.org/node/2289/discussions/1579467/sallie-mcconnell-hubbard-1842-1922-fulton-county>.

⁶² "Indorse Girls' Detention Home," *The Murray Ledger*, March 4, 1915, 3, <https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/tml/583/>.

everyone, not just women. The Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs supported the use of districts and local divisions of their organization because they realized that far more women, particularly rural women, could become involved if meetings and chapters were closer to them. The Murray Women's Club started in 1905 with the title "As You Like It," before changing to the official Women's Club title a year later. It is still active in Murray, Kentucky, and local women created it at the same time as the Paducah Women's Club. Women heard support for school suffrage, in particular if they were teachers. School suffrage passed before full suffrage because of women's roles in the lives of children. In Calloway County and 18 other counties in Kentucky in 1914, teacher institutes began to promote school suffrage and brought in suffragist speakers to present at conferences and to begin the formation of leagues.⁶³ Teachers were excited at this new development and made plans to work in their own communities to support this effort in the hopes that it would lead to full suffrage. Women worked in these clubs and heard talks from suffrage promoters that inspired them to become more involved within their own localities, especially with local chapters of KERA and the Women's Clubs.

Rural women worked within these local organizations due to the frequently negative associations with women's suffrage and the challenges of making changes as an individual. By joining these local organizations, women appeared together as a united front which provided them with greater protection against societal beliefs, organized them into an efficient working force, and gave them a space to become more involved with other women and with their community. Society still subjected suffrage itself and these organizations to negative scrutiny but these clubs provided rural women some protection by this scrutiny by focusing it on the club instead. A group of women is less likely to experience this negative slander than a single woman

⁶³ "Teachers Hear Talks," *The Murray Ledger*, August 13, 1914, 2, <https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/tml/759/>.

since there is strength in numbers and these groups displayed the growing draw of suffrage for women. In urban areas, singular suffragists often worked individually before joining, or starting, suffrage societies and thus negative publicity did not stop them the way it did rural women initially.

Not every women's group in Kentucky or in the Jackson Purchase Area that women joined specifically focused on suffrage. Often, women joined groups like their local Women's Club or the United Daughters of the Confederacy more as ways to participate in social events rather than attempt to enact legislative change. As society changed and the push for women's suffrage became bigger, these clubs shifted their perspective and began to help in the fight for women's rights. The biggest push, however, came directly from groups dedicated specifically to women's rights. KERA typically set the standard for how the push for suffrage should begin and other women-based groups, like Women's Clubs or the UDC, picked up the momentum and continued the movement.

Women needed to join these groups in order to work toward suffrage due to the generally negative view in rural society of women achieving the vote. The ideas about suffrage in many rural areas leaned toward a more negative slant and quite a few people believed that it benefited both women and society as a whole if they never gained this right. This negative slant included fears that women were not cut out for voting, that they were not intelligent enough, or the fear that it would make them more masculine. In the *Paducah Evening Sun's* "Daily Thoughts" section, one Paducah writer tried to initially put himself and the newspaper in "support of woman's capacity for exercising the franchise," but quickly devolved into what he termed "the view point of the average man."⁶⁴ He promoted women's role in the household raising children

⁶⁴ "Daily Thought," *The Paducah Evening Sun*, February 4, 1907, 4, <https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/pes/280/>.

and asserted that “to permit anything to come between her and her devotion to the training of her children is nothing less than treasonable.”⁶⁵ Essentially, the author makes the argument that women’s suffrage would only become permissible in society if women did not have to fulfill their duty in the home. Giving women the right to vote would directly interfere with that and instead would serve as a detriment to society.

In the same newspaper, a local man wrote in to discuss the issue of women’s rights. In it, he firmly established his belief in the necessity of adding an educational caveat to women’s suffrage for the “highest good in the individual woman, to the home, to society and in politics.”⁶⁶ Throughout the article, the author argues that there exists a distinctive difference between good and bad women with education serving as the defining characteristic of a good woman, thus his support solely for educated women to have the right to vote. This further illustrates the issue that even when women’s suffrage gained support in rural communities it always comes with a caveat to prevent certain women from voting.

The leaders of the rural suffrage movement typically worked in their local clubs and helped spread pro-suffrage sentiment through the region, but they did not start out individually contributing to suffrage the way that urban women did. These women stuck out for their remarkable efforts in the region to advance women’s rights in the Jackson Purchase Area through their efforts within the clubs rather than from individual contributions. In the case of Sally McConnell Hubbard of Fulton County, she decided very early to fight for two goals: women’s suffrage and prohibition. Hubbard joined KERA so that she could work in a group setting toward suffrage and other women’s rights. She worked diligently with KERA and in 1890 worked to

⁶⁵ “Daily Thought,” 4.

⁶⁶ “Voice of the People: On Woman’s Rights,” *The Paducah Evening Sun*, February 2, 1907, 4, <https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/pes/279/>.

gather 2,240 petitions out of 9,000 total for KERA when they petitioned the Kentucky legislature to appoint female physicians in all state insane asylums.⁶⁷ Later, Hubbard would serve as the president of the Fulton County chapter of KERA, and through this, the club elected her to represent KERA at the NAWSA Convention in the nation's capital. Along with her association with KERA and NAWSA, Hubbard joined the local UDC and the local Women's Club, both of which worked with women and provided a safe space for them to work on advancing women's rights.

Demonstrating the trends seen throughout the state and in the Jackson Purchase Area, Hubbard displayed how many women's groups worked toward advancing suffrage. Women in rural communities often worked together through these women's clubs to circulate petitions, host speeches, spread pro-suffrage pamphlets, and collect donations to further this goal. While serving as president of the Fulton County KERA, she led the club in successfully distributing over 1,200 pages of pro-suffrage literature throughout Fulton County alone.⁶⁸ Actions like these showed their determination in achieving their goals by working within groups steadily to convert local sentiment and their unwillingness to work individually. Almost every women's group partook in similar methods to spread the pro-suffrage sentiment throughout the region and to gather more women to their cause. Being more active and privileged than others, however, Hubbard chose to lead many of the suffrage efforts in Fulton County and also donated a large portion of her personal funds toward the movement. In 1914, she donated \$1,000 of her own money to KERA's Board of Directors as her most generous donation, but at another point, she also paid for each Kentucky legislator to receive a four-month subscription to the *Woman's*

⁶⁷ Walton-Hanley, "Sallie McConnell Hubbard."

⁶⁸ Walton-Hanley, "Sallie McConnell Hubbard."

Journal, a pro-suffrage newspaper.⁶⁹ She hoped that providing legislators, and the community at large, with the tools to become more educated on suffrage and the positive societal effects it could bring, would entice more people to the cause and potentially enact legislative change. She recognized that pamphlets and other pro-suffrage literature could serve as an effective counterpoint to the unrelenting barrage of anti-suffrage sentiment. Hubbard embodies a perfect example of the trends seen in the Women's Suffrage Movement because she sought out local organizations and joined them so that she could fight for suffrage and prohibition rather than single-handedly trying to fight for enfranchisement.

Another notable woman, Josephine Fowler Post from Paducah, worked for suffrage from the Jackson Purchase Area. She received recognition in 1920 *Who's Who of America* as a “speaker on patriotic and women's suffrage topics,” and between the years of 1908 to 1916 Post served as Vice President of the Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs.⁷⁰ At the same time, she served on the Executive Board of the Kentucky Child Labor Association (KCLA), worked as the Congressional Chairman of KERA, and was president of the McCracken County chapter of this organization. Her work toward children's labor rights made her an attractive prospect for KERA and she did not begin to work toward suffrage until later. She directed all of her suffrage work through these clubs rather than doing any individual work. Most notably, however, her membership with NAWSA enabled her to, successfully, lobby the 64th and 65th US Congresses which saw the passage of the 19th Amendment. Post advocated that women both “needed and deserved the right to vote, but that all women needed to work to get this right” and that

⁶⁹ Walton-Hanley, “Sallie McConnell Hubbard.”

⁷⁰ Jaime Chapman and Jennifer Hanley, “Josephine Fowler Post, 1871-1946, McCracken County clubwoman and suffrage lobbyist,” H-Net, accessed November 6, 2020, <https://networks.h-net.org/node/2289/discussions/1579468/josephine-fowler-post-1871-1946-mccracken-county>.

“slackers” should not sit back while other women worked to grant all women suffrage.⁷¹ She realized that a massive undertaking like suffrage was a hard enough sell with all the outright hostility from the community at large without further inactivity and passivity, or even full opposition, from other women in the state toward the advancement of women’s rights. Post adamantly believed that “every path which now lies wide open before women has been worn smooth by the bleeding feet of those who broke the road,” and she used this as a motivator to get more women to join the movement.⁷² She believed that it would take the efforts of all women to achieve suffrage.

Like many of the women who worked toward suffrage in Kentucky, the nation, and globally, Post joined her local organizations in order to have her voice heard and work toward suffrage from within a group. Opposition to suffrage frequently and fervently spread throughout the region and women found it difficult to enact change by themselves against all of this antagonism. Women joined women’s organizations in order to provide a united front in favor of advancing their own rights. Many women in rural areas, like the Jackson Purchase Area, did this and some women even gained notoriety as leaders of the movement in their local areas, such as Post with her dedicated leadership in multiple suffrage organizations in McCracken County. During her time as president of the McCracken County KERA, she raised membership from 60 women in 1912 to over 350 members by 1915.⁷³ Exceptional leadership like this drew many rural women into women’s clubs with the hopes of working with other like-minded women on advancing their rights and placement in society.

⁷¹ Chapman and Hanley, “Josephine Fowler Post.”

⁷² Chapman and Hanley, “Josephine Fowler Post.”

⁷³ Chapman and Hanley, “Josephine Fowler Post.”

One massive international event, however, almost completely brought the Women's Suffrage Movement to a grinding halt: World War I. During this time, women around the nation, in Kentucky, and in the Jackson Purchase Area focused more on helping the war effort than fighting for the advancement of women's rights. This effectively pushed the suffrage movement to the wayside. However, women continued to help society in their pre-established patterns. For instance, women in the Jackson Purchase Area began to help the war effort by becoming nurses and joining local chapters of the Red Cross. Similar to their efforts during the suffrage movement, women of the Jackson Purchase Area joined these local organizations so that they could more effectively help the war effort through group work rather than making individual contributions.

Most notably, Kentucky suffragists themselves led the efforts to organize aid to help the war effort. Known for her work with suffrage and in the war effort, Josephine Fowler Post's contributions to the suffrage movement in the Jackson Purchase Area are in detail above, but her efforts in the war are just as notable. When World War I first broke out, Post worked quickly to "organize a McCracken County chapter of the Red Cross, went on to become chairman of the Local Defense Society," and even "spearheaded Liberty Loan drives."⁷⁴ Post used her experience working in the Women's Suffrage Movement to form the local chapter of the Red Cross and better organize the efforts of the women of the county. In one of the only pictures of her during the war, Post posed with a group of "prominent society women who gave up their homes and personal comforts to make the winning of the war possible" who donated thousands of items to

⁷⁴ Chapman and Hanley, "Josephine Fowler Post."

American soldiers abroad.⁷⁵ Without the right to vote, women helped out the war effort in whatever ways they could.

This showcases a typical example of the work women did during the time to aid the war effort that frequently paralleled their efforts to advance women's rights. In both movements, women joined local organizations so that they worked in an organized group effort rather than working individually. Society took women more seriously, especially in the suffrage movement, when they presented themselves as a united front in these organizations, but with the war effort specifically, it became easier to organize aid within these organizations. Despite the country's main focus on the war, the issue of suffrage remained at the forefront for women, but significant work and legislation would not pass until after the war had ended. Shortly after that, when women did achieve the right to vote, they began to exercise this right with full force.

The women of the Jackson Purchase Area quickly used their suffrage rights as soon as they gained them, both in terms of school suffrage and later with the arrival of the 19th Amendment which brought them full suffrage. These women who had fought for suffrage for so long quickly turned up at the polls to have their voices heard. In Paducah, Kentucky in 1919, women became a “political force” when they turned out in droves to vote on the question of selling bonds to fund the construction of Augusta Tilghman and Lincoln High Schools; 2,291 women registered for this election and constituted 46% of the electorate that year alone.⁷⁶ This shows that, despite all of the negative perceptions toward women’s suffrage that presented themselves both in the Jackson Purchase Area and also nationally, did not inhibit women from expressing these rights when they achieved them. The general disapproval of the advancement of

⁷⁵ “World War I Honor Roll,” [1919], MCPL WWIHR 43, McCracken County Public Library, Paducah, KY, <https://digitalcollections.mclib.net/luna/servlet/detail/McCracken~34~34~294~4584:WWI-Honor-Roll-Page-041?sort=title%2Csubject%2Cdate%2Ccoverage>.

⁷⁶ John E.L. Robertson, *Paducah: Frontier to the Atomic Age* (Mount Pleasant: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 133.

women's rights in the area served to drive women to these women's groups in order to work as a unit toward suffrage. However, it did not stop women when they gained the right to vote, both when partial suffrage passed in Kentucky and when national suffrage ratified.

A select few women of the Jackson Purchase attempted to run for office with their newfound rights. Lucille Grogan became the first woman to both run for and hold office in Calloway County, Kentucky when she ran for the position of school superintendent of Calloway County School System in 1908-1909, and she served again briefly in 1913. Although women at the time would not gain full suffrage for another 12 years, women had achieved partial suffrage in Kentucky on matters of school suffrage and thus could hold office for this as well. Her original campaign poster encouraged voters to "Speak a good word for me," but her reelection poster went in a more direct route and insisted that voters "Investigate my record... my work speaks for itself."⁷⁷ Without having full suffrage yet women struggled to make an attempt at running for office, but Grogan successfully did this. Enough so, in fact, that voters reelected her later on the basis of her good service in office, as her campaign poster would suggest. She remains the first woman in a sporadic list of candidates for any office in Calloway County with another woman not running for office, in any position, until 1925. Only a handful of women would run for office each decade until the 1970s, when the political participation of women increased exponentially, likely due to the second wave of feminism.

One notable exception, however, comes from Dr. Ora K. Mason who moved to Murray, Kentucky, in 1917 after marrying local physician Dr. William Mason. Originally from Flint, Michigan, Dr. Ora Mason had grown up under the influence of her well-traveled parents who exposed her from a young age to the potential women had in society. She served as the first

⁷⁷ Dr. Randy Patterson, "Calloway County Women and Elective Office: A Tentative Finding List and Some Biographical Sketches," Alpha Department, Murray Woman's Club, November 17, 2018, 6-7.

practicing female physician in Calloway County and sought inclusion in her new home by joining the Murray Woman's Club and eventually rising to president by 1927 and serving in that capacity for eight years.⁷⁸ Before serving as president, however, Dr. Mason had higher aspirations. In 1926, Dr. Mason made a "credible race" for Congress as the leader of the West Kentucky Republicans. Previously, she had served as a delegate to the 1924 National Republican Convention and helped nominate Calvin Coolidge for the presidency, all while serving as a member of the State Central Republican Committee.⁷⁹ Not only did she bravely run as a woman in an area that highly contested women's suffrage, but she also ran as a Republican in a majority Democrat state at the time. It was a long-shot run for office in the first place which became even worse when societal standards forced to run as "Mrs. William Mason" rather than by her own title and name as "Dr. Ora K. Mason."⁸⁰ Forcefully running under her husband's name rather than her own served to undermine her campaign despite her qualifications otherwise to serve in Congress, such as her multiple degrees and obscuring her time spent with the National Republican Convention. She was one of the first women in the Jackson Purchase Area to run for office and helped clear a path for the women to come. Dr. Mason serves as an exemplary figure of the suffrage movement in the Jackson Purchase Area and represents many of the trends found in the movement.

Conclusion

Following the national trend, women in the Jackson Purchase Area joined grassroots organizations dedicated to women in order to work toward suffrage and the expansion of

⁷⁸ "Murray Woman's Club Officers," Murray Woman's Club, accessed October 14, 2020, https://www.murraywomansclub.org/officers_chairs.htm.

⁷⁹ "History of Calloway County Kentucky, 1931," *The Murray Ledger & Times*, 58, <http://lib.murraystate.edu/pdf/History%20of%20Calloway%20Co%201931.PDF>.

⁸⁰ Patterson, "Calloway County Women," 10.

women's rights despite the negative portrayal of suffrage in the media. Southerners often held more negative perceptions toward suffrage than other populations, particularly in the North and West, which was evidenced in these regions granting women suffrage, either partial or full, before the national amendment was passed. In rural areas especially, women joined women-based organizations and from there gradually began to work toward suffrage. This was contrasted in urban movements where prominent suffrage leaders often worked toward the advancement of women's rights on their own and then joined suffrage organizations, or frequently started their own, to amass larger change.

The movement on all levels created suffrage organizations, although some formed for a variety of reasons. As an example, the Catholic-based suffrage movement in France reflects some trends for the rural movement in the Jackson Purchase Area. For both, women were part of clubs that were not specifically built for suffrage, such as the Murray Women's Club or French Catholic church groups, but gradually focused on suffrage as women clamored for more rights. These clubs began to fight for suffrage more because the clubs were feminine rather than feminist. The experience of the Jackson Purchase Area in regard to suffrage mirrors the movement across the state with other rural communities and involvement with women's clubs. Women in the Jackson Purchase Area fought just as hard as women throughout Kentucky to advocate for themselves and gain the right to vote.

Seen throughout the country as well as in Kentucky itself, a noted difference in the white and Black movements for suffrage existed. Particularly after the Civil War, white women forbade African American women from working within their suffrage organizations. Black women then went on to create their own organizations and continued to work for suffrage using many of the same methods they had when working with white women. White women typically

believed that promoting suffrage for Black women would serve as a distractor from their overall campaign for suffrage and would actually convince their husbands not to vote for suffrage. They feared that this would give even more voting rights to African Americans. Black women still played an incredibly important role throughout the suffrage movement in their work advancing property rights, the rights of children, and especially suffrage.

Throughout Kentucky and in the Jackson Purchase Area, state and local movements showed a lot of similarities. The primary similarity noted is the inclusion of women into women's clubs, such as KERA, that worked toward the advancement of women's rights. Although the headquarters for KERA were located in the larger urban center of Kentucky in Lexington, local chapters spread throughout many communities in the state and these local chapters were sometimes the only reason some counties became involved in suffrage, whereas urban centers typically had women who started these organizations in order to draw other women into the fight for suffrage. Rural women frequently joined these in order to escape disapproval from local communities and the media while still working toward suffrage. Working within a group provided women protection from this discrimination by providing them levels of protection that helped disperse disapproval throughout the club rather than centering it on a single individual. These women's clubs usually worked with the same methods, such as distributing pamphlets, writing newspaper articles, and circulating petitions for both the betterment of women and their status in society and for women's suffrage. Historians have studied leaders in the statewide movement more than the contributions from rural movements because the urban movements often sparked the rural movements that otherwise might not have started without the influence of suffrage organizations. Despite this, rural women played an important role in the progression of women's rights.

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