



**COVER** | Signing the 19th Amendment in Maine.



The Maine Suffrage Centennial Collaborative thanks the William G. Pomeroy Foundation, the National Votes for Women Trail, and private donors for making these markers possible.

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# MAINE SUFFRAGE CENTENNIAL TRAIL

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THE ROAD TO THE 19TH AMENDMENT



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## In honor of the suffrage centennial.

In 2020, the William G. Pomeroy Foundation awarded every state five roadside markers to commemorate suffragists and locations in which suffrage activity took place. These donations were routed through the National Votes for Women Trail, a project of the National Collaborative of Women's History Sites.

In Maine, the Maine Suffrage Centennial Collaborative (MSCC), spearheaded by Anne B. Gass, managed the process of identifying suffragists and locations, securing approval from the Pomeroy Foundation, and obtaining permission for markers to be erected.

The Pomeroy Foundation's guidelines for the marker program stipulated that the suffrage activity had to have been in

service to the passage of the 19th Amendment through which most women won the right to vote, and it had to be documented. Ultimately, we decided to fundraise separately for two additional markers, one to honor Black suffragists, and another to honor an Indigenous woman who fought for Native voting rights.

As a side benefit, the additional two markers provide a template that can be used to erect markers recognizing other women in Maine for their contributions to women's rights.

Our journey to commemorate Maine's suffrage story and its activists took many twists and turns. We are grateful for the guidance we received from so many people on how to research and recognize all the women who did so much to win suffrage. More work remains to be done to recognize BIPOC activists, but the seven markers are a good start in bringing Maine's suffrage history the recognition it deserves.



### 5. | Isabel Greenwood

#### 235 Main Street, Farmington

Founder of the Franklin County Equal Suffrage League, Isabel Greenwood presided over the MWSA annual convention in Farmington in 1907.

### 4. | 19th Amendment Ratification

#### Maine State House, Augusta

After a decades-long battle, the Maine legislature ratified the 19th Amendment here on November 5th, 1919.

### 7. | Lucy Nicolar Poolaw

#### 1 Down Street, Indian Island

“Princess Watahwaso” - “Aunt Lu” was an activist, suffragist, entertainer, basket maker, and keeper of the Penobscot legacy.

### 6. | Black Matriarchs

#### Bangor Public Library, 145 Harlow St, Bangor

For the Black matriarchs of Bangor who supported suffrage and worked for their community through the Mothers Clubs and other groups.

### 3. | Camille Lessard Bissonette

#### 223 Lisbon Street, Lewiston

Journalist Camille Bissonette wrote for the French-language newspaper Le Messenger in Lewiston, advocating for suffrage in Maine and Canada.

### 2. | Augusta Hunt

#### 165 State Street, Portland

Suffrage leader Augusta Hunt hosted the Maine Woman Suffrage Association (MWSA) meeting in 1916, launching Maine’s first statewide suffrage referendum.

### 1. | Florence Brooks & Robert Treat Whitehouse

#### 42 Deering Street, Portland

Home to suffrage leaders Florence and Robert Whitehouse -1894-1917. Founded and chaired Maine branch of the Congressional Union, and the Men’s Equal Suffrage League.

# The Road to the 19th Amendment.





**Florence Brooks Whitehouse** | 1869 - 1945  
**Robert Treat Whitehouse** | 1870 - 1924

**MARKER LOCATION:**  
42 Deering Street  
Portland, Maine

Florence and Robert were born in Augusta, Maine, and moved to Portland following their marriage in 1894. Their first home in Portland was at 42 Deering Street, and this is where their marker can be found.

In 1913, after bearing three sons, writing several plays, and publishing two novels, Florence became involved in woman suffrage. She joined the Maine Woman Suffrage Association (MWSA) and quickly assumed leadership positions. Among other things, she chaired MWSA's Legislative Committee from 1915-1916.

Robert was an attorney, who founded the Men's Equal Suffrage League in 1914 to support Florence and the campaign for woman suffrage. He chaired the League from its start to when the 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920, and provided considerable legal advice and financial assistance to the suffrage campaign.

In 1915 Florence agreed to lead the newly formed Maine branch of the Congressional Union (CU), later known as the National Woman's Party (NWP). This was controversial with her MWSA colleagues, especially once Florence joined in public demonstrations against then-President Woodrow Wilson for his refusal to support equal suffrage. In 1917, when the Maine legislature passed a statewide suffrage bill and sent it out to voters for a referendum vote, Florence's more conservative suffrage colleagues refused to let her have any public role in promoting it, citing her radical views. In response, Florence's friends secretly formed the Equal Suffrage Referendum League of Maine- to work only for the referendum- and elected her Chair. She happily accepted the position.

When Maine's suffrage referendum was resoundingly defeated, Florence left MWSA and worked only for the NWP. This earned her much local notoriety because of the "militant" tactics employed by NWP organizers, such as picketing the Whitehouse.

In June 1919 the US Congress passed the 19th Amendment and sent it to the states to ratify. In November, Maine's Governor Millikin called the legislature into special session to act on it. A few days before the session, the Maine Federation of Labor (MFL) unexpectedly issued a public call for the legislature to defeat the suffrage amendment. Florence called for aid from the NWP and Alice Paul traveled to Maine to help. The Senate passed it easily, but at the 11th hour it was Florence and Alice Paul in a room at the state capitol, twisting arms and threatening the MFL leaders to make them retract their call, which they finally did. When the House voted the next day it passed by only four votes. Maine became the 19th state to ratify the 19th Amendment in November 1919.

Florence's skills as a writer, public speaker, lobbyist, and organizer were unequaled in Maine's suffrage movement, and she was a key figure in the last six years of the struggle. She worked closely with national suffrage leaders, especially during pivotal periods when the nation looked to Maine for breakthroughs in the battle. The support she received from her husband, Robert, was invaluable in winning the long battle for woman suffrage.



## Augusta Hunt | 1842 - 1932

### MARKER LOCATION:

 165 State Street  
Portland, Maine

Throughout her life Augusta Merrill Barstow Hunt worked for women's rights, suffrage and the temperance movement. She was president of the Portland chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) for 15 years, and helped to establish a day nursery, free kindergartens, and the practice of hiring police matrons for female offenders. She also helped enact laws giving mothers equal rights with fathers in the care and guardianship of minor children, and permitting the election of women to school boards. She championed many causes, using her wealth and privilege to improve the lives of those less fortunate.

Augusta was an early advocate for suffrage, both with Maine Woman Suffrage Association (MWSA) and the WCTU. In 1916, at the age of 74, she came out of retirement to serve as MWSA's interim chair during a short-term leadership crisis. In October 1916 she hosted MWSA's annual meeting at her gracious home on 165 State Street, which was attended by about 100 members. At this meeting, the members decided to pursue legislative approval of what would become Maine's first ever statewide suffrage referendum, in 1917. While the referendum failed, the 19th Amendment through which most women the right to vote was ratified in August of 1920. In recognition of her many contributions Hunt was given the distinction of being the first woman in Portland to cast a ballot.

"A great humanitarian;" that's how a Portland newspaper article described Augusta Hunt on the occasion of her 90th birthday. And yet, her story has a darker side. She was married to George S. Hunt, a wealthy sugar refiner and shipping magnate, who was 13 years her senior. George owned the Eagle Sugar Refinery in Portland, as well as a fleet of ships. George's ships brought Maine lumber products to Cuba, where they were exchanged for cargoes of sugar and molasses to bring back to his refinery.

Cuban plantation owners used slave labor until it was abolished in 1886. Maine timber, as well as dried fish and other products, helped build and sustain the slave labor plantations. Thus, the Hunts' affluence, which allowed Augusta to turn her hands to good works instead of to paid labor, resulted in part from the labor of enslaved peoples.

Augusta deserves to be acknowledged for her work over decades to promote women's equality. Yet we must not forget that her privilege was derived from her husband's business interests, which profited from slave labor.





## Camille Lessard Bissonnette | 1883 - 1970



### MARKER LOCATION:

223 Lisbon Street  
Lewiston, Maine

Camille Lessard Bissonnette was born in Ste-Julie-de-Mégantic, QC, and moved to Maine from Laurierville, Quebec, CA in 1904. She was a feminist in the early 1900s, before the concept of feminism was more widely known.

At age sixteen while still living in Quebec, Camille became a schoolteacher, one of the few jobs available to women. When she immigrated to Lewiston she began working in the Continental Mill and, two years later, she joined the staff of

Le Messenger, Lewiston's French language newspaper. Camille was a correspondent for the paper until 1938. In 1910 and 1912, Camille wrote columns in support of the suffrage movement. On February 4th, 1910 Camille wrote in the Le Messenger: "You say, sirs, that it is the woman who lights up your home. You compare her to a ray of sunshine. You exclaim that women must not be dragged into the mud of politics. But sirs, when a ray of sunshine falls on the mud does it dirty itself, or does it dry up and purify the mud?"

As a French heritage woman Camille's pro-suffrage views were unique and daring. French-speaking cultures, world-wide, were reluctant to grant women the vote; Quebec women didn't win the vote until 1940 and for women in France it was 1945. Camille's unique suffrage contribution was her bi-cultural, bi-lingual, cross-border conversation with the women in French Canada as well as with the immigrant working women in Lewiston for whom she wrote her Le Messenger columns.

Camille struggled against the thinking and beliefs of the larger and more dominant White Anglo-Saxon Protestants in Maine. Her courageous stand in support of votes for women took place during a time when Maine had little interest in cultural diversity, and perhaps even less in suffrage.

Her views ran counter to many women and men in her own culture, as well. Under the pen name, Liane, Camille made the case for why women should be able to vote. Arguments against enfranchising women centered on their place in the home, and their role as guardians of French-Canadian culture. She continued to support suffrage over the objections of the French-Canadian community, the clergy, and other journalists.

Eventually, Camille's columns helped persuade Canadian women to favor suffrage; in 1912, women in English-speaking Canada began working for the vote, but it would be 1922 before the movement for suffrage got underway in Quebec.

Camille was the lone voice speaking for suffrage action in the Maine French heritage women's public space in the early 20th century. Her marker is located at the former offices of Le Messenger.



## Maine and the 19th Amendment

**MARKER LOCATION:**  
Maine State House  
Augusta, Maine

In 1854 Sen. Thomas McCulloch Hayes of Saco asked the Maine legislature to consider women's voting rights. This was followed, in 1857, by a petition authored by national suffrage leaders Alice Blackwell, Lucy Stone, and Antoinette Rose. This was the first "memorial" (petition) to the Maine Legislature. No action was taken.

These earliest attempts to win woman suffrage through state action were followed by petitions submitted at least 12 more times, in 1869, 1870, 1872, 1883, 1887, 1895, 1901, 1905, 1907, 1909, 1911, 1913, and 1915. All of these petitions were considered in some fashion by the legislature in the Maine State House, at its current location in Augusta, Maine.

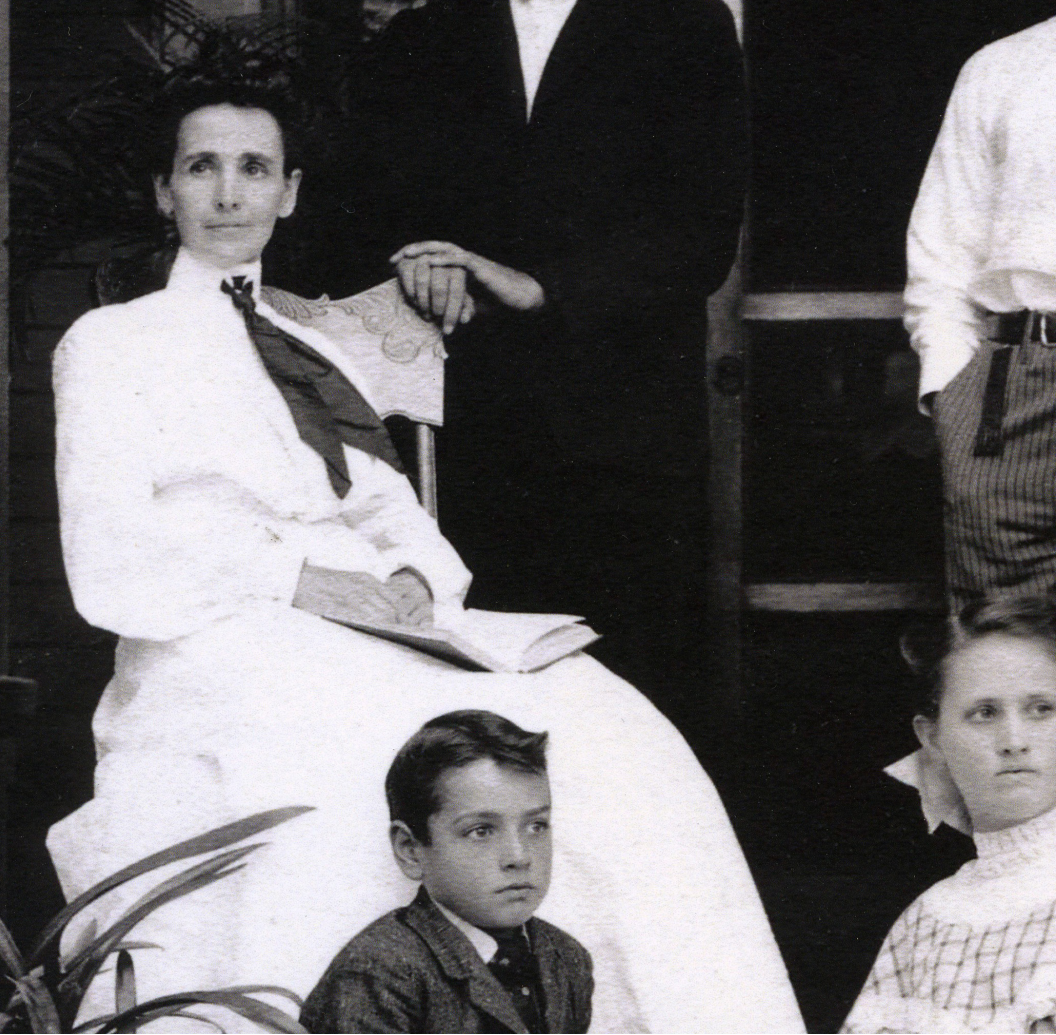
Some years, there would be hearings in front of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary, followed by votes in each respective chamber. It wasn't until 1917 that the legislature passed a full suffrage bill with the two-thirds majorities needed to send it to voters. Sadly, Maine's first-ever suffrage referendum was soundly defeated.

The US Congress approved the 19th Amendment in June 1919, and sent the measure to the states for ratification. Maine Governor Carl Milliken called the legislature into special session on November 4 and 5 for the ratification vote. Despite some last minute machinations from the anti-suffragists, the measure passed the Senate easily on November 4th with a two-thirds majority. The following day, following some vigorous arm twisting by National Woman's Party Chair Alice Paul and Maine suffrage leader Florence Brooks Whitehouse, it squeaked through the House with only four votes to spare. Maine became the 19th state to ratify the 19th Amendment, in November 1919.

Thus, it was not until the 19th Amendment was fully ratified that most Maine women won the right to vote (Native Americans would not be fully enfranchised until 1967). Over the years, the Maine State House was the primary focus of women's efforts to win voting rights through state action, to lobby the legislature to pressure Maine's US Senator Frederick Hale to support passage of the federal suffrage measure, and, finally, to ratify the 19th Amendment.

Currently, there is very little evidence of women's history in the Maine State House. In an effort to rectify this, on February 27, 2020 the Legislative Council gave its unanimous approval to a Pomeroy Foundation suffrage marker to be placed in a prominent position on the State House grounds. This fulfills a goal of the Maine Suffrage Centennial Collaborative and the Legislative Council to have a marker honoring women's fight for suffrage at the State House.





In 1907 the Franklin County Equal Suffrage League hosted the 27th annual Maine Woman's Suffrage Association Convention, held at Old South Congregational Church in Farmington (now a Congregational Church). The church boasted one of the biggest congregations in Farmington, and it was often used to host meetings and conventions. On October 21, 1907, as president of the local suffrage group, Isabel Greenwood gave the welcoming speech.

While managing their home and raising their four children, Isabel continued advocating for equal suffrage by giving speeches, gathering petition signatures supporting women's right to vote, and writing letters to newspapers, journals and businessmen listing reasons women needed the vote. She and other supporters also had a suffrage booth at the local county fairs.

She later served on the state board of the Maine Woman's Suffrage Association. After the 19th Amendment was ratified, Isabel and other Equal Suffrage League members formed a local chapter of the League of Women Voters. Isabel continued to participate in local causes and activities until she died at the age of 96.

Isabel is often overshadowed by her well-known husband, Chester Greenwood, inventor of the earmuff, as well as other machinery. He supported her efforts and even joined the Equal Suffrage League. But Isabel's contributions have been forgotten — it's Chester who is celebrated each December during Farmington's "Chester Greenwood Day." Now, at long last, it's time to recognize Isabel Greenwood for her part in the long struggle to win suffrage for women.

## Isabel Greenwood | 1862 - 1958

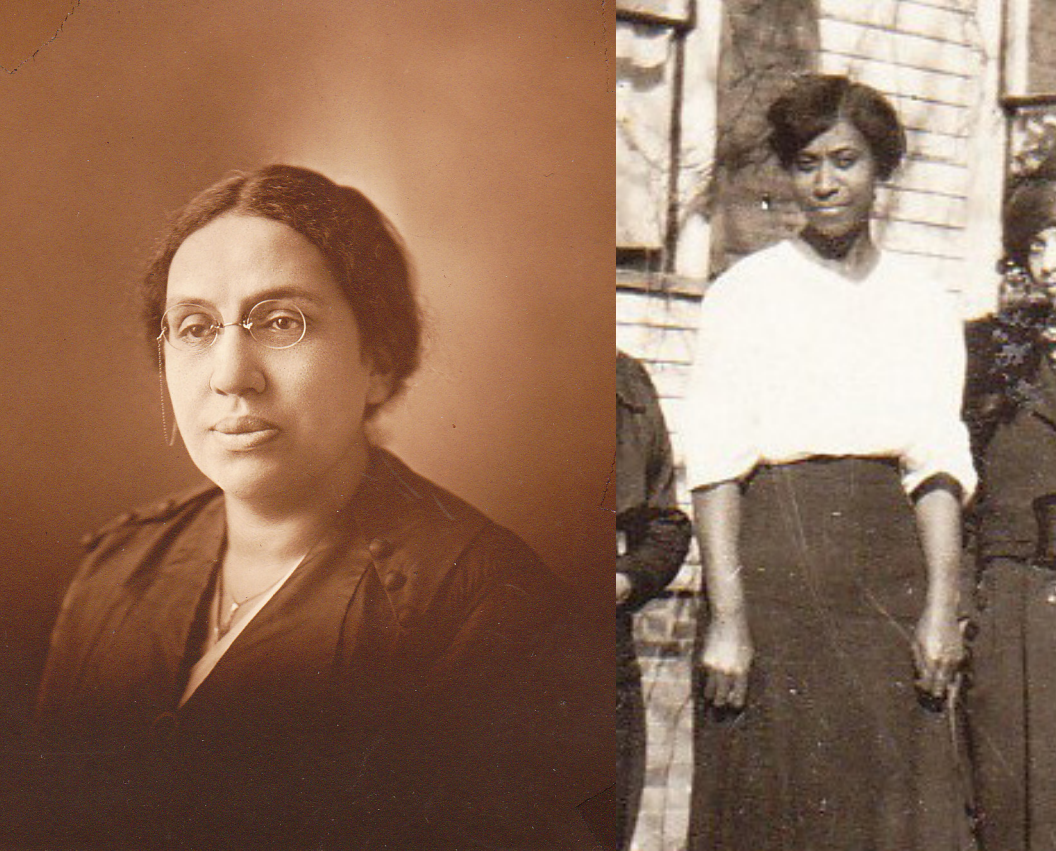


### MARKER LOCATION:

235 Main Street  
Farmington, Maine

Sarah Isabel (Whittier) Greenwood of Farmington, Maine, organized the Farmington Equal Suffrage League in 1906 after hearing a speech in Portland urging women to join the suffrage movement. She held meetings in her home and recruited other men and women to join the cause. Soon she had organized a Franklin County Equal Suffrage League as well.





## Black Matriarchs of Bangor



### MARKER LOCATION:

Bangor Public Library  
Bangor, Maine

At the turn of the 20th Century Bangor boasted a small but thriving Black community whose members came from the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean. Never more than 300 people, this vibrant community supported a number of social clubs, including several established by Black women.

Mabel Derricks, Edith Johnson, and Blanche Dymond were leaders in the Black community of Bangor, and supported suffrage and their community through the Mothers Clubs and the Household of Ruth (the women's auxiliary to the Odd Fellows). These clubs helped knit the Black community together through dances and other social activities, while also organizing support for families in need.



### More about Mabel Derricks, Edith Johnson, and Blanche Dymond

In 1917, Mabel, Edith, and Blanche were among the women who signed a petition in support of Maine's first ever statewide suffrage referendum. The women attended Columbia Street Baptist Church where the pastor's wife, Deborah Knox Livingston, was active in the suffrage movement in Maine and nationally. Since Deborah was a paid organizer for the Maine suffrage referendum in 1917, it is likely she was instrumental in collecting the three women's signatures. Suffrage advocates aimed to collect signatures on the petition from 10,000 women statewide, so Deborah would have been pleased to add members of her husband's congregation to her tally.

Yet while schools and sports teams in Bangor were integrated, as was the Bangor Public Library, in general Blacks weren't welcome in White-led organizations. This may explain why Mabel, Edith, and Blanche's names cannot be found in the membership of the Bangor suffrage organization, and no other details have emerged regarding their involvement in Maine's suffrage movement.

After the fight for suffrage was won, Mabel, Edith, and Blanche continued their activism. For example, Blanche helped establish and served on the Executive Committee of the Bangor NAACP.





## Lucy Nicolar Poolaw | 1882 - 1969



### MARKER LOCATION:

1 Down Street  
Indian Island, Maine

Lucy Nicolar was born in Indian Island, Maine, a citizen of the Penobscot nation and the daughter of Joseph Nicolar and Elizabeth Joseph. Every summer, her family traveled to the resort town of Kennebunkport to sell baskets, and Lucy and her sister performed in Indian dress for the tourists. In her late teens she started performing at public events such as sportsman's shows. These early experiences led to a long and successful career in the arts, performing on stage in traditional Indian dress, mixing classical music and opera with Native American songs, and recording with Victor Records. Lucy's stage name was "Princess Watahwaso."

Following her retirement as a full-time entertainer, Lucy returned to Maine with her husband, Kiowa Nation citizen Bruce Poolaw. They opened Chief Poolaw's TeePee on Indian Island in 1947, a store that featured Penobscot artwork. This is where her marker is located.

Lucy's considerable achievements in the arts were matched by her activism on the part of the Penobscot people. Along with her sisters, Florence and Emma, she campaigned for Native voting rights. Though most American women won the right to vote through the 19th Amendment, Maine didn't extend voting rights to Indigenous peoples until 1954. Yet as the State didn't create voting districts for the reservations, Native peoples here weren't fully enfranchised until 1967.

With her sisters, Lucy also fought for better educational opportunities for the Penobscot people, and lobbied the State of Maine to build a bridge to Indian Island in order to improve its accessibility.

In recognition of her advocacy, Lucy was chosen to be the first Native American on a Maine reservation to cast a vote.

In 1988 Lucy's nephew, Charles Norman Shay, obtained and renovated the teepee store to cast a vote (depicted in the photo on the opposite page, and this is where the roadside marker celebrating Lucy has been installed).

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We are indebted to the following individuals and organizations for their assistance with identifying, researching, and crafting the messages on the suffrage markers.

Anne B. Gass, MSCC Marker Project Lead

Maine Suffrage Centennial Collaborative Steering Committee:

Ellen Alderman, Chair  
Anna Kellar, League of Women Voters of Maine (LWVME)  
Steve Bromage, Maine Historical Society  
Amy Kuhn  
Laura Genese, Girls Scouts of Maine

We also would like to thank the following individuals for sharing the knowledge and history of these suffragists:

Rhea Côtés-Robbins — Camille Lessard Bissonnette

David Payne, and interns Rachael Swan, Camden Breckenridge, and Christina Polston — The Black Matriarchs of Bangor

Anne B. Gass — Augusta Hunt

Claudia Bell, Michaela J. Carney, Marion Scharoun, and Jane Woodman — Isabel Greenwood

Darren Ranco — Lucy Nicolar Poolaw

Anne B. Gass — State House Marker

Anne B. Gass — Florence Brooks and Robert Treat Whitehouse

We appreciate the private donors who helped make this project a reality, and thanks to the William G. Pomeroy Foundation for donating the first five markers!

Design by: Jen Lancaster