



Episode Five | TRANSCRIPT

Isabel Greenwood | 1862 - 1958



HOSTED BY:

League of Women Voters of Maine
Featuring Michaela J. Carney



MARKER LOCATION:

235 Main Street
Farmington, Maine

lwvme.org/SuffrageTrail

- 0:36 You're listening to the "Road to the 19th Amendment" podcast, and we're telling the story of Maine's suffragists, and bringing this history the recognition it deserves. This project is made possible by the Maine Suffrage Centennial Collaborative, chaired by Ellen Alderman, led by Anne Gass, and with support from the William G. Pomeroy Foundation and other donors like you.
- 1:03 This episode covers Isabel Greenwood, the story told by Michaela J. Carney.
- 1:19 So, my name is Michaela Carney. I was a student at UMS [University of Southern Maine]. Before, I started interning with the Historical Society. And I became an intern, and through that process, I learned about Isabel Greenwood and the family, and I've met some of the members, and Jane and Claudia have always, since then over the last few years, have just asked me to do a lot of speaking as her, playing her character. And I've been in the Chester Greenwood Day parade, playing Isabel on the float. So it's a little...I almost feel like I'm her sometimes when I'm in...in this character mode. So that would be my main connection.
- 2:14 Most importantly, I would say she was an influential figure in Maine suffrage movement. But besides that, she was also a daughter, a wife, and a mother. She didn't really settle for less than she deserved. And she absolutely fought for what she believed in, no matter if she was doing suffragist activities or if she were doing activities in her own community of Farmington, she was pretty active in various different town responsibilities.
- 2:53 You could say, I know that she was active in the Grange activities, and something else that does not come into my mind, but I might think



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of it. I found a few quotes from the Morning Sentinel, which this was published in December of 1985, and the reason it was published so late and she's mentioned in it, is that this was her first kind of appearance in Chester Greenwood Day, and one of the quote says according to relatives and friends. She was a very active, and energetic woman long before women finally did get the vote. She and her followers held educational meetings and were often seen taking literature at town meetings. So she was always advocating for women and always advocating for herself and her children, just trying to do what she thought was right.

3:52

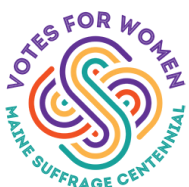
Another quote said she was often a recipient of letters from women all over the state. Outlining the personal, toll-taken, all women who were working through the vote. And lastly, according to her grandson, Warren Greenwood, she was active in anything that had to do with bettering one's place in the world. So honestly, whatever you could think of that would be in that category, she was most likely involved in, and like I mentioned, a very influential person in Farmington, in Franklin County, and in Maine.

4:24

Yes, she was living in Farmington. Yes, she was on the Executive Council of the Maine Suffrage Movement. However, I'm not sure that there would have been anything she would have considered a challenge. As I thought more about this question, yes, definitely travel expenses were one of the first things they came to mind..,how difficult it would have been to travel from Farmington to Portland on a semi-regular basis, at least. But then, I thought, well in that area of the state, obviously, it's more populated, it's more progressive. It's always been more progressive than our second district is, which is where she is lived.

5:12

Thinking about what she would have been thinking, I can't imagine she would have felt the pull towards the Portland Area, to be down there as much as possible, as much time as she could be down there. I feel like she would have wanted to be in her home community, in her home county making as much of an influence on the citizens and the voters up here as she could, and using her Executive Council power in the Franklin county western Maine region, being able to bring north the trainings that they had in Portland communities that are much smaller and may not have had as much communication, I guess, that that area of the state this other Maine area, which again, is more progressive.



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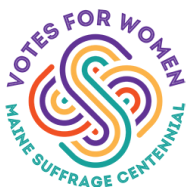
- 6:08 So if she's a progressive female, and she's definitely going to want to spend as much time in her own community, which at the time, yes, was progressive, but was also conservative. So the more discussion she could have with the conservative folks in the area was definitely going to make more of an impact on the community than...and on the state community then just always being in Portland and always pushing you down in southern Maine where there were many more suffragists than there were in western Maine. So yeah, I'm not really sure she would have seen anything as a challenge, in a negative way, but a challenge in a positive way to just communicate with as many people as she could.
- 7:03 Being overshadowed by a husband, who was a rich white male, a rich white landowning male in the twentieth century. He was an inventor, an incredibly notable person in Franklin County and in Maine. He's most well known for inventing the ear muff, which the town, the community, which Farmington celebrates every December. So of course, she would have been overshadowed by him. As unfortunate as it is, that's just usually what happened, and it's even...it's even more interesting to look at how history has acknowledged women's role, and how it's still difficult for society today to acknowledge women's role in predominantly male oriented professions, anything in the STEM related fields: science, technology, engineering, mathematics. Definitely politics and government, even history. It's hard to be a female working in any of these academic, or mathematics related areas.
- 8:22 And honestly, for Isabel to join the political scheme of the twentieth century with all of these other important women, who were working to gain the right to vote, it really shows how important that she felt this was, and how important all of these other women felt that this was for them to, honestly, risk their lives to to gain this right, and it's definitely still seen today, not only with women but with people of color, people in the Asian Pacific Islander community, anyone honestly that is not a white male, is putting their life on the line to fight for what they believe in and what we, a society, should be accomplishing at this point in time.
- 9:14 So...yeah, I mean she was overshadowed, but she definitely made her own, and people did recognize that eventually. It didn't take incredibly long as with other people in history being recognized for what they did, but it took a little while, couple of decades at least. And she wasn't even brought into the parade celebration until 1990.



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- 9:47 I think more importantly she was acknowledged eventually, she's still being acknowledged today, she's still being acknowledged in this suffrage trail. So definitely was not lost to history.
- 10:00 The marker for Isabel Greenwood is located at the old South Congregational Church on Main Street in Farmington, right out front. You can see when you drive by. Very very cool to look at. And the Old South Church was chosen for the marker location, because it was not only the largest meeting venue in Farmington, but it was kind of their hub in a way. They called most of their meetings there. Most of their meetings if they were in the Farmington Area, obviously they would have different meeting in different towns, but it was their...it was their hub. They had all of their meetings there. They had all of their trainings there, they would split up between a few different buildings that could hold larger groups of people for example, the Grange in West Farmington is also a meeting spot, but this one was pretty significant definitely.
- 11:06 I do want to mention after women got the right to vote, Isabel didn't feel the need to stop advocating. She changed the name of the Farmington Equal Suffrage Association to the Maine League of Women's Voters — of Women Voters — so that she and her suffragists could continue to educate women and register them to vote. I believe once women did win the election, there was, when the vote was there, there was an election I think less than a month later. So there was a lot of push to try and just get everyone registered to vote as soon as possible.
- 11:54 And I do...I do want to mention that she didn't quit. She—she literally just kept going. And she definitely kept going until she passed away. In 1958...up until the end.



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Bio.

Isabel Greenwood | 1862 - 1958

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.

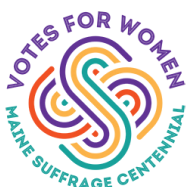
In 1907 the Franklin County Equal Suffrage League hosted the 27th annual Maine Woman's Suffrage Association Convention, held at Old South Congregational Church in Farmington (now a Congregational Church). The church boasted one of the biggest congregations in Farmington, and it was often used to host 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.

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