

The Nottingham's Legal Voters List March 1909

History Mystery IX Women Voters in Nottingham 1909

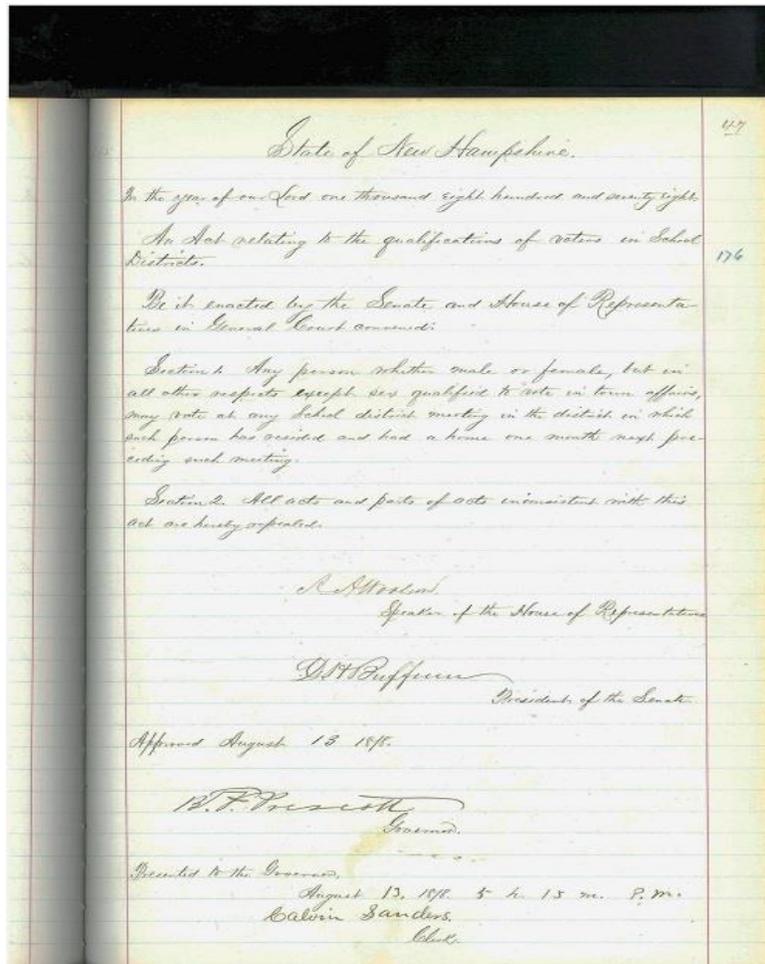
Steve Soreff, MD

The Nottingham Historical Society's (NHS) Van Dame School House and Museum, 139 Stage Road, has a large and diverse collection of the community's memorabilia. These include historically significant photographs, documents of Nottingham's 13 one-room school houses, information about its over 125 private graveyards, the town's voting lists, the town's tax list, Nottingham's Annual Reports, and pictures along with their stories of Nottingham's houses built before 1900. The author, a member of the NHS, sought to link these different areas together by tracing either one town person or a family through all of them. It would follow starting with the birth record in the Annual Reports, moving through the school records, then showing a picture of the family home, continuing on the tax and voter lists, and ending with graveyard information. As I was tracing the Kennard family through those various museum areas, I discovered that several Kennard women were listed on the 1909 Legal Voter list.

What made this finding of great interest is that women in the United States of American did not get the right to vote in elections until 1920 with the passage of the 19 Amendment to the

U.S. Constitution. “The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granted American women the right to vote, a right known as women’s suffrage, and was ratified on August 18, 1920, ending almost a century of protest. In 1848.” A quick check showed that although other states had indeed given the right to vote to women before 1920, New Hampshire was not one of them. This was the history mystery: How was it possible that women’s names were on the Nottingham Legal Voters in 1909? And there were many other women on that list besides those Kennard ladies, too.

With help of the former town Moderator, Bonnie Winona Mackinnon, I was in contact with New Hampshire’s Secretary of State’s (NHSOS) office. The NHSOS was very interested in this discovery. Brian Nelson Burford, the Acting New Hampshire State Archivist pursued it. He found an 1878 New Hampshire act granting the right to vote on school matters.



Here is the actual 1878 act.

Here is a transcript provided by Brian Burford of that act.

“State of New Hampshire In the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and seventy-eight. An Act relating to the qualifications of voters in School Districts. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:

Section 1. Any person whether male or female, but in all other respects except sex qualified to vote in town affairs, may vote at any School District meeting in the district in which such person has resided and had a home one month next pre-ceding such meeting.

Section 2. All acts and parts of acts inconsistent with this act are hereby repealed.

A. A. Woolson Speaker of the House of Representatives

D. H. Buffum President of the Senate

Approved August 13 1878.

B.F. Prescott Governor

Presented to the Governor, August 13 1878 5 h. 15 m. P.M. Calvin Sanders Clerk”

That mystery was solved! Thank you, Brian Burford. To learn about other history mysteries and to discover more about Nottingham’s history please, visit the Nottingham Historical Society’s (NHS) Van Dame School House and Museum. It is open on Thursday mornings from 9 -11 A.M. and the last Saturday of the month from 10 A.M. to 12 noon.



Van Dame School House and Museum.