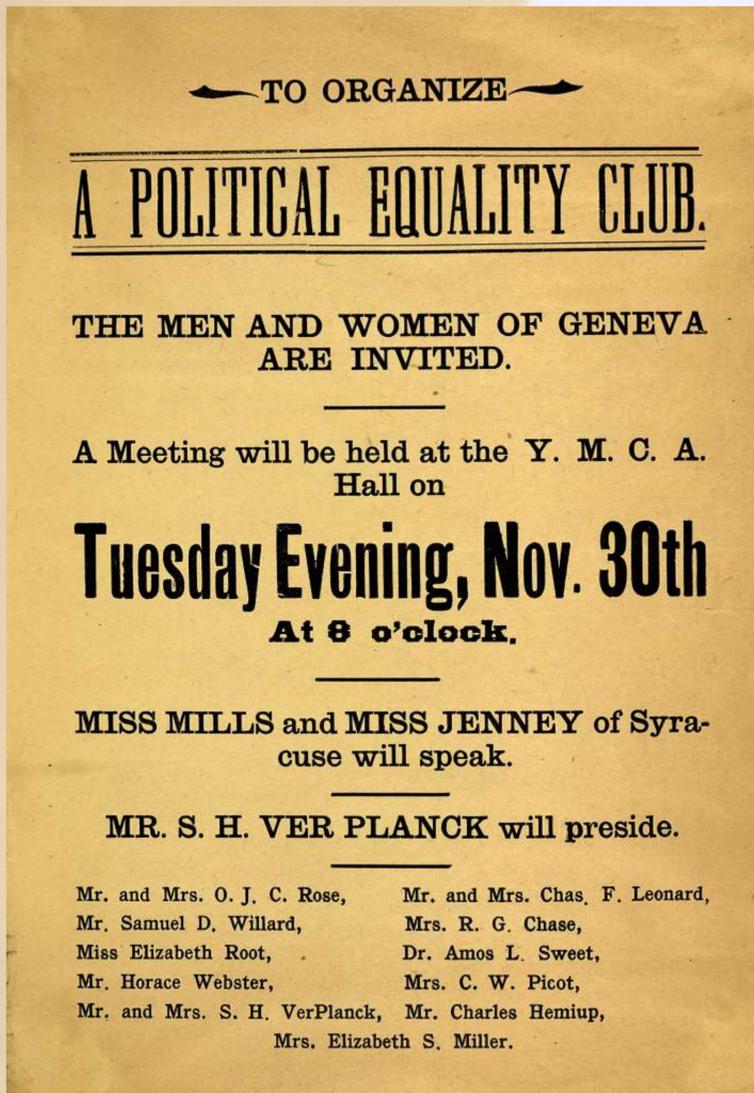
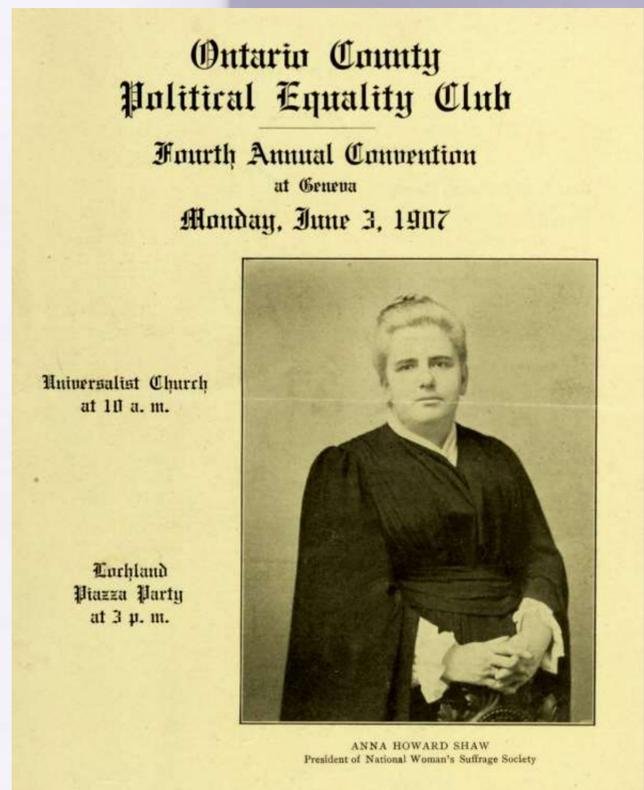


1897–1917: Geneva Gets Busy



In 1897, through the efforts of Elizabeth and Anne Miller, the New York State Woman Suffrage Association held their annual convention in Geneva. Inspired by the convention, the Millers and other community members formed the Geneva Political Equality Club. Eventually the Club became the largest in the state. Women opposed to suffrage organized as well.

Open to men and women, the Geneva Political Equality Club (1897-1918) promoted the discussion and education of issues central to women's rights. The Club sponsored public lectures ranging from Susan B. Anthony to British suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst. An annual fundraiser was held in the spring for several years at the Miller's Lochland estate, featuring speakers and refreshments on the piazza.

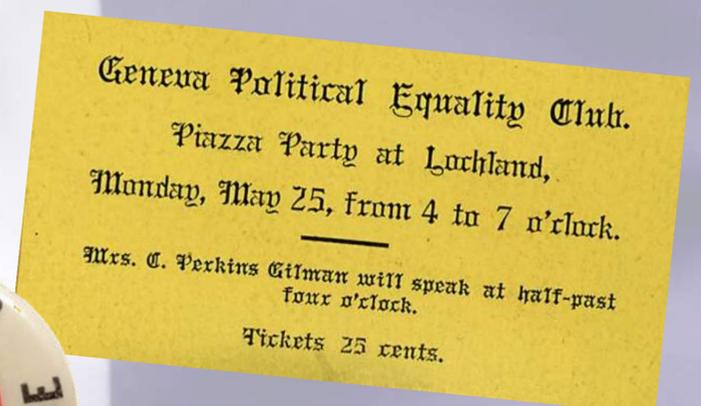


Through the Geneva Political Equality Club efforts clubs were formed in Phelps, Clifton Springs, Gorham and on the campus of William Smith College. In 1902 the Phelps and Geneva Clubs formed the Ontario County Political Equality Club. Other clubs in the county included Honeoye, Allen's Hill, Victor and Shortsville.

Against Suffrage.

We are told that an anti-suffrage league is to be formed in Geneva, to consist solely of women. We do not know who is at the head of it, but the movement was given a momentum by the address given before the suffragists at their last meeting Monday night of this week by Rev. Mr. Leighton, Chaplain of Hobart College, who discussed it in several phases. A little later there will be others who will talk along the same lines. The suffragists of Geneva welcome these arguments—they say there is much to be gained by discussion. If the new movement gets a representative membership there may be some very interesting debates next winter, and we know they will all be conducted in the proper spirit, "to show the greatest good to the greatest number," nothing acrimonious. There are many like ourself, ready to listen.

Not all women wanted the vote. Reasons varied from politics corrupted women to a married woman could only double or nullify her husband's vote rendering it pointless. Though Geneva's anti-suffrage movement was slow to form, it took shape in 1914 as legislative suffrage efforts in New York State increased.



The Straws that Stirred the Drink: Local Women

Many Geneva women worked in the suffrage movement. Elizabeth and Anne Miller used their connections to bring major speakers to Geneva. A local signer of the 1848 Declaration of Sentiments, Rhoda Palmer, became an icon for the movement. Other women, like Charlotte Baldrige and Sarah Burrall, were already active within the community supporting issues like education, health care, and the arts. For these women the right to vote was part of community engagement.



Elizabeth Smith Miller (1822 – 1911) and Anne Fitzhugh Miller (1856 – 1912) were active in the political arena as a mother-daughter team.



Rhoda Palmer (1816-1919) was the only signer of the 1848 Declaration of Sentiments who lived long enough to legally vote. She lived most of her life north of Geneva on Lyons Road and attended the Junius Quaker meeting although not officially a member. At the age of 102 she voted for the first time in 1918.



Along with the Geneva and Ontario County Political Equality Clubs Charlotte Baldrige (1850-1931) was active in the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Connections between the temperance and suffrage movements were common and the liquor industry feared women's votes would hurt their business.



Sarah Burrall (1854-1930), with her husband Charles, was a life member of the Geneva Political Equality Club. She had a high profile within the community working with a variety of organizations including the Woman's Board of Managers of the hospital, the Geneva Free Library, Daughters of the American Revolution and the YMCA.

A Woman's Touch: Women Office Seekers

The fight for suffrage was driven by an interest in public affairs. Women had long attended meetings and stayed informed on the issues, some say more than the men. They became active in party politics and held positions within the parties. The right to run for office, however, did not immediately lead to more women in elected positions. Decades passed before women were elected to the school board, city council, and the mayor's office.

—The Political Equality Club last night named Miss Harriet B. Pope for School Trustee. The lady is a granddaughter of the late Bishop Bissell, and has been engaged in educational work. She is well qualified for the office, but we doubt if she will enjoy the evening sessions of the board.

Miss Harriet Pope was elected to the Geneva school board in 1905 but not without complications. During the annual board meeting in December 1904, Miss Pope won a three-way election but without a majority. By law the previous board member, Mr. Backenstose, was to stay in office another year but he resigned soon after. The four board members then had to elect a new member. After a deadlock over a female versus male board member, the board followed the will of the voters and appointed Miss Pope. She served one year then was elected in 1905 and 1909.



Helen Maney, a long-time history teacher at Geneva High School, first served on City Council in 1947 representing the Fifth Ward. She served as City Council president from 1962 to 1964 when the city switched to a manager-mayor form of government. Following Mayor William Hosking's death in October 1974 Maney took the post. She won her own term in 1975 and served until 1979. Joanne Wisor (1996 - 1999) is the only other woman to be elected Mayor.

MRS. M. BARTLETT IS CITY OFFICER
Wife of President becomes first woman to be elected as City Alderwoman

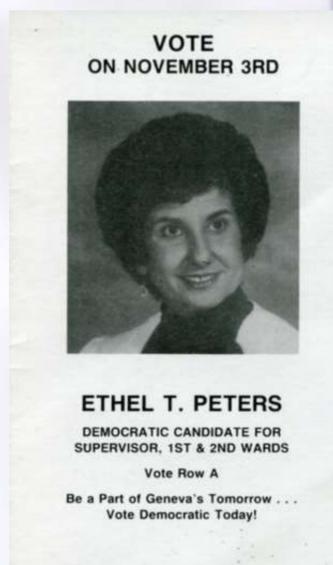
Since coming to Geneva in 1919, she has continued her interest in social welfare work and in young people's activities. She is now a director of the Geneva Social Service League and a representative from this district of the New York Emergency Commission.

With the distinction of being the first woman elected to a position as a Geneva city official, Mrs. Murray Bartlett, wife of the president of Hobart College, was elected on Nov. 7 to be Alderwoman in the First Ward. Although this ward has always been staunchly Republican, Mrs. Bartlett, running on the Democratic ticket, received more votes than either of her opponents.



Mrs. Bartlett has always been actively interested in work of public benefit. Before coming to Geneva, she was at one time a director of the Rochester Y. W. C. A. In 1908, while she and Dr. Bartlett were in the Philippines, she took a prominent part in the social and charitable work of Manila. During the War, as a resident of California, she was very active in the Pasadena Chapter of the Red Cross, having charge of the packing and distributing of the vast amount of supplies sent over-seas by that chapter.

In 1933 Mrs. Blanchard Bartlett, wife of Hobart & William Smith President Murray Bartlett, became the first woman elected to City Council. A Democrat, she won the traditionally Republican First Ward and served from 1934 to 1938.



Two school principals became the first women to represent Geneva on the Ontario County Board of Supervisors. In 1992 Ethel Peters (left, West Street School) was elected from Wards 1 and 2 for the city. Mary Luckern (right, North Street School) won the Town of Geneva seat in 1997.