



“Renton’s Lady Voters” Study Guide Questions

“Renton’s Lady Voters” is an article about women who contributed to civic life in Renton around the time that Washington passed House Bill 59 in 1910, granting women the right to vote.

This activity is designed for readers in 7th grade and above. Questions can be used for discussion or as writing prompts. You can find the original article from [September 2014 on Renton History Museum’s Newsletters Page](#).

1. Mary Wilson was not only the first woman in Renton to cast a ballot after the state ratified the women’s suffrage amendment in 1910, she was the first woman in Washington state to vote after 1910. How else did she contribute to her community?

2. What sources can researchers study at the Renton History Museum to help them get a better overall understanding of female voters in the 1910s?

3. Besides voting, how else did Renton women participate in the election process?

4. Why were organizations such as Order of the Eastern Star and Columbine Rebekah Lodge of the International Order of the Odd Fellows especially important to woman in Renton?

5. Who was Nannie Evans, and what was her role in the Renton community?



6. A number of early women voters in Renton were family members of public officials and people who would go on to serve their community in the public sector later. Name at least three examples.

7. Who was Hattie Butler, and what are some of her accomplishments?

8. Describe the connection between the women's suffrage amendment in 1910 and the 1914 vote on Prohibition (banning the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages) in Washington State.

ESSAY QUESTION: How did Renton women participate in civic life in the 1910s? How did they affect their community?

CREATIVE ESSAY QUESTION: Imagine that you are a reporter for the *Renton Bulletin* in the early 1910s. You have been assigned to write an article about local women who vote. You are required to go to at least three different organizations and interview three different people to do research for your article. Which locations would you choose to visit? Who would you want to interview and why?



Answer Guide for Parents and Teachers

1. Mary Wilson was the first woman in Renton to cast a ballot after the state ratified the women's suffrage amendment in 1910. How else did she contribute to her community?

After voting on whether the City should form Waterway District #1 in the 1910 election, Mary continued to be politically active. In 1922, she was elected Director of School District No. 52 at Coalfield.

2. What sources can historians at the Renton History Museum study to help them get a better overall understanding of female voters in the 1910s?

Historians at the Renton History Museum have access to primary voter registration books for the Socialist and Citizens Parties from 1912 and 1913 elections and registers for the 1913 and 1915 general elections. They can compare the records with biographical sources to help them understand Renton's first female voters. Newspapers from Renton and Seattle are also useful.

3. Besides voting, how else did Renton women participate in the election process?

Starting in 1913, women in Renton had the opportunity to be election officers. Catherine Dinning, Rinnie Nichols, Margaret Nichols, Mary Jane Rees, Lydia Trent, and June Hancock all served as election judges, while Jennie Isackson, Mrs. R. H. Hunt, Theresa Oehm, Alice A. Davis, and Maggie Harner served as election clerks.

4. Why were organizations such as Order of the Eastern Star and Columbine Rebekah Lodge of the International Order of the Odd Fellows especially important to woman in Renton?

Founded in 1899, these female chapters of male lodges provided women in Renton with leadership opportunities, training in organizational skills and teamwork, and a way to improve the community. Attending them was a way to exchange serious ideas and take action in the community. This was especially important because in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, women did not have the same career access as men.

5. Who was Nannie Evans, and what was her role in the Renton community?

Nannie Evans was one of Renton's leading women who voted. She attended the 1912 election with her boarder Clara Blondé and her daughter-in-law Edith. She was married to Harold Evans, a Renton Councilmember who bought and sold real estate for a living and later founded Citizens Bank. Nannie continued his work developing downtown properties when he passed away in 1934. She was also a mother of four and a member of Columbine Rebekah Lodge, the Nesika Lodge, and the Washington State Pioneer Association.

6. A number of early women voters in Renton were family members of public officials and people who would go on to serve their community in the public sector later. Name at least three examples.

Nannie Evans was married to Renton City Councilmember Harold Evans, who served under Renton's first mayor, Abijah Beach.

Melissa Ticknor's husband Benjamin completed a term as Mayor in 1911.

Ellen Smithers' husband was Mayor in 1912.



Jessie Ticknor's husband Al was City Clerk in 1910.

Grace Williams' Husband Sidney was City Attorney from 1901 to 1908.

Mary Baxter's son Joseph R. Baxter became Mayor from 1949-1960.

Ella Beanblossom's husband George became Mayor in 1939-1943.

Mary Fuller and Janet Faull's husbands became city councilmembers.

Emma Dullahant's daughter Eleanor was elected to the WA State House of Representatives in 1972, 1974, and 1976.

7. Who was Hattie Butler, and what are some of her accomplishments?

Hattie Butler was the first woman to be elected to the Renton City Council in Renton, and the first city councilmember in Washington State. She served one term from January 1919. Later she and her husband were active in labor union affairs.

8. Describe the connection between the women's suffrage amendment in 1910 and the 1914 vote on Prohibition (banning the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages) in Washington State.

The 1910 suffrage amendment granted women in Washington the right to vote. Female voters were thought to be the deciding factor in the vote for Prohibition in Washington in 1914. It was a major piece of legislation, and after it passed, women began to truly understand their power as voting citizens.

ESSAY QUESTION: How did Renton women participate in civic life in the 1910s? How did they affect their community?

SAMPLE ANSWER: On November 8, 1910, Washington State passed a bill that allowed women to vote. Two weeks later, fifty women in Renton went to the polls to vote on whether the City would form Waterway District #1. Starting in 1913, women in Renton also served as election judges and clerks.

While women did not have the same career access as men in the 1910s and 1920s, they developed professional skills and became active members of their communities through women's civic organizations. From looking at historical documents, we know that 50% of the women who voted in Renton were also members of the Order of the Eastern Star, the Columbine Rebekah Lodge of the International Order of the Odd Fellows, Pythian Sisters, The Washington State and King County Pioneers Associations, and various churches.

By the end of the decade, more opportunities to participate in the public sector had opened up to women. In 1919 Renton residents Hattie Butler and Gertrude Feek were on the ballot as potential city councilmembers. Butler was elected to office and served a term on the council, becoming the first woman in Washington elected as a councilmember.

CREATIVE ESSAY QUESTION: Imagine that you are a reporter for the *Renton Bulletin* in the early 1910s. You have been assigned to write an article about local women who vote. You are required to go to at least three different organizations and interview three different people to do research for your article. Which locations would you choose to visit? Who would you want to interview and why?



SAMPLE ANSWER: This essay asks students to look back at the article to identify organizations that facilitated participation in civic life, as well as some of the women who played an active role in Renton in the 1910s. Encourage students to think like journalists and look for answers to the six vital questions: who, what, when, where, why, and how?

Supplemental Resources (all available at no cost)

Women’s Suffrage Movement in Washington State

The Fifth Star is a short film documentary created by members of Reel Grrls, a filmmaking and media literacy program for young women. It was made by and features teenage girls. The film is about how and why women in Washington were some of the first in the nation to be able to vote. It also extends the discussion to women in modern politics in the Seattle area. <https://vimeo.com/16443189>

Equal Rights for Women is the Washington State Historical Society exhibit featured in *The Fifth Star*. This PDF contains text from the exhibit that describes Washington’s women’s suffrage movement and its place in national history. It also includes information about the continuation of women’s rights movements into the 20th century, highlighting second wave feminism (1960s – 1980s), Title IX, and women in WA state politics. <http://www.washingtonhistory.org/files/library/equalrights.pdf>

“Woman Suffrage Crusade, 1848 – 1920” is an article on HistoryLink. It contains a detailed chronological list of efforts made in Washington State by suffragettes and their opponents leading up to the women’s suffrage amendment in WA and the ratification of the 19th amendment to the U.S. constitution. <https://historylink.org/File/5662>

A Ballot for the Ladies: Washington Women’s Struggle to Vote is a free online special collections exhibit courtesy of the University of Washington. It highlights the efforts made by activists in Washington to win women the vote, including Catharine Paine Blaine, Mary Olney Brown, Abigail Scott Duniway. <https://content.lib.washington.edu/exhibits/suffrage/>

Critical Thinking Questions: Washington was the fifth state in the U.S. to add a women’s suffrage amendment to its state constitution. Why do you think Washington was ahead of many other states when it came to women’s suffrage? What efforts led up to the women’s suffrage amendment? What efforts are still being made today to promote equal rights for women?

Women’s Suffrage Movement in the U.S.A. and the 19th Amendment

Not for Ourselves Alone: The Story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony is a two-part documentary that follows the women’s suffrage movement during the lifetimes of two prominent women’s rights activists of the 1800s, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. The story of their partnership and the efforts they made to champion women’s right to vote are told through photographs, letters, and other primary source documents. The film also touches on interconnected movements, such as abolition and temperance, and incorporates the broader historical context of U.S. politics and the Civil War. It is available for streaming through King County Library System.

Part 1: <https://kcls.bibliocommons.com/item/show/1317072082>



Part 2: <https://kcls.bibliocommons.com/item/show/1317073082>

Woman Suffrage and the 19th Amendment is a varied collection of primary source documents made available online by the National Archive, with a focus on women's activism in the 1870s through the 1910s. It also provides additional context for each document and links to learning activities.

<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/woman-suffrage>

Rightfully Hers: American Women and the Vote is an online exhibit also curated by the National Archives, which has several documents and photographs available online, as well as links to related learning resources.

https://www.archivesfoundation.org/women/?gclid=EAlaIqobChMliP2lvLuB6QIVQRx9Ch0-Cw2ZEAAYASAAEgKRhfD_BwE

A transcript of Frederick Douglass's 1888 Speech on Woman Suffrage is available online via Virginia Commonwealth University's Social Welfare History Project and BlackPast.org. In the speech, Douglass argues in favor of women's suffrage and reflects on his own involvement in the movement. He also acknowledges that women are the key advocates and spokespeople in the women's suffrage movement. <https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/woman-suffrage/frederick-douglass-woman-suffrage-1888/>

Critical Thinking Questions: What challenges did women face when fighting for the vote at the national level? How did Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony's experiences in childhood and young adulthood shape their viewpoints? How did abolitionists and women's rights activists work together, and what complicated their relationship?