

Wisconsin Women Roared into Public Office in the 1920s



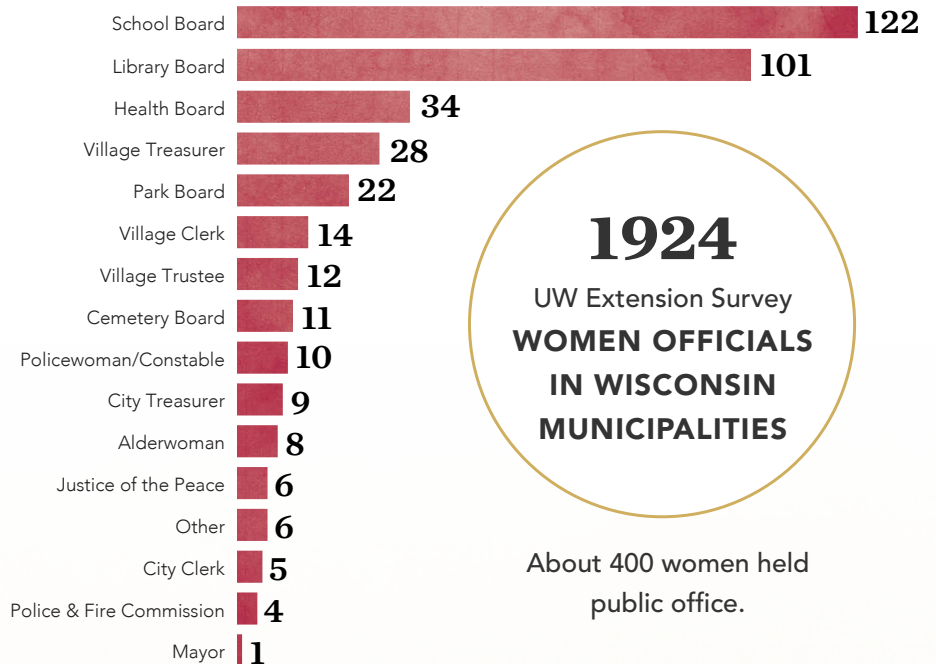
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THE ROARING '20s BROUGHT A NEW MODERN ERA FOR AMERICAN WOMEN AND SET WISCONSIN WOMEN ON A NEW PATH AS GOVERNMENT LEADERS.

The groundwork for this surge of women into public office began in 1875 when Wisconsin women allowed to run for School Board and other elected School offices.

Then in 1919 the 19th Amendment gave women in the United States the vote.

The Wisconsin Legislature followed the lead and in 1921 passed the nation's first equal rights bill, granting women full equality with men under civil law., including holding public office.



1924
UW Extension Survey
**WOMEN OFFICIALS
IN WISCONSIN
MUNICIPALITIES**

About 400 women held public office.

WISCONSIN WOMEN'S POLITICAL FIRSTS

Wisconsin's first **Lady Mayor, Lulu Shaw** was elected in 1923 in Crandon.

"The women have only begun. They make good campaigners – fully as good as men". Shaw led reforms for lower taxes, less moonshine and fought corruption.



In 1923, **Ane M. Hanrahan**, Brown County, was the first woman elected to a County Board in Wisconsin.



In 1924, **Hanna C. Saunders**, Burnett County, was elected Wisconsin's first female Sheriff.

Mrs. Saunders replaced the outgoing sheriff, her husband Charles. "Her election assured that someone from her family would continue in the sheriff's position despite limits on successive terms. Her run was based on a common division of labor in sheriff's offices, where wives assisted their husbands with the non-policing aspects of the position."



And in 1925 three women, **Mildred Barber, Helen Brooks and Helen Thompson**, became the first women elected to the Wisconsin State Assembly.



Women in Local Government in 1924

ALDERWOMEN Libbie Hyde, Clintonville • Emma H. Manning, Janesville • Anna Lathrop, Marshfield
Mrs. C.F. Peterson, Mellen • Mary Bieberstein, Phillips • Mrs. V.M. Russell, Platteville • Elsie B. McFarlane, Waukesha
Helen Ohm, Wausau • Matilda Fowler, Whitewater **CITY CLERKS** Margaret Riley, Ladysmith
Addie Lynch, Port Washington • Anna Moe, Rhinelander • Ethel Sowle, Tomah • Mabel Henika, West Allis
CITY TREASURERS Louise Green, Broadhead • Alice Olsen, Elkhorn • Carrie Maurer, Kiel • Grace Reik,
Ladysmith • Susie Erdman, Park Falls • Mrs. Wm. Carroll, Prairie du Chien • Mrs. Neta Sansburn, River Falls
Mrs. L.A. McDonald, Sturgeon Bay • Louise Krueger, Tomahawk • **MAYORS** Lulu Shaw, Crandon
VILLAGE TREASURERS Myrtle Conway, Albany • Mrs. Nett Wade, Balsam Lake • Mrs. F. Hillman, Bell Center
Mabel Jackson, Blanchardville • Francis Moreland, Blue Mounds • Katherine Pease, Clinton • Viola Giebel, Curtiss
Miss E. Schneider, Dousman • Mary Ketter, Fenwood • Mrs. H.E. Canteson, Galesville • Esther Birkett, Hazel Green
Mrs. Bernie Ward, Hollandale • Ella Taylor, Marshall • Mrs. J.C. Mason, Montfort • Fannie Benkert, Monticello
Mrs. Clarence Gesme, Mount Horeb • Mrs. Ben Brown, Oliver • Ada Seamon, Palmyra • Ann Murphy, Pewaukee
Elise Armstrong, Pound • Mrs. Thos. Lewis, Ridgeway • Mrs. Belle Kline, Sharon • Theresa Neururer, Union Center
Stella Moe, Union Grove • Jessie Davidson, Verona • Etta Cooper, West Salem • Mary Jones, Wild Rose
Martha Parmenter, Wyocena **VILLAGE TRUSTEES** Cora Turner, Amherst • Lillian Eberhart, Camp Douglas
Inez Singleton, Camp Douglas • Lucile Peterman, Curtiss • Miss Frances Fitzmorris, Eagle • Ruby Radcliffe, Eagle River
Ruby Edwards, Oakfield • Nellie Dwyer, Pound • Mary Moore, Trempealeau • Mrs. Geo. Haire, Weyauwega
Mrs. S.C. Cushman, Wyocena • Mrs. R. Prosser, Turtle Lake **VILLAGE CLERKS** Alice Meyers, Abbotsford
Mrs. Luella Hayes, Boyceville • Ada Quinn, Cable • Marion Gwin, Curtiss • Tina Watson, Genoa Junction
Agnes Christianson, Grantsburg • Cynthia Beebe, McMillan • Mrs. Katherine Fullmer, North Freedom
Mrs. Ella Staples, Osceola • Mrs. Jos. Taylor, Redgranite • Beth Nuoffer, Wales

NOTES ABOUT THIS SURVEY

The 1924 UW Extension report includes both principal elected offices such as mayor, alderwoman, trustee, city clerk and treasurer, as well as other offices that are often filled by appointment such as police and fire commission, parks board, health board, etc. The report does not identify whether an office is elected or appointed.

SOURCES

Lulu Shaw, Wisconsin's first Mayor - submitted by Michelle Gobert, Director, Crandon Public Library

Ane Hanrahan, Brown County Board, submitted by Julie Arneith and Colleen Adams, League of Women Voters of Greater Green Bay

Dorothy Moses Schultz and Steven M. Houghton, "Married to the Job: Women Sheriff's in Wisconsin," Wisconsin Magazine of History, Vol. 86, No. 3, pg. 23, Spring 2003.

University of Wisconsin Extension Division, Municipal Information Bureau, "Women Officials in Wisconsin Municipalities," Compiled by Gladys D. West, Information Report No. 33, September 1923 and No. 36, January 1924.

Wisconsin Statutes § 766.97 "Equal rights; common law disabilities", <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/766/97>, accessed 10/27/17

The Laws of Wisconsin passed at the Twenty-Eighth Annual Session of the Wisconsin Legislature, in the year 1875, Chapter 120, pg. 220.

Legislative Reference Bureau, "Wisconsin Legislators—A Historical List," Wisconsin Briefs, 15-3, January 2015, legis.wisconsin.gov/lrb.

"Crandon Elected First Lady Mayor in Wisconsin," The Forest County Spy, Crandon Public Library's Local History Blog, March 21, 2014.

"Car Full of Suffragists" Members of the Political Equality League, Milwaukee, WHS-7679, Wisconsin Historical Society, Photo Archives, www.wisconsinhistory.org. Reprinted by permission.

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These trailblazing women paved the way for many more to follow in their footsteps throughout the remainder of the 20th Century. For more information about the status of wisconsin women in public office visit womenscouncil.wi.gov.



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