

A Guide to Researching Women of Color and the Suffrage Movement

This guide offers some resources for you as you begin your research into women of color and the suffrage movement in Connecticut, whether you are interested in investigating a specific person, town, organization, or general information about the topic. We will continue to update this page with additional resources.

Research Centers

Before visiting any research organizations, please call or email to make sure that your selected materials will be available and to learn about their admission process, including hours of operation, registration, fees, and policies (and to see if they are open now).

- [Connecticut Historical Society, Research Center](#), offers a wide range of resources, including original manuscripts, research databases, town newspapers, genealogy sources, books, photographs and other images, historical objects, and more. The CHS holds a variety of materials related to pro- and anti-suffrage activities. For more information about the CHS, please follow [this link](#), and here for the [CHS online catalog](#), and [here for emuseum](#), the objects catalog.
- [Connecticut State Library](#) has collected some of its suffrage resources into a [Resources for Woman Suffrage site](#). Here, you can find links to state and federal suffrage materials. The CSL holds the records for the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association.
- The [New Haven Museum](#) has records and items related to the Twentieth Century Club, the National Association of Colored Women, and likely additional women's organizations and activities. Here is [a link](#) to their online catalog.
- [Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center](#) offers extensive collections of historical records and other materials related to the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe, likely including information on the matriarchs, as well as records for other Native American communities in southern New England.
- The [Watkinson Library](#) and College Archives at Trinity College holds various records related to the Hartford branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). [Trinity College Library](#) also has a microfilm copy of the records for the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs.

- [University of Connecticut, Thomas J. Dodd Research Center](#) has the 1920 registrar of Hartford voters and a wide range of other sources in their collections. Search their [online catalog here](#).
- The [Hartford History Center](#) at the Hartford Public Library holds the voter registration cards for Hartford and many additional sources. Here is a [link](#) to the guides for some of their collections.
- Local historical societies
- Local public libraries and history centers/rooms
- Western Connecticut State University's [Connecticut Woman Suffrage Movement Collection](#)
- Bridgeport Historical Society has a guide on their items available for [Women's Suffrage Research](#).
- Yale University Library offers an extensive range of sources, including special collections in its [Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library](#). Many items have been digitized and are available at the [Beinecke Digital Collections](#), including materials related to African American women and other women of color.

Organizations' Records

- Local churches,
- women's clubs,
- voter leagues,
- political organizations, and other groups may hold historical archives of their materials. Please consider calling or emailing to ask about their records and policies regarding access.
- A guide to the microfilm edition of **Records of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, 1895-1992** is available [online here](#).

Several institutions hold the NACWC's records in different formats. Please search [WorldCat](#) for locations and holdings. This item may be available at the [New Haven Museum Library](#) and [Trinity College Library](#).

Here is a description of this association from Bowdoin College: “The National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Inc. (NACWC) is the oldest continually operating African-American secular organization in the country, as well as one of the nation's oldest women's organizations. It was formed in response to disenfranchisement under Jim Crow, with a particular focus on violence and stereotyping perpetrated against the African American men and women. The Records of the NACWC, 1985-1992 document over one hundred years of activity supporting the African American community in political, social, economic realms.”

- In addition to speaking with local African Methodist Episcopal Zion churches about their records, you may find it helpful to connect with the [A.M.E. Zion Church Department of Records and Research](#), which may help with researching histories, activities, and people nationwide.
- Union Baptist Church Archives
- [Directory of Women's Organizations in Connecticut \(2013\)](#)

Newspapers

Newspapers are an important research source. Various newspapers offer articles about select people, organizations, and events. You may also find the names of people who were involved in political elections and other activities. From those lists of names, you may be able to identify women who were involved in politics.

- [Historic Hartford Courant \(1764-2020\)](#). Paid subscription service. The Research Center at CHS offers access. Your local library may offer access remotely or at the library. If you have a Connecticut State Library card, that will also enable access.
- African American and additional ethnic American newspapers in Connecticut are available both online and in print. The Connecticut State Library offers a research guide aptly titled [Connecticut ethnic newspapers](#).

The [Connecticut Digital Newspaper Project](#) is in the process of digitizing several African American newspapers.

There are several online African American newspaper databases, such as those by ProQuest, and they are usually paid subscription services. Some local public libraries, college libraries, or research centers may offer access to them.

The Library of Congress's Chronicling America site offers digital access to select [African American newspapers](#), listed by state and publication dates.

- Local newspaper archives may be available through your town public library, either online and/or at the library. Please ask your reference librarians.
- The Connecticut State Library has a collection of digital [Newspapers of Connecticut](#). The Newspapers of Connecticut collection includes a sampling of newspapers covering various towns, villages, and topics ranging from 1821-1947.
- The Library of Congress offers very useful digital access to: [Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers](#) which has options to search its databases by state and date range.
- Another way to search the Chronicling America newspapers database is available through the Connecticut State Library's [Free Connecticut Newspapers Online](#) page.

Voter Records

Please check with the town Registrar of Voters or City Clerk if you are interested in viewing historical voter registration records and lists of voters. The local public library or historical society may also be able to help locate historical voter records. Town newspapers also sometimes listed the names of voters, especially women who registered to vote.

- [Hartford City and Town Elections, Lists of Women Voters, 1894-1919](#). CHS collection, MS 100687
- The [Hartford History Center](#) at the Hartford Public Library is in the process of scanning tens of thousands of voter registration cards and uploading the images on the [Connecticut Digital Archive](#) (CTDA). Search the CTDA for the voter registration cards that have been scanned so far, such as: [1920 voter registration](#).

- City of Hartford (1920). *Registrar of voters 1920 national and state elections, November 2, 1920*. Storrs: [University of Connecticut, Thomas J. Dodd Research Center](#).

Online Collections

- [Connecticut Digital Archive](#) (CTDA) offers a wide range of digital resources from educational and cultural institutions and state agencies in the State of Connecticut.
- [Connecticut Suffrage Centennial](#)
- [Ancestry](#) is a paid subscription service that can be helpful in investigating a person's genealogy. The CHS offers access to the database if you visit the Research Center, and your local library may also have remote and/or onsite access.
- [Library of Congress](#)
- [Woman Suffrage Memorabilia](#)
- [Ann Lewis Women's Suffrage Collection](#)

Tips for Searches

- Try different first and last name combinations. For example, if "Mary A. Johnson" returns too many or no results, try "Mary Johnson." Please note that women's middle and last names may change over their lifetimes.
- If you only have a married name, such as "Mrs. Sidney Johnson," then search for that, and also consider checking Ancestry, census records, and city directories to see if Sidney Johnson's spouse's name is listed in another item.
- We do not use disrespectful terms to refer to race today, but historical materials, such as census records and newspapers, may use words from their time periods, such as colored, Indian, oriental, and others.

- Try a variety of word combinations to search for women of color voters, such as “woman,” “women,” “ladies,” “vote,” “voter,” “suffrage,” “suffragist,” “suffragette,” “Republican,” “Democrat,” “election,” race terms, and so on (try two or three words at a time).
- Persevere. Keep searching and trying again. Many resources, particularly online databases, are updated regularly. If you run a search on the CTDA or Ancestry or a newspaper database today, try again in a few weeks. The results from the searches may differ even slightly. You might find an additional detail, such as a middle initial or town of residence or family member, and this new information will change the terms that you will use to search the databases again.
- Check and contribute to the project website at chs.org/wocvotes. Calling all citizen historians, let’s work together to develop and expand this site! If you know of a woman of color who was involved in the suffrage movement, or think that she might have been part of it, please complete the information form on the website. Also, if you have more information about one of the women identified on the site, please let us know. The CHS will continue to update the site and add biographical narratives and links.