

*Equal by Annette Finnigan*

OUTLINE OF HISTORY OF WOMAN SUFFRAGE IN TEXAS.

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The Houston Equal Suffrage League, organized in Houston, February 1903 by Annette and Elizabeth Finnigan and Katherine Finnigan Anderson; Annette Finnigan, First President.

March 1903, Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt lectured in Houston under auspices Houston E. S. L.

In the summer of 1903 Annette and Elizabeth Finnigan spoke several times in Galveston and secured a Suffrage Committee there.

December 1903 the Texas W. S. A. was organized at a Convention held in Houston; the Convention lasted two days and the meetings were well attended. Dr. Anna Howard Shaw was present at all the sessions and took a deep interest in the new organization. She spoke at both evening meetings and the Convention was a great success. Annette Finnigan was elected State President.

During the following year, Miss Annette Finnigan made an effort to organize in Beaumont, San Antonio, and Austin, but the women, although interested, were too timid to organize for Suffrage. A Suffrage Circle was formed in La Porte.

Mrs. C. P. Gilman visited in Houston in 1904 and she spoke there under the auspices of the Houston League.

The Second State Convention was held in Houston in December 1904, Galveston, Houston and La Porte being represented. This Convention, unlike the first, was more in the nature of a conference. Reports were given and officers were elected, Annette Finnigan remaining President. The Houston E. S. L. prospered. It had a paid-up membership of one hundred. Regular meetings were held and the subject of Woman Suffrage was kept constantly before the public. In 1904, the League made an effort to get a woman on the School Board. The campaign created widespread interest, but the Mayor who held the appointed power refused to appoint a woman.

In all the Suffrage work in Texas at this time, the three Finnigan sisters were the leaders. Others active in the work were: Althea Jones, Mrs. E. F. McGowen, Miss Ruby McGowen, Miss Mary W. Roper of Houston, Mrs. S. Adella Penfield of La Porte, Mrs. C. H. Moore, and Miss Julia Runge of Galveston.

The Houston League was active for several years, until Miss Finnigan and her sisters left the State. A Suffrage Club was formed later in Austin. The Suffrage movement in the State was inactive for several years, through lack of a leader. Annette Finnigan, though living in New York, remained nominally at the head of the organization and dues were paid regularly into the National Treasury.



In 1912, through the efforts of Miss Eleanor Brackenridge of San Antonio and Miss Anna Maxwell Jones of New York, Suffrage Clubs were organized in San Antonio, Galveston, Dallas, Waco, Tyler, and San Marcos. The Austin League, which had organized several years before, was active. Mrs. L. E. Walker was its president. The Houston League was reorganized. Miss Finnigan, who had returned to Texas to live, was again elected President.

The Third State Convention was held in San Antonio in March 1913; Annette Finnigan presiding, and Althea Jones, the first State Secretary, acting at this Meeting. Miss Eleanor Brackenridge was elected State President; Annette Finnigan, Honorary President. The Convention was spirited and showed the Suffrage movement was well launched in the State. This was just ten years after the first Club was started in Texas.

In 1913, under the auspices of the San Antonio Equal Franchise League, a Suffrage Bill was introduced in the Legislature, but it never came to a vote.

In April 1914, the State Convention was held in Dallas. Miss Finnigan was again elected State President & Miss Brackenridge, Honorary President.

During the year following, the movement grew rapidly and attracted statewide attention. The Clubs were increased in number from eight to twenty-one. Miss Pearl Penfield, as Headquarters and Field Secretary, ably organized State work. The striking work of this year, under Miss Finnigan's presidency, was the Legislative campaign, which made Suffrage one of the leading political questions in the State. The Texas Constitution requires for the submission of a constitutional amendment a two-thirds vote of the elected members of the Legislature. Of course, this is very difficult to obtain. The Legislative Committee were inexperienced in legislative work, but they worked with such zeal that they received a vote in the House of 91 to 31, lacking only 3 vote to the necessary two-thirds. Those who were especially active in the Legislative campaign were Annette Finnigan, Elizabeth Finnigan Fain, Mrs. Dunn, Mrs. Potter, and Mrs. B. J. Cunningham. (Annette Fisk Cunningham)

The Fourth State Convention was held in Galveston in May 1915, Miss Finnigan retiring from the presidency; Mrs. M. F. Cunningham being elected President.

Sent in by Annette Finnigan, August 31, 1916.

a Texan by birth