



Woman's rights activist Paulina Wright Davis, first president of the R. I. Woman Suffrage Association, organized the 1869 National Woman's Suffrage Association convention in Newport. Engraver. Paulina W. Davis / photo. by Manchester Bros.: engraved by J.C. Buttre, N.Y., None. [Between 1850 and 1881] Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/97500070>.

"A Crisis in Our Cause": The Fifteenth Amendment and the Newport Woman Suffrage Convention of August 1869

Elizabeth C. Stevens

Elizabeth C. Stevens is the Editor of *Newport History*. She is the author of *Elizabeth Buffum Chace and Lillie Chace Wyman: A Century of Abolitionist, Suffragist and Workers' Rights Activism* (2003).

In August 1869 a woman suffrage convention was held in Newport, R.I. Elizabeth Cady Stanton's comment on the gathering was revealing although it was clearly meant to be entertaining. She combined a tongue-in-cheek tone with military metaphors to describe preparation for the convention and the suffragists' arrival in Newport. Susan B. Anthony, the "Napoleon of the Woman Suffrage movement in this country," had "ordered her forces" to be in "marching order on the 25th of August to besiege the 'butterflies of fashion' in Newport," Stanton reported in *The Revolution*, Stanton's and Anthony's weekly woman suffrage paper. "Obeying orders," Stanton related, she and other suffragists from New York, "sailed across the sound one bright moonlight night... and found ourselves quartered on the enemy..." The suffragist "invaders" penetrated the precincts of the fashionable Atlantic House hotel, bringing a number of trunks, filled not with "gossamers, and laces, and flowers," but with "Suffrage ammunition, speeches, resolutions, petitions, tracts, John Stuart Mill's latest work, and folios of *The Revolution*."¹

Stanton's light, humorous tone masked a deeper reality and her military metaphors may have been more than apt. Suffrage activism in Rhode Island had coalesced months before when the Rhode Island Woman's Suffrage Association, an affiliate of the New England Woman's Suffrage Association, had been organized. Two key Rhode Island reformers, Paulina

Wright Davis and Elizabeth Buffum Chace, were instrumental in the formation of both the regional and state associations at the end of 1868. In the months and weeks leading up to the Newport convention, however, differences among women suffragist leaders and activists led to a painful schism that severed decades-long alliances among woman's rights advocates in the northeast. Although historians have given many reasons for the split between woman suffrage activists, a major factor in the division was Stanton's and Anthony's opposition to the 15th Amendment which would ensure the constitutional right of African-American men to vote.²

This article will examine the role of Paulina Wright Davis, who was president of the fledgling Rhode Island Woman's Suffrage Association, an officer of the New England Woman Suffrage Association, and chief organizer of the convention at Newport on behalf of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. Davis's contacts with suffrage activists leading up to the convention at Newport reveal the depths of grief and antipathy among former close friends and colleagues. The convention itself, shunned by most New England woman suffrage leaders, was a largely New York affair, although several Rhode Island women took part in the proceedings. Suffrage leadership in Rhode Island was affected by the schism among long-time woman's rights activists although ultimately, the RIWSA survived this painful period and created a flourishing presence in the state.

Background

After the Civil War, woman suffrage and antislavery activists were optimistic that the Republican party would reward their loyalty during the war with an amendment to the U.S. constitution granting women the vote. In the years immediately following the war, however, differences among prewar reform allies about tactics and policy simmered. These conflicts came to a head in a dispute over whether to support the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would enfranchise African-American men, but not any women. The amendment passed Congress in February 1869 and was in the process of being debated and ratified by the states in the months leading up to the Newport convention. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, leaders of the New York group of suffragists, refused to support the passage of an amendment that guaranteed suffrage to men only, and argued that the 15th Amendment should not be ratified, using racist and nativist language as they spoke and worked against awarding the franchise to Black men only and not to women.

Most radical abolitionist suffragists in the Boston orbit were in favor of the 15th Amendment and argued that, as Wendell Phillips famously said in 1865, “It is the Negro’s hour.”³ As early as 1867, when Lucy Stone was agonizing over whether or not to support the amendment, stalwart Massachusetts abolitionist and woman’s rights leader Abby Kelley Foster wrote her longtime antislavery colleague, “The slave is more deeply wronged than woman...I should look upon myself as a monster of selfishness if, while I see my neighbor’s daughter treated as a beast—as thousands still are all over the South—I should turn from them to secure my daughter political equality.”⁴ Especially galling to abolitionist woman’s rights activists like Lucy Stone and Abby Kelley Foster, who had endured ostracism, criticism and threats during their decades of working for immediate emancipation of enslaved people and for woman’s rights, was the outright racism employed by Stanton and Anthony to argue their point. Indeed, it was unthinkable that abolitionist women suffragists would turn their backs on their longtime African-American colleagues like Frederick Douglass, Charles Lenox Remond, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper and many others who had been staunch supporters of woman’s rights for many years. Stanton’s and Anthony’s flagrantly racist and nativist opposition to the 15th Amendment effectively alienated



Frances Ellen Watkins Harper advocated for woman’s rights and the rights of Black people. *Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, -1911, 1872. Photograph.* <https://www.loc.gov/item/2002698208/>.

African Americans dedicated to woman’s suffrage. As Harper is said to have stated, “When it was a question of race [I] let the lesser question of sex go...”⁵

Conflict between the New York-based Stanton/ Anthony group and the Boston abolitionists reached a fateful impasse at the annual gathering of the Equal Rights Association in New York City at end of May 1869. Relationships among former comrades were so frayed and feelings ran so high concerning support for the 15th Amendment, that the meeting devolved into a chaotic cauldron of shouting, hissing and accusations. To opponents of the Amendment, Frederick Douglass, an ardent woman’s rights advocate, explained why the franchise was the difference between life and death for Black men, in a way that it was not for middle-class white women.⁶ The day after the convention dissolved in acrimony, Stanton and Anthony called a meeting of their allies, deliberately excluded their abolitionist/suffragist sisters and brothers, and declared the founding of the National Woman’s Suffrage Association (NWSA) that would work only to gain suffrage for women. At an early meeting of the fledgling group, Elizabeth Cady Stanton announced that,

I have always been in favor of the negro having every right, but when he, ignorant and degraded, was made a voter before the noble, cultivated white women, it was time for [women] to demand something for themselves...It isn’t merely giving suffrage to black men, but giving it to ignorant men of every color landing on our shores.⁷



Radical abolitionist Abby Kelley Foster (1810-1887) was also a close friend of Elizabeth Buffum Chace. *Abby Kelley Foster, -1887; bust., 1899. [Published] Photograph.* <https://www.loc.gov/item/2007683097/>.

This precipitous move paved the way for an irreconcilable split among former devoted colleagues in the prewar abolition and woman’s rights movements. It was Stanton and Anthony who called the Newport Convention on behalf of their new National Woman Suffrage Association. Yet a sliver of hope still remained on the part of Rhode Island suffrage leader Paulina Wright Davis that the convention planned for Newport in August 1869, could be an opportunity for New England women abolitionists to join Stanton’s and Anthony’s “national” woman’s rights organization. At the very least, Davis felt it necessary to make overtures to her New England friends and colleagues in the run-up to the Newport Convention, gestures that would reveal the very depths of antipathy between the fledgling Boston and New York woman suffrage groups.

In the summer of 1869, Paulina Wright Davis straddled both the New York and Boston camps. Paulina Kellogg, born in New York state in 1813, had come to antislavery activism early in her marriage to Francis Wright, a prosperous merchant in Utica, in the mid-1830s. During this time she became closely acquainted with Abby Kelley Foster, a staunch Garrisonian antislavery speaker and later, woman’s rights activist. The two women were so attached that Foster named her only child, Paulina Wright Foster (“Alla”), after her activist friend.⁸ Wright gained notoriety when, after she was widowed, she took up the study of female anatomy, purchased a life-sized *femme modelle* from France, and began to travel about the country giving lectures to educate women about their bodies. Davis recounted that, some women “fled the room, or

fainted when they saw the *modelle du femme*, a very lifelike reproduction of internal female anatomy.” Her popular “health talks” were well subscribed and some women who attended went on to pursue careers as physicians.⁹ Lucretia Mott credited Davis, who claimed “equal pay with men for her lectures,” with “making the lecturing field a lucrative and respectable profession [for women].”¹⁰ After marrying Thomas Davis, a successful Rhode Island jewelry manufacturer and politician, Paulina Wright settled in Providence in 1849.¹¹

Paulina Wright Davis had impressive early woman’s rights bona fides. Her lecturing work in the 1840s had given her a venue for asserting the right of women to know and control their bodies. Importantly, within months of moving to Rhode Island, along with Lucy Stone and others, Davis had organized the first national woman’s rights convention in Worcester, Massachusetts in October 1850. Speakers at the 1850 Worcester Convention over which Davis presided, included abolitionist luminaries Sojourner Truth, Lucretia Mott and Frederick Douglass. Lucy Stone, William Lloyd Garrison and Abby Kelley Foster were also participants. The concluding resolution of the gathering was a radical demand for woman suffrage and “Equality before the Law, Without Distinction of Sex or Color.”¹² Davis organized another woman’s rights convention in Worcester the following year. In a letter to Lucy Stone written decades after the Worcester conventions, Elizabeth Cady Stanton praised Davis’s “rare organizing talent” and gave credit for the “success of the two Worcester conventions” to Davis, “more than to any other person.” Davis had displayed “rare courage, persistence, and executive ability,” Stanton wrote, “in the face of much opposition and many discouragements, she took the initiative steps unaided and alone.”¹³

Few accounts of Paulina Wright Davis failed to mention her personal attractiveness and magnetic personality. The first volume of the *History of Woman Suffrage* recounted of Davis,

Her wealth, culture and position gave her much social influence; her beauty, grace and gentle manners drew around her a large circle of admiring friends. These, with her tall, fine figure, her classic head and features, and exquisite taste in dress; her organizing talents and knowledge of the question under consideration, altogether made her so desirable a presiding officer, that she was often chosen for that position.¹⁴

Davis's periodical, *The Una*, published for two years in Providence, and for another year in Boston, was one of the first publications in the country devoted to woman's rights.¹⁵

Paulina Wright Davis was a notable presence in Rhode Island. Lillie Chace Wyman, daughter of Elizabeth Buffum Chace, Davis's reform partner and friend, observed that, "when Paulina Wright came to Rhode Island . . . [she] brought her golden hair, her serenely willful ways, and her determined notions with her."¹⁶ The Davises' ample Greek Revival house on Chalkstone Avenue in Providence was a gathering spot for a lively assortment of reformers, artists and writers. On a visit to the area in 1868, the poet Walt Whitman spent a few days at the Davis home which he described as a "sort of castle built of stone on fine grounds a mile and a half from the town." At the Davis home, the great American poet found himself amidst a "really intellectual," group "composed largely of educated women," who conversed "in earnest on profound subjects."¹⁷ The Davises built a new house nearby in 1869, which has been described as a "stately Gothic mansion...on a hilltop near the junction of Chalkstone Avenue and Raymond Street in a thirty-four acre park-like setting."¹⁸ Lillie Wyman thought that, after her marriage, Paulina Wright Davis "dwelt like a sort of foreign princess in Providence." Although she was not accepted by the business and university elites, Davis "was a radiant figure in its circle of literary, artistic and reformatory people."¹⁹

Among Paulina Wright Davis's Rhode Island friends and acquaintances, perhaps none shared her zeal for reform more than Elizabeth Buffum Chace of Valley Falls. An avowed Garrisonian abolitionist, Chace, a Rhode Island native, had been active in radical antislavery work since the mid-1830s when she and her sisters help found the Fall River Female Anti-Slavery Society in nearby Massachusetts. The women vowed to fight not only for the immediate eradication of slavery in the south, but for the elimination of racial prejudice in the north. The Fall River female activists proposed to labor for "the enjoyment of civil, intellectual and religious rights and privileges" for both enslaved and free Blacks. When several African-American women attempted to join the Fall River Female Anti-Slavery Society, Chace and her sisters welcomed them, rebuffing those who argued against the admission of Black women to membership.²⁰

After she settled in Rhode Island in 1840, Chace, a birthright Quaker whose forebears were among the earliest settlers of Rhode Island, disavowed her ancestral Quakerism



Elizabeth Buffum Chace (1806-1897), shown here with her granddaughter, Bessie Cheney, worked for immediate abolition of slavery for thirty years and then turned her attention to woman suffrage. Image, ca. 1880, Photograph album, Elizabeth Buffum Chace and family papers, Ms. 89.12, JOHN HAY LIBRARY, BROWN UNIVERSITY.

when it became clear that Quaker meetings were hostile to antislavery speakers. Chace's home, a station on the underground railroad, was a regular stopping off point for antislavery lecturers like Lucy Stone, Abby Kelley Foster, Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison and Sojourner Truth. Unlike Davis who was childless until late in her life,²¹ at mid-century, Chace was consumed with raising her own children to be radical activists. She gave birth to five children between 1830 and 1841; all died in childhood before she gave birth to five more children, the youngest born in 1852 when Chace was forty-five years old. Like Davis, Chace was married to a successful businessman, cotton manufacturer Samuel B. Chace, and enjoyed financial security. And like Davis, too, Chace was ostracized by "polite society" in Rhode Island for her radical activism.²²

It is not known when Davis and Chace first became acquainted. Elizabeth Buffum Chace's daughter, Lillie Chace Wyman, recalled that Chace was a confidante during Paulina Kellogg Wright's courtship prior to her marriage in 1849. When the women met, Wyman recalled, they were "mutually attracted." Chace's friendship with Davis,

while understandably rooted in their shared reform interests was more "personal" than most of Chace's relationships. "She liked 'Paulina' herself and not merely Paulina's opinions," Lillie Chace wrote of her mother. "She enjoyed [Paulina's] beauty, her soft, social manner and her graceful audacity."²³ Chace apparently attended the 1850 Worcester convention, organized by Davis, that was teeming with antislavery associates.²⁴ No doubt Chace's experiences in the public arena of the antislavery movement, her abiding friendships with activists Lucy Stone and Abby Kelley Foster, with whom Davis was also close, and her passionate commitment to both woman's rights and antislavery infused their friendship.²⁵

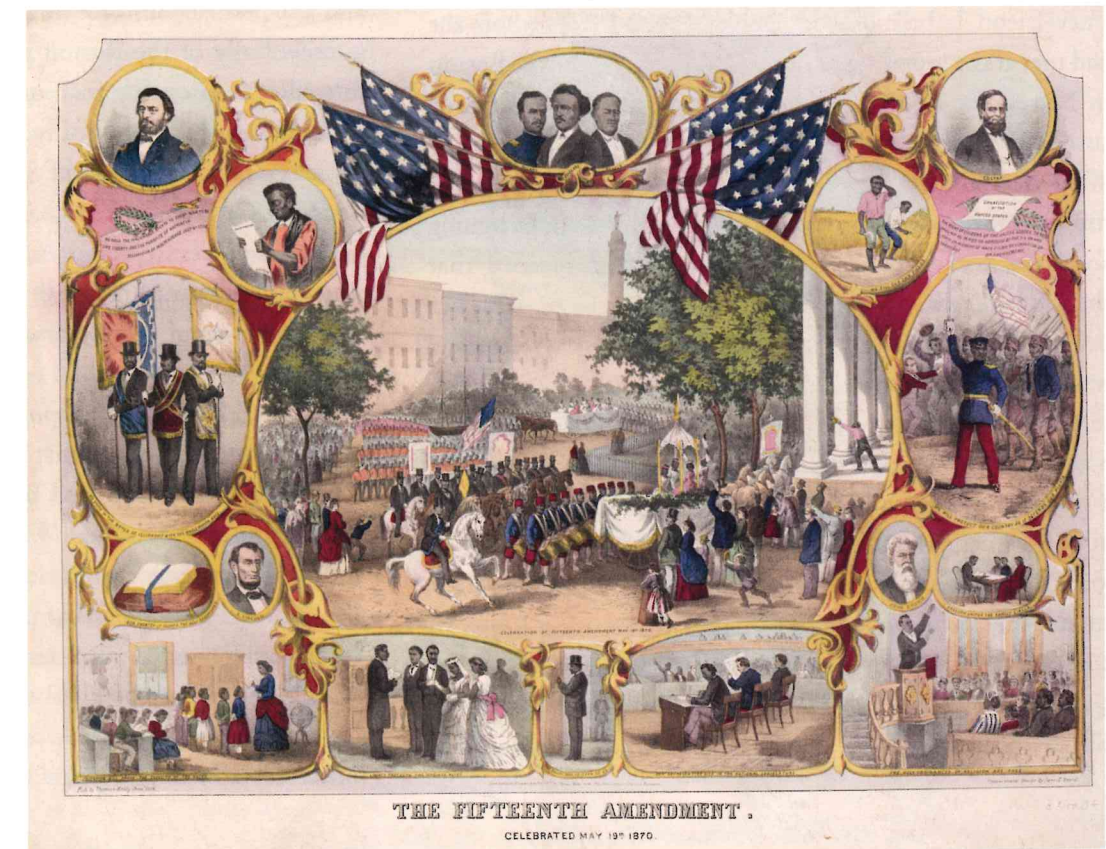
Woman suffrage organizing commenced in earnest in New England in November 1868. Activists met at Horticultural Hall in Boston to form the New England Woman Suffrage Association (NEWSA). Rhode Island leaders Elizabeth Buffum Chace and Paulina Wright Davis traveled from Providence to Boston for the inaugural meeting of NEWSA. Julia Ward Howe, a newcomer to the woman suffrage struggle, who stopped in at the meeting just to observe, was elected president of the new organization. Paulina Wright Davis was named a vice-president.²⁶ Among the other vice-presidents of NEWSA were Charlotte Forten and Thomas Wentworth Higginson. Speakers included Lucy Stone, Frances E.W. Harper,

Charles L. Remond, and Frederick Douglass. The convention resolved that "Suffrage is an inherent right of every American citizen without distinction of sex."²⁷

Indeed, Chace and Davis were so inspired by the formation of NEWSA that, upon their return to Rhode Island, the two women crafted a call to a Rhode Island convention to found a state woman suffrage association. The gathering, held on December 11, 1868, at Roger Williams Hall in downtown Providence attracted some one-thousand people. Notable reformers who attended included Frederick Douglass, Abby Kelley Foster, and her husband Stephen Foster. The Rhode Island leaders drew up a constitution, set by-laws and elected officers. Davis was elected president; Chace became chair of the executive committee. By January 1869, the Rhode Island Woman Suffrage Association (RIWSA), an official auxiliary of NEWSA, had petitioned the state legislature for an amendment to the state constitution that would grant suffrage to women residents of the state, and inaugurated petition drives and monthly meetings to discuss strategy and hear inspirational speakers.²⁸

Despite her affiliations with the Boston-based New England Woman Suffrage Association, where support for the 15th Amendment was near unanimous, and her presidency of the closely affiliated Rhode Island Woman

Published ca. 1871, this poster expressed the hopes that the 15th Amendment to the federal constitution would restore and affirm the inherent rights of African Americans in the United States. Kelly, Thomas, Active, Publisher, and James Carter Beard. *The Fifteenth Amendment. Celebrated May 19th, from an original design by James C. Beard.*, ca. 1871. [New York: Pub. by Thomas Kelly, New York, 1870 or 1871] Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2003690776/>.



Suffrage Association, Paulina Wright Davis was “converted” to Stanton’s opposition to the 15th Amendment sometime in the winter or spring of 1869.²⁹ At the disastrous Equal Rights Association meeting, Davis asserted that she did not approve of the passage of the 15th Amendment without a Sixteenth Amendment granting the right to vote to women. She had “lately come from the South,” and maintained, that based on her observations, formerly enslaved women in the south would be subject to brutal treatment from their husbands if Black men gained the vote but women did not.³⁰ Davis was elected a vice-president of the National Woman’s Suffrage Association at its formation the day after the debacle at the Equal Rights Association convention, thereby holding positions in the New York “national” organization, as well as the New England and Rhode Island associations.³¹ As a sign that the talented organizer was deeply committed to the Stanton/Anthony group, when plans for the Newport Convention were getting underway, Paulina Wright Davis apparently loaned funds to Susan B. Anthony, to sustain the publication of *The Revolution*, which had recently lost its primary funder, openly racist businessman George F. Train.³²

Newport Convention Prologue

In her preparations for the convention, Davis found an ally in a new friend, Isabella Beecher Hooker (1822-1907), whom she had met at the founding of the NEWSA convention in Boston in November 1868. Hooker, younger half-sister of famed author Harriet Beecher Stowe and popular preacher Henry Ward Beecher, had not participated in the nascent woman’s suffrage movement heretofore, but was interested in becoming an active worker. Hooker later noted of their meeting that she found Davis’s “mere presence on the platform, with her beautiful white hair and her remarkable dignity and elegance, was a most potent argument in favor of woman’s participation in public affairs.”³³ Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton wished to court Hooker, not least because they desired a member of the notable Beecher family to take their side, but also to entice Isabella’s sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, to join their movement and write fiction for *The Revolution*.³⁴ In late July, as plans for the Newport Convention began to coalesce, Paulina Wright Davis arranged a meeting at her house in Providence to introduce Isabella Beecher Hooker to Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, hoping that

an in-person meeting would endear Stanton and Anthony to Hooker. The meeting at Davis’s Providence home succeeded. After spending time with the two dedicated suffragists, Isabella Beecher Hooker decided to throw in her lot with the New York group.³⁵ Following the “delightful visit” in Providence, Susan B. Anthony wrote to Hooker, urging her to “be at Newport.” It would be “just the time to talk up ways and means to storm the hosts that stand in battle array against Woman’s freedom.”³⁶

The choice of Newport as a venue for the convention was both odd and provocative. Odd, because Newport was not known for its loyal cadre of woman’s rights activists, and was better known in the summer as a social playground for wealthy New Yorkers. The city, which had been a summer refuge for artists and writers as well as vacationers of all classes who lodged there in hotels and boarding houses, had been acquiring a reputation as a resort of the first magnitude as immensely wealthy New Yorkers began to build expansive homes in Newport after the Civil War. Stanton claimed that her rationale for holding the convention in Newport was to convert “fashionable” influential women, whose support would mean a great deal to the new suffrage group.³⁷ Yet, the choice of Newport, summer home to Julia Ward Howe, the current president of the New England Woman Suffrage Association, and also permanent home to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a fervent ally of the Boston group, was unquestionably an incursion into enemy territory, as Stanton suggests in her seeming light-hearted account of the suffragists’ arrival for the convention. The very act of Stanton and Anthony, pitching their tents in Newport, a geographic outpost of the Boston group, after Stanton and Anthony had just formed what they claimed was a “national” woman suffrage group, was a provocative act of hostility toward woman’s rights activists in the region.

The Call to the Newport Convention first appeared in *The Revolution* on August 5, 1869. It was to be held on Wednesday August 25th and Thursday, August 26th. Stanton’s and Anthony’s National Woman’s Suffrage Association had held a suffrage convention at Saratoga, N. Y. in July.³⁸ The Saratoga convention came off “splendidly,” and the New York women hoped to repeat their “success” at Newport. The Call was signed by Elizabeth Cady Stanton as “President” and Paulina Wright Davis was named as “Advisory Council for the State of Rhode Island.”³⁹

By the time the Call to the Newport Convention appeared in early August, Paulina Wright Davis and Isabella Beecher Hooker had already embarked on a campaign to convince Boston friends and reformers to attend the Newport Convention. When Hooker reached out to Lucy Stone, the famed woman’s rights and abolition leader could not have been more direct. Stone informed Hooker that the principal reason “why I thought you would not wish to cooperate with those who call the convention in Newport. It is this: they steadily oppose the 15th Amendment.” Further, Stone wrote, “I believe that, in just so far as we withhold or deny a human right, to any human being, we establish a basis for the denial and withholding our own rights.” Although she felt “urgency” for the “political rights” of women, Stone who had endured opprobrium as an abolitionist speaker and when she refused to take her husband’s name after her marriage in 1854, informed Hooker, “by my whole moral sense, by the very essence of my soul. I cannot work with those who work against the negro.” She was “inexpressibly sorry” that the women activists had split. “We might be so much greater power, if we could all work together,” she lamented.⁴⁰

Hooker’s fledgling attempts to entice Boston friends and woman suffragists to come to Newport, were further undercut in the days after she received Stone’s letter, when the Boston suffragists who supported the 15th Amendment sent out a printed communication to their current and former colleagues in the movement. The document proposed the organization of a “truly national and representative base for the organization of an American Woman Suffrage Association.” The signers, all officers of NEWSA, tactfully asserted that they did not wish to disparage the “value of Associations already existing,” however, they “urgently” sought to form “an organization at once more comprehensive and more widely representative.” The lead signatory was Lucy Stone, her signature was followed by those of Caroline M. Severance, Julia Ward Howe, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and George H. Vibbert.⁴¹ If there was a whisper of hope on Davis’s and Hooker’s part that the Newport Convention could present a united woman suffrage front, those aspirations were now dashed. Nevertheless, perhaps to display public cordiality, Davis and Hooker continued to make overtures to Boston woman’s rights colleagues.

Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910), the principal signer of the circular, and president of NEWSA, lived in Boston and



Isabella Beecher Hooker, younger half-sister of Harriet Beecher Stowe and Henry Ward Beecher, made her debut on the suffrage platform in Newport in 1869. Photograph of Isabella Beecher Hooker c. 1872. HARRIET BEECHER STOWE CENTER, HARTFORD, CT.



Lucy Stone, who advocated for immediate abolition of slavery and woman’s rights for decades prior to the Civil War, supported the passage of the 15th Amendment granting Black men the right to vote. Photograph album, Elizabeth Buffum Chace and family papers, Ms. 89.12, JOHN HAY LIBRARY, BROWN UNIVERSITY.

had deep family ties to Rhode Island. She and her husband purchased an old farmhouse in the Lawton's Valley area of Portsmouth, in the 1850s, where she spent several months every summer. Howe was not a woman's rights veteran like her colleagues Paulina Wright Davis and Lucy Stone. She was famous for her authorship of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Howe claimed that, when she attended the organizing convention of NEWSA in November 1868, she went at the urging of her friend, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, trying to remain inconspicuous in her "rainy-day suit," sitting in the audience. However, she was soon invited to the platform and her "conversion was instant..." Howe "embarked then on the good ship woman suffrage."⁴² She firmly supported the 15th Amendment maintaining in an address, after her ascension to the presidency of NEWSA, "I am willing that the Negro [shall get] the ballot before me."⁴³ In the summer of 1869 Howe had given talks on woman suffrage at the Unitarian Church in Newport; she and Thomas Wentworth Higginson were close friends.⁴⁴ Paulina Wright Davis planned to visit Howe in the days before the Newport Convention, but sent her a message instead.⁴⁵

As a gesture of good faith, Paulina Wright Davis called on Thomas Wentworth Higginson in Newport in early August.⁴⁶ Higginson (1823-1911), another signer of the Boston call to form a new suffrage society, was a minister,



Thomas Wentworth Higginson, colonel of the first Black regiment in the Civil War, was an ardent woman suffragist who was living in Newport at the time of the 1869 convention. From Lillie Buffum Chace Wyman and Arthur C. Wyman, *Elizabeth Buffum Chace and Her Environment 1806-1899* (Boston: W.B. Clarke Co., 1914), vol. 2: facing p. 10.

writer, and abolitionist who had served as colonel of the first Black regiment of the Union Army in the Civil War. He moved to Newport after the war and lived with his wife in Mrs. Dame's boardinghouse at the corner of Mann Avenue and Kay Street.⁴⁷ After the war, working with an alliance of activists, led by George T. Downing, Higginson advocated for the racial integration of Newport's public schools.⁴⁸ He was also an ardent woman's rights supporter who had been converted to the woman's cause in the early 1850s, and had presided at the wedding of radical abolitionists Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell in 1854 in which Stone and Blackwell read a protest against the legal inequities of marriage.⁴⁹ Higginson had assumed leadership positions in the formation of NEWSA and RIWSA.

Criticized for not including Higginson in the plans for the Newport Convention, Paulina Wright Davis called on him in Newport around August 6th. Davis informed Isabella Hooker that, when she visited Higginson, he was "just as full of bitterness and suppressed malignity as can be." It made Davis "almost sick," but she reassured Hooker that, despite Higginson's hostility, they "would have a splendid convention" at Newport.⁵⁰ She instructed Hooker not to try to convince her Boston friends to come to Newport "as it will do no good." Davis reassured her protégé by maintaining that it was "best... to let them go their own way and in a little while they must come to us..."⁵¹ Elizabeth Cady Stanton was so frustrated by Higginson's "failure to understand" her better, that she wrote Davis she was "perfectly willing that the Newport Convention should be entirely managed by the New England people."⁵² In a letter postmarked August 12, Davis let Hooker know that Davis, Stanton and Anthony felt that Hooker should not "waste your strength" to write to the signers of the circular dated August 5th. "If we cannot work without dissention in two societies," Davis advised her friend, "how can we be agreed in one."⁵³

If Lucy Stone's forthright response had dampened Hooker's and Davis's quest to entice the Boston abolitionist women to attend the Newport Convention and Higginson's in-person rebuke to Davis had made her ill, with the circular further proof that hopes of a last-ditch alliance between the two groups were fruitless, a letter to Davis from Hooker's good friend and Davis's former years-long colleague, Caroline Severance, written some ten days before the start of the Newport Convention was another blow to unity.

Severance (1820-1914) had been active in the antislavery movement in Boston before the war and was head of the recently formed New England Woman's Club, a powerful organization of women leaders in Boston, and a founding member of NEWSA.⁵⁴ Severance had met Isabella Beecher Hooker in South Carolina in 1864; the two women had much in common and Severance became an "adored friend" of Hooker. It was Severance who had introduced Paulina Wright Davis and Isabella Beecher Hooker at the NEWSA convention the previous year. Davis had contacted Severance, asking her to consider attending the convention in Newport. On a visit to Severance's home outside Boston, Hooker had also urged her "dear friend" to attend.⁵⁵ Hooker had further been encouraged by Susan B. Anthony to convince Severance to come to Rhode Island.⁵⁶

Severance's response to Davis's and Hooker's invitations to attend the Newport Convention, could hardly have been more unequivocal. Severance wrote that, neither Hooker's verbal invitation nor the further letter from Davis inviting Severance to Newport had indicated "that the Newport Convention is to be called by the NY. Society which names itself 'National,'" i.e., which claimed to be an organization representing all women suffragists in the country. Severance informed Davis that her own presence in Newport "would be both a personal and official endorsement" of Stanton's and Anthony's new organization which Severance "could not conscientiously give." Further, Severance faulted the failure of Davis to "confer with or invite, your fellow members of the New England Executive Committee [i.e., of the NEWSA], until induced to do so by Mrs. Hooker's urgent desire for it (as a measure tending toward union)—not even Mrs. Howe and Col. Higginson, residents of Newport having been consulted, or notified of it, until then."⁵⁷

In her lengthy missive, Severance further questioned whether Stanton, Anthony, and Davis were sincere in their professed desire to find common ground with their colleagues from Boston. She found fault with Stanton's and Anthony's organization of a "national" woman suffrage organization in the wake of the Equal Rights Association debacle the previous May, "without a day's notice to the old absent friends." Stanton and Anthony's group was not "national," as it did not "represent by any means the majority" of suffragists. In their opposition to the 15th Amendment, the two women's actions made "union more difficult" and caused the Boston women



Caroline M. Severance, suffragist and close friend of Isabella Beecher Hooker, was in favor of the 15th amendment. Frances Willard and Mary Livermore, eds., *A Woman of the Century: Fourteen Hundred-Seventy Biographical Sketches Accompanied by Portraits of Leading American Women in all Walks of Life* (Buffalo: Charles Wells Moulton, 1893), 642.

to question Stanton's and Anthony's "fitness as leaders and representatives of the cause." Severance asked why Stanton and Anthony "should bring that organization upon ground already covered by two properly organized and efficient Societies—the 'R.I. State' [i.e., RIWSA] and the 'NE' [i.e. NEWSA];"⁵⁸ These "two energetic societies" were "already in the field" in Newport and both Howe and Higginson were "representing the cause there in various ways." Severance asked why a 'foreign' society should come to "ground already so well-provided, when there were plenty of other areas in pressing need of labor?"⁵⁹

Finally, Severance expressed her deep disappointment and surprise that her dear friend and reform colleague Paulina Wright Davis, an avowed leader for decades in the woman's rights effort in New England, would ally with such unsuitable partners, a disappointment that was echoed in the severing of many close ties between woman's rights activists. "I am very sorry, too, allow me to say, dear Mrs. Davis, with a plainness of speech which I think one old, and I trust, permanent friendship and pleasant relations justify—that you should have decided to take the course you have toward the N. York society, I cannot at all understand." She found it inconceivable that Davis would align with Anthony's organization since Davis was already affiliated with RIWSA and NEWSA. RIWSA was "very much" in Davis's "hands" and Davis could have discussion there of the 15th Amendment and "invite such

speakers as you choose.” Urging Davis and Hooker, with their connections to the “New York Society,” to “work together for a union of all our forces,” Severance asserted that the purpose of the recent Circular—was not to split the nascent woman’s rights effort, but “to gather all into one harmonious whole, whose officers and measures shall be the choice of the entire constituency.” Severance ended her lengthy letter “with the most cordial wish that union of effort may be found possible.”⁶⁰ Davis’s response to Severance has not been found; Hooker wrote her friend defending Stanton and Anthony, asserting “I care nothing for the 15th amendment anyway,” and asking Severance to, “Pray forgive me for disappointing you and believe me always your loving friend.”⁶¹

In almost single-handedly pulling together the Newport Convention during August, Paulina Wright Davis made several trips “back and forth to Newport and wrote letters innumerable.”⁶² Although Stanton and Anthony had been involved, Hooker maintained that “it is really Mrs. Davis who got up & managed & paid for the whole—I mean recd. the monies & paid the bills & took receipts in her business like way.”⁶³ To promote the convention and to insure local press coverage, Davis also determined to “see the Editors” in Newport and “make them understand that it is to be a good gathering.”⁶⁴ It is not clear what “editors” Davis saw in Newport, but the *Newport Daily News* ran a prominent notice of the convention in its August 24th edition, announcing that a “large delegation of distinguished advocates of woman’s suffrage will be present and participate in the meeting.”⁶⁵ When she hadn’t heard back from missives sent to Caroline Severance, Lucy Stone, or Julia Ward Howe ten days before the start of the convention, Davis wrote to Hooker, “I think I am cut dead but some how I am so certain of my rectitude and that of my coadjutors [i.e. Stanton, Anthony, and Hooker] that I feel as quiet and peaceful as though the thing was all settled,” although she was “very tired.” Davis considered “this convention almost a crisis in our cause,” she confided to Hooker.⁶⁶

As if Paulina Wright Davis did not have enough difficulties juggling the convention arrangements and enduring the “bitterness” from Boston in the run up to the Newport Convention, just two weeks before the convention was to take place, Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote that she might not attend, offering to sacrifice her presence for the sake of a more harmonious gathering. She had written to



Julia Ward Howe, who lived part-time in Portsmouth, R.I. was the first president of the New England Woman Suffrage Association. Photograph of a painting by John Eliot and William Cotton, n.d., RHI X17 4247, RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

Higginson, Stanton informed Paulina Wright Davis, urging him to be involved in the convention, and offering to stay away if it would be helpful. Stanton wondered why the “abolitionists” who supported the 15th amendment were so “anxious,” because it would undoubtedly be ratified. Stanton opposed the amendment, she asserted, as it would establish an “aristocracy of sex.” But she vowed not to mention the 15th Amendment at the Newport Convention she reassured Davis, “unless somebody asks me to rejoice or puts forward some resolution to that effect.” For her own speech at Newport, Stanton planned “to address myself more particularly to the world of fashion.” Nevertheless, despite her expressed hesitation to attend, Stanton ended her letter assuring Davis that she and Susan B. Anthony would “do the best thing to conciliate and unite our forces.”⁶⁷ Susan B. Anthony sent a less resigned letter to Davis enclosing the circular dated August 5th. Anthony was incensed that the Boston women had “urgently called for” a new suffrage organization. Anthony directed Davis that they “must go strait forward in the line of absolute right,” underscoring the turmoil and division then roiling woman suffragists in the northeast as the time of the convention neared.⁶⁸

On Davis also fell the burden of drafting resolutions for the convention. In her August 17th letter, Davis urged Hooker to “[p]repare some resolutions please & let us have the best of suggestions.”⁶⁹ Davis told Hooker that Thomas Wentworth

Higginson “advised that we make the 15th Amendment the grand feature of the Conven [sic],” which she felt was “sinister advice.” Davis instructed Hooker that “there will be very little said about” the amendment at the convention. She saw Higginson’s “dodge” and she would “avoid it by a counter charge.”⁷⁰ In her letter of August 12, Anthony insisted that, “We must word our Newport Resolutions so as to go in for a final amendment of Fed. Con. One that shall cover us all poor women—black & white.”⁷¹ Although little is known of this process, in a huddle at Davis’s house in Providence just prior to the convention, Stanton and Anthony may have been involved in the preparation of the resolutions. Davis told her acolyte, Hooker, that she wanted “the convention to be artistic and beautiful as it will be I have no doubt.”⁷²

Conspicuous by her absence in the preparations for the Newport Convention was the co-founder of RIWSA, chair of its Executive Committee and Davis’s close friend, Elizabeth Buffum Chace. Chace’s husband, Samuel B. Chace, was in ill health at this time and no doubt she was consumed with his care.⁷³ For Chace, who had spent decades toiling as a radical Garrisonian abolitionist, it would have been unthinkable to ally with a group that opposed the 15th Amendment. Perhaps it was just as well that the health of her husband provided a needed excuse to stay out of the fray surrounding the convention at Newport. Chace’s antislavery colleague, Lucy Stone, had written Chace in July expressing her anguish that the blatant racism demonstrated by the Stanton/Anthony wing in their opposition to the 15th Amendment, would cast all woman’s rights advocates as racist. “A very large number of woman’s rights women are old Abolitionists, and of necessity rejoice in every gain for the negro,” Stone stated. But Stanton and her allies could succeed in tarnishing the entire movement. Aside from Stanton, Anthony, Davis and one or two others, Stone informed Chace, “I do not know one advocate of the cause who opposes the 15th Amendment...” She urged Chace, “Do not let us interfere with the real claim of our cause by allowing the enemy to suppose that we are fighting the very principles, we are seeking to establish.”⁷⁴ A few weeks later, Stone sent Chace a copy of the NEWSA circular proposing the establishment a new woman’s suffrage organization, asking Chace to give her imprimatur to the group.⁷⁵ Chace’s responses to Stone’s letters have not been found, but it is clear from her later affiliations that she was in agreement with Stone and other abolitionist friends.

The Newport Convention

Stanton, Anthony and their entourage arrived in Newport by boat on the night of August 24th, with their trunks filled not with “gossamers, laces, and flowers,” but with “suffrage ammunition.” The party of “the strong-minded mothers and daughters, wives and sisters, editors, reporters, and the Hutchinson family” took up twelve “apartments” at the Atlantic House on Bellevue Avenue, one of Newport’s principal resort establishments. The suffragists arrived late at night when the “brave men and fair women who had tripped the light fantastic until the midnight hours slept heedlessly on, wholly unawares” of the arrival of the “invaders.” The next morning, the visitors from New York had “baths, breakfast, and a drive on the sea beach,” before going over to the Academy of Music for the opening session of the convention at 11 a.m.⁷⁶

After the turmoil that marked the lead-up to the Newport Woman Suffrage Convention, the event itself seemed almost free of controversy. When the first session convened, the *New York Tribune* reported that, “a crowd of elegantly attired and languidly interested fashionables gradually filtered” into the “pretty little Academy of Music,” formerly a dining hall of the Bellevue Hotel, located adjacent to the Jewish cemetery at the crest of Touro Street.⁷⁷ Notably both NEWSA president Julia Ward Howe and RIWSA officer Thomas Wentworth Higginson did attend the opening session, although they were not seated on the platform. Neither were they, perhaps by their own desire, introduced as honored guests or asked to make remarks at any time during the sessions.

After describing the fashionably attired attendees and several notable personages in the audience, a *Tribune* reporter noted that “the audience, becoming impatient at the sight of the empty stage, began a well-bred clapping.” The reporter wrote that eventually, “a charming halo of silver curls became visible and Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s genial face and plump frame appeared with all the dignity of her fifty years and her mission resting upon her.” Paulina Wright Davis with her “still pretty figure, and her white curls, bound in the unique Grecian style, about her shapely head, attracting many admiring glances,” followed Stanton. Also present on the platform were “Isabelle” Beecher Hooker, with her “kindly blue eyes, her shawl of airy black lace and the lilac ribbons of her bonnet.” Susan B. Anthony who joined the group was

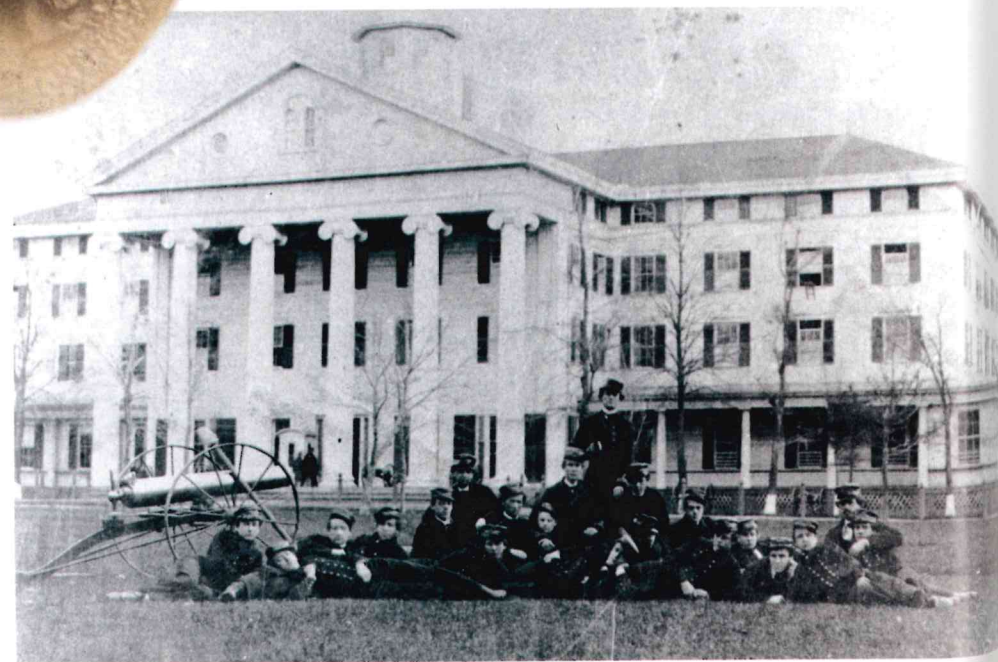
Elizabeth Cady Stanton formed the National Woman's Suffrage Association in May, 1869, despite opposition from other woman's rights advocates. Photograph album, Elizabeth Buffum Chace and family papers, Ms. 89.12, JOHN HAY LIBRARY, BROWN UNIVERSITY.



Susan B. Anthony worked closely with Elizabeth Cady Stanton in founding the National Woman's Suffrage Association. Photograph album, Elizabeth Buffum Chace and family papers, Ms. 89.12, JOHN HAY LIBRARY, BROWN UNIVERSITY.



Suffragists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony and their entourage from New York stayed at the posh Atlantic House hotel at Bellevue Avenue and Pelham Street, when in Newport for the 1869 convention. The building was used to house the U.S. Naval Academy during the Civil War when this photograph was taken. (Photographic Print, P1697, NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY.)



than expedience," that would support the enfranchisement of all Americans. Skirting entirely the issue of the 15th Amendment, other resolutions called for admitting girls to high schools and colleges, and for the formation of local suffrage societies that would be "auxiliary to the National Woman's Suffrage Association. . . throughout the country."¹⁰³ The *World* noted that "by a singular oversight," none of the resolutions that had been proposed "were put to the meeting," so it was unclear "what impression the various facts and arguments made upon the audience...." The Newport Convention resolutions were later printed in their entirety in an issue of Stanton and Anthony's paper, *The Revolution*.¹⁰⁴

Although the daily New York and Newport papers gave only a small amount of space to Davis's address, it was published fully, two weeks after the convention, in the *Revolution* issue of September 9, 1869. She had shockingly maintained that women were uplifted through their association with men, as an enslaved person was "less degraded into brutishness," by contact with a "refined, educated and exalted master." Davis hailed the advance of women in literary pursuits, like Harriet Beecher Stowe, whereas women writers had been previously "sneered at and assailed." Davis also praised the struggles of women following careers as physicians who had encountered many difficulties in pursuing education and training, and cited Newport's heroic lighthouse keeper Ida Lewis. Davis concluded her lengthy address by asserting

that, "After twenty-five years work in this cause, I am compelled to say, men and bretheren [*sic*], your constitutions and laws are unjust and degrading to one half the human race."¹⁰⁵ The *Newport Daily News* account noted that "Mrs. Davis is a forcible and pleasant speaker and made a good impression."¹⁰⁶

After Davis's speech and a "thrilling song" by the Hutchinson Family singers, Elizabeth Cady Stanton took over the podium to present the keynote address to the convention. The *Newport Daily News* showered superlatives on the New York suffrage leader, finding her remarks to be "most eloquent." Its writer noted that, "We...can say justly that it was one of the best prepared arguments to which we have even [ever?] listened." In her "long and able address," Stanton argued for women to seek vocations in the professional and public sphere rather than in "fashionable life." She favored "the broadest and truest democracy," but she would not support allowing, "the ignorant negro on the southern plantation who has not the slightest idea of our grand system, making laws for" the American woman while "intelligent women are kept silent."¹⁰⁷

Isabella Beecher Hooker's maiden address to a public gathering followed Stanton's speech. Hooker apparently "gave an outline of her ideas of the way to which the Bible should be studied in reference to this question of woman's position." While giving a summary of Hooker's talk, the *New York World* commented that, "It was somewhat difficult to understand, on the whole, what this lady was driving at." The *World* reported that "After other proceedings of an uninteresting character, the Convention adjourned until the evening."¹⁰⁸

At the final session of the Newport Convention on the night of Thursday August 26th, the Hutchinson Family singers opened the proceedings, and Mrs. Sarah Fisher Ames, sculptor of a bust of Lincoln displayed in the U.S. Senate, and summer visitor to Newport, delighted the gathering with "some pleasant dramatic readings in good taste and with credit."¹⁰⁹ Francis De Pau (Frank) Moulton, a New York merchant, was the first speaker of the evening. The *Newport Daily News* noted that Moulton "spoke well, perhaps, but so far below the range of speeches by the ladies, that the effort, was not a great success."¹¹⁰ The Reverend Phoebe A. Hannaford, a Congregational minister from Massachusetts, followed Moulton.¹¹¹ She argued that women should be equal in "the school, the church and the state."¹¹² James W. Stillman provided the penultimate remarks of the evening. Stillman

had won favor with woman suffragists and other activists after giving a pro-woman suffrage speech in the Rhode Island House of Representatives on February 25, 1869.¹¹³ Apparently, due to the "late hour," Stillman was "listened to with some impatience." Criticizing the 15th Amendment, according to the *Newport Daily News*, Stillman argued that it should not be ratified "because it does not include women." Stillman's argument "called out" Mrs. Hannaford "who justly rebuked [Stillman] for what she deemed his heresy." The *Newport Daily News* thought Hannaford's "impromptu speech was one of the finest efforts of the occasion, and was received with hearty expressions of favor."¹¹⁴ It marked perhaps the only incident of friction at the entire convention. Susan B. Anthony invited any attendees who lived in New York to stop by the Woman's Bureau parlors on 23d Street in the city. After brief remarks from Lillie Devereux Blake promoting equal wages for equal work, the Hutchinson Family sang the national anthem, and "the convention was adjourned *sine die*."¹¹⁵

Perhaps the most pleasant event of the New York suffragists' sojourn in Newport was an outing to lighthouse keeper Ida Lewis's house perched high on rocks at the mouth of Newport harbor the day after the convention ended. Lewis, a young woman had made daring rescues and had become famous. Stanton and Anthony had featured Lewis in several articles in *The Revolution*, and the City of Newport honored her in a July 4th tribute the previous month which thousands of people had attended. The suffragists' visit to Lewis was almost undoubtedly brokered by Thomas

Ida Lewis, a young lighthouse keeper in Newport, gained instant fame for making several daring rescues; she was visited by suffragists who were in Newport for the 1869 convention. Photograph, c. 1865. RHI X3 4196, RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY.



Wentworth Higginson, who had acted as Lewis's escort and spokesperson at the Newport tribute event in July.¹¹⁶ The suffrage party that sailed through the harbor to visit Lewis at her "rock-bound house" at Lime Rock consisted of Stanton, Anthony, Higginson, Theodore Tilton, sculptor Sara Fisher Ames, Abby Hutchinson Patton, and renowned phrenologist, Nelson Sizer.¹¹⁷ "Just now Ida Lewis is the fashion," Stanton informed her *Revolution* readers. "No one thinks of visiting Newport without seeing her." The group chatted informally with Lewis who claimed, "she did not care much to go out when it was calm. She liked the excitement of battling old ocean in a storm." After admiring the "beautiful little boat with its red cushions and metal mountings," which had been presented to Lewis by the city of Newport, and hearing tales of Lewis's exploits, the suffragists took their leave.¹¹⁸

In her final remarks on her Newport visit, Stanton found Newport to be "a charming little town; its look out on the sea is grand; its shores are cultivated lawns, dotted all round with the elegant homes of merchant princes from Boston and New York." On the way back from the lighthouse, the group took a "pleasant drive through the town and on the sea shore." Stanton could not resist commenting on their passing the impressive home of "Mrs. George Francis Train" (an Italianate "cottage" on Bellevue Avenue between Ledge Road and Bailey's Beach cove), complimenting both Mrs. [Wilhelmina Wilkinson Davis] Train and her "excellent" husband who had financially supported Stanton's and Anthony's woman suffrage efforts in the past years.¹¹⁹ It was a fitting closing remark on the New York suffragists' Newport venture as their association with Train, an openly racist financier, had been a source of outrage and distress for abolitionist woman's rights advocates in Boston over the past few years.

In its summary of the convention, the *Newport Mercury* ventured that the speakers' "arguments were forcible and were it not for the prejudice existing in the minds of most people, we might say they were conclusive." However, the paper surmised that "most of the large numbers of attendees" were "undoubtedly induced to attend from mere curiosity, as it is a novelty to witness such an assemblage." The leaders were "fully competent to present the question of female suffrage." Nevertheless, the *Mercury* stated that "stronger arguments" can "be used against" female enfranchisement than "for it," and that most women did not care to attain the right to vote.¹²⁰ Elizabeth Cady Stanton felt the Newport Convention was

a success as a reporter had been converted to the cause, a "Young Wall street merchant" (Frank Moulton) had given his first public speech supporting woman suffrage, and the "landlord" of the Atlantic House had taken a subscription to *The Revolution*.¹²¹ Stanton declared that she and her suffragist colleagues had "never received a more quiet and respectful hearing," as at the Newport Convention.¹²²

Aftermath

It is not clear whether Paulina Wright Davis approached her close friend and colleague Elizabeth Buffum Chace about joining the Stanton/Anthony group and aligning RIWSA with NWSA before or after the Newport Convention. Stanton herself had written Chace in April 1869, encouraging her to attend the Equal Rights Convention in New York, and remarking, in an oblique reference to differences over the 15th Amendment, that although "we may differ a little as to ways and means, we are all together in the great principle that the safety of the nation demands that woman's voice be recognized in the government."¹²³ Paulina Wright Davis came out to call on Chace in Valley Falls at some point between May and October. "I clearly remember the interview," Lillie Chace Wyman, who was twenty-two-years-old at the time, recalled some forty-five years later, "—the gracious, beautiful, earnest woman [Davis] talking,—, the other [Chace] sitting mainly in a silence which seemed almost like a heavily-freighted atmosphere around her." Wyman thought that Davis's argument about the 15th Amendment had been "so skillfully phrased," that Elizabeth Buffum Chace did not quite understand that the "Stanton plan" was opposed to the "passage" of the 15th Amendment. According to her daughter, Chace "saw it rather as a refraining in Woman's Rights meetings from giving express endorsement to a measure designed to increase the number of male voters in the country, who would probably use their power to keep women disenfranchised." Wyman claims to have persuaded her mother that she couldn't desert as a woman suffragist the ideals of racial equality she had so passionately supported as an abolitionist. Chace's decision to align with AWSA, the "Boston group," her longtime radical antislavery colleagues, did have a significant impact on the woman suffrage movement in Rhode Island for the rest of the century.¹²⁴

The affiliation of RIWSA still hung in the balance in the months after the Newport Convention. Davis continued

to hold monthly meetings and carry on the business of the organization. She apparently won a vote in the October RIWSA meeting to disaffiliate with the NEWSA. And she did not attend the formative meeting of the American Woman Suffrage Association in Cleveland in November, although she had been elected as a delegate, but rather stayed in Rhode Island presiding over a large suffrage meeting in Woonsocket. She planned "to hold meetings in all our small villages along the line of the railroad and get all the subscribers we can for the *Revolution*," Davis wrote to Hooker.¹²⁵ After spending some months away in the winter, back in Rhode Island over the summer of 1870, Davis threw herself into suffrage-related work.¹²⁶ However, Davis's energies were increasingly diverted to working directly with Stanton's and Anthony's New York group. In October 1870, Paulina Wright Davis organized a gala celebration in New York of the twentieth anniversary of the woman's rights movement that harkened back to the first national woman's rights convention in 1850 that Davis, Lucy Stone and others had convened.¹²⁷

It is not known how Elizabeth Buffum Chace responded to Davis's attempts to bring RIWSA into the "New York" fold. In July 1869, while Chace attended to her ill husband, Davis had presided over a RIWSA convention in Westerly, that passed a resolution condemning the passage of the "Fifteenth Constitutional Amendment without the Sixteenth [that would give women the vote] as the basest compromise a republican government could make..."¹²⁸ And Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony addressed the RIWSA convention, presided over by Davis, held on October 20, 1869.¹²⁹ During 1869-1870, Chace was preoccupied with her husband's illness, spending many hours supervising his care at their home in Valley Falls. In a late October 1869 meeting, Chace's daughter, Lillie, made a motion against RIWSA's affiliation with the National Woman Suffrage Association, Stanton and Anthony's organization.¹³⁰ The membership voted to send delegates to both the AWSA convention in Cleveland in November 1869, and the NWSA convention in Washington in early 1870.¹³¹

During 1870, despite her husband's infirmity, Chace stayed active. (Samuel Chace died in December 1870.) As a representative of RIWSA, she visited the state prison and reform schools where females were inmates, and, with other suffrage colleagues, successfully pressured the governor of Rhode Island to appoint a committee of women to sit



Lillie Buffum Chace Wyman, daughter of Elizabeth Buffum Chace, remembered her mother's conversations with Paulina Wright Davis. The photograph was taken ca. 1880. Photograph album, Elizabeth Buffum Chace and family papers, Ms. 89.12, JOHN HAY LIBRARY, BROWN UNIVERSITY.

on a board that would recommend improvements in the treatment of residents at those state institutions. At the annual convention of RIWSA held on October 25, 1870, Davis announced her "retirement" as head of RIWSA, and Elizabeth Buffum Chace was elected to replace her.¹³² At her ascension to the presidency, Chace rallied RIWSA members, urging that, "Petitions to the legislature, appeals from year to year should go up louder and louder, stronger and stronger, until they can no longer deny us."¹³³ By 1870, RIWSA had affiliated with the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), which had been initiated by the Boston group circular of August 5, 1869, during the run-up to the Newport Convention.¹³⁴ Its weekly, *The Woman's Journal*, edited by Lucy Stone, Henry Blackwell, and Mary Livermore, was filled with suffrage news from RIWSA for the remaining decades of the century. *The Woman's Journal* outlasted *The Revolution*, which ceased publication in 1872, by many decades. Chace eventually served for one term as president of AWSA, in 1882-1883. If any members of RIWSA who voted against the 15th Amendment in 1869, were upset by the change of leadership orientation, it is not evident from existing records. The 15th Amendment was ratified in the winter of 1870.

Conclusion

The woman suffrage convention in Newport, Rhode Island in August 1869 occurred at a critical moment in the fight for woman suffrage in the United States as the fledgling movement split in two, disrupting decades-old friendships and reform ties. Although slim hopes for union remained as plans for the convention progressed, antipathy over support for the 15th Amendment giving the vote to Black men, had made it impossible for the New England group of former radical abolitionists, and the New York group to reconcile. As seen in the speeches and correspondence of Paulina Wright Davis, her support of the racist arguments of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton closed the door to reconciliation with her long-time New England activist colleagues and friends. The Newport Convention itself, planned by the New York group alone, and efficiently executed by Davis, was effectively purged of most supporters of the 15th Amendment, save for Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Julia Ward Howe, Newporters, who, as suffrage leaders in New England, lent their presence to the gathering, but remained aloof from the proceedings. The 15th Amendment was barely mentioned at the convention, although Davis, Stanton and Anthony all expressed their opposition to Black men gaining the vote before women. Paulina Wright Davis and Elizabeth Buffum Chace, the founders of the Rhode Island Woman Suffrage Association, who had been friends and close reform colleagues for twenty years, parted ways over Davis's New York affiliation. The effect of this rift on the membership of the RIWSA appears to have been minimal, however, and Rhode Island women continued to agitate for their enfranchisement during the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Paulina Wright Davis died in Providence in 1876; Elizabeth Cady Stanton was the principal speaker at a memorial service in Davis's home.¹³⁵

Despite their principled support for ratification of the 15th Amendment, during the last decades of the nineteenth century many white former abolitionists who were involved with the woman suffrage movement in Rhode Island and New England, did not actively protest the reign of terror that was Reconstruction in the South, nor oppression of African-Americans in the North. There seemed to be little concern among the white suffragists about the voting rights of Black men in the South, or the difficulties of African-American communities in the entire country. African-American woman



Anna Garlin Spencer (1851-1931) joined RIWSA as a teenager and lived to see Rhode Island women achieve full suffrage. Photograph, Sara Algeo, *Story of a Sub-Pioneer* (Providence, R.I.: Snow and Farnham, 1925), 81.



Mary H. Dickerson of Newport was a national and regional leader in the Colored Women's Clubs movement that supported woman suffrage. "Northeastern Federation of Woman's Clubs to hold Annual Meeting in Brooklyn." *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 12, 1902, p. 9. <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/28076493/the-brooklyn-daily-eagle/> Accessed September 25, 2020.

suffragists worked with both NWSA and AWSA in the 1870s and 1880s.¹³⁶ The two groups merged into the National American Woman's Suffrage Association in 1890, and racism in the succeeding years was endemic in the national woman's suffrage movement, especially as northern white women sought to appease southern white women's suffrage societies. Elizabeth Buffum Chace, president of RIWSA, outlived many of her former radical abolitionist colleagues and a younger generation lacked the antislavery roots that fed Chace's efforts at anti-racism. In her *Anti-Slavery Reminiscences*, a short memoir that sought to inspire her children's generation to adopt the "great cause" of woman suffrage, Chace recalled that she and her daughters withdrew from the Rhode Island Woman's Club in 1877 when club members refused to admit an African-American teacher.¹³⁷ Yet it is clear that the Boston suffragists and their Rhode Island counterparts did not make concerted attempts to condemn policies and actions which imperiled the lives, livelihoods, and well-being of African Americans in their states and in the nation.

African-American women in the region organized Colored Women's Clubs, beginning in the 1890s, to press for redress of wrongs inflicted on their community, and to work for woman's suffrage to achieve their goals. Newport once more

was on the national suffrage map when successful Newport businesswoman Mary H. Dickerson (1830-1914) founded the Woman's Newport League, an African-American club that formed to press against the pernicious effects of racism in the North and South. Among other causes, the Colored Women's Clubs supported woman suffrage. Dickerson became one of the principal organizers of a country-wide consortium, the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, attending their organizing convention in Washington, D.C. in 1896, and later founding the Rhode Island Union of Colored Women's Clubs.¹³⁸ Out of this movement, the Colored Women's Civic and Political League of Rhode Island, led by Bertha Higgins and Mary E. Jackson, provided critical support to the white-led Equal Suffrage League leading up to the ratification battles of the nineteen teens. The story of the African-American women's clubs in Rhode Island, and their relation to RIWSA, and suffrage has barely been explored.¹³⁹ It is of interest to note that Bertha Higgins, a later key African-American supporter of woman's right to vote in Rhode Island, gave a nod to the NEWSA women who supported the 15th Amendment, when she organized and named the Julia Ward Howe Republican Women's Club, which thrived for some years in the early decades of the twentieth century.¹⁴⁰

Endnotes

- 1 Editorial Correspondence, "The Newport Convention," *The Revolution*, Sept. 2, 1869, 129.
- 2 Ellen Carol DuBois in *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America 1848-1869* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), gives a thorough examination of the split in the woman's suffrage movement. Du Bois claims that historians were still clashing over the reasons for the schism when she wrote her book in the nineteen-seventies. Faye Dudden, *Fighting Chance: The Struggle Over Woman Suffrage and Black Suffrage in Reconstruction America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1911) is another excellent source on the topic.
- 3 Holly Jackson, *American Radicals: How Nineteenth-Century Protests Shaped the Nation* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2019), 261.
- 4 As quoted in Dorothy Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time: Abby Kelley and the Politics of Antislavery* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1991), 347-48.
- 5 Quoted in Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 32.
- 6 Jackson, *American Radicals*, 267-68.
- 7 Elizabeth Cady Stanton speaking at a National Woman's Suffrage Association meeting, June 8 [1869], *The Revolution*, June 17, 1869, 380.
- 8 On Wright's close relationship with Foster, see Sterling, *Abby Kelley*, 159-61. Paulina Wright Davis may have attended the birth of Abby Kelley Foster's daughter in Worcester in May 1847 (Sterling, *Abby Kelley*, 241-42).

- ⁹ The quotation is from Elizabeth Cady Stanton's remarks on Davis in Paulina Wright Davis, comp., *A History of the National Woman's Rights Movement for Twenty Years with the Proceedings of the Decade Meeting at Apollo Hall October 20, 1870, From 1850-1870* (New York: Journeymen Printers' Co-operative Association, 1871), 32. For biographical information on Davis, see Edward T. James, ed., with Janet Wilson James, and Paul Boyer, eds., *Notable American Women, 1607-1950 A Biographical Dictionary* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1971), 1:444-445; Ann D. Gordon, ed., *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, vol. 2, Against An Aristocracy of Sex* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 255n; Lynn Derbyshire, "Paulina Kellogg Wright Davis," in Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, ed., *Women Public Speakers in the United States, 1820-1925, A Bio-Critical Study* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993), 309-318, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton's "Reminiscences of Paulina Wright Davis," in Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 1, 1848-1861, 2d ed. (Rochester: Susan B. Anthony, 1889), 283. Davis was also a founder and enthusiastic member of the Providence Physiological Society; see its records at the Rhode Island Historical Society, MSS 649.
- ¹⁰ Davis, comp., *National Woman's Rights Movement*, 31.
- ¹¹ James, et al., eds., *NAW*, 1:444-445. Thomas Davis, an antislavery Democrat, served one term in the U.S. Congress and was also a R.I. state senator. <https://bioguideretro.congress.gov/Home/MemberDetails?memIndex=D000135> Biographical Directory of U.S. Congress. Thomas Davis, accessed June 24, 2020; "Congressman Thomas Davis and Paulina (Kellogg) Wright Davis," in Patrick T. Conley, *The Makers of Modern Rhode Island* (Charleston, S.C.: History Press, 2012).
- ¹² *The proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention held at Worcester, October 23d and 24th, 1850* (Boston: Prentiss & Sawyer, 1851), 15. The quotation is taken from an account of the 1850 Worcester convention and subsequent conventions in the 1850s. Davis, comp., *National Woman's Rights Movement*, 15.
- ¹³ Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Lucy Stone and the Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association, January 15, 1891, in Ann Gordon, ed., *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, vol. 5, Their Place Inside the Body Politic 1887-1895* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 346.
- ¹⁴ Stanton, Anthony and Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, 1: 226. See also, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage, vol. 3, 1876-1885* (Rochester, N.Y.: Susan B. Anthony, 1886), 340.
- ¹⁵ Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, 1: 246.
- ¹⁶ Lillie Buffum Chace Wyman and Arthur Crawford Wyman, *Elizabeth Buffum Chace: Her Life and Its Environment* (Boston: W.B. Clarke & Co., 1914), 1:119.
- ¹⁷ Sherry Ceniza, *Walt Whitman and Nineteenth-Century Women Reformers* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 136-37.
- ¹⁸ On the location of Paulina Wright Davis's houses in Providence, see http://www.rheritagehalloffame.com/inductees_detail.cfm?iid=470. Accessed June 24, 2020.
- ¹⁹ Wyman and Wyman, *EBC*, 1: 120.
- ²⁰ Elizabeth C. Stevens, *Elizabeth Buffum Chace and Lillie Chace Wyman: A Century of Abolitionist, Suffragist and Workers' Rights Activism* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co, 2003); Wyman and Wyman, *EBC*, 1:51, 54.
- ²¹ Davis adopted two daughters in the 1860s. See Paulina Wright Davis to Isabella Beecher Hooker, March 12 [1870 or 1871], Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn.
- ²² Stevens, *Elizabeth Buffum Chace*.
- ²³ Wyman and Wyman, *EBC*, 1: 119.
- ²⁴ Wyman and Wyman, *EBC*, 1:121; "E. B. Chase of Valley Falls" was listed among the "Members of the Convention" and also named as a member of the "Committee on Social Relations," along with Lucretia Mott. *Woman's Rights Convention held at Worcester, 1850*, 19, 81.
- ²⁵ As their acquaintance deepened, Wyman noted, Chace appreciated the wider world represented at Davis's "house parties." Wyman and Wyman, *EBC*, 1:120.
- ²⁶ Stevens, *Elizabeth Buffum Chace*, 82-83. While Susan B. Anthony, suffrage leader from New York, did attend NEWSA's inaugural meeting, her colleague Elizabeth Cady Stanton, did not. Stanton's ascerbic comments in *The Revolution* reflected the tensions between the "New York" and "Boston" groups. "The Boston Woman's Suffrage Convention," *The Revolution*, Nov. 12, 1868, 296, and "New England Woman's Rights Convention," *The Revolution*, Nov. 26, 1868, 330.
- ²⁷ Ibid.

- ²⁸ The formation of RIWSA is described in *A Brief History of the Rhode Island Woman Suffrage Association During Twenty-Four Years, From 1868 to 1893* (Providence, R.I.: E.L. Freeman, 1893), 9-13, and in an address given by Arnold B. Chace at the "Golden Anniversary of the Rhode Island Equal Suffrage Association," reprinted in *The Woman Citizen*, January 11, 1919, p. 666. See also, *The Revolution*, "Rhode Island Woman Suffrage Convention," December 17, 1868, 369, and "The Rhode Island Convention," and a communication from "Narragansett," *The Revolution*, December 24, 1869, 394.
- ²⁹ Lillie Chace Wyman remarked on Davis's "conversion" in Wyman and Wyman, *EBC*, 1: 319.
- ³⁰ "American Equal Rights Association, Second Day Proceedings," *The Revolution*, May 27, 1869, 322. See also "Paulina Wright Davis on the Fifteenth Amendment," *The Revolution*, June 17, 1869, 374.
- ³¹ The officers of the new National Woman's Suffrage Association were published in the June 3, 1869 issue of *The Revolution*, p.345; on the group's formation, see *ibid.*, May 27, 1869, 328.
- ³² Gordon, ed., *Papers of Stanton and Anthony*, vol. 2, 255; In a letter to Hooker ["ca. 1869"], Davis mentions her husband had "paid in \$500 for me" for Susan B. Anthony. Isabella Beecher Hooker Papers, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn.; Sally G. McMillen, *Lucy Stone: An Unapologetic Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 172-73.
- ³³ Barbara A. White, *The Beecher Sisters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 129-130.
- ³⁴ Gordon, ed., *Papers of Stanton and Anthony*, 2: 256n, 292-293n; Susan B. Anthony to Paulina Wright Davis [1869 July or August], Isabella Beecher Hooker Papers, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn.
- ³⁵ Ida Husted Harper, *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony*, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: The Bobbs Merrill Co., 1899), 1:331-32; White, *Beecher Sisters*, 130-132.
- ³⁶ Susan B. Anthony to Isabella Beecher Hooker, July 29, 1869, Isabella Beecher Hooker Papers, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn.
- ³⁷ In her keynote address at the convention in August, Stanton related, that, "The editors of all the New York papers remarked if you can get the butterflies of fashion to consider this question the work will be speedily done. . . ." As reported in the *New York World* and reprinted in *The Revolution*, Sept. 2, 1869, 133.
- ³⁸ Anthony to Hooker, July 29, 1869, Isabella Beecher Hooker Papers, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn. The Saratoga Convention that took place in mid-July 1869, was, in effect, the formative meeting of the New York Woman's Suffrage Association that was to be a NWSA affiliate. *The Revolution*, July 22, 1869, 33.
- ³⁹ "Woman Suffrage Convention at Newport, Rhode Island," *The Revolution*, August 5, 1869, 65.
- ⁴⁰ Lucy Stone to Isabella Beecher Hooker, August 4, 1869, Isabella Beecher Hooker and John Hooker Papers, Rare Books, Special Collections and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester (N.Y.).
- ⁴¹ A copy of this printed communication, hand addressed to "Dear Mrs. Davis" is in the Isabella Beecher Hooker Papers, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn.
- ⁴² Julia Ward Howe, *Reminiscences 1819-1899* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1900), 238. In 1871, Howe and her husband, Samuel Gridley Howe, purchased a home, Oak Glen, also in Portsmouth, where Howe died in 1910. On her experience at the 1868 NEWSA founding, see *Reminiscences*, 375-376. The quotation about her "conversion," is in Elaine Showalter, *The Civil Wars of Julia Ward Howe: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016), 187.
- ⁴³ As quoted in DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, 188; Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage vol. 2, 1861-1876* (Rochester: Susan B. Anthony, 1881), 383.
- ⁴⁴ In his diary, Higginson noted attending several of Howe's woman suffrage lectures in Newport during the summer of 1869. Thomas Wentworth Higginson Papers, 1856-1911 (MS Am 1162-1162.9). Houghton Library, Harvard University. <https://id.lib.harvard.edu/ead/hou00293/catalog>. Accessed July 13, 2020.
- ⁴⁵ Paulina Wright Davis to Isabella Beecher Hooker, postmarked August 5 [1869], and Paulina Wright Davis to Isabella Beecher Hooker, n.d. [ca. Aug. 6, 1869?], both in Isabella Beecher Hooker and John Hooker Papers, Rare Books, Special Collections and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester, N.Y. Paulina Wright Davis to Isabella Beecher Hooker, [ca. 1869], likely should be dated ca. August 6-7, 1869. Isabella Beecher Hooker Papers, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn. Davis's invitation to Howe has not been found. However, an undated fragment of a note may have been part of a larger message to Julia Ward Howe, inviting her. In the fragment, Davis writes that Mr. Howe's "presence at the meeting at Newport" was desired. Undated [1869 July or August]. Isabella Beecher Hooker Papers, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn.

- ⁴⁶ In an undated letter postmarked in Providence on August 5th, Davis wrote Hooker that she would call on Higginson "tomorrow." In another undated letter, probably sent sometime after the 5th, Davis wrote that she had called on Higginson in Newport the previous day. (Both letters are in the Isabella Beecher Hooker Papers, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn.)
- ⁴⁷ Howard N. Meyer, ed., *The Magnificent Activist: The Writings of Thomas Wentworth Higginson 1823-1911* (Da Capo Press, 2000), 1-39; McMillen, *Lucy Stone*, 127-130; Mary Thacher Higginson, ed., *Letters and Journals of Thomas Wentworth Higginson 1846-1906* (Cambridge: Riverside Press: Houghton-Mifflin, 1921). Howe, *Reminiscences*, 402. Higginson had inscribed the address in the front of his diary for 1869. Thomas Wentworth Higginson Papers, 1856-1911 (MS Am 1162-1162.9). Houghton Library, Harvard University. <https://id.lib.harvard.edu/ead/hou00293/catalog> Accessed July 13, 2020.
- ⁴⁸ Joey La Neve De Francesco, "Abolition and Anti-Abolition in Newport, 1835-1866," *Newport History* (Winter/Spring 2020):26-32.
- ⁴⁹ McMillen, *Lucy Stone*, 127-130.
- ⁵⁰ Paulina Wright Davis to Isabella Beecher Hooker, ca. 1869, Isabella Beecher Hooker Papers, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn. The letter can be further dated to "ca. August 6, 1869," from its contents. In another letter, Davis wrote that Higginson mentioned that Julia Ward Howe and Lucy Stone had considered having a gathering in Newport, yet Howe had written Davis that "Mr. Higginson did not think well of having a meeting there." Paulina Wright Davis to Isabella Beecher Hooker, [ca. Aug. 6, 1869], Isabella Beecher Hooker and John Hooker Papers, Rare Books, Special Collections and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester, N.Y.
- ⁵¹ Paulina Wright Davis to Isabella Beecher Hooker, n.d., Isabella Beecher Hooker and John Hooker Papers, Rare Books, Special Collections and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester, N.Y. The letter can be dated to "ca. August 7-8, 1869," from its contents.
- ⁵² Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Paulina Wright Davis, August 10, 1869, Isabella Beecher Hooker and John Hooker Papers, Rare Books, Special Collections and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester, N.Y.
- ⁵³ Paulina Wright Davis to Isabella Beecher Hooker, postmarked Aug. 12 [1869], Isabella Beecher Hooker and John Hooker Papers, Rare Books, Special Collections and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester, N.Y.
- ⁵⁴ James, et al., eds., NAW, 3:265-268. Virginia Elwood-Akers, *Caroline Severance* (New York: iUniverse, 2010); Ella Giles Ruddy, *Caroline M. Severance: Mother of Clubs: An Estimate and An Appreciation* (Los Angeles: Baumgardt Publishing Co., 1906).
- ⁵⁵ White, *Beecher Sisters*, 99-100, 129. In her correspondence with Hooker in August 1869, Davis mentions several times that she had written Severance and had not heard from her. See, for example, Paulina Wright Davis to Isabella Beecher Hooker, n.d., "My dearest friend, I certainly cannot go to Boston. . . ." Isabella Beecher Hooker and John Hooker Papers, Rare Books, Special Collections and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester, N.Y., also, Hooker to Severance August 27 & 29, 1869, Isabella Beecher Hooker Papers, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn. See Susan B. Anthony to Isabella Beecher Hooker, July 29, 1869, Isabella Hooker Papers, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn. Hooker's visit to Severance's home in West Newton is mentioned in Caroline M. Severance to Paulina Wright Davis, August 16, 1869, Isabella Beecher Hooker and John Hooker Papers, Rare Books, Special Collections and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester, N.Y.
- ⁵⁶ Susan B. Anthony to Isabella Beecher Hooker, July 29, 1869, Isabella Beecher Hooker Papers, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn.
- ⁵⁷ Caroline M. Severance to Paulina Wright Davis, August 16, 1869, Isabella Beecher Hooker and John Hooker Papers, Rare Books, Special Collections and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester, N.Y. Severance sent a copy of this letter to Isabella Beecher Hooker, in a letter of August 17, 1869. In her cover letter, Severance gave her friend a number of reasons why cooperation with the New York group was fraught. Isabella Beecher Hooker Papers, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn.
- ⁵⁸ Caroline M. Severance to Paulina Wright Davis, 16 August 1869, Isabella Beecher Hooker and John Hooker Papers, Rare Books, Special Collections and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester, N.Y.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid. Severance also wondered if Davis felt slighted at not being named president of NEWSA after her years of fighting for woman's rights in New England.
- ⁶¹ Isabella Beecher Hooker to Caroline Severance., n.d., postmarked Providence, August 16, Isabella Beecher Hooker and John Hooker Papers, Rare Books, Special Collections and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester, N.Y.
- ⁶² Paulina Wright Davis to Isabella Beecher Hooker, n.d. [after August 26, 1869], Isabella Beecher Hooker and John Hooker Papers, Rare Books, Special Collections and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester, N.Y.
- ⁶³ Isabella Beecher Hooker to Caroline Severance, August 27, 1869, Isabella Beecher Hooker Papers, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn.

- ⁶⁴ Paulina Wright Davis to Isabella Beecher Hooker, postmarked Providence August 5th, Isabella Beecher Hooker and John Hooker Papers, Rare Books, Special Collections and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester, N.Y.
- ⁶⁵ *Newport Daily News*, August 24, 1869, 2.
- ⁶⁶ Paulina Wright Davis to Isabella Beecher Hooker [1869?] [Aug. 17], Isabella Beecher Hooker Papers, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn. When she wrote to Hooker, Davis had not yet received Severance's letter of Aug. 16.
- ⁶⁷ Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Paulina Wright Davis, [12 August 1869], in Gordon, ed., *Stanton Anthony Papers*, 2:256-59.
- ⁶⁸ Susan B. Anthony to Paulina Wright Davis [12 August 1869] in Gordon, ed., *Stanton Anthony Papers*, 2: 254-255.
- ⁶⁹ Paulina Wright Davis to Isabella Beecher Hooker, [1869?] [Aug. 17], Isabella Beecher Hooker Papers, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn.
- ⁷⁰ Paulina Wright Davis to Isabella Beecher Hooker, n.d., fragment. Isabella Beecher Hooker and John Hooker Papers, Rare Books, Special Collections and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester, N.Y.
- ⁷¹ Susan B. Anthony to Paulina Wright Davis [12 August 1869] in Gordon, ed., *Stanton Anthony Papers*, 2: 254-255.
- ⁷² Paulina Wright Davis to Isabella Beecher Hooker [1869?] [17 August], Isabella Beecher Hooker Papers, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn.
- ⁷³ Edward Chace wrote a friend that his father was "in so much pain he can hardly bear to live." August 10, 1869. Wyman and Wyman, *EBC*, 1:317.
- ⁷⁴ Lucy Stone to Elizabeth Buffum Chace, July 11, 1869. Wyman and Wyman, *EBC*, 1: 316-17.
- ⁷⁵ Lucy Stone to Elizabeth Buffum Chace, August 17 [1869]. Wyman and Wyman, *EBC*, 1:318.
- ⁷⁶ "Editorial Correspondence," *The Revolution*, Sept, 2, 1869, 129.
- ⁷⁷ The *New York Tribune*, as reprinted in *The Revolution*, Sept. 2, 1869, 132. The Academy of Music existed for only one year; it was later the Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid., 132.
- ⁷⁹ Gordon, ed., *Stanton and Anthony Papers*, 2: 279n.
- ⁸⁰ Author Lillie Devereux Blake (1833-1913) would become a regular speaker in the ensuing years. James, et al., eds., NAW, 1:167-69, and Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 3, 1876-1885, 408n.
- ⁸¹ Poet Sarah Helen Whitman was best known as the one-time fiancée of Edgar Allan Poe. James, et al., eds., NAW, 3: 597-99. Paulina Wright Davis called Whitman, the "first literary woman of reputation who gave her name to the [woman suffrage] cause. . ." Davis, *National Woman's Rights Movement*, 26.
- ⁸² Catharine W. Hart, and her husband, Charles Hart, a lawyer who had served as attorney general of Rhode Island before the Civil War, both signed the call to the organizing convention of RIWSA in December 1868. She was a vice-president of RIWSA at the time of the Newport Convention. *A Brief History of the Rhode Island Woman Suffrage Association, During Twenty-Four Years From 1868 to 1893* [Providence, R.I.: E. L. Freeman, 1893], 10, 11; *Proceedings of the Rhode Island Historical Society 1903-1904* (Providence: Printed for the Society, 1904), 56-57.
- ⁸³ Elizabeth Kittredge Churchill (1829-1881) was a dedicated woman suffragist who was active in RIWSA between 1869-1880. Churchill was voted onto the Executive Committee of the RIWSA at its inception. *Brief History RIWSA*, 11; "In Memoriam Elizabeth K. Churchill," *Woman's Journal*, March 12, 1881, 84; in a letter dated Sept. 14, 1885, Frederick Hinckley, a RIWSA activist, wrote that Churchill's "work. . . made her a tower of strength to the woman's rights cause. . ." Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 3, 1876-1885, 349.
- ⁸⁴ Stillman's speech was later printed as a pamphlet and used by RIWSA. *Woman Suffrage Speech of James W. Stillman, of Westerly, Delivered in the House of Representatives of Rhode Island, Thursday, February 25th, 1869*. (Published by the Rhode Island Woman Suffrage Association. [Providence: Providence Press Company, 1869]). Paulina Wright Davis praised Stillman in her *National Woman's Rights Movement*, 28n.
- ⁸⁵ Richard Miller, ed., *States at War, vol. 4: A Reference Guide for Delaware, Maryland and New Jersey in the Civil War* (Lebanon, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2015), 237, 563n.
- ⁸⁶ *New York Tribune*, as reprinted in *The Revolution*, Sept. 2, 1869, p. 132; *Newport Daily News*, 25 August 1869, p. 2.

- ⁸⁷ *New York Tribune*, as reprinted in *The Revolution*, Sept. 2, 1869, 132.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid. Rhoda Anna Fairbanks was secretary of RIWSA at its inception in December 1868. (*Brief History of RIWSA*, 11) The daughter of abolitionists, she lived on Broad Street in Providence where she and her sister, Julia entertained noted reformers and authors. Lillie Buffum Chace Wyman, "Visitors and Home People in Old Providence," typewritten manuscript, n.d. [ca. 1923?], Ms. 30.90, Brown University Library.
- ⁸⁹ *Newport Daily News*, 25 August 1869, 2.
- ⁹⁰ *New York Tribune* as reprinted in *The Revolution*, Sept. 2, 1869, 132.
- ⁹¹ Ibid.
- ⁹² Ibid. According to the *Tribune*, the proceeds from the collection amounted to \$35.
- ⁹³ *New York Tribune*, as reprinted in *The Revolution*, Sept. 2, 1869, 132.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid. Higginson noted in his diary for August 25th that he had "called on the ladies at the Atlantic House." Thomas Wentworth Higginson Papers, 1856-1911 (MS Am 1162-1162.9). Houghton Library, Harvard University. <https://id.lib.harvard.edu/ead/hou00293/catalog>. Accessed July 13, 2020.
- ⁹⁵ "Who Was There," *The Revolution*, Sept. 2, 1869, 136.
- ⁹⁶ Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Isabella Beecher Hooker, Sept. 9, 1869, Gordon, ed., *Papers of Stanton and Anthony*, 2: 263.
- ⁹⁷ Severance maintained that Howe "wished very much to speak at Newport," but was dissuaded by William Lloyd Garrison and others. Caroline M. Severance to Isabella Beecher Hooker, Oct. 19, 1869, Isabella Beecher Hooker and John Hooker Papers, Rare Books, Special Collections and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester, N.Y.
- ⁹⁸ *Newport Daily News*, Aug. 26, 1869, 2; *New York Tribune*, as reprinted in *The Revolution*, Sept. 2, 1869, 132.
- ⁹⁹ The *Newport Daily News* observed that despite du Chaillu's lack of "proficiency" in English, the audience was attentive. (Aug. 26, 1869, 2).
- ¹⁰⁰ *Newport Daily News*, Aug. 26, 1869, 2. The Hutchinson Family singers had been providing entertainment at antislavery gatherings and other reform meetings for many years. Scott Gac, *Singing for Freedom: The Hutchinson Family Singers and the Nineteenth-Century Culture of Reform* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).
- ¹⁰¹ *Newport Daily News*, Aug. 26, 1869, 2.
- ¹⁰² *New York Tribune*, as reprinted in *The Revolution*, Sept. 2, 1869, 133.
- ¹⁰³ *New York World*, as reprinted in *The Revolution*, Sept. 2, 1869, 133; *Newport Daily News*, Aug. 26, 1869, 2.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Newport Daily News*, Aug. 26, 1869, 2; *New York World*, as reprinted in *The Revolution*, Sept. 2, 1869, 133. The resolutions were published in "Newport Convention," *The Revolution*, Sept. 9, 1869, 147.
- ¹⁰⁵ "Newport Convention," *The Revolution*, Sept. 9, 1869, 147-149.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Newport Daily News*, Aug. 26, 1869, 2.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Newport Daily News*, Aug. 26, 1869, 2; *New York World*, as reprinted in *The Revolution*, Sept. 2, 1869, 133.
- ¹⁰⁸ *New York World*, as reprinted in *The Revolution*, Sept. 2, 1869, 133. In a letter of Aug. 27, 1869 to her friend Caroline Severance, Hooker wrote that giving her speech in Newport was a transformative experience. Isabella Beecher Hooker Papers, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn.
- ¹⁰⁹ "Editorial Correspondence," *The Revolution*, Sept. 2, 1869, 129; *Newport Daily News*, Aug. 27, 1869, 2. On Sarah Fisher Clappitt Ames, see Melissa Dabakis, "Sculpting Lincoln: Vinnie Ream, Sarah Fisher Ames, and the Equal Rights Movement," *American Art* 22 (Spring 2008): 78-101.
- ¹¹⁰ *Newport Daily News*, August 27, 1869, 2. Moulton, a New York merchant, was a close friend of Theodore Tilton. Barbara Goldsmith, *Other Powers: The Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism, and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1999), 92-93.
- ¹¹¹ Hannaford, who served parishes in Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Jersey, became a dedicated speaker for the woman suffrage cause. (Davis, comp., *National Woman's Rights Movement*, 30).
- ¹¹² *New York World*, as reprinted in *The Revolution*, Sept. 2, 1869, 133; *Newport Daily News*, Aug. 27, 1869, 2.
- ¹¹³ Stillman had been a speaker at the infamous Equal Rights Association meeting the previous May. ("American Equal Rights Association, Second Day Proceedings," *The Revolution*, May 27, 1869, 321) He also spoke at a meeting of the Stanton-Anthony group in New York in November where he argued against the 15th Amendment because "Cuffy, Patrick, Michael, and Sambo" would be enfranchised before such eminent women as Stanton and Anthony. *The Revolution*, November 18, 1869, 314.

- ¹¹⁴ *Newport Daily News*, Aug. 27, 1869, 2.
- ¹¹⁵ *Newport Daily News*, Aug. 27, 1869, 2.
- ¹¹⁶ In its edition of July 15, 1869, *The Revolution* carried a glowing description (taken from the *New York Tribune's* account) of the city of Newport's July 4, 1869 homage to Ida Lewis, p. 26.
- ¹¹⁷ Thomas Wentworth Higginson Diary, August 27, 1869. Thomas Wentworth Higginson Papers, 1856-1911 (MS Am 1162-1162.9). Houghton Library, Harvard University. <https://id.lib.harvard.edu/ead/hou00293/catalog> Accessed July 13, 2020; Nelson Sizer, *Forty Years in Phrenology* (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1888). Abby Patton Hutchinson was a member of the Hutchinson Family Singers.
- ¹¹⁸ "Editorial Correspondence, The Newport Convention," *The Revolution*, Sept. 2, 1869, 129-130.
- ¹¹⁹ "Editorial Correspondence," *The Revolution*, September 2, 1869, 130. The "Train Villa" was a "large mansard Italianate cottage." <https://www.newportmansions.org/learn/history-highlights/lost-newport/1866-1875>. Accessed Sept. 30, 2020.
- ¹²⁰ "Local Matters," *Newport Mercury*, August 28, 1869.
- ¹²¹ *The Revolution*, Sept. 9, 1869, 150.
- ¹²² "Editorial Correspondence," *The Revolution*, Sept. 2, 1869, 129.
- ¹²³ Elizabeth Cady Stanton to "Mrs. Chace," April 15 [1869], Wyman and Wyman, *EBC*, 1:315.
- ¹²⁴ Wyman and Wyman, *EBC*, 1:319-321.
- ¹²⁵ Paulina Wright Davis to Isabella Beecher Hooker, [1869 Dec.], Isabella Beecher Hooker Papers, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn. See RIWSA minutes, October 20, 1869. R.I. Equal Suffrage Association, early records, Dec. 16, 1869-Nov. 24, 1871, R.I. State Archives.
- ¹²⁶ Paulina Wright Davis to Isabella Beecher Hooker, July 10 [1870], Isabella Beecher Hooker Papers, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, Conn.
- ¹²⁷ Paulina W. Davis, *History of the National Woman's Rights Movement*.
- ¹²⁸ "Meeting of the Rhode Island Woman Suffrage Association," *The Revolution*, July 1, 1869, 408.
- ¹²⁹ Minutes of October 20, 1869 RIWSA convention, R.I. Equal Suffrage Association, early records, Dec. 16, 1869-Nov. 24, 1871, R. I. State Archives.
- ¹³⁰ Minutes of October 25, 1869 RIWSA meeting, R.I. Equal Suffrage Association, early records, Dec. 16, 1869-Nov. 24, 1871, R. I. State Archives.
- ¹³¹ RIWSA convention minutes, October 20 & 21, 1869, and RIWSA meeting minutes, October 26, 1869, R.I. Equal Suffrage Association, early records, Dec. 16, 1869-Nov. 24, 1871, R.I. State Archives.
- ¹³² Minutes of October 25, 1870 RIWSA meeting, R.I. Equal Suffrage Association, early records, Dec. 16, 1869-Nov. 24, 1871, R.I. State Archives.
- ¹³³ Address by Elizabeth Buffum Chace to RIWSA meeting, November 10 [1870], R.I. Equal Suffrage Association, early records, Dec. 16, 1869-Nov. 24, 1871, R.I. State Archives.
- ¹³⁴ Anna Garlin Spencer, "History of the Rhode Island Woman Suffrage Association," 1893, p. 7, in *The Records of the League of Women Voters of Rhode Island*, MSS21 B1 F1, Rhode Island Historical Society.
- ¹³⁵ Anthony, Stanton and Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, 1: 283-289; James, et al., eds., *NAW*, 1:445.
- ¹³⁶ Terborg-Penn, *African American Women and the Vote*, 42.
- ¹³⁷ Elizabeth Buffum Chace, *Anti-Slavery Reminiscences* (Central Falls, R.I.: E. L. Freeman & Son, 1891), 17n.
- ¹³⁸ Victoria Johnson, Sankofa Community Connection, <https://www.facebook.com/SankofaCommunityConnection/posts/mrs-mary-h-dickerson-information-taken-from-the-1914-obituary-of-mrs-dickerson-w/492296931116965/> Accessed July 14, 2020.
- ¹³⁹ Rosalyn Terborg-Penn makes reference to the Rhode Island effort in *African American Women and the Vote*, 74, 98, 103-104, 114, 143, 145, 157.
- ¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 103-104.