

# In Johnstown, Hope for Votes for Women Trail Funding

By [Olivia Twine and Marguerite Kearns](#) on [September 30, 2013](#)



It's late afternoon in Johnstown, NY, magic hour, right before sunset when filmmakers capture the best lighting. Nancy Brown, a fifth grade teacher, is waiting to take us to the local historical society and out to dinner with three other board members of the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Hometown Association.

This is the town where well-known women's rights activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton grew up. The place is also loaded with history of the American Revolution, plus generations of tanners and workers in the glove industry who lived

and worked here. We can't get to the Johnstown Historical Society at 17 North William Street without passing sites of major historical interest. It's as if everybody is related in some way to this historical community. It looks like classic small town America, made in America.

The Historical Society building has a front parlor room that's devoted entirely to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, with things to die for: her piano, her chair, her father's bookcase, her family bible. They have sleuths volunteering for the board who ferret out facts about the Cady family never known before. Elizabeth's parents and many of her relatives are buried in the local cemetery. Local people here talk about Elizabeth Cady Stanton as if they're related to her. And they are. Like they're first cousins or neighbors.

On her 90th birthday, while Elizabeth was in New York City speaking, the people of Johnstown met and told stories and shared memories about her. Today the activists of the local historical and hometown association understand the value of what they've got in their cultural heritage and they're building it up from the grassroots.

Yet they feel there's something lacking, despite the fact that Johnstown has the oldest working courthouse in America, the same courthouse where Elizabeth's father was a judge. This is an area with strong women, well-known local women, including Molly Brant, Rose Knox, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and a Native American Catholic saint, Kateri Tekakwitha.

Johnstown has a strong revolutionary history, a strong labor history. By going to the next level, the two local organizations are moving into the future by developing awareness through advertising, street signs, a social media presence, collaboration and partnering. They have organized themselves thoroughly, and the town reflects this with its banners, cell phone tour, and exhibits including one at the local bank, the site of the Cady home where Elizabeth grew up.

The Elizabeth Cady Stanton Women's Consortium, the umbrella of women's organizations including the hometown association, is planning a symposium in 2015 to honor the year of Cady Stanton's 200th birthday.

And still, something is missing. Ask them what they need, and there's no question in their minds.

"The greatest gift the State could give us would be to fund a Votes for Women history trail," said Nancy Brown of the Hometown Association. "A trail has been established, but there's no funding."

And what else is missing? They say that other historical-related groups located in the "cradle" are worthy, energetic, and well organized, but there's no unity among the separate organizations. These associations of people may work together and share information, but there's a recognized need to make a focused effort to get a trail funded that would be good for the state and visitors on a number of levels.

Emphasized Helen Martin of the historical society: "Money for a historical trail is desperately needed. Money – that's the biggest gift the state could give us. There's so much potential, like I could see a big convention of womens' groups in New York State, maybe at the state fairgrounds. Some place where we can celebrate women's past, get media coverage and press, get the right speakers."

"We must pull together," added Nancy Brown. "Look at all that needs to be done!"

"We know our past; we know where we are. But where are we going?" posits Helen Martin. "Let's break that glass ceiling!"

These community grassroots organizers are aware of what can be accomplished by themselves and the value of working together with others to reach a goal. This involves rocking the cradle.

As we made our way back to the Holiday Inn from the Union Hall Inn Restaurant and dinner with Hometown Association board members Bonnie Valachovic, Barb Taylor, Sandy Maceyka, and Nancy Brown, we asked about their goal. We were told: "...to be the home of women's equality by 2020." But isn't this competing with Seneca Falls? "Oh no," they said.

"We complement Seneca Falls and other places and sites. There's no doubt in our minds that Elizabeth Cady Stanton's experience in Johnstown as a young person made her the revolutionary thinker she was."

*The Johnstown Historical Society at 17 North William Street, Johnstown, NY is open weekends 1-4 p.m., Memorial Day through September. Or by appointment 518-762-7076.*

*The Elizabeth Cady Stanton Hometown Association has a one-hour, one-mile cell phone tour called "Walking the Footsteps of Elizabeth Cady Stanton," plus events, exhibits, banners and signs throughout the town. Their website is at [www.ElizabethCadyStantonHometown.org](http://www.ElizabethCadyStantonHometown.org).*



This entry was posted in Public History and tagged Elizabeth Cady Stanton House, Fulton County, Gender History, Johnstown, Johnstown Historical Society, Suffrage Movement on September 30, 2013

[<http://newyorkhistoryblog.org/2013/09/30/in-johnstown-hope-for-votes-for-women-trail-funding/>] by Olivia Twine and Marguerite Kearns.

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### About Olivia Twine and Marguerite Kearns

Olivia Twine is a freelance writer specializing in cultural issues whose work appears in regional and local publications in the Hudson Valley. She also edits the website [WomensSuffrage.org](http://WomensSuffrage.org). Marguerite Kearns writes on the subject of women's history. Her website, [SuffrageWagon.org](http://SuffrageWagon.org) is a multi-media educational platform featuring news and stories about the suffrage movement. Marguerite Kearns is traveling with Olivia Twine on a 2013 blogging tour of the "Cradle" of the US women's rights movement in upstate New York and blogging at [LetsRockTheCradle.com](http://LetsRockTheCradle.com).

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## 2 thoughts on "In Johnstown, Hope for Votes for Women Trail Funding"



Margaret Eckert-Norton

October 6, 2013 at 2:44 PM

This is an area of the stae that deserves more attention like this. Thanks for opening my eyes.

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