

# Katharine Wentworth Ruschenberger (1853-1943)

Suffragette and parishioner, buried in St. David's Churchyard

Compiled by Susanna Gold

*"Father, brother, husband, son,  
Vote for Amendment Number One!"*

— Rallying cry to amend the Pennsylvania State Constitution

*"Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the  
inhabitants thereof"*

— Original inscription on the Liberty Bell

*"Establish justice and secure the blessings of liberty"*

— Inscription added to the Justice Bell

*"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not  
be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State  
on account of sex. Congress shall have power to enforce this  
article by appropriate legislation."*

— 19th amendment to the United States Constitution, 1920



Katharine Wentworth Ruschenberger.

Photo by Ollie Hall. Courtesy Swann Auction Galleries.



The Justice Bell

Washington Memorial Chapel, Valley Forge, PA. Photo by  
the National Park Service, courtesy of Melissa Callahan.

In the year 2020, the United States will celebrate the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote. It is noteworthy that one of St. David's accomplished parishioners, Katharine Wentworth Ruschenberger, was a leader in the movement. An active member of the Pennsylvania Woman Suffrage Association, Katharine commissioned at her own expense the "Justice Bell," a bronze replica of the Liberty Bell with which she toured the state of Pennsylvania in support of the proposed amendment to the Pennsylvania State Constitution—"Amendment Number One"—granting women full voting rights.

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A ceremonial casting of Justice Bell in the foundry at Meneely Bell Co. in Troy, NY on March 31, 1915, attended by Katharine, members of the Pennsylvania Woman Suffrage Association, and Katharine's 12-year-old niece, Catherine Wentworth.

*Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ggbain-18817.*



A Model-T flatbed was specially adapted to hold the Bell and cart it more than 5,000 miles throughout Pennsylvania. Photo by Ollie Hall. *Courtesy Swann Auction Galleries.*



Known also as the “Women’s Liberty Bell,” or the “Suffrage Bell,” the Justice Bell was made the same size and shape of the Liberty Bell, but with two significant differences: to the inscription on the original, “Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof,” Katharine added, “Establish justice and secure the blessings of liberty” to emphasize her own mission. In addition, Katharine arranged for the bell’s clapper to be

chained to the side of the bell. It was silenced—just like women’s political voices were then—and would remain silent until women were granted their right to vote.

Katherine’s three-month tour started in Sayre (Bradford County) and stopped in each of the 67 counties before ending in West Chester (Chester County) on November 2, 1915, the date of the referendum on the proposed amendment.



**The Justice Bell on parade tour with supporters.**  
Photos by Ollie Hall. Courtesy Swann Auction Galleries.





## Patriotic Message of Woman's Liberty Bell Stirs Thousands



Miss Elizabeth McNamee  
Director of the  
Bell Tour



Four-year-old Betty Branton, youngest suffragist  
in Somerset Co.



Street crowd at Titusville.



Crowd at Mahaffey, Note hay rack  
loaded with party from neighboring farms

Patriotic Pennsylvania is responding so splendidly to the mute but eloquent appeal of the Woman's Liberty Bell that Governor Brumbaugh's prediction that the men of Pennsylvania will approve the suffrage amendment at the polls this year seems certain of fulfillment. More than a million people have taken part in the wonderful receptions tendered to the bell on its triumphant tour of the western half of the State, and thousands upon thousands of men in all the cities, towns and hamlets along the route have pledged their allegiance to the women's cause.

Both in the rural and industrial sections the receptions have been the same—friendly, warm and enthusiastic. The farmer has left his plough, and the miner his pick, to see the bell that is to sound the message of political independence to the women of this State, and to hear the women speakers explain what this message means.

At Coleraine, in Carbon county, a meeting was held at the entrance to a colliery that outdid in its elements of picturesqueness any political meeting ever held in the State. The little mining settlement, with its single street, emptied itself of men, women and children as the big bell truck, gay with yellow flags, came honking up the steep mountain road into the village. For an instant, every doorway became a mass of faces, then the coal dust flew in every direction as the miners and their families dashed out to meet the bell.

Miss Emma MacAlarney, one of the

speakers with the bell party, explained why the women of the State want the ballot.

"We're with you, Miss," said a brawny miner. "All you folks want is a square deal and you can gamble that we'll give it to you. You're all right."

But it is not the miners alone who are pledging a "square deal" to the women. Farmers, shopmen, staid Judges, business men, policemen, politicians, mayors, burghesses—all have come to see what the bell stands for and are rallying to its support.

The attitude of most of these men was splendidly summarized by Judge C. B. Staples, when, in welcoming the Liberty Bell party at Stroudsburg, he said:


"I was appointed to welcome the bell, but I am here to welcome the supporters of what the bell stands for. The bell stands for a cause that has set the world agog. This is the same cause that our revolutionary fathers stood for and the women in that time were just as loyal as the men, even as our women of today are. They want a voice in the government under which they live—a voice in the making of the laws which they must obey. It is their right and they should have it."

A good idea of the size of the average crowd that attend the bell meetings may be gleaned from a glance at the pictures which accompany this story. The night meetings are frequently attended by thousands. In Williamsport, the crowd at the night meeting was estimated at 12,000.


WEDNESDAY  
September 8, 1915

## Evening Illustrated Ledger


ON THE TRAIL OF THE SUFFRAGE LIBERTY BELL IN ITS 5000-MILE TOUR OF THE KEYSTONE STATE




THE SUFFRAGE LIBERTY BELL AND THE AUTO TRUCK WHICH IS ITS CARRIAGE OF STATE  
On the rear platform is Mrs. Frank M. Thompson, president of the Pennsylvania Woman Suffrage Association; in the driver's seat, Miss Helen Bell, the bell's safeguard; standing on the left is the bell.




NEIGHBORING CHILDREN INSTITUTE A ROYAL LIBERTY BELL TRUCK, DRAWN BY A BLACK DOG DECORATED WITH BUNTING IN THE SUFFRAGE COLOR, YELLOW.



CHORUSMAN CROWD AT MAHAFFEY. PEOPLE FOR MILES AROUND CAME TO WELCOME THE BELL, AND ON THE TRAIL.



WORKMEN ALWAYS GIVE HEARTY RESPONSE TO SUFFRAGE ORATORS  
Men of the Arts shop, near Williamsport, listening to Miss Helen Bell, who explained the principles of the cause, with the Liberty Bell for an added feature.



BETTY BRANTON  
Youngest suffragist in Somerset Co.

ABOVE: [Philadelphia] *Evening Public Ledger* (September 08, 1915), p. 1.  
LEFT: [Indiana, PA] *Patriot* (September 10, 1915), p. 3.

BELOW: Banners, sashes, and pennants accompanied parades and rallies across the state. Chester County Historical Society. West Chester, PA





Supported by “nickel and dime” contributions, the whistle-stop tour was wildly popular, often making the front pages of the local newspapers. Great fanfare accompanied the arrival of the Bell with marching parades, bands, and appearances by local officials. Crowds rushed to see the remarkable Bell, hear the speeches, and buy souvenir miniature replicas. Cheers and chants of “Father, brother, husband, son, vote for Amendment Number One!” followed the Bell, appealing specifically to men, since they would be the ones participating in the referendum.

Seed packets for yellow flowers like these—yellow was the signature color of the women’s suffrage movement—were passed out along the parade route.  
*Courtesy of denise-ie, <http://stores.ebay.com/deniseie>*



**Justice Bell parade.**

Photo by Ollie Hall. *Courtesy Swann Auction Galleries.*

## Woman Suffrage Parade

PHILADELPHIA

### On Friday Evening, October 22nd, 1915

Thousands of earnest Men and Women marching in a  
**GRAND FESTIVAL OF LIGHT**  
 Forming on South Broad Street, at Mifflin, march up Broad Street, around City Hall, to  
**ACADEMY OF MUSIC**  
 where a great Mass Meeting will be held.  
 Men and Women, get into line, four abreast, at 6.45 o'clock sharp,  
**RAIN OR SHINE**  
*March for your convictions      March for justice to women*  
*Bring your friends, men and women      Women wear white (not essential)*  
*Watch your step—keep in step with the music*  
*Carry torch or lantern (if possible)*  
*Carry an American Flag (if you have one)*

### WOMAN'S JUSTICE BELL

(Silent until Women have the Vote)

<b>1776</b> Liberty Independence		<b>1915</b> Justice Equality
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A duplicate of the old Liberty Bell, which is to ring for the first time on the day that the women of Pennsylvania are granted the right to vote. The Liberty Bell of 1776 rang to proclaim Liberty and Independence—to create a nation; the Woman's Justice Bell will ring to establish Justice and Equality—to complete and perfect a nation. Let every just man help break the chain that holds the clapper silent.

### THE WOMAN'S JUSTICE BELL

soon to become famous, will be in the great Parade.

**SHOW YOUR COLORS. MARCH WITH US ON OCTOBER 22ND**  
**GIVE THE WOMEN A SQUARE DEAL BY VOTING "YES" ON NOVEMBER 2ND**

Send word that you will march, to ANNA H. SNYDER, Secretary Parade Committee, 1723 Chestnut Street, or to any Suffrage Headquarters.

Chester County Historical Society,  
 West Chester, PA.





**The Justice Bell on tour in Washington, D.C., 1916.**  
*Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-hec-06745.*



"Just as the old bell in Independence Hall rang out the wonderful news of Independence in the long ago will this afternoon sound the triumphant note of women's equality. Miss Catherine Wentworth, of Roanoke, Va., will tug the rope that will move the clapper." [Philadelphia] *Evening Public Ledger* (September 25, 1920), p. 1.

Despite the popularity of Katharine's Justice Bell tour, the referendum to secure voting rights for the women of Pennsylvania lost by a narrow margin. Katharine did not give up hope, however, and turned her attention to the national stage, and continuing to tour with the Bell over the next several years at political rallies and events all the way from Illinois to Washington, DC. On June 5, 1919, the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution was proposed; it would be ratified on August 26, 1920, finally guaranteeing the vote to all American women.

One month later, Katharine brought the Justice Bell to a celebration in Independence Square in Philadelphia with a crowd of thousands. After speeches by the governor, mayor, and Katherine herself, the clapper from the Bell was finally released. After so many years of being silenced, the Bell rang out loud and clear, not at the hands of Katherine, but instead, by those of her young niece Catherine Wentworth, now 17, who represented the next generation of women voters.

Before she died in 1943, Katharine stipulated in her will that the Justice Bell be put on permanent public display at Valley Forge National Historical Park. It continues to be on view at the base of the bell tower of the Washington Memorial Chapel in the park. Perhaps the Bell will ring out again on the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment in 2020.

Katharine is buried in St. David's churchyard along with several members of her prominent Wentworth family who lived on the original 200-acre farm near the current Strafford train station in Tredyffrin Township. The community of Strafford—and the name of the station stop—both came from the Wentworth family homestead with its elegant 1855 Greek Revival mansion where Katharine grew up, named for the family's English ancestors, the 1st and 2nd Earls of Strafford. Katharine moved from one prominent family to another when she married Charles Wister Ruschenberger, a descendent of John Wister, one of the first German colonists in the area and leader among Philadelphia's "First Families," who rests beside her.



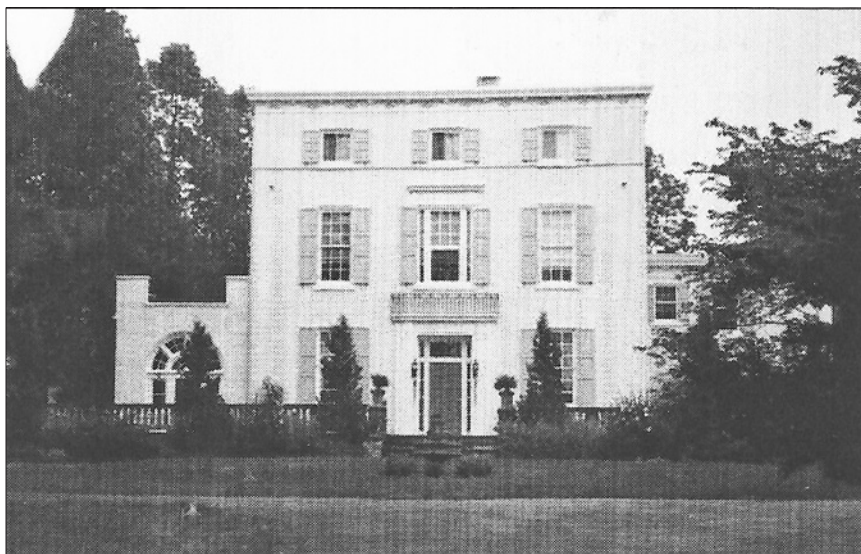
Katharine Wentworth Ruschenberger's headstone is in lot 26 of St. David's churchyard. *Photo by Steve Dittmann.*



**“Strafford,” the Wentworth family  
homestead.**

Illustrated in James B. Garrison, AIA, *6th Annual Town Tours & Village Walks, Strafford North*, Tredyffrin Township Historical and Architectural Review Board, 10 August 2000.

This 1855 Greek revival mansion was built by William White, who lived in it for only two years before the Wentworth family acquired it. Strafford still stands on Homestead Road.



**Aerial photo of “Strafford,” looking east.**

Aero Services photo #13926, 10/22/1931.

Courtesy of Pennsylvania State Archives.

The Wentworth homestead was one of only three or four farms that occupied most of present day Strafford until the Pennsylvania Railroad began promoting summer and year-round residences for Philadelphians along its lines in the late nineteenth century.



**Strafford Railroad Station,  
Old Eagle School Road and Crestline Road.**

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS PA 268-5.

In the 1880s, the Pennsylvania Railroad renamed the stops on the Paoli Local, asking John Langdon Wentworth for permission to use his family homestead name, “Strafford,” to replace the former name, “Eagle.” This new name was more in keeping with the Welsh- and English-derived names assigned to the stops along this line. The building is an example of the late “Victorian Stick Style” or “American Style” architecture that was popular for new homes being built on the suburban Main Line at the time. It has served as the rail station since the 1880s, and has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1984.

It [was once] believed that the building was originally built to serve as the Catalog Building at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Fairmount Park, and was purchased after the end of the Exhibition and eventually moved to its current location. [Subsequent research has shown this not to be the case].





**Thomas Wentworth, 1st Earl of Strafford,**  
**after Sir Anthony van Dyck,**  
oil on canvas, ca. 1633, 49" x 42 ½".  
Given by Lord Craigmyle, 1938, NPG 2960.  
© National Portrait Gallery, London.

This is a copy of Van Dyck's portrait depicting Thomas Wentworth (1593-1641) as a strong military figure. Wentworth enjoyed a long political career in Parliament and as Lord Deputy of Ireland, earning the reputation as a tough and authoritative leader before being appointed Earl of Strafford by King Charles I in 1640. With a new tide change in Parliament, Strafford acquired a number of political enemies over his position of strengthening the power of the Crown over the People, which resulted in his execution. Thomas' only son, William, soon after succeeded his father as 2nd Earl of Strafford.



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## Exhibitions

- "The Justice Bell," Washington Memorial Chapel, Valley Forge, PA. On permanent view.
- "1915 Woman Suffrage Campaign in Pennsylvania," Chester County Historical Society, November 2015 – Summer 2016.
- "Independence Hall & Votes for Women," Liberty Bell Center, Independence National Historical Park, 2015.