

Evanston Women's History Timeline

(highlighted names are included in our research database)

I. 1850 – 1874 – Educated Women

1855

- **Northwestern Female College** is founded by William P. Jones, Jr. and J. Wesley Jones to provide higher education for women in Evanston.

1856

- Northwestern Female College opens. The institution includes a college for women and a preparatory school for boys and girls.

1868

- The **Women's Educational Aid Association** is formed to promote the establishment of a college for women.

1869

- Northwestern University becomes coeducational.
- **Evanston College for Ladies** is founded by the Women's Educational Aid Association, taking over from the struggling Northwestern Female College. The new college is entirely staffed and run by women.

1870

- Evanston resident **Frances Willard** is elected president of the Evanston College for Ladies.

1871

- Evanston College for Ladies opens.

1873

- Evanston College for Ladies is absorbed by Northwestern and becomes the Woman's College of Northwestern University.
- Frances Willard is named Dean of Women at Northwestern.

II. 1875 – 1899 – Reforming a Community

1876

- The Pro and Con Club is formed by **Elizabeth Boynton Harbert** as an outlet for discussion of women's suffrage issues.

1883

- The **Benevolent Society of Evanston** is formed by **Sarah Blanchard** to provide relief for families in need. The society is made up of three committees: sewing, relief and investigation, and fundraising.

1889

- The **Woman's Club of Evanston** is founded by Elizabeth Boynton Harbert to address social reform issues within the community such as housing, public education, and healthcare.

1892

- **Louise Brockaway Stanwood** is elected to the District 75 school board, becoming the first Evanston woman to hold public office. This election was also the first in which Evanston women could vote.

1893

- The **King's Daughters** is founded by **Mary Spencer Gardner** to provide young women with the opportunity to undertake charitable work within the community. Early projects include sewing clothes for families in need and raising funds for other charitable organizations.
- Evanston resident **Catharine Waugh McCulloch** drafts a bill for woman's suffrage in Illinois. The bill is eventually enacted into law in 1913, making Illinois the first state east of the Mississippi River to grant women the right to vote in national and municipal elections.

1895

- The Fresh Air Home for Working Girls is opened by the King's Daughters to provide a two-week sojourn during the summer for young women living and working in Chicago.

1897

- The **Visiting Nurse Association of Evanston** is founded by Jessie Chandler, Nancy Lutkin, and Kate McMullen to provide health services to those within the community who might not otherwise be able to afford medical care. The association focuses on infant mortality, inadequate sanitation, and the spread of infectious diseases.

III. 1900 – 1924 – Reform Becomes Work

1901

- Evanston resident **Isabella Garnett** graduates with a medical degree from the College of Physicians and Surgeons (now the University of Illinois College of Medicine), making her one of the first female African American physicians in Illinois.

1907

- Catharine Waugh McCulloch is elected Justice of the Peace in Evanston becoming the first woman in Illinois to be elected to the position.

1911

- The **North End Mothers' Club** is formed by a group of women from North Evanston to bring parents and schools together to improve children's education and welfare.

1913

- The Girls' League of Evanston (later known as the **Young Women's Community Club**) is founded to provide a place for young working women to gather on their lunch breaks or days off, to learn new skills and socialize with other working girls.

1914

- Dr. Isabella Garnett and her husband, Dr. Arthur Butler, open the Evanston Sanitarium and Training School in their house at 1918 Asbury Avenue. It is one of only four hospitals in the Chicago area that accept African American patients and physicians.

1917

- The **Iroquois League** is founded by Eva Rouse to provide African American working women with safe, economic housing. Later led by Cora Watson, the Iroquois League provided a place for young, single working girls to socialize with each other and learn new skills.

1918

- The Children's School (now **Baker Demonstration School**) at National College of Education is founded in Chicago by Evanston residents **Edna Dean Baker** and **Clara Belle Baker**. Clara Belle Baker becomes director of the Children's School.

1919

- The **Evanston Community Kitchen** is established to provide meals to families affected by the influenza epidemic and to address the "servant problem." The organization delivers hot dinners to families daily for small a fee.

1920

- Edna Dean Baker is elected president of National Kindergarten and Elementary College (now National Louis University). During her 29-year tenure, she develops new standards for early childhood education and teacher training.

1922

- The Young Women's Community Club opens a boarding house at 615 Church Street for young working women who are new to Evanston. The home provides residents with a sense of community and companionship.

1923

- **The Cradle** is founded by Evanston resident Florence Walrath to care for infants awaiting adoption and to find loving homes for them. It is among the nation's first private adoption agencies and becomes a leader in the effort to dignify adoption and improve the quality of infant care.

1924

- Evanston resident **Dr. Gladys Dick** and her husband, Dr. George Dick, develop a skin test (known as the Dick test) to determine susceptibility to scarlet fever as well as a toxin and antitoxin for the prevention and treatment of the disease.
- The Iroquois League opens a boarding house and community center at 1125 Garnett Place for working African American females.

IV. 1925 – 1949 – Work Becomes More

1925

- Northwestern University professor **Winifred Ward** starts the Children's Theatre of Evanston, one of the first theaters for youth performance in the US. The theatre serves as a laboratory for university students studying "creative dramatics" and provides local children with the opportunity to watch or participate in theatrical productions.

1926

- The Children's School (now Baker Demonstration School) at National College of Education is relocated from the south side of Chicago to Evanston, becoming one of the first nursery schools in Chicago's northern suburbs.

- 1928
- Butler Memorial Hospital and the Community Hospital of Evanston merge to form a new organization for the promotion of a modern hospital for primarily African American patients and physicians. The resulting organization assumes the name Community Hospital of Evanston.
- 1930
- *Clara, Lu, and Em* is broadcast for the first time on WGN. Created by Northwestern University alumni [Louise Starkey Mead](#), [Isobel Carothers Berolzheimer](#), and [Helen King Mitchell](#), the program becomes the nation's first radio soap opera.
 - The Community Hospital of Evanston opens in the remodeled home of Dr. Rudolph Penn at 2026 Brown Avenue with Dr. Isabella Garnett as superintendent. The hospital has 18 beds, two operating rooms, x-ray facilities, and a contagious disease ward.
- 1932
- [Daisy Sandidge](#) is elected alderman to the Fifth Ward, making her the first female alderman in Evanston.
- 1939
- Evanston native and Community Hospital staff member [Dr. Elizabeth Webb Hill](#) forms a woman's auxiliary to raise operating funds for the improvement of Community Hospital. The Woman's Auxiliary becomes a primary source of funding for the hospital.
- 1944
- The Delta Chi Omega Chapter of the national African American sorority [Alpha Kappa Alpha](#) is founded to provide African American college women with scholarships and community service opportunities.
 - Evanston Township High School graduate and Northwestern University alumna [Kay Davis \(Kathryn McDonald Wimp\)](#) joins the Duke Ellington Orchestra as a vocalist.

V. 1950 – Present – Politics and Activism

- 1952
- Community Hospital opens in a new facility to more adequately meet the needs of Evanston's growing African American population. The hospital has fifty-four beds, a nursery with twelve bassinets, two operating rooms, and two delivery rooms. Dr. Elizabeth Webb Hill is chief of staff, having been appointed to the position in the mid-1940s. She is the first African American female to be named to such a position in Illinois.
- 1963
- [Mayme Spencer](#) is elected alderman to the Fifth Ward, making her the first African American female alderman in Evanston.
- 1980
- Community Hospital is forced to close. The facility is converted into an apartment complex for adults with disabilities and dedicated in 1986 as the Hill Arboretum Apartments in memory of Elizabeth Webb Hill.
- 1985
- [Joan Barr](#) is elected mayor of Evanston, becoming the first woman elected to the position.
- 1993
- [Lorraine Morton](#) is elected mayor of Evanston, becoming the first African American elected to the position. She is the city's longest-serving mayor when she retires in 2009. Upon her retirement, City Hall is renamed the Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center in her honor.