Women's History Tour of Evanston

Evanston is home to over a dozen parks named after women. Evanston women have made significant impacts in the Evanston community and beyond, and the dedication of these parks throughout the city continue to honor their influence and celebrate their achievements. For more information on these extraordinary women and others like them who have called Evanston IL home, go to https://evanstonwomen.org/.

This walking tour is one of the hundreds of interactive walking tours available on Clio and has been reformatted for printing. Clio is a free website and mobile application that connects people to nearby history at www.theclio.com When using the Clio website or mobile application, users can enjoy additional features such as audio narration, links to related books and articles, and directions to each stop along the route. Clio is non-profit and free for everyone and made possible by tax-deductible donations.
Entries on this tour
A. Cornelia Lunt Park
B. Oldberg Park
C. Carlson Greenhouse
D. McCulloch Park
E. Harbert-Payne Park
F. Butler Park
G. Smith Park
H. Leah LoMar Park
I. Vera Megowen Park
J. Reba Park
1. Cornelia Lunt Park

Introduction
Lunt Park in Evanston IL, is dedicated to the city's "First lady" Cornelia Lunt (1843-1934). Lunt was the daughter of Northwestern University founder Orrington Lunt. She came to Evanston in 1871 after graduating from Dearborn Seminary. Widely known as the leading lady of Evanston, Lunt served on the Northwestern University Board of Trustees and was active in the University Guild, serving as its first President. Her father's home “Anchorfast,” which became her home after his death, was the center of Evanston's social life for many years. She was the founder of the Fort Dearborn Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, serving as its first Regent and later honorary Regent for many years.

Backstory and Context
Cornelia Lunt, "First Lady of Evanston," was the daughter of Orrington Lunt and niece of John Evans. The Lunt family moved to Evanston after the Chicago Fire, though Orrington had helped to found Northwestern University before the move. Cornelia traveled widely during and after her schooling, both throughout the United States and even made an annual trip to England. She brought together many noted artists and was instrumental in several groups. She helped to found the University Guild and was its first president. She also helped to found the Fort Dearborn chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and was regent for the first two years. Later she was honored with permanent election as honorary regent. Lunt also served on Northwestern's Board of Trustees from 1899 until 1920. On top of this, Lunt was the founder of the Chicago branch of the Colonial Dames of America and was a charter member of the Fortnightly Club of Chicago.

Address
Evanston, IL 60201
2. Oldberg Park

Introduction

Mary and Arne Oldberg Park, located in Evanston IL near Northwestern University is dedicated to the couple, who made a significant mark in the Evanston community. Mary Oldberg (1876 – 1968) was a prominent civic leader during her 60-year residency in Evanston. Throughout this time Oldberg founded the Council of Social Agencies (United Community Services), was the President of the District 76 Board of Education (1925-1940), became a trustee and the Vice President of the Evanston Public library for 37 years, as well as maintained leadership and membership roles in a variety of welfare projects and organizations in Evanston and Chicago. 

Backstory and Context

After moving to Evanston in 1900, Mary Oldberg focused her attention on creating lasting change for welfare reform and health awareness through a variety of campaigns she headed as a part of the Woman's Club of Evanston and in the Council of Social Agencies. For instance, her recurring Christmas Seals Committee was established as a charitable organization addressing the tuberculosis crisis. Oldberg remained civically active in Evanston until her death in 1968. She is memorialized as a pioneer for health and welfare reform in Evanston through a park honoring her and her husband, a renowned musician and professor at Northwestern University.

Address
Elgin Rd
Evanston, IL 60201
3. Carlson Greenhouse

Introduction
The Carlson Greenhouse, located at Lighthouse Beach in Evanston IL is named for Margery Carlson, a world-renowned botanist and conservation advocate (1892-1985). Carlson lived in Evanston from 1930 until her death in 1985. She taught botany at Northwestern University and was a research associate at the Field Museum, helping build its plant collection through her travels around the world. Later she was involved with the Illinois Nature Conservancy, helping to preserve Volo Bog, Illinois State Beach, and Matthiessen State Park. She was active in Evanston throughout her life, promoting Victory Gardens during WWII and helping create the Lighthouse Nature Center.

Backstory and Context
Margery Claire Carlson, Ph.D. (1892-1985) Margery Claire Carlson, Ph.D. was a botanist and professor who was committed to local nature preservation and conservation. Born in Arthur, Illinois in 1892, Carlson moved to Evanston in 1912 to begin her undergraduate studies at Northwestern University. Carlson completed her Bachelor of Science in biology from Northwestern in 1916 and subsequently earned a master’s degree and doctorate from the University of Wisconsin in 1920 and 1925, respectively. Carlson held a series of post-doctoral appointments from 1925 to 1928, whereupon she returned to Northwestern as an instructor in the University’s botany department. At the time, she was one of only five female faculty members at the University. In 1930, Carlson was promoted to assistant professor of biology. She retained the title for more than 20 years until she was promoted to associate professor in 1954 and associate professor emeritus upon her retirement in 1958. During her teaching career, Carlson frequently traveled to Mexico and Central America to collect rare plant specimens for Northwestern University and the Field Museum of Natural History, where she worked as an associate and later, as a research associate. The specimens she collected now comprise a significant portion of the Field Museum's holdings from Central America. In Evanston, Carlson was closely involved with activities at Lighthouse Park, restoring and caring for the Nature Trail as chair of the Garden Club of Evanston Wildflower Committee and helping found the Nature Center. Carlson was also involved with the war effort from 1941 to 1948, serving as chair of the Evanston Victory Garden Committee. The garden encouraged Americans to grow their own food during the war period and provided plots for more than 2,500 Evanston families while Carlson was chair. Carlson died in Evanston in 1985 at the age of 92. She received numerous awards and honors during her lifetime for her devotion to local conservation and preservation and her achievements in the field of botany, including the Eloise Payne Luquer Medal and the Sarah Gildersleeve Fife Memorial Award from the Garden Club of America in 1952 and 1954, respectively. Beyond the Carlson Greenhouse, the Big Bend Preserve in LaSalle County, Illinois has been renamed the Margery C. Carlson Nature Preserve.
Address
2611 Sheridan Road
Evanston, IL 60201
4. McCulloch Park

Introduction

McCulloch Park, in Evanston IL, is named for one of the most prominent among 20th-Century suffragists, Catharine Waugh McCulloch (1862-1945). McCulloch began her legal career in 1886 and was the first woman in the U.S. to serve as a Justice of the Peace. She was legal advisor to the National WCTU and the National Woman's Suffrage Association, and was partner with her husband in their Chicago law firm. When the campaign for Illinois suffrage ended successfully in 1913 (largely through McCulloch's tireless efforts), she was greeted by a torchlight parade of happy supporters when she arrived home in Evanston.

Backstory and Context

Catharine Waugh McCulloch was a lawyer, suffragist, political activist, supporter of women's rights and mother who lived in Evanston during a time of great change both in the political and social arena. She was the first woman in Illinois to serve as a Justice of the Peace (elected April 2, 1907 and served two terms) and is largely responsible for the passing of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution allowing all citizens to vote. Catharine McCulloch was born Catharine Gouger Waugh on June 4, 1862, in Ransomville New York to parents Susan Gouger and Abraham Waugh. Her family moved to a farm in Illinois when she was five years old and her younger brother was just two years old. It was her father who encouraged her to study hard and prepare for a profession, and in 1878 Catharine entered Rockford College Female Seminary (now Rockford College) and graduated in 1882, first in her class. McCulloch received a law degree in 1886 from Union College of Law (now Northwestern University Law School) and was admitted to the Illinois Bar that same year. In 1888 she received both Bachelor and Master of Arts degrees from Rockford College, Rockford Illinois; later, in 1936, she received a Doctorate of Law from Rockford College, Rockford Illinois. Initially, it was a challenge for McCulloch to find a position at an established law firm, turned away by male attorneys who told her to take in sewing and one even offering her a clerkship in exchange for sexual favors. So, in 1887, she returned to Rockford and opened her own law practice. She did this with support from members of the Equity Club, the first association of women lawyers in the country and one in which McCulloch was instrumental in establishing while she was a law student. McCulloch's client base consisted of women tormented by problems relating to lack of legal status, especially as related to wage discrimination, divorce, probate, child custody, and domestic abuse. By representing these issues, she emerged as a leading figure among the advocates for the women's movement and a leading advocate of woman suffrage in Illinois. In 1890 she married Frank McCulloch and they moved to an apartment in Chicago. They had four children together, son Hugh born 1891, son Hathorn born 1899, daughter Catharine born 1901, and son Frank born 1905. With their family expanding, they moved to a larger house in Evanston in 1895. In addition to their matrimonial union, Frank and
Catharine opened a law partnership in Chicago where they continued to work on women's rights and in 1889, Catharine practiced before the United States Supreme Court. It is clear from McCulloch's list of achievements that she was a woman who firmly believed women were just as equal to men in every arena and she dedicated her entire life to achieve not only equality, but justice for women. She affected change in the city of Evanston, the state of Illinois, and the entire country through her involvement with the Legislative Committee of the Illinois Equal Suffrage Association (IESA), which she was part of for 22 years. She devised a strategy to allow women to vote for president and in other elections not constitutionally limited to men. This bill was introduced in 1893 and every year thereafter. She framed the legislation so it neatly sidestepped the Constitution, allowing women to vote for presidential electors and other government officers not mentioned in the Constitution. Illinois was the first state east of Mississippi River to pass such a law and others soon followed, leading to the universal suffrage amendment in 1920. In addition to campaigning for equality for women in the social and political sphere, she also worked to protect women in the domestic setting. She wrote a bill that strengthened rape laws and raised the age of consent in Illinois. She wrote plays which called attention to a woman's need for greater protection from abusive or alcoholic husbands and published works of nonfiction and fiction to bring attention to laws relating to mother and child. She campaigned tirelessly to elect women to prominent positions of power and was careful to follow the correct procedures, distancing herself from militant suffragist groups who picketed and got themselves arrested. Instead she firmly believed women could only advance themselves through the legal channels, so she confined her own activities to lobbying, writing and speech-making. She thought "women had a special mission to purify and perfect politics" (Shultz, Rima L and Haste, Adele eds. Women Building Chicago 1790-1990: A Biographical Dictionary. Bloomington, IN; Indiana University Press, 2001). From 1917 to 1925 McCulloch was President of the Women's Democratic Club of Illinois. She was nominated as their first president and worked for the enactment of women's suffrage and prohibition. After suffrage was achieved and her children grown, McCulloch spent much time traveling and exploring her life long study of the legal conditions of women. After a two week cancer-related illness, Catharine Waugh McCulloch died at age 82 in Evanston Hospital.

Address
Evanston, IL 60201
5. Harbert-Payne Park

Introduction

Renamed in 2020, this park is named in honor of suffrage activist Elizabeth Boynton Harbert and Betty Jean Payne, a leader of several women's organizations in Evanston. In 1876, Elizabeth Boynton Harbert organized the Pro and Con Club for the purpose of discussing women's suffrage. Harbert had participated in the founding of the American Woman's Suffrage Association and was a close associate of Susan B. Anthony. She also wrote the "Woman's Kingdom" column for the Inter Ocean, a leading Chicago newspaper. She later published the monthly newsletter, "The New Era," where she expressed her expansive views on women's rights. Harbert was also a founder or founding member of a number of women's associations. Betty Jean Payne (1938-2017) resided in Evanston for over 70 years. During this time she dedicated herself to creating community programs and leading a variety of causes in order to improve the safety and economic wellbeing of her community.

Backstory and Context

Elizabeth Boynton Harbert: Elizabeth Boynton Harbert was a prominent leader in the women's suffrage movement and prolific writer of publications and speeches on the subject of women's rights. Born in Crawfordsville, Indiana in 1843, Harbert attended Western Female Seminary in Oxford, Ohio before entering Terre Haute Female College in Indiana where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1862. Upon graduation, Harbert sought admission to all-male Wabash College but was denied. Outraged, Harbert penned her account of the experience for the New York Independent in 1865, beginning her long career as a writer and women's rights activist. Over the next five years, Harbert published her first novel and became involved in the women's suffrage movement, serving as vice president of the Indiana Woman Suffrage Association. In 1870, she married William Soesbe Harbert, a lawyer and former officer during the Civil War, and moved to Iowa where she served as vice president of the Iowa Woman Suffrage Association the following year. In 1874, Harbert was elected president of the Iowa Woman's Suffrage Association but did not complete her term, as she moved to Evanston later that year. In Evanston, Harbert remained active in the women's suffrage movement, serving as president of the Illinois Woman Suffrage Association for twelve years and vice president of the National Woman Suffrage Association for Illinois. During this period, Harbert also became involved in the founding and management of various other local, state, and national organizations, including the Woman's Club of Evanston, the Illinois Social Science Association, and the National Household Economic Association. Harbert continued to write during this time as well, starting the "Woman's Kingdom," a column in the Chicago Inter Ocean dedicated to the moral and political interests of women and The New Era, a monthly periodical for the discussion of women's rights issues. In 1891, Harbert received an honorary doctorate from Ohio Wesleyan University in recognition of her dedication to the promotion of justice and equality for women. In the years thereafter,
Harbert remained active within the Evanston community until 1906 when she moved to Pasadena, California with her family. She died there in 1925 at the age of 81. Evanston has since dedicated a park in her honor, named Harbert-Payne Park. Betty Jean Payne: Betty Jean Payne, who attended Evanston Township High School, Evanston Business College, and the United States League of Financial Education, worked for many years at the Horizon Federal Savings Bank and Loan where she oversaw approving housing loans and investments. Additionally, she was an Affiliate member of the Northshore Board of Realtors, as well as a Board Member of the Evanston YWCA. She also served two consecutive terms as the Evanston Township High School Treasurer. Moreover, Payne established many of her own initiatives, such as the Canal Park Neighbors Association, Noise Neighbors, and more. In 1988, Payne decided to run for the 4th Ward alderman seat with support from the community. Ultimately, Payne lost the election, but her determination to reform and make positive impacts in her community continued. In 2020, a proposal was ratified which renamed Harbert Park to Harbert-Payne park, memorializing the work Payne accomplished in her canal neighborhood of over 40 years.

Address
2024 N McCormick Blvd
Evanston, IL 60201
6. Butler Park

Introduction
Butler Park in Evanston IL is named in honor of Dr. Isabella Garnett-Butler (1872-1948). Garnett-Butler was born in 1872 to one of Evanston's earliest African-American families. Garnett received her medical degree in 1901 from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Chicago and returned to Evanston in 1904. Recognizing that hospital care for African Americans was very limited, she and her husband, Arthur Butler, opened the Evanston Sanitarium and Training School in 1914 in their home at 1918 Asbury Avenue. After Butler died unexpectedly in 1924, Garnett continued to manage the hospital. In 1928, Garnett joined the staff of the new Community Hospital and the two organizations merged. She served as superintendent at Community Hospital until 1945.

Backstory and Context
Isabella Maude Garnett was a physician and early leader in the organization of hospital care for African Americans in Evanston. Born in Evanston in 1872, Garnett received a nursing degree from Provident Hospital and Nurses Training School in 1895 and later graduated with a medical degree from the College of Physicians and Surgeons (now the University of Illinois College of Medicine) in 1901, making her one of the first female African American physicians in Illinois. Following her graduation, Garnett worked as an intern at Provident and began practicing on the South Side of Chicago before moving to Evanston a few years later. In Evanston, Garnett continued her practice and married Arthur DeLyon Butler in 1907. The couple adopted a son, Arthur Garnett Butler, Jr., a few years later and opened the Evanston Sanitarium and Training School in their house at 1918 Asbury Avenue in 1914. Established by Garnett and her husband for the care of African Americans in Evanston, the Sanitarium was one of only four hospitals in the Chicago area that would admit black patients at the time. For nearly a decade, the couple managed the fourteen-bed hospital with Butler specializing in surgery and Garnett in general practice and anesthesiology until the untimely death of Butler in 1924. Thereafter, Garnett continued to manage and largely support the hospital herself with income from her private practice until 1928 when she joined forces with the Booker T. Washington Association from the Community Hospital of Evanston. In 1930, Community Hospital opened with Garnett as superintendent. That same year, Garnett married Reverend James Rayford Talley. Garnett remained superintendent of the hospital until her retirement in 1946. Thereafter, she spent the majority of her time in the African American resort town of Idlewild, Michigan. In 1930, the City of Evanston opened the Isabella G. Butler Park in honor of Garnett's pioneering role in the development of hospital facilities for the African American community.

Address
Evanston, IL 60201
7. Smith Park

Introduction
<p>Elnora Smith Park, in Evanston IL, is named for Elnora Smith (1894-1958). Smith was a Physical Education teacher in Evanston, who also dedicated a majority of her life to advocating for safer playground equipment and the establishment of safer parks in Evanston, IL. Additionally, Smith was a key member in the Evanston Rationing office during WWII. </p>

Backstory and Context
As a graduate of Western Michigan College, Smith arrived in Evanston in 1923 to teach at district 75 (now 65) schools. During this time, Smith was the Physical Education supervisor of all District 75 schools, but later oversaw a larger staff of teachers. Smith held this position for 35 years. Additionally, Smith was also known as a “playground architect” advocating for safer playground equipment and the establishment of more safe playgrounds in Evanston. In 1961 a park, focused on offering safe equipment for younger children, was dedicated in her name. Furthermore, during WWII, Smith was given a leave of absence from her District 75 position in order to run the Evanston Rationing office, a critical organization during wartime.

Address
Lyons St
Evanston, IL 60201
8. Leah LoMar Park

Introduction
This park is named in honor of Evanston education advocate Leah LoMar (1922-1968). LoMar was a well-known figure in the establishment of Parent – Teacher Association (PTA) chapters throughout Evanston and founding the Chute Middle School and Dawes School PTA. She also held Presidential seats in the Dawes and Nichols PTA, as well as a Vice Presidential seat at Chute.

Backstory and Context
As a founder of the Chute Middle School and Dawes School PTA, as well as her engagement in multiple existing PTA chapters in Evanston, LoMar earned a life membership in the national PTA, and was an elected director of the National PTA's District 21. LoMar, who advocated for equity and accessibility in education, was also a member of the School District 65 advisory committee on integration in schools. Beyond her work in education, LoMar was a graduate of Purdue University and a licensed Research chemist and medical technician. Early in her career, she worked at St. Francis Hospital where she was in charge of the chemistry laboratory and blood bank. LoMar continued her work on education in Evanston until her death in 1968, at the age of 46 due to illness.

Address
Mulford Street
Evanston, IL 60202
9. Vera Megowen Park

Introduction
<p>Vera Megowen (1894-1987) was a professional chef who trained at the Cordon Bleu. She opened her first restaurant, the Vera Megowen Restaurant, in 1926 and from that time until her retirement in 1973, was involved in the restaurant industry. Megowen was also known for her philanthropy, generously supporting many local organizations and funding the creation of the Merrick Rose Garden and restoration of the old Fountain Square fountain. She is remembered through an Evanston park dedication in her name.</p>

Address
Evanston, IL 60202
10. Reba Park

"Lifting as We Climb"

Introduction
Reba Place Park is named after Reba Poor Dickenson. Reba is the daughter of John Poor, who had dedicated a street to his daughter called Reba Place. Since then, many religiously affiliated organizations have been created with the name such as the Reba Place Fellowship, Reba Place Church and Reba Place Development Association.

Address
707 Reba Place
Evanston, IL 60202