

Retired Housewife? Remembering Anne Dallas Dudley

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Ward's Seminary for Girls on Spruce Street in Nashville.
"Ward Seminary." Iris, 1907. archive.org. Accessed 16 Dec. 2019.

In May of 1886, Dr. W. E. Ward addressed the audience of the twenty-first commencement ceremony at Ward Seminary for Young Ladies. The Second Industrial Revolution, with its rapidly advancing technology, increased social diversity, and economic mobility, was in full swing. In his *The Coming Woman* address, Ward noted that women needed to prepare for the challenges of

this new world. The modern woman, he advised, ought to seek out substance in both her cultural and intellectual pursuits. She ought not "be a creature of mere fashion" or "rely on superficial knowledge."ⁱ Like many southern gentlemen at the time, Ward cautioned against embracing modernity too wholeheartedly. "The coming woman" he warned, "ought not to seek to come to the political arena, where the rougher man contends, quarrels, and fights. She ought not, therefore, to want the ballot."ⁱⁱ Dr. Ward died the following year, so he would have no idea how thoroughly that last bit of advice was disregarded by many former, current, and future Ward Seminary students.

Notable among those burgeoning suffragists, and enrolled in Ward Seminary in 1886, was Annie Dallas. She was born to influence and fortune: the eldest daughter of Trevonian Barlow Dallas, a wealthy cotton manufacturer, the great niece of George Mifflin Dallas, Vice President under James K. Polk, and the great-granddaughter of Alexander James Dallas, Secretary of the Treasury for James Madison. Life for Anne Dallas Dudley was never going to be ordinary. Nor was it necessarily going to be, as it turned out, extraordinarily distinguished.

Catalogue of Pupils, 1886-7.	
Allison, Mary.....	Tennessee.
Amos, Zula.....	"
Amos, Etruria.....	"
Anderson, Hester.....	Kentucky.
Aylward, Mabel.....	New York.
Alexander, Willie.....	Tennessee.
Allen, Ella.....	"
Critchlow, Allie.....	Tennessee.
Culver, Frances.....	Iowa.
Dallas, Annie.....	Tennessee.
Davis, Kate Litton.....	"
Davis, Marga.....	"
Duckworth, Annie.....	"

Ward Seminary Catalogue, 1887. Courtesy of Harpeth Hall Archives.

Annie Dallas attended Ward Seminary for Young Ladies just down the road from her maternal grandparents' home on Spruce Street. Ward's was like many collegiate schools for girls in the late 1800s, educating daughters of the growing middle and upper classes to be intellectually capable and confident without openly challenging the traditional roles for women. Ward Seminary educated many of the women in Anne Dallas' family, including her mother Ida Bonner Dallas (1870), her aunts Elizabeth Bonner Flint (1870) and Blanche Bonner Wright (1880), as well as her sisters Trevania and Elizabeth. According to *The Coming Woman* address, a graduate of Ward's Seminary was expected to celebrate her God-given role as the "moral citadel" for family and community and embrace her "loving dependence on man."ⁱⁱⁱ To prepare for motherhood and life in the New South, the girls at Ward's learned English, elocution, "the laws of her physical being, ...health and development," and the "laws of the land" with an emphasis on mental discipline and independent thought.^{iv} Students like Annie and her sisters, Trevania and Elizabeth, were featured regularly in newspaper notices for elocution recitals, dramatic productions, club activities, and musical performances. As the next generation of the South's social elite, the ladies of Ward Seminary, including most of the women in Anne Dallas' family, were encouraged to be learned, confident, articulate, and well-mannered.

By the time of her social debut in October of 1896, Anne Dallas had embraced the duties of her station.^v Her name graced the society columns of the *Nashville American* regularly throughout the 1890s, shining a light on her activities, her acquaintances, and her skills as a hostess. "Miss Dallas" even made an appearance in a Baltimore paper. There, she was described as "one of the greatest beauties in this country, her high-bred style and distinguished appearance adding greatly to her charm."^{vi} Within this high-bred world, Anne Dallas learned to manage the spotlight with grace. She assisted in and attended a number of social events hosted by many of Nashville's fashionable families, including the Warner, Polk, and Wilson families. Both the illustrious Mrs. Van Leer Kirkman and Mrs. W.L. Nichol hosted events in honor of Anne following her twentieth birthday.^{vii} It was Mrs. Leslie Warner, a former classmate of her mother and future suffragist, who hosted her debutante party.^{viii} Anne Dallas played hostess as well. In 1897, she founded and

served as the first president of the Young Ladies' Cotillion Club. In this role, she organized meetings and hosted social events at her West End Avenue home for the young men and women of Nashville's elite.^{ix}



Anne Dallas (far left) at the Centennial Expo in 1897.
Courtesy of the Sumner County Historical Society.

Between May and October of that same year, Nashville hosted a social event of its own during the Centennial Exposition. Here, too, Anne Dallas played a part in organizing and entertaining. She served on the Young Ladies' Reception Committee and rode in the celebrated Katie Kirkman Day parade.^x And, despite Dr. Ward's caution, she was reportedly in the Woman's Building in late October for the

meetings of the National Council of Women and heard Susan B. Anthony and Dr. Anna Howard Shaw speak for women's suffrage.^{xi}

Newspaper notices tracked a cycle of celebration and tragedy for Anne Dallas Dudley during the years immediately following the Centennial Exposition. The birth of her first nephew in May of 1900 was followed by the brief illness and death of his father, Hugh Douglas Dallas Sr. in October. In the spring of 1901, her sister and celebrated socialite Trevania married Hugh Blair Smith in an elaborate ceremony. In the fall, her father fell ill. Trevonion B. Dallas struggled with grief over the loss of his first son and the stress of mounting financial debt.^{xii} He died in June of 1902. Five months later, Anne Dallas married the widower Guilford Dudley in a reserved but beautiful ceremony and, in August of 1903, the couple welcomed the birth of their first daughter, Ida Dallas Dudley. At only eleven-months old, little Ida would die in the home of Trevania Blair Smith after a sudden illness. Two births, a son and a daughter, and the marriage of her youngest sister, Elizabeth, to Kenneth Ward-Smith followed quickly in 1905 and 1907. Despite the personal peaks and valleys of these years, Anne Dallas Dudley became increasingly engaged in the civic life of Nashville.

Like many southern ladies at the turn of the century, Mrs. Guilford Dudley was a consummate club woman. As guardians of the moral citadel, club women at the turn of the century thought it their duty to engage in public policy debates for the benefit of all families. Mrs. Dudley was a charter member of the Centennial Club of Nashville and was selected to serve as chairwoman of the Kindergarten Project in the West End.^{xiii} She was also one of nine women who met at the Tulane Hotel, on the corner of Church and 8th Street, in September of 1911 to found the Nashville Equal Suffrage League (NESL or NESL).^{xiv} Anne Dudley served as its President for four years. In addition to promoting women's suffrage through special events and speaking engagements, this association, much like the Centennial Club, turned its attention to the moral and physical health of Nashville's women and children. The minutes from NESL meetings note city beautification efforts and discussions about funding free milk dispensaries for Nashville's poorer neighborhoods.^{xv}

It is important to note that, given the reality of racial segregation and the privilege enjoyed by Nashville's white citizens, these civic efforts likely did not include the black residents of Nashville. The African American club women of Nashville were expected to shoulder that responsibility. The same separation was true of equal suffrage efforts. While Anne Dallas Dudley and her peers within the Nashville Equal Suffrage League, the Tennessee Equal Suffrage Association (TESA), and the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) advocated for equal suffrage for women, they did not argue for the extension of that right to black women. Mrs. Dudley did not challenge Jim Crow laws and voting restrictions, in fact, she spoke in support of them.^{xvi} Nor did Anne Dallas Dudley argue for the equality of men and women in arenas beyond that of suffrage. This approach earned her allies in the south, allies that proved useful as the debate over woman suffrage gained national attention.

In 1914, NAWSA asked that suffrage associations across the country hold rallies to promote the cause and celebrate recent state-level victories. The Nashville Equal Suffrage League, with Anne Dallas Dudley at the helm, answered the call by organizing a parade and political rally that doubled as a wholesome family event. Along the parade route, homes and businesses were

decorated with yellow accents and “Votes for Women” banners, and spectators watching from second-story windows dropped yellow flowers on the parade route. Mayor Howse declared a half-day holiday to allow more people to attend the celebration. The *Tennessean* touted that “Today is Suffrage Day” and Nashville was “dressed in its best bib and tucker for the occasion.”^{xvii} And what an occasion it was. A line of fifty festively decorated cars rumbled from the downtown headquarters of the NESL to Centennial Park with men, women, and children riding along to wave at spectators. Mrs. Guilford Dudley and her family were first in line followed closely by her fellow suffragists and friends Catherine Talty Kenny and Maria Thompson Daviess. All three women would speak on the steps of the Parthenon that day but Dudley was the first in what was the first open-air speech given by a woman in the south.^{xviii}

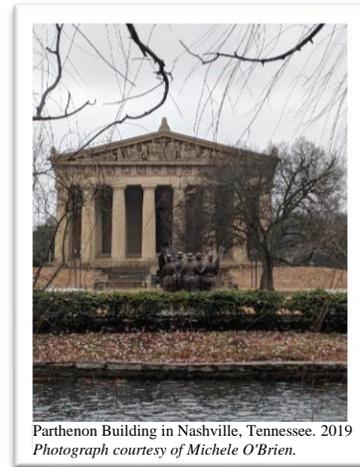
Flanked by her children and supported by her husband, Mrs. Guilford Dudley argued that women held a moral duty as caretakers to support the public efforts of husbands and the health and growth of children. “[T]he affairs of the government are, after all,” she noted, “the affairs of the home.” Thus, she argued, the federal amendment for suffrage honored and protected the natural duties of womanhood.

The *Nashville Banner* said this of her speech:

She made a stirring appeal for equal suffrage which made a deep impression upon her hearers with its dignity, its clarity of view and convincing logic, and yet which was so impassioned and illuminated with feeling that her audience felt the cause she was presenting was indeed to its followers a sacred cause.^{xix}

Surely, Dr. Ward would have appreciated the sentiment and skill if not the ultimate conclusion.

The success of Nashville’s Rally Day shone a light on the skilled organizers and extent of support for suffrage within Tennessee. It gave some hope that the south might vote for suffrage. In November of 1914, three hundred and eighteen NAWSA delegates and eighteen news agencies descended on the city for a three day convention.^{xx} For the pro-suffrage Nashville community, it was all hands on deck as they welcomed national leaders like NAWSA President Dr. Anna Howard



Parthenon Building in Nashville, Tennessee. 2019
Photograph courtesy of Michele O'Brien.

Shaw and Hull House founder Jane Addams. Delegates and leaders, showered in well-mannered southern hospitality, attended speeches and special events. For Nashville generally and the Tennessee Equal Suffrage Association specifically, the convention proved a successful dress-rehearsal for the dramatic events of 1920. And for Anne Dallas Dudley, as the skillful organizer and charming President of the Nashville Equal Suffrage Association, it garnered national praise and recognition.



Bain News Service, Publisher. *Mrs. Guilford Dudley*. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/2014710247/>.

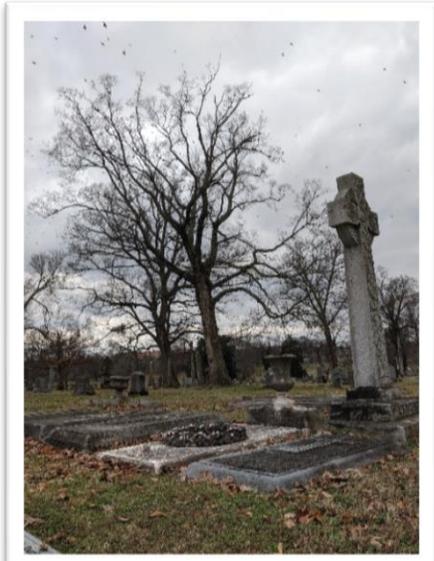
In 1915, Catherine Talty Kenny described Dudley's leadership and character in terms familiar to aspiring Harpeth Hall students today "[B]ecause she is sure of herself, she is sure of other women, and her faith in them, and in herself, is her real cornerstone of suffrage Unselfishly, and untiringly, she has worked, nor has she asked any woman to do what she would not do herself."^{xxi} Mrs. Guilford Dudley, confident in her abilities and in the justice of her cause, led confidently, without hubris or insincerity. She gained trust and admiration as a result.

In the years leading up to 1920, Anne Dallas Dudley accepted more responsibility and wielded more power as a national figure. Within TESA and, later, as Vice President of NAWSA under Carrie Chapman Catt, she attended several national conventions, including those in Washington D.C., Chicago, and Atlantic City, and spoke frequently on behalf of southern suffragists in several states.^{xxii} Closer to home, Anne Dallas Dudley led the state constitutional amendment efforts as Legislative Chairman for TESA and was the first woman to address the Tennessee state legislature from the speaker's podium.^{xxiii} Her poise and deft organizational skills played a part in her selection to serve the nation during World War I. Appointed by the United States Treasury Secretary, Mrs. Dudley directed the sale of bonds across the state of Tennessee and the southern Federal Reserve District, coordinated with multiple committees and clubs, spoke in support of liberty loans, and reported directly to the Treasury Department.^{xxiv} This she did, to great acclaim, until the war's end in 1918. Anne Dallas Dudley was one of thousands who served

her country during war without the right to vote for the politicians who declared war. During World War I, mothers and daughters across the country proved that patriotism and political activism aligned well with the caretaking duties and moral obligations of womanhood.

Years of organizing efforts by the pro-suffrage women and men of Tennessee created a challenging battleground for anti-suffragists in 1920. A year earlier, the U.S. Congress passed the 19th Amendment and sent it to the states for ratification. By July, thirty-five of the thirty-six states required had done so. A complex battle was waged in the corridors of the Capitol and the halls of the Hermitage Hotel, where anti-suffrage leaders like Josephine Pearson attempted to convince legislators to wear the red rose with forecasts of denigrated womanhood and racial overthrow.^{xxv} Carrie Chapman Catt, Anne Dallas Dudley, and their allies, lobbied for the yellow rose, countering arguments by Pearson and her National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage in press releases, speeches, flyers, and polite but persistent lobbying. Ultimately, the vote for suffrage lay in the hands of one man from the Appalachian foothills, Harry Burn. And he, the youngest representative in the Tennessee legislature, did as his mother asked and voted for suffrage.^{xxvi}

After the passage of the 19th Amendment, Mrs. Dudley remained active in the politics of her nation and city. She served as the first female delegate-at-large to the 1920 Democratic National Convention, was a distinguished member of the League of Women Voters, and volunteered for the Red Cross in World War II.^{xxvii} Her name appeared less frequently in the papers despite her participation in the Garden Club, Centennial Club, Christ Church congregation, and the Association for Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities. From time to time, she graced the pages in social notices of family tragedy or celebration. The unexpected death of their 18 year old daughter, Trevania, a former Ward-Belmont student and Bryn Mawr undergraduate, warranted several columns of attention in 1924.^{xxviii} As did the construction of a stately Tudor-style home on Hillsboro Road in 1928, which was later added to the National Register of Historic Places.^{xxix} She died in Belle Meade at the age of 78 and was buried in Mt. Olivet Cemetery between her husband Guilford and her daughter Trevania. No statements of achievement were chiseled into



Dudley family gravesite, Mt. Olivet Cemetery, 2020. Photograph courtesy of Michele O'Brien.

her stone. On her death certificate, her *usual occupation* and *industry* boxes read Retired Housewife.

Life for Annie Dallas was never going to be ordinary. Through her experiences, both intentional and coincidental, Anne Dudley cultivated an extraordinary knack for organizing people and convincing them to bend toward moral courage and make a more honorable choice. Scattered across Nashville today sit monuments and markers acknowledging her work and impact on the history of this city and the nation. Ultimately, she upheld the vision

of *The Coming Woman* so long ago espoused by Dr. Ward and echoed across Harpeth Hall's campus today: "The coming woman must have moral convictions. She must do right and believe in its reward."^{xxx}

ⁱ "Ward's Address," W.E. Ward's Seminary for Young Ladies Annual, 1886, Harpeth Hall Archives, Nashville. Manuscript. Many thanks to Leigh Mantel for finding this gem of a speech and providing me with a copy of the Annual.

ⁱⁱ "Ward's Address"

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} "Remarks on the Course of Study" *Ward Seminary Annual*, 1893. Sadie Warner Frazer Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

^v "Society." *The Nashville American (1894-1910)*, 1896, pp. 4. *ProQuest*, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/952823909>.

^{vi} described in "Miss Dallas." *The Nashville American (1894-1910)*, 1898 Feb 20, pp. 11. *ProQuest*, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/936109446>

^{vii} "The Week's Social Programme." *The Nashville American (1894-1910)*, Nov 08, 1896, pp. 13. *ProQuest*, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/960192213>. and "Society." *The Nashville American (1894-1910)*, Dec 02, 1896, pp. 4. *ProQuest*, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/952835097>.

^{viii} "Society." Mrs. Leslie Warner, born Katharine Burch, graduated from Ward Seminary with Ida and Elizabeth Bonner in 1870. She would join the Nashville Equal Suffrage League after the death of her husband.

^{ix} "A Day in the Drawing-Rooms of Nashville." *The Nashville American (1894-1910)*, 1897 Dec 21, pp. 3. *ProQuest*, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/940717339>

^x Justi, Herman, editor. *Official History of the Tennessee Centennial Exposition*. Brandon Printing Company, 1898. *Google Books*, books.google.com/books?id=qME2AQAAMAAJ&dq. Accessed 8 July 2019.

^{xi} Morgan, Judith A. *My Name Was Elmwood: A Story of Nashville*. Panacea Press, 2015. p 205.

^{xii} Kaylor, Mike. "Trevanion Barlow Dallas: His Huntsville Connections." *The Huntsville Historical Review, Adobe Acrobat ed.*, vol. 15, nos. 1 & 2, 1985, pp. 13-28.

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- ^{xiii} Ikard, Robert W. "The Cultivation of Higher Ideals: The Centennial Club of Nashville." *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, vol. 65, no. 4, 2006, pp. 342–369. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/42628597. and "Mrs. Guilford Dudley Appointed Chairm'n of Kindergarten Project for West End." *The Nashville American (1894-1910)*, May 19, 1909, pp. 7. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*. Accessed 1 July 2019.
- ^{xiv} "Services for Mrs. Dudley to Be Held Thursday." *Nashville Banner*, Sept. 1955. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*. Accessed 1 July 2019.
- ^{xv} "Tennessee Equal Suffrage Association Minutes." March, 1912. Nashville Equal Suffrage Association Collection, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, BoxM80 Folder 11. Manuscript.
- ^{xvi} Harper, Ida Husted, editor. *History of Woman Suffrage*. E-book, vol. V, National American Woman Suffrage Association, 1922. VI vols. *Archive.org*, <https://archive.org/details/historyofwomansu05stanuoft/page/580> Accessed Nov. 2019.
- ^{xvii} "Rally Day for Equal Suffrage." *Nashville Tennessean and the Nashville American (1910-1920)*, May 02, 1914, pp. 1. *ProQuest*, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/919204683>.
- ^{xviii} "Notable Rally of Suffragists." *Nashville Banner*, May 4, 1914, pp 2 *Newspapers.com*. Accessed 22 Dec 2019.
- ^{xix} "Notable Rally", 1914.
- ^{xx} Harper, *History of Woman Suffrage*.
- ^{xxi} "Handbook of the Tennessee Equal Suffrage Association (Incorporated) and Proceedings of the Eighth and Ninth Annual Conventions." 1916. *Tennessee Virtual Archive*, TEVA teva.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15138coll27/id/999. Accessed 24 Nov. 2019.
- ^{xxii} Harper, *History of Woman Suffrage*.
- ^{xxiii} "Handbook"
- ^{xxiv} Gilmore, Rose Long. *Davidson County Women in the World War, 1914-1919*. Foster & Parkes, 1923. *HathiTrust*, babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=dul1.ark:/13960/t2z35gp54&view=1up&seq=9. Accessed 3 Jan. 2020.
- ^{xxv} Weiss, Elaine. *The Woman's Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote*. New York, Penguin Books, 2019. p 299 - 300.
- ^{xxvi} See Weiss for more on the tumultuous months of 1920.
- ^{xxvii} "Services for Mrs. Dudley."
- ^{xxviii} "Tremania Dudley Is Killed by Auto in Bryn Mawr, PA." *Nashville Tennessean*, 27 Jan. 1924. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*. Accessed 22 Oct. 2019.
- ^{xxix} *National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet*. US Department of the Interior, 23 Oct. 2003. *NP Gallery*, npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset/a133d3c3-d7d9-4e7f-aed4-1a1a458210db. Accessed 6 Jan. 2020.
- ^{xxx} "Ward's Address."