

# May Wright Sewall

*Indianapolis, Marion County*

May 27, 1844 – July 22, 1920

One of Indiana's best known leaders of the women's suffrage movement, May Wright Sewall is a significant Hoosier, known as a courageous and groundbreaking woman. Born Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1844, Sewall graduated in 1866 from Northwestern Female College (later absorbed into Northwestern University) where she earned a laureate of science and a Master of Arts degree in 1871. She was an influential educator, teaching in Mississippi and Michigan. She later took a position at the high school in Franklin, Indiana. After marrying the school's principal, Edwin Thompson, she and her husband moved to Indianapolis, where they taught at the old Indianapolis High school. After Edwin died of tuberculosis, she married Theodore Sewall in 1880.

Starting her career as a suffragist in the 1880s, Sewall became a prominent ally of suffrage leaders, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. She founded more than fifty organizations that promoted women's rights and education, including the International Council of Women, Indianapolis Equal Suffrage Society, the Girls' Classical School, and the Indianapolis Women's Club. She led Indiana suffrage groups and was charged with organizing an 1888 convention in Washington, D.C., to mark the 40th anniversary of the Seneca Falls Convention. She also was a delegate to the Universal Congress of Women in Paris and became president of the National Federation of Women's Clubs in 1889. She also was instrumental in forming the National Council of Women of the United States. Sewall wrote three works: *Higher Education of Women in the Western States of the U.S.*, *Neither Dead nor Sleeping*, and *History of the Woman Suffrage Movement in Indiana*.

May Wright Sewall died on July 22, 1920, just one month before the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, granting women the right to vote.

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For more information about May Wright Sewall, go to:

<http://www.britannica.com/biography/May-Eliza-Wright-Sewall>.

For more information about *Writing Her Story*, go to: <http://www.in.gov/icw/2440.htm>.

Photo: *Indy Star* (10 March 2014). *Retro Indy: May Wright Sewall*. Retrieved from:

<http://www.indystar.com/story/news/history/retroindy/2014/03/10/may-wright-sewall/6260981/>.



  
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