

MAY WRIGHT SEWALL, AVOWED FEMINIST

by Hester Anne Hale

Collection #
BV 2638

Table of Contents

[Collection Information](#)
[Biographical Sketch](#)
[Scope and Content Note](#)
[Cataloging Information](#)

Processed by
Charles Latham
11 January 1993

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 bound volume
COLLECTION DATES:	1844-1920
PROVENANCE:	Hester Anne Hale, Indianapolis, IN, 23 October 1992
COPYRIGHT:	Retained by author
ACCESSION NUMBER:	1993.0028

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

May Wright Sewall (1844-1920), feminist, educator, and lecturer, was born in Milwaukee, the daughter of Philander W. Wright, a teacher, and Mary W. Wright. In 1866 she earned a bachelor's degree, and in 1868 a master's degree, from North Western Female College. She did some teaching in various places in the Midwest.

In 1872 she married Edwin W. Thompson, and moved with him to Indianapolis. He died in 1875. She became interested in woman suffrage, and attended a national convention in 1878.

In 1880 she married Theodore Lovett Sewall, then head of a Boys' Classical School in Indianapolis. With him she founded and then headed the Girls' Classical School, for years one of the three leading girls' schools in Indianapolis.

Mrs. Sewall was a charter member of the Art Association of Indianapolis, the Propylaeum, and the Contemporary Club. Through her life she assisted in campaigns for female suffrage in various Midwestern states.

Beginning in the 1890s she carried her feminist interests further abroad, being elected president of the National Congress of Women in 1891 and of the International Congress of Women in 1899. She began to combine this activity with working for peace. In 1904 she became chairman of the ICW standing committee on peace and arbitration, and in 1915 she chaired an Organized Conference of Women Workers to Promote Peace. In 1915 she sailed on the Oscar II as a member of Henry Ford's Peace Expedition.

In 1907 she sold the Girls Classical School to Anna Weaver, but was disappointed at the amount she received from the sale. Henceforward she depended for income mainly on lecturing, on women's rights, on peace and arbitration, and on psychic research. This last subject had been one of her interests since the 1880s, and she moved to a center on the subject at Eliot, Maine. In 1920 she wrote a book on her psychic experiences, Neither Dead Nor Sleeping.

She also wrote books on *The Higher Education of Women*, on *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Indiana*, and on *Women, World War and Permanent Peace*.

A month after her death the nineteenth Amendment was ratified.

Sources: Materials in collection_
Dictionary of American Biography
Who Was Who in America, Vol. I

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection, consisting of one bound volume, is a typescript of *May Wright Sewall, Avowed Feminist*, by Hester Anne Hale, copyright 1992. It was written under a research grant from Indiana Historical Society.

Hester Anne Hale received a bachelor's degree from Earlham College in 1949, and a master's degree from Middlebury College in 1966, both in English. She worked as an editorial assistant; then from 1962 to 1975 as an instructor in English at Arsenal Technical High School in Indianapolis; then as instructor in English at Indiana Central College and at IUPUI.

She is the author of *Growth and Change: Indianapolis 1820-1920* (1982), revised and reprinted as *Indianapolis, the First Century* (1987).

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's [online catalog](#)
2. Click on the "Local Catalog" icon.
3. Search for the collection by its call number, using the letter or letters designation and **four** digits (e.g., M 0715, SC 2234).
4. When you find the collection, go to the "Holdings" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.

END