Ella Knowles Haskell First Woman Lawyer of Montana

Lois Wand
Carroll College

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Ella Knowles Haskell
First Woman Lawyer of Montana

by

Lois I. Wand

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fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree
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by

Thomas A. Clinch

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Preface

This thesis has for its purpose an analysis of the life of Ella Knowles Haskell. Special attention, however, is directed toward those aspects of her career which mark her as the pioneer feminist in Montana history.

That her life had an impact on the political, legal, and social history of her era cannot be doubted. I have endeavored to explain how this came about, and to illustrate those special talents and traits of character which marked this woman as an outstanding figure of her day.

I wish to thank the staff at the Montana State Historical Library and Father James R. White of the Carroll College Library for their assistance and suggestions in locating material for this thesis. My thanks to Mr. Thomas Clinch for his suggestion of subject matter and for the helpful criticism of this manuscript. I am grateful to all those who by their efforts and interest encouraged me to complete this work.

L. I. W.
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CHAPTER I

EARLY LIFE

Ella Knowles Haskell was born at Northwood, New Hampshire, on July 31, 1860. She was the only child of David Knowles and Louisa Bigelow Knowles. Her parents were well thought of in the community. They resided on a farm in what was called the "Knowles District", so named because of forebears of David Knowles who were outstanding residents of the area.¹

Ella Knowles' life in New England revealed at an early date her intelligent personality and the determination of will which was to mark her character throughout life.

As a small child she was an industrious student, and she graduated from Northwood Seminary at the age of fifteen. She had suffered the sorrow of losing her mother a year before.² Later she went on to complete a course at Plymouth State Normal School.³

For the next three or four years Miss Knowles taught in neighboring district schools. At the same


time she furthered her education by studying Latin and Greek.

Her ambition to go to college was hampered by the fact that co-education was being contested in New England at that time. Also, her family felt they could give her no financial assistance. Undaunted, Ella Knowles entered Bates College at Lewiston, Maine, in 1880 and graduated with an A. B. degree, "magna cum laude", in 1884. Only four girls had graduated previously from Bates.

Thus, she became involved in the battle for co-education, and those who advocated it could not have found a better example. No girl before had taken part in public debate, but Ella Knowles dared and carried off the prize from the male debaters. She was the first woman to win prizes in oratory and composition and became the first female editor of the college magazine. Ella Knowles showed that girls could compete with men in intellectual activities and was to show her belief in this in her activities later in life.

After graduation ill health forced her to curtail her activities.

8. Ibid., pp. 472-474.
She procured law books from the office of Burnham and Brown in Manchester, New Hampshire, and began "reading law" which was the usual manner in which a lawyer prepared himself for that profession in those days. She was nominally the student of Judge Burnham and lawyer Brown. She also worked as a private tutor in Manchester and was able to pay her expenses even while studying and in ill health.

Her brilliant record as a speaker in her college career brought an offer of the Professorship of Rhetoric and Elocution at Western Normal College in Iowa. However, her ill health still prevailed, and her doctor advised her to make her home in the mountains.

Teaching positions in Salt Lake City, Utah, and in Helena, Montana, were open to her, and she finally settled in the latter city.

Miss Ella Knowles is listed in 1888 among the teachers of the Central School which was located at the corner of Warren and Eighth Avenue. This was the "high school", and other teachers that year were E. A. Carleton, principal, Mrs. M. A. Howard, Miss May Scannell,

Mrs. N. D. Groshon, M. E. Harrah, Miss Lassie Williamson, and Lou A. Shiell.

The principal, Professor Carleton, was also a New Englander, and soon an organization was formed of former members of that area called the "New England Society of Helena and Vicinity". Miss Knowles reserved the first and third Fridays of each month for the meetings which were held in the A.O.U.W. Hall in the Parchen Block at 5 Broadway St. There were discussions and debates on many subjects related to New England, and this sort of intellectual activity delighted Ella Knowles very much. Her interest was noted, and she was secretary-treasurer of the Society for several years.¹⁴

Her ability in the teaching profession also did not go unnoticed and after a year as teacher at Helena Central she was elected principal of the West Side School.¹⁵

Despite this honor she felt that education was not her field. She decided to resign in order to resume her law studies.¹⁶

This idea startled her friends. Women had been teachers for many years and were accepted—but a woman lawyer! Whoever had heard of such a thing? They felt she could never succeed in a profession that was so much

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¹³ The Sunday Record, Helena, Montana, April 8, 1888.
¹⁵ Joaquin Miller, op.cit., pp. 85-86.
¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 85-86.
a part of the male world. They sought to dissuade her by all means at their disposal. Some even resorted to ridicule when all else failed, but to no avail. Her resignation was sent, and she made plans to study law in a law office in Helena. 17

In later years one newspaper recounted the early part of Ella Knowles' life and described it thus:

Those who knew Ella Knowles Haskell in the many phases of her busy life ..........; who knew of her early struggles, when she battled against the grinding hardships of a narrow New England life, when she worked at menial tasks and lived on a mere pittance to obtain a college education, who knew her when she taught school on her arrival in Montana and studied law; ..........these are the people who knew that hers was a brave heart and a staunch character. 18


ADMITTING WOMEN TO THE BAR

Ella Knowles' decision to resign her teaching position and study law was not an easy one. There were hardships for all young law students, but for Ella Knowles the obstacles must have seemed at times insurmountable. One with less courage and ambition would surely have given up before achieving victory.

The struggle of earning a living while reading law was but one problem she had to solve. Older members of the bar, so used to offering words of encouragement to those wishing to enter their profession, gave none to Miss Knowles. Those who did not ridicule her met her with a silent hostility that was only overcome in later years by proficiency in her chosen field.¹

The greatest barrier to her realizing her ambition to become a lawyer was legal: women could not practice law in the territory of Montana at that time. The original law (chapter nine of the 5th division of general laws) had been worded so as to allow only the admission of males to practice as attorneys and counselors-at-law.

Ella Knowles was the only woman interested in becoming a lawyer at that time, but she set out to

¹ Anaconda Standard, "My First Fee", February 3, 1907.
have the law changed so that she and others who might come after her would not be discriminated against in choosing the profession they desired. In personal interviews with members of the legislature she presented her case in her eloquent but logical and clear-cut way.  

The Sixteenth Session of the Legislature met in January, 1889, in the Lewis and Clark County Courthouse. On the fifth day of the session, January 18, Councilman Bickford of Missoula gave notice that he would introduce a bill to allow the admission of women to practice law. Mr. Bickford, who sympathized with Miss Knowles' ambitions, was himself a former New Englander and a member of the bar. G. A. Bennett was contesting Mr. Bickford's seat in the Council, but Bickford's great activity in the council is evidence of what he thought the outcome of that contest would be. He introduced the bill, Council Bill Number 4, the following Monday, on January 21st.

There was not much opposition to the bill. In fact, it was apathy as much as opposition which the adherents to the bill had to face. Many legislators felt that it did not matter if the bill passed or not.


5. Helena Independent, February 6, 1889.
How anxiously Ella Knowles must have watched the proceedings from day to day, knowing that her future lay in the outcome of the bill.

On January 29th, the judiciary committee, made up of Lawrence Brown of Beaverhead County, C. R. Middleton of Custer County and William Thompson of Deer Lodge, reported the bill back to the Council without recommendation.  

The following day the legislative chamber was filled with many women present to hear the discussion of the bill. They warmly applauded those speakers in favor of the bill.

Mr. Bickford and Mr. C. K. Cole were the first two "ready champions of the fair sex" and then in Mr. Brown, the next speaker, they found a most eloquent spokesman. One newspaper said of him, "He claims to know women and in speaking of them yesterday winged his eloquence with rhetorical pinions which swept the dust from the stars".

The Helena Daily Record reported on the lively debate:

Mr. Brown made an elaborate and exhaustive argument in favor of the ladies and in support of the bill. He classed the women as the founders


8. Ibid., January 31, 1889.
or rulers of the nation whose hands rocked the cradles of the world. He referred to Queen Victoria and Joan of Arc and wound up citing his own prosperity all of which was due to the immediate guidance and influence of his wife. 'I know what women are. I have had two or three of them myself during my life time and to them do I owe my standing in the world today'. It is needless to state that his remarks brought down the gallery.

Will Kennedy gave a logical speech in opposition, but it was left to Councilman Middleton to try to match Mr. Brown in oratory:

Councilman Middleton made a most beautiful and impressive address in his conscientious opposition to the bill. He opposed its every feature, citing instances wherein lay the evil of permitting women to practice the profession. He thought it beneath the attributes and finer senses of the woman to seek that calling. Home was the place for her; there, surrounded by pleasant influences, was the level consistent with her morals, and away from the sights and scenes of court rooms, where the demoralizing and degrading trials and tribulations of mankind were ever in progress. Pathetically he closed his remarks with the following suggestive quotation:

'I thought to win me a name
To sound in the ears of the world;
How can I work with these small hands
Around my fingers curled.

Then away with name and fame,  
It is not worth at the best  
One soft touch of this warm little mouth  
That I hold against my brest.  

Despite Mr. Middleton's moving speech, Council Bill No. 4 was recommended for passage by the committee of the whole. The next day the bill was read for the third time and passed by a vote of eight to four.

The following Saturday the first of the bouquets were delivered which were to disrupt and cause such mirth in both houses during the passage of the bill. The Helena Daily Record said:

Councilman Brown was yesterday the recipient of a beautiful bouquet of natural flowers, the gift of some of the ladies of Helena in appreciation of his noble efforts while debating the bill permitting women to practice law. Accompanying it was a neatly written card on which was inscribed "To our champion: from the many ladies of Helena."  

On February first, the nineteenth day of the session, the bill had been transmitted to the lower branch of the legislature, the House. Council Bill

12. Ibid., pp. 93-94.
No. 4 was read for the first and second times and referred to the committee on judiciary, composed of William H. Hunt, of Helena, S. G. Murray from Missoula, and Henri J. Haskell of Glendive, who represented Dawson County.

The following day Mr. Hunt, chairman, reported it back without recommendation. On February fourth Henri Haskell moved the bill be taken from general orders and made a special order for the next day, Tuesday, at two o'clock.

When the House convened that afternoon the lobby was well filled with spectators, women among them. The Speaker was late, and another took his place. A general air of hilarity pervaded the scene and Henri Haskell, fearing for the fate of the bill in that atmosphere, asked postponement of consideration until the following morning, but the motion was lost.

The speaker arrived and orderly procedure resumed, but the usual sedate character of the chamber was still

14. House Journal of the 16th Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Montana (Helena, Montana, 1889), pp. 87 and 44.
15. Ibid., pp. 89-90.
16. Ibid., pp. 92-93.
17. Helena Daily Record, February 6, 1889.
not restored.

Representative J. R. Comfort referred to Section One of the original bill in which it was stated that men may practice law during good behavior. Mr. Comfort moved that this be amended to apply as well to women, remarking that representatives of the feminine sex might "get off wrong", and it was only fair to bind the ladies as well as the gentlemen to the point mentioned. The motion lost.  

Then, Representative S. G. Murray took the floor to advocate passage of the bill. He said the measure was larger than the one individual affected in the city of Helena. During the course of his speech he said women had been little better than slaves or serfs. He further stated that he believed intellectual (as well as physical) culture equally important. The idea was now modified but still prevalent that women are mere ornaments and playthings or useful only in the discharge of domestic duties. College had been opened to them. They then taught school, entered the medical profession, and proved their fitness for the duties imposed. Now one lady in Montana had seen fit to study for the practice of law. Would the door be closed to her? He thought not. Many were of the opinion that women could not with proper self-respect appear in court and go thru the ordeals of many cases there pre-

15. Helena Independent, February 6, 1889.
sented; he, as a lawyer of experience, did not believe it to be true. On the other hand he thought the presence of women in court would do much to purify the atmosphere.

Representative William Hunt then gave a mildly satirical speech but did not seem to especially oppose the bill. The speaker warned the various members who had fathered the bill against future danger when bright eyes and golden hair might influence a jury against them. For himself, he should never consent to pit his knowledge of the law and experience in it against a varying shade of complexion, whalebone corsets and pearly teeth, embroidered petticoats and other elements of feminine beauty. He would reluctantly vote for the bill. Mr. Hunt moved to amend section 2 of the bill under consideration, making it take effect in the year of our Lord, 1900. 16

Then the fun began.

Joseph Davis moved the amendment that in the future women should be eligible to the office of the president or vice-president of the United States, justice or chief-justice of Montana, or any other office in the gift of

17. Ibid., February 6, 1889.
the people. The motion was ruled out of order. 18

C. D. Joseyn offered an amendment to the effect that any lady desiring to practice law should be over thirty years of age, have decided convictions on the question of matrimony, and be firmly of the opinion that marriage is a failure. 19

Despite these humorous remarks, it was recommended that the bill pass, and the motion was adopted. 20

As a last witticism Representative Lee Mantle moved an amendment to the title as "An act to afford someone to have the last word with Col. Sanders". (W.F. Sanders was a prominent lawyer and politician in Montana). This motion was lost in the shuffle. 21

Council Bill No. 4 was finally passed by a vote of 19 to 3 with one member absent. 22

Each day on the following Friday and Saturday the sergeant-at-arms marched down the aisle with bouquets causing great commotion and merriment. Representative

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18. Ibid., February 6, 1889.
19. Ibid., February 6, 1889.
Murray received the first flowers as champion of the bill and Mr. Hunt, on Saturday, received flowers from those who signed themselves the "Silent Majority". One newspaper said surely the governor would not be so ungallant as to veto the bill and he was not.
The bill was approved on February 13, 1889.

Thus, largely through the efforts of Ella Knowles, women were allowed to practice law in Montana.

23. Helena Independent, February 7 and 8th, 1889.

24. Laws, Resolutions and Memorials of the Territory of Montana, passed at the Sixteenth Regular Session of the Legislative Assembly (Helena, 1889), pp. 100-101.
Watching the proceedings of the legislature did not occupy all of Miss Knowles' time. She continued with her law studies, and in the evenings there were social meetings of unions, organizations and public entertainments throughout Helena. The latter were often programs to raise money for some club's worthy cause. Miss Knowles participated in such a one at the Y. M. C. A. Hall one Friday night. Literary and musical selections made up the "programme" and others taking part were Professor Carleton, Miss Axford, Miss Smith, Miss Israel and Willie Israel. The Daily Herald reported that "the numbers were excellently rendered and heartily enjoyed by those present." Also, the "proceeds of the affair", sponsored by the W.C.T.U., "were gratifyingly large."

The New England Society was active during the time in which the legislature was in session, and new members were recruited from the ranks of the solons. Henri J. Haskell was admitted as a member at the meeting on January 18. Members of the bar seemed to gravitate toward the Society and that night Mr. Haskell witnessed a debate between Judge Knowles, Councilman

Bickford, J. W. Kinsley, and Professor Carleton. Mr. Kinsley was the lawyer in whose office Miss Knowles was continuing her studies.  

At one meeting, that of February first, there were many members absent, but Ella Knowles was there and took the affirmative on the debate, "Resolved, That New England has Degenerated." On Washington's Birthday the Society put on a large celebration which Miss Knowles helped plan and she also served on the reception committee.

Realizing that her slender savings were diminishing, Ella Knowles decided that she must do something to gain money for her expenses. She had earned her own living since she was fifteen and was confident that she could do so now. In later years she told of the problems she encountered:

When I took up the study of law I received very little encouragement from members of the bar in Montana. They all thought my ambition was a joke, a thing to laugh at, and I was made all manner of fun of. No one believed that I would ever practice. However, I was determined to persevere and to succeed. As I had to earn my livelihood while I was studying law, I looked about for some business.

3. Helena Independent, February 2, 1889.
Young lawyers usually start upon their career by doing a bad debt collecting business, and I decided that I could do that very well while studying. I called on a number of business men and firms in Helena and solicited accounts for collection, but they did not receive me well; they didn't take kindly to the idea of a woman "doing a man's work". I asked them if they didn't have some especially hard bills—bills that they had no hopes of ever realizing on. I said I would like to try to see what I could do with them. They turned me away with the remark that they had no bad bills.

I went from one business house to another with the same result, but I did not give up, and finally I approached one man, almost my last hope, and asked him the usual question. Had he any bills to collect? No, he had none. Didn't he have some very hard accounts? Yes, he had lots of them; hundreds of them. He was impatient with me, I could see that, but I asked him if he would not let me try to collect some of the bad accounts for him.

He said he was too busy then, and told me to come again. He probably did not expect me to return, but I did. I wanted those bills to collect, because I needed the work. Too busy, said he again; did not have time to look up the accounts; told me to come again.

The next time I called at his place of business it was raining, and he was in a fretful mood. I saw instantly that I was not welcome when I entered the store, but I referred to the bills again. Then he showed his impatience.

"If you want to collect anything", he exclaimed, "go and collect some
of my umbrellas. I own three of them; one I loaned to Mrs. So and So, and another was borrowed by Mrs. Blank weeks ago, and none of them have been returned. Here it is raining, and I cannot go to lunch because somebody has borrowed my umbrellas and did not return them."

With that he turned and walked to the rear of the store. I was vexed and chagrined. I hesitated for a moment, and then I decided to act on the suggestion he gave me, although he did not expect me to do it. I straightway went to the home of the first woman he named, a well-known Helena lady.

I rang the front door bell, and a maid came to the door. I stated my business, and the maid called the woman of the house. To her I explained that I was studying law in a certain lawyer's office in Helena, and that Mr. Merchant had asked me to collect some umbrellas for him, one of which had been borrowed sometime ago by her. She flared up, but produced the umbrella. I accepted it and thanked her, and did not pretend to notice the cloud that was hanging over her.

I then proceeded to the second home. The same formality was gone through; I was studying law in Mr. _______’s office, and had been employed by Mr. Merchant to get an umbrella which the lady had borrowed and forgotten to return. I got the umbrella, but it was accompanied by a look that haunted me in my sleep that night.

With the two umbrellas under my arm I returned to the store of the man who gave me the job of collecting them. "Here are your umbrellas," said I, "and my fee is 50 cents."

He looked shocked and dumbfounded when he realized what I had done,
and then became angry and started to storm worse than the two women had. There were a number of people in the store, and I appealed to them to say if I was not entitled to my fee. When they understood the case, they all agreed with me, and then the humorous phase of the matter was recognized by my client, and he joined in the general laugh. He accepted the umbrellas, paid me my fee, consisting of two 25-cent pieces, and told me my work was satisfactory. I learned afterward that he did some very earnest and sincere apologizing to the two borrowers of his umbrellas.

From that time I was given all of the firm's bad debts to collect and was very successful with them. After I was admitted to practice, I was retained as the firm's attorney, and remained so until the firm went out of business some years ago.

I still have those two 25-cent pieces, my first fee, and they are my mascot.

In December of 1889 Miss Knowles felt ready to take the bar examinations. The committee in her case was composed of three eminent legislators: W. F. Sanders, Cornelius Hedges, and John B. Clayberg. They examined her thoroughly and were entirely satisfied with her legal attainments.


6. The New North-West, Deer Lodge, Montana, January 3, 1890.
By the new year she was admitted to practice before the supreme court of Montana, the first woman to have that right. It was in April that she was admitted to the U. S. district and circuit courts. 7

At first other lawyers ridiculed the idea that she could try cases in court but a few clients were pioneers enough to engage her, and the scoffers soon had to concede her ability. She showed "thorough knowledge" of the law, had a "keen perception of fine points" and "nice distinctions" on legalities. Her power of language and fine oratory showed to great advantage in the courtroom. 8

Of her first lawsuit she says:

When I first began the practice of law, I was taken as a huge joke, and I could have sat in my office to this day and would not have had a case. But I didn't sit in the office; I went out and got my business to start with, and soon business came to me in abundance...

My first lawsuit also was an experience for me. It was a justice court case in Helena, and the litigation was between a Chinaman and a negro. The Chinaman, my client, had been employed by the negro in a restaurant, and, when he quit the employment, there was due him five dollars in wages. The colored man employed a well-known Helena attorney and at the


trial my client told his story and made a statement of the account between himself and his employer. The defendant produced a dirty account book showing the entries of credits and debits between himself and the Chinaman, and the figures footed up right.

I had no evidence to offset the book, and I felt my first case lost, when an inspiration came to me. I procured a magnifying reading glass and examined the colored man's accounts. The glass won the case for me, for it disclosed that some figures had been erased and others marked over them, and that the erased figures corresponded with the Chinaman's account. The justice of the peace examined the figures and then gave judgment for my first client.

That five dollar case worried me more than many big lawsuits have worried me since, and I had many sleepless nights before the case came to trial.

Another of Miss Knowles' early suits also involved a claim for wages by an employer, but in this one Miss Knowles was representing the defendant, Mrs. Woolridge, proprietress of the Woolridge House. Mrs. Graham was suing for money which she claimed was due her for wages. Her attorney, Dudley DuBose, centered his attack on other employees of the Woolridge House

who were testifying favorably for Mrs. Woolridge. Hoping to embarrass his feminine opponent he stated that his language was not to be choice nor selective and requested Attorney Knowles to step out of the room. Miss Knowles told him to "open his batteries and charge" as she was there to fight!

DuBose proceeded to extract from a witness a racy tale about herself in order to discredit her testimony.

Despite these tactics Justice Fleischer rendered his decision in favor of the defendant, and Attorney Knowles had won another case.

CHAPTER IV

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

Eighteen Eighty-nine was a year of great political activity in Montana. The United States Congress had passed the Enabling Act, approved February 22, 1889, and so the legislature proceeded to hold a constitutional convention, convening in Helena on July 4th of that year. This was the third constitutional convention for Montana, the previous ones in 1866 and 1884, having failed in their object of having Montana admitted to the Union.¹

Ella Knowles was interested in the work of the constitution, especially the speeches and debates concerning women's suffrage. She remained an ardent champion of women's rights throughout her lifetime.²

The citizens of Madison County were the first to inject the problem of women's right to vote into the actual proceedings. On the tenth day of the convention they had a memorial read that stated, "We, the undersigned adult citizens of Montana desiring that our women citizens may enjoy all the privileges of statehood that our men will, would respectfully pray and petition your honorable body to incorporate in the

¹ Proceedings and Debates of the Constitutional Convention (Helena, Montana, 1921), Forward.
state constitution about to be formed an equal suffrage provision. 3

Thus, was brought before the convention the sentiment that many, both men and women, had been contemplating.

Previously, workers for women's suffrage had placed on the desks of all members of the convention a list of "Reasons for Universal Suffrage". These were so firmly attached to the desks that they could not be removed. 4

Also on the tenth day Mr. Warren, of Silver Bow County, requested permission for Mr. H. B. Blackwell to address the convention. 5 Mr. Blackwell was secretary of the American Woman's Suffrage Association and the husband of Lucy Stone of Boston, well-known suffragette, who edited the Woman's Journal. 6 There were objections to his speaking during the session, and after some discussion he was invited to address the convention and the public that evening at eight o'clock.

That evening the majority of the members plus a number of interested spectators, many women among them, assembled to hear Mr. Blackwell. 7

5. Proceedings and Debates of the Constitutional Convention, p. 78.
7. Ibid., July 18, 1889.
He did not attempt to persuade the convention to adopt a universal suffrage clause, but his plan was to have the constitution provide that the legislature could extend the franchise to women whenever it felt it was expedient. This would do away with an expensive election, leaving the matter entirely in the hands of the legislature. He cited his previous experience in Colorado where everyone had been confident that equal suffrage would carry in an election then being held; but it was not those in favor of the measure who took the trouble to vote. Their indifference was revealed when the measure was voted down by "wife beaters, habitual drunkards, men who did not know their left hand from their right and conservative men, who felt everything new was wrong". He tried to quiet the fears of those who thought universal suffrage would bring prohibition, citing Wyoming as an example. In his lengthy speech he went on to show the qualities in women which are different from those of men and how the government would benefit in partaking of those qualities. At intervals he gave historical examples, quoted poetry, or told stories—all this exhibiting his ability as a speaker. He gave a logical and powerful address which was listened to attentively.


For over a week no more was said on the subject at the convention except for communications or memorials read, such as the one from Mrs. Louisa Coulson of Butte: she wanted not only the right to vote in county and state elections but also in presidential elections. "I am not asking you, honorable sirs, to elevate women; there is no elevation above a wife or mother. But I ask the right of suffrage that she may go on, hand in hand with you, in maintaining the laws. Women are your co-workers in the church, Sabbath school, Christian charity and benevolence, and henceforth she will help you to purify the ballot-box as she purifies the home." 10

On July 25, during a debate on literacy requirements for suffrage, Walter Bickford introduced the question of women's right to vote. Again there were many women in the audience who applauded several times during his speech. He quoted a letter from Mary Humphreys in Kansas the substance of which was that the granting of municipal suffrage in Kansas had been "beneficial and had worked a good to the ballot". Taking a conservative view of the matter, he was strongly in favor of allowing women the right of suffrage. The debate on the subject was long. Nearly every member participated. Mr. Richards of Silver Bow seemed to

voice the viewpoint of others when he said that although he was for the women having the vote he feared that if it was included it might defeat the constitution.

It was not until August the twelfth that a motion by Mr. Callaway of Madison, "That the Legislative Assembly shall have the power to grant to all female citizens of the state over the age of 21 years the right to vote at all elections" came up for a vote. It was defeated 35 to 33. 11

On August the 14th the feminists gained their only concession from the convention; woman taxpayers were given the right to vote on questions submitted to taxpayers. 13

Later Ella Knowles was to use the question of taxation in her speeches for equal representation. She said of the vote and the right to hold office:

As to suffrage and the woman question, I am of the opinion that women should have the rights of electors as they are required to pay taxes. We cannot evade the tax collector or the revenue act, and if we support the government in times of war and peace with our money,


12. Ibid., p. 855.

we should have a voice in expending our contributions to the public funds. I believe in justice in all things, and if it was unjust for our fathers to be taxed by Great Britain without representation, it is unjust to tax the women of today without representation. I cannot see it in any other light. You ask me if I believe my sex will soon be represented in Congress. There are plenty of educated, talented women who would do credit to their states in Congress or anywhere else, and it may be that some of the suffrage states will send a woman there in the future. If any of them do I shall expect that woman to be possessed of unusual brain power and integrity of purpose. She will be a credit to her political party, for it is hard to break away from the custom that has prevailed for centuries, of electing only men to legislative bodies, and when a woman is chosen she will necessarily have to possess more ability than her male competitor. At least that will be the case at first.

There is quite a strong suffrage sentiment in Montana, but such an innovation would probably be looked upon with favor in some sections and with disfavor in others, depending entirely upon the standard of intelligence of the particular community.14


Ella Knowles was an able speaker and there was nothing on which she would rather speak than women's rights. She interposed the subject in many speeches which she delivered. In 1896 an eastern newspaper interviewed her and quoted her at length:

I am a woman suffragist, not because my own position in life is such that I need complain of it, but because I believe it is right and just. As a Daughter of the American Republic, I protest against taxation without representation. My forefathers protested against it at Lexington and Bunker Hill, and their blood courses through my veins. I am a taxpayer, and I don't seek to evade the assessment list.

I am a college graduate graduate with two degrees, and have spent my life in study, having practiced law for six years, and in behalf of myself and the womanhood of America I protest against a system which does not permit me and other women of my class to express an opinion in governmental affairs, through the medium of the ballot, and which does permit the Italian dago, who does not speak or write the English language, and who has lived in the United States possibly six months, to vote away my earnings, which I contribute to the support of good government through the medium of taxation.

Ella Knowles was destined never to see women voting in all elections in Montana. Hopes for women's suffrage were raised again during the 1905 legislature when W. W. Berry, a Democrat from Lewis and Clark County, introduced a bill for an act entitled, "An Act providing for the submission to the qualified electors of the State, for their approval or rejection, an amendment to Section 2, of Article IX, of the Constitution of the State of Montana, in relation to the right of suffrage".\(^{16}\)

The friends of the measure put up a good fight. Mr. Jacob M. Kennedy of Silver Bow County stated that for years he had been vigorously opposed to such a thing but after years in Montana politics he was convinced it would be to the best interests of the state.\(^{17}\)

Mr. Thomas Everett opposed the bill. "I did not want to say anything on this bill," he said, "until all the nice ladies' men had spoken". He contended that a grave duty devolved upon the legislature in regard to submitting constitutional amendments. Everett made continued use of the term, "nice ladies' men", and thereby aroused the ire of Mr. Kennedy.

\(^{16}\) House Journal, Ninth Legislative Assembly, (1905), p. 54.

\(^{17}\) Helena Daily Independent, February 15, 1905.
"I think the gentleman from Chouteau (County)", said Kennedy, "should at least treat his opponents as gentlemen. If he does not, I will make him". Everett paid no attention and continued his speech in opposition.

Opponents such as John R. Quigley, Jr. and Allen J. Bennett gave the weak excuse that they were of the opinion that the majority of the women of Montana did not want the right to vote.18

There was comparatively little debate on the bill, and once more the advocates of woman suffrage met defeat.19 What was the cause? Probably fear of prohibition (especially among the liquor interests), and conservative thinking.

The women who filled the galleries that day were not discouraged nor did they give up the fight.20

In 1914 universal suffrage, for which Ella Knowles had fought so hard, was granted to the women of Montana.

19. Ibid., February 15, 1905.
20. Ibid., February 15, 1905.
CHAPTER V

POLITICAL CANDIDATE

The entrance of Ella Knowles into active politics came at the request of the Populist Party. This party was newly organized in 1892 and held their convention at Butte in June of that year. Only thirty-eight delegates were present, but they represented many sections of the state.¹

The platform drawn up by this group supported the following reforms: free coinage of silver, the eight-hour work-day law, the election of the president and United States senators by popular vote, and the restriction of immigration, (this was directed against the Chinese). The platform also urged that the land grant of the Northern Pacific Railroad be forfeited because of failure to construct within the time specified in the charter. Conservation was also included in a plank requesting that the national government maintain reservoirs for the irrigation of arid land, to "provide homes for the people free from the control of monopolies". A socialist tendency was seen in the section which stated, "We hold that where free competition becomes impossible as in telegraphs, telephones, railroads, water and gas supplies, etc., such business becomes a proper govern-

¹. Helena Weekly Herald, June 23, 1892.
mental function, which should be controlled and managed by and for the whole people concerned, through their proper government, local, state or national as may be. 2

When the convention sent a dispatch to Ella Knowles asking if she would accept the nomination for attorney general she felt that a practical joke was being played. On learning that they were sincere she quickly answered in the affirmative. She was nominated unanimously by the convention. 3 Other officers nominated were Will Kennedy for governor and H. H. Cullom for lieutenant governor.

When the People's Party (as it was known at that time) tendered the nomination to Miss Knowles they stated that they wanted her to "make the fight", and she had too much fighting blood in her to do anything else, even though it was the consensus of opinion among others that she had no chance of winning. 4

She studied the political questions of the day, especially the fiscal and silver problems, and entered energetically into the activities of the People's Party. 5 At a State Central Committee Meeting held in Helena in July she addressed the group on the important issues of the campaign.

2. Butte Semi-Weekly Intermountain, June 19, 1892.


5. Ibid., January 28, 1911.

When James B. Weaver, the Populist presidential candidate, visited the state in August, Ella Knowles was one of those who accompanied him and his party to the different cities of the state. One campaigner with General Weaver was Mrs. Mary Elisabeth Lease of Kansas, an effective and spectacular speaker who, like Ella Knowles, was a lawyer.

The visit to Helena was typical of the Weaver tour in Montana. The General arrived on the train from the west and was met by members of the People's Party Club, among them Will Kennedy and Miss Ella Knowles. The trolley cars took the group to the business section, stopping at intervals for the presidential candidate to speak to groups that had gathered along the route. There was a luncheon at the Broadwater, a hot springs resort hotel. That evening a large crowd gathered at a local auditorium to hear General Weaver and Mrs. Lease. It was a multifarious audience with many different political opinions and religious creeds present. There were well-dressed people and some not so well-dressed. There were "People's Party adherents, old-time Democrats, partisan Republicans, never-give-up prohibitionists, and last but not least, a good representation of woman suffragists. There were Catholics, Protestants, Hebrews, followers of Ingersoll and faith curists. In fact, there was no class of society nor walk of life that was not represented."  

7. Helena Weekly Independent, August 25, 1892. Probably this was meant as a satirical description.
Will Kennedy introduced General Weaver who spoke at some length on the goals of the party. Then Mrs. Lease delivered a speech which showed she well earned the description of "Kansas Cyclone" which some newspapers had applied to her. She began by expressing her satisfaction at the honor done her sex by nominating a woman for attorney-general of Montana. She felt whenever God had any divine purpose to enact it was a woman selected for the task and the world now was willing to admit woman to any position that she was able to fill. Twenty-five years before, Mrs. Lease asserted, a woman lawyer, or a woman doctor, or a woman politician was unknown, or would have been looked upon as a social monstrosity. But by that day (1892) there were 126 law firms in the country composed exclusively of women; and women doctors who could kill or cure as good as a male doctor could be found everywhere. But there was one place a woman would never be found: running around town on election day with her sleeves rolled up and a bottle of whisky in each pocket, declaring she could lick every man in the place. Mrs. Lease then enumerated other conditions in need of reform - she mentioned the many mortgages in existence, the increase of tenant farming, unemployment, women in the garment industry who did not make a living wage; "And we call ourselves a Christian people", she declared. She spoke of foreign laborers in Idaho who worked for less than a living wage, thereby driving out other native
laborers. She concluded by averring that these problems should be settled not by warfare but by ballot, and it would be the People's Party that would lead the way. A call was made for Miss Ella Knowles to speak, but because of the lateness of the hour she merely returned her thanks for the compliment. 8

During the summer and early fall Miss Knowles made a vigorous canvass of the state. She made an exhausting tour in Eastern Montana accompanied by Will Kennedy. Their busy itinerary was as follows: Placer, August 27; Glendive, August 29; Miles City, August 30; Forsyth, August 31; Park City, September 1; Red Lodge, September 2; Billings, September 3; Big Timber, September 5; Livingston, September 6; Cokedale, September 7; Timberline, September 8; Bozeman, September 9; Townsend, September 10, White Sulphur Springs, September 12; and Castle, September 13. 9

Montana was a large state to cover, but Ella Knowles stumped every section of it and her clever speeches won votes for herself and her party at every stop. Newspapers on the whole were complimentary to her, although some felt that politics was not the place for one of her sex. After her visit to Glendive the Independent of that city reported, "As for Miss Knowles, she very favorably impressed the people here as to her fitness for the

9. Anaconda Standard, August 27, 1892.
position of Attorney General. And if the other parties wish to elect their candidates they must bring forward a more forcible argument than the stale one of sex unfitness". 10

The Red Lodge Picket, a Republican organ, asserted that she was,

A lady, a scholar and a credit to her sex. She is an example for the women of the state to emulate, for through her own energy and ambition she has attained a position in the legal profession of Montana which scores of men have failed to reach and would be proud to occupy. Undoubtedly, she is well qualified for the office of attorney general and hosts of people in Montana would be glad to see her elected if she did not stand for the subtreasury scheme of the farmer's alliance, an inflation of the currency and several other measures equally as impracticable demanded by the platform of the people's party. 11

The novelty of a woman in politics was such that her very presence at a meeting meant a full house. But those who came to hear her out of curiosity were so affected by her logical arguments and oratorical language that they went away interested if not convinced. The newspapers called her, "Portia of the People's Party".

10. Glendive Independent, September 3, 1892.
11. Anaconda Standard, September 8, 1892.
Her opponents in the campaign were E. C. Day, Democratic nominee, and Henri Haskell, the Republican choice. The latter, a native of Maine and a Civil War veteran, was an acquaintance of Miss Knowles. He had come to Helena in 1888 as a member of the territorial House of Representatives in Montana. Previously he had practiced law in Glendive, in Dawson County, and had been county attorney there. During the 1889 session of the house, the Helena Independent, in sketching the state representatives, described Mr. Haskell thus:

Henri J. Haskell always has a pleasant smile on his ruddy face, and when he does speak, which is seldom, he makes the house echo with his powerful voice. He punctuates his remarks with vigorous gestures but does not pound his...desk... He tosses his head to and fro and hurls out his words as from a catapult. Personally he is very popular and a great friend of the reporters.12

After Montana achieved statehood, he served as the state's first attorney general and in 1892 was bidding for his second term.

The eligibility of Ella Knowles for the office of attorney general was a question raised many times during the campaign. The attorney general had to be thirty years old, and although Miss Knowles did not state her age she would simply reply to questions that if elected she would qualify. A rumor was circulated that she was engaged to

be married, and she retorted to this that if she was to be married she did not know about it. A more serious charge was made concerning her legal ineligibility when it was alleged that she could not hold an office if she could not vote. A Helena attorney presented her case before the public in a letter to a newspaper. He first quoted from the act of the legislature of 1889 - the law that allowed women to practice as attorneys-at-law. Then he cited Section 539, Chapter Nine, entitled "Miscellaneous Provisions" of the statutes of Montana which was as follows:

Words used in this act in the present tense shall be deemed to include the future as well as the present; words used in the singular number shall be deemed to include the plural and the plural singular, and the words to include the masculine gender shall include the feminine gender.

The attorney cited the qualifications as stated in the statutes of the State of Montana, article 7, section 4:

No person shall be eligible to the office of governor, lieutenant governor, or superintendent of public instruction, unless he shall have obtained the age of 30 years at the time of his election, or to the office of secretary of state, state auditor or state treasurer unless he shall have attained the age of 25 years, nor to the office of attorney

general until he shall have attained the age of 30 years, and have been admitted to practice in the supreme court of the state or territory of Montana, and be in good standing at the time of his election. In addition to the qualifications above prescribed, each of the officers named shall be a citizen of the United States, and have resided within the state or territory two years preceding his election.

Next was quoted:

All laws enacted by the Legislative Assembly of the Territory and in force at the time of admittance and not contrary to the United States constitution or laws of the United States of America shall be and remain in force as the laws of the state.

It is a well-known fact, his letter stated, that in the interpretation of the law and in the ordinary interpretation of the English language, the term "he" is used with reference to mankind in general and includes the feminine she. Although the author admitted that Miss Knowles could not vote for attorney general or any other state officer he said that neither could the nominee for Superintendent of Schools when a woman.

Perhaps if the election in November had ended as first believed, there would have been a court case to determine the winner's eligibility. The first returns

that came in gave Ella Knowles the majority, and the secretary of the Populist Party claimed her election. Montana papers announced that she "probably" had been elected. News of her election was telegraphed all over the country, and eastern newspapers printed alleged portraits of Montana's new "attorney generaless". But when the results arrived from the less populated areas of the state it was found that Miss Knowles had lost the election although polling many more votes than the other Populist candidates. Henri Haskell, the Republican candidate stayed in office that year.

Ella Knowles attributed the fact that she did not win to the habit the "cow counties" had of voting their tickets straight. Of the national election she remarked,

The Democrats have the control of things in their own hands for the next four years. If they don't do the right thing for the country, you will find me on the stump for the people's party, and I'll talk free silver right along. Look for the people's party to carry Montana next time.

Although in actuality Ella Knowles had lost the election, in another sense she had won. She had shown

15. Helena Weekly Herald, November 17, 1892.
17. Helena Weekly Independent, November 17, 1892.
that women were capable of taking an active part in politics. She had made many people realize that women as well as men could discuss and judge the affairs of the state and the nation. Of this year in the life of Ella Knowles, Joaquin Miller exults as marking "an epoch in the lives of the women of the west". ¹⁸

¹⁸. Joaquin Miller, op.cit., p. 86.
CHAPTER VI

MARRIAGE

The "very friendly" relations which had always existed between the two lawyers, Henri Haskell and Ella Knowles, continued despite their political opposition. Mr. Haskell recognized the superior ability of Miss Knowles and employed her in the attorney-general's office, giving her the title of law clerk. The 1893 state legislature had been asked to create the office of assistant attorney general but had refused. Miss Knowles' duties were such that she soon became known as the "assistant attorney general" and the title was sanctioned by the next legislature when money was appropriated for the salary of the office.  

As assistant attorney-general, Miss Knowles represented the State of Montana in a case before the Department of Interior in September of 1893. The case, Paris Gibson vs. the State of Montana, concerned the title to school lands near Great Falls worth at least $200,000. The attorney-general showed complete faith in his assistant's competence when he put the case completely in her charge, giving her no definite instructions but advising her to "do the best she could in the premises." She was introduced to the Secretary of the Interior, Hoke

Smith, by Senator Thomas C. Power, of Montana, and was treated with the utmost respect, kindliness and courtesy by both the Secretary and his assistants in the Department before whom she presented the claims of Montana. Because she was the first woman to go to Washington on official business as an accredited representative of a sovereign state, there were many articles about her in the Montana press and in other papers. Before Miss Knowles left Washington, she knew that she had been successful in her efforts. Secretary Smith ruled that school land could not be taken up for a stone quarry under the Placer Mineral Act, thus awarding the lands in question to the State of Montana.  

Miss Knowles was also very successful in her law practice outside the attorney general's office. Her clientele steadily increased, and on several occasions her services commanded large fees. One case, which eventually netted her the sum of $10,000, was tried in Butte, Montana. Miss Knowles traveled there by train and in going from the depot to her hotel she was involved in an accident when the hackman attempted to go between a heavily laden truck and the curb. The wheels struck a small post and Miss Knowles was thrown about within the carriage. She continued on to the hotel and immediately afterwards departed for the courthouse where she argued  

and won her case. It was not until she returned to the hotel that she allowed herself to think of her bruises, as she called them, and not until she arrived in Helena did she consult her physician. To her amazement she had several broken ribs and severe chest injuries and was confined to her room for a very long time. Months later she went to California in hopes of restoring her health.³

The adage, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder" must have been true in the case of Henri Haskell. After Miss Knowles had been in California several months, he left for Moscow, Idaho, supposedly on a purely business trip. He was representing the Northern Pacific Railroad in a case against the treasurer of Jefferson County who was seeking to collect taxes on land that was not yet "patented" to the company. The case was being tried before Judge Beatty of the United States District Court. Mr. Haskell had hinted that he might continue on to San Francisco to attend the United States circuit court of appeals.⁴

It was through an Associated Press dispatch that those in Helena learned of the impending marriage of the attorney general to his assistant, Miss Knowles.⁵ They

⁴. Ibid., May 23, 1895.
⁵. Ibid., May 23, 1895.
were married on May 23, 1895. They did not return to Helena until the following July.

In the meantime the public and the press made much of the marriage. One retired judge said, "Well, politics makes strange bedfellows!" A Montana paper congratulated the couple and hoped "the ethics of their chosen profession" would always keep them on the same side of the case. It was a political, official and social fusion that was more Republican than Populist, quipped the Great Falls News.

The Miles City Journal expressed the surprise that many acquaintances of the two were feeling—that two persons of such strong and individualistic personalities and such disparate age should wed:

That these two should marry, not only each other, but anybody, is the greatest surprise of all. If ever there was a pair voluntarily committed to celibacy these are they. To slightly paraphrase "Pinafore",

Our amazement, our surprise
Can be gathered from the expression in our eyes.


8. Helena Clock, June 1, 1895, quoting from the Miles City Journal.

9. Helena Clock, June 1, 1895, quoting from the Great Falls News.

10. Helena Clock, June 1, 1895, quoting from the Miles City Journal.
After their return to Helena the couple continued to work together in the attorney general's office.
CHAPTER VII

POLITICAL AND MINING ACTIVITIES

At the time of her marriage one paper had said of the new Mrs. Haskell: "She is a woman of exceedingly broad mentality, and it is safe to say she will not allow the mere incident of marriage to divert her from the active life she has chosen". 1

This proved to be a correct assumption. Mrs. Haskell continued with her law practice and also remained very active in the Populist Party.

In 1896 she was a delegate to the Lewis and Clark County Populist Convention and acted as secretary to the convention. She added another "first" to a long career of "firsts" when she was elected a delegate to the national Populist convention, being the first woman to be elected as a delegate to a national convention from Montana. 2

The Populist leaders, believing that both the Democrats and Republicans would have strong "single gold standard" platforms, had set the date of their convention later than those of the two older parties. They hoped that by bringing out a strong pro-silver platform that they would gain all silverite votes plus those of

1. Helena Clock, June 1, 1895, quoting from Miles City Journal.

people dedicated to general reform movements. It was an unpleasant surprise to the Populists when the Democrats supported free silver and chose as their standard bearer the free silver orator, William Jennings Bryan. Many Populists, especially in the West, felt that their convention should endorse Bryan so as not to split the silver vote. To many southern Populists, however, the Democratic vice-presidential candidate, Arthur Sewall, was unacceptable. He was a wealthy shipbuilder and banker from Maine.

Before Mrs. Haskell left in July for the convention in St. Louis she was interviewed by a local reporter. At that time she stated:

I am for free coinage with all my heart and soul. I believe in it thoroughly. I think it is the only thing for the American people, and hope to see a union of all the silver forces—populists, democrats, and silver republicans in this campaign.

The reporter asked, "You are, then, in favor of the populists nominating William J. Bryan for president?"

I am indeed. It seems to me that just now is the opportunity of the century for the silver people. I think that if this opportunity is neglected and through a failure to agree, we let it pass by, it may be a

great many years before we have another chance.

I am for silver because it has always been the money of the people and because it is right. I believe free coinage will eventually save our American institutions, prevent general dissatisfaction and infuse new life into every channel of industry in the east as well as the west. I trust that silver's friends may unite; for then the cause of free coinage will, I believe, sweep the country.

Personally, I wish our party would make silver the only issue. That would be the best plan, I think, for that is what it will be, no matter what else may be brought forward. 4

During the convention, the St. Louis Republic interviewed some of the more prominent women of the convention. All seemed to feel that Bryan should be nominated. Among those whose opinions were asked were Mrs. Helen Gougar, Mrs. Anna L. Diggs, Mrs. Victoria Whitney, and Mrs. Ella Knowles Haskell. The Republic prefaced Mrs. Haskell's remarks with a short history of her career as lawyer and politician in Montana. They quoted her as saying:

I believe the only thing for the Populist Convention to do in the present crisis is to nominate Bryan.

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I believe in keeping the national and state organizations of the populist party intact, but we have the opportunity of the century in our grasp.

By nominating him we may secure success for one great principle for which we have fought a hopeless political fight for years.

After we secure the free coinage of silver we can then use our party organization in the line of other great reforms, but I believe, for the benefit of humanity and a people suffer from more or less financial distress, it is our solemn duty to secure that one grand result which may be secured by a union of all silver forces.\(^5\)

Mrs. Haskell, accompanied by Mrs. Anna L. Diggs, a Miss Reynolds of Colorado, and Mrs. Helen Gougar, went before the platform committee and asked for the insertion of a plank favoring women's suffrage. This proposal, however, was defeated by the southern members of the committee.\(^6\)

Before the convention was over, Mrs. Haskell was honored by being elected to the Populist National Committee. She was the only woman on the committee which was made up of one hundred and thirty prominent Populists from every state in the Union. She held the position for four years.\(^7\)

\(^5\) Helena Daily Independent, August 2, 1896.
\(^6\) Helena Daily Independent, August 1, 1896.
\(^7\) Ibid., August 1, 1896.
After her return to Helena Mrs. Haskell uttered her views on the convention. She thought that the convention had erred in not nominating Sewall, but thought nothing else could have been done with the need for compromise existing at the convention. She said,

The nomination of Watson, as you know, was due entirely to the southern men. They went into the convention determined to nominate a straight ticket. The southern men, I believe, were sincere in their opposition to the nomination of Bryan, believing, as they did, that his nomination would mean the overthrow of the party. The middle-of-the-road delegates and those who favored the nomination of a southern man for vice-president were in the majority, and the delegates who desired to nominate Bryan and Sewell were compelled to yield, and did so as gracefully as they could. There was a sentiment in the convention that the populists were entitled to recognition on the ticket, and it was believed that if a southern man was nominated for vice president, Sewall would resign.

The gold papers may say what they please about that convention, but, after all, it was a grand meeting. In 1,000 years it would be difficult to get together a convention that would be more representative of the people. All classes were represented there, but the people—the plain people—were represented as they never were before in any national
convention in the United States. It was a convention controlled by some of the ablest men in the country. There were those there who would set afame any audience anywhere with their matchless oratory........

Mrs. Haskell was asked, "What do you think will be the effect of the nomination of Watson?" She replied,

Well, that, of course, I am unable to say. I think that Bryan will not be notified formally of his nomination by the populists, and that he will not be asked to support the platform. While I think that Bryan will be elected it will be only after a hard fight, notwithstanding the union of the democrats, silver republicans and populists. I suppose there will be two electoral tickets having Bryan's name at the head, but I confess that I see no way out of the difficulty.8

The difficulties which Mrs. Haskell foresaw in having two vice-presidential candidates proved true. The Democrats did not substitute the Populist candidate, Thomas Watson, for Sewall as many had hoped they would, and during the balloting confusion reigned supreme. Many Populists voted Democratic to be sure their ballots counted. The situation was a tremendous blow to the Populist Party, and it was never again a serious factor

in national elections.\textsuperscript{9}

Mrs. Haskell "took the stump" for the fusion ticket in both 1896 and 1900 and spent many weeks addressing audiences on political issues. In 1900 she took an active part in the Lewis and Clark County and the state Populist Conventions, working on committees and addressing the conventions.\textsuperscript{10}

It must have been sad for Ella Knowles Haskell to see this party slowly lose its political significance—the party which she had believed would accomplish the many reforms which were needed in the political and social world of that day.

She was, however, too busy a person, with too many interests, to ever stop working in one field or another. She was very interested in mining, having represented mining companies at one time or another in her career and was the owner of mining properties herself. Mining activities in Montana even as a stockholder or attorney around the turn of the century were not for the naive, the stupid nor the timid. It is to Mrs. Haskell's credit that in this atmosphere she "successfully conducted several mining deals."\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{9} John D. Hicks, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 272.

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Progressive Men of the State of Montana} (Chicago, 1902?), pp. 472-474.

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 472-474.
It was mentioned to her that mining was an unusual field for a woman, and to this she replied, "That I am interested in mining in various ways is not strange when you consider that I reside in one of the greatest mining states in the Union or even in the world."  

In 1900, while a delegate to the International Mining Congress held in Milwaukee, Mrs. Haskell was elected a member of the executive committee of the Congress.  

The next year, 1901, the Congress was held in Boise, Idaho. It was one of the main purposes of the Congress to start a movement that would ultimately result in the establishment by the national government of a bureau or department of mining. It was the hope of the Montana delegation to secure Butte as the site of the meeting place of the Congress for the following year. Donald Bradford, owner of the Rocky Mountain Magazine, put out a July mining edition which was distributed among the delegates at Boise. The cover of this number was printed in colors with the words, "Butte for the Mining Congress, 1902."  

Mrs. Haskell was chosen as the Montanan to make the

12. Ibid., pp. 472-474.
speech presenting the reasons the Congress should be held in Butte. The possible cities had been narrowed down to Los Angeles, Portland and Butte when Mrs. Haskell rose to speak. During her address she said:

If you will come to Butte, we will present to you the keys of two cities - one above ground and one 8,000 feet below. We will show you nature's treasure house - the richest spot on the face of the earth. I have to say to you that Butte has four transcontinental lines - come any way you will, you may come straight through to Butte . . . .

I understand the city selected must deposit $3,000 inside of thirty days. Butte wants you, and if necessary, she will deposit $30,000 within three days . . . .

In behalf of the people of the great state of Montana, of the gigantic interests of Butte, in behalf of the clubs, of the business men, of all the people, I invite you to meet next year in Butte - nestling at the feet of the grandest range of mountains on this continent. We will tender you the most royal welcome.  

The result of this speech was, as one paper headlined the next day, "Mrs. Ella Knowles Haskell Carries Day - (her) Eloquence Resulted in a Unanimous Choice of the

15. Ibid., July 30, 1901.
Big Copper Camp.  

The oratorical ability which had won Ella Knowles prizes in college now won an honor for a city which was later to be her home.

16. Ibid., July 30, 1901.
CHAPTER VIII

LIFE IN BUTTE

After the election of 1896, when C. B. Nolan became attorney general, both Mr. and Mrs. Haskell directed all their attention to their growing private practice. They shared a law office in the Bailey Block and lived at the Helena, a hotel on Grand Avenue just off Main Street. 1

It was the desire of Mr. Haskell to go back to the town which had been his home before coming to the capital city, so the couple went to Glendive, Montana, to live. The quiet life, however, was not for the active Ella Knowles Haskell, and after a short time she returned to her law practice in Helena. 2 She was later granted a divorce. 3

In the next few years Mrs. Haskell found more and more of her business and professional activities being centered in Butte. She was attorney for several mining companies and had acquired some fine mining property herself. She moved to Butte in 1902 and was even more successful in her law practice in the great mining city than she had been in the capital city. 4

As the years passed, Mrs. Haskell found herself a highly respected member of the bar. She seemed to have won the esteem and good will of every member of the legal profession as well as that of the judges on the bench.  

She was a member of the local bar association and was a friend as well as professional associate to many in that organization. Judge Jeremiah Lynch, now retired, recalls Ella Knowles Haskell:

She was a good trial lawyer and an eloquent advocate and was successful as a practitioner. At a banquet of the Silver Bow County Bar Association held in the old Finlen Hotel shortly after it was formed Mrs. Haskell responded to a toast in eloquent and interesting terms. Much of her address was devoted to a recital of her experiences as assistant attorney general.

Mrs. Haskell seemed to reach the pinnacle of activity in her life after she moved to Butte. Her business life made many demands on her time and strength but she also was an energetic member of many organizations, holding offices and acting as delegate on many occasions to state and national conventions.

For several years she was Regent of the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Her

5. Butte Intermountain, January 27, 1911
qualification for membership in this organization came through descent from Caleb Pillsbury who was an officer in the Revolutionary War and a member of the Continental Congress. Mrs. Haskell's paternal grandmother was Eliza Pillsbury.

Other associations to which Mrs. Haskell belonged were the local Woman's Relief Corps, the Daughters of Rebekah, Women of Woodcraft and the Butte Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star. She was a member of the Woman's Club and was especially active in the art department of that organization.

She always worked actively in movements whose goal was the advancement of women in business and political fields.

Less easy to understand is her connection with the Theosophical Society of which she was an officer of both the local group and the state federation. One can hardly see the practical Ella Knowles Haskell as an advocate of this esoteric, mystical society which supposedly was based on ancient oriental teachings. Perhaps what appealed to her was theosophy's basic teaching of the uni-

10. Ibid., January 28, 1911.
versal brotherhood of humanity; included in this was the belief in toleration toward all persons and all varieties of religious faiths. One of the purposes of the Theosophical Society was to counter the materialism and agnosticism which were so prevalent in the thought of that age. One of the great attractions of the system for Mrs. Haskell was probably the role women played in the Society. It was founded by a woman, Madame Helena Blavatsky, and later the great propagator of the Society was another woman, Mrs. Annie Besant. Many followers of theosophy felt that there was a close connection between the modern spiritual awakening (for which they felt they were responsible), and the "woman's movement".

Mrs. Haskell made a wide circle of friends among those whom she met in the fraternal lodges, the women's clubs, in her business life and in society. Her friends were from many walks of life and no matter how busy she was she always found time for a chat with them. These


friends remember Mrs. Haskell as a woman of medium height who wore plainly designed clothes but of the best material. Many of these acquaintances were devoted to Mrs. Haskell, but few could call themselves "intimates", for she retained her New England reserve even with close friends.  

Mrs. Haskell enjoyed entertaining her friends and felt the need of having larger quarters than she had previously had. Most of her adult life had been spent in boarding houses and hotels. She leased a suite of rooms in the Napton Block, a new building at that time, and there had furnishings of her own choosing.  

Here were displayed the souvenirs of the trip around the world which Mrs. Haskell made in 1909 and 1910. One reason for the trip was to gain some necessary rest for the sake of her health. She had not been well for several years although she rarely spoke to those around her of illness or fatigue.  

On her trip she traveled extensively in the orient in such places as the Phillipines, Japan, and India. With her great interest in people she was terribly depressed by the sordid living conditions of the people in those

countries, especially in India. On her return she spoke before various groups recounting the experiences of her travels, but did not speak of those things which depressed her. Rather she told of the beauties and wonders of each country.  

Upon her return, Mrs. Haskell resumed her busy professional and social life. Her naturally hospitable nature plus her friends' desire to see her travel curios had the result that she kept virtually open house except for the time during which she was at her law office. She had not become as strong as she had hoped on her journeys and the constant entertaining and other activity lowered her resistance to those diseases which resulted in her death.

She first had what was believed to be a bad cold. This turned into tonsilitis which was later complicated by pleurisy and erysipelas, and culminated in a virulent case of septicemia. Dr. Grace Wilson Cahoon, Mrs. Haskell's personal physician, called three of the leading doctors of the city into consultation, and they agreed that everything possible had been done. When the patient realized that she was to die she calmly had word sent to her elderly father, David Knowles, who still resided in New Hampshire. She died in her apartment at the Napton

17. Ibid., January 28, 1911.
at eight o'clock in the morning on January 27, 1911. 19

Butte was stunned and saddened by Mrs. Haskell's death as were people all over the state. Her funeral arrangements were in charge of the executors of her estate, Dr. Grace Cahoon and Robert Tait. They consulted with representatives of the various organizations to which Mrs. Haskell belonged. The funeral, held in the Masonic Temple, was attended by an immense crowd of people. Most of the clubs attended in a body. Pallbearers, members of the Silver Bow Bar Association, were Jesse B. Roote, John N. Kirk, E. B. Howell, Lewis A. Smith, L. P. Sanders, L. Forestell, H. L. Maury and M. J. English. 20 She was buried in Mount Moriah Cemetery. 21

At the time of her death a friend in Anaconda wrote;

Though in a land distant from her birth and where neither kith nor kin will stand beside her, there will be many who will shed tears of sorrow when she is laid at rest. And for long years Ella Knowles Haskell will be held in tender memory by her host of friends. 22

This proved to be true. Although it has been nearly fifty years since she died, those few remaining friends who knew her still recall the indomitable Ella Knowles Haskell.

Conclusion

This work on the life of Ella Knowles Haskell is limited by reason of the fact that there is little material available except that afforded by newspaper accounts of the period. However, the press of that day gave full and vivid descriptions in most of their articles and therefore one gets a relatively complete viewpoint concerning most events for the period involved.

My research on Ella Knowles Haskell has revealed to me that her dauntless fortitude, oratorical ability, and superior intelligence placed her at the forefront of activities of a feminist nature; and that these activities, in the final analysis, furthered the cause of women in the state of Montana.*

Little research has been done on the role of women in the history of Montana. It is to be hoped that this situation has in part been remedied by my researches and that it will be fully remedied by future historians of the Treasure State.

* It is interesting to speculate as to whether the career of Jeanette Rankin would have been possible had there not been an Ella Knowles Haskell in the earlier history of the Treasure State.
Books:


Letters:


Periodicals:

1. Anaconda Standard, 1892, 1907, 1911.

2. Butte Daily Intermountain, 1889, 1911.


5. Butte Semi-Weekly Intermountain, 1892.


7. Glendive Independent, September 3, 1892.

8. Helena Clock, 1895.


12. Helena Sunday Record, April 8, 1888.

13. Helena Weekly Herald, 1892.


17. The New North-West, January 3, 1890.