

Blanche Ames

1878–1969



A woman of many accomplishments, Blanche Ames was a suffragist, artist, inventor, and creator of suffrage cartoons.

Ames Family Tree

Blanche Ames was the daughter (and biographer) of Civil War general Adelbert Ames, who also served as Reconstruction Governor of Mississippi. One grandfather was the colorful Benjamin Butler, a Civil War general and later Governor of Massachusetts. Her husband, Harvard Professor Oakes Ames, was not related but inherited a significant fortune from the Ames Shovel Company. Best-selling author George Plimpton was a grandson.



George Plimpton



Benjamin Butler
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



Adelbert Ames
NATIONAL ARCHIVES



Blanche Ames SCHLESINGER LIBRARY, RADCLIFFE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY, HARVARD UNIVERSITY



Blanche married Oakes Ames, who became Professor of Botany at Harvard, director of the Harvard Botanical Museum and Arnold Arboretum. Oakes Ames supported equal rights for women as did his father, former Governor Oliver Ames. PORTRAIT BY BLANCHE AMES

Arts and Sciences

Majoring in Art History at Smith College, Blanche Ames had ambitions to be a professional artist. She would create portraits, scientifically accurate botanical drawings, and suffrage cartoons. She received four patents for inventions including a World War II device designed to jam propellers of enemy planes. She also designed the mansion at Borderland, her estate in North Easton, as well as a system of dams and ponds for drainage on the 1,200 acre property.



Blanche Ames designed the "Borderland" mansion after becoming frustrated with the architect. The 2019 murder mystery "Knives Out" was filmed at the house. Currently the property is a Massachusetts state park. BORDERLAND STATE PARK, MASS.GOV

Campaigning for Suffrage

Blanche Ames became art editor for the Boston-based *Woman's Journal*, the country's leading suffragist publication. Efforts to support a Nov. 1915 Massachusetts suffrage referendum included an organizing meeting at Borderland on Jan. 13, 1915, but Blanche expected the meeting to be cancelled when she woke to a foot of snow. She was thrilled to see 38 women trudging through the snow to hear her speak and make plans. That group organized and held 49 suffrage events in less than one year. Unfortunately, the referendum failed.

Loefgrenianthus blanche-ames

Blanche and husband Oakes, created an illustrated seven volume study of orchids. She became the foremost scientific botanical illustrator of her time and her husband's colleague in research. On a tree that had fallen across the road in Brazil she discovered an orchid thought to be a lost species. It was named for her.



Loefgrenianthus blanche-ames DALTON HOLLAND BAPTISTA

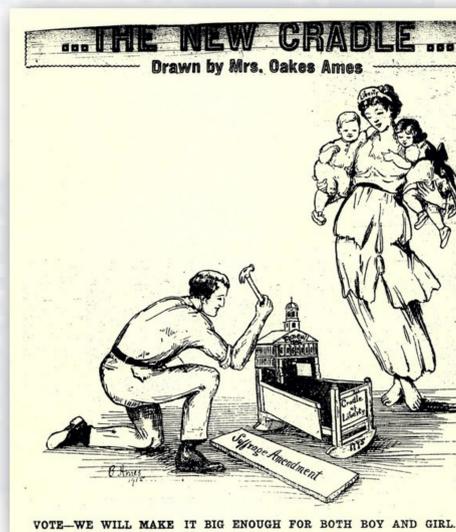
The Suffrage Cartoons of Blanche Ames



Both the *Woman's Journal* and *Boston Transcript* featured cartoons by Blanche Ames. These were created as part of a campaign to promote passage of the referendum for women's suffrage in Massachusetts in November 1915. The referendum failed and women in Massachusetts did not obtain the vote until the adoption of the 19th Amendment in August 1920.

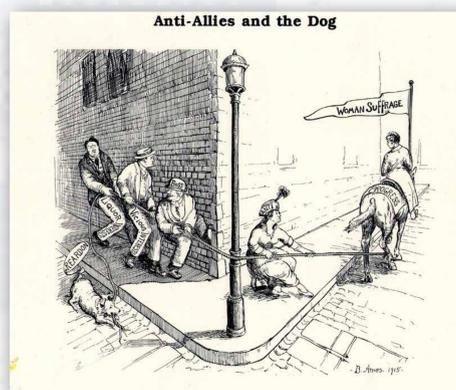
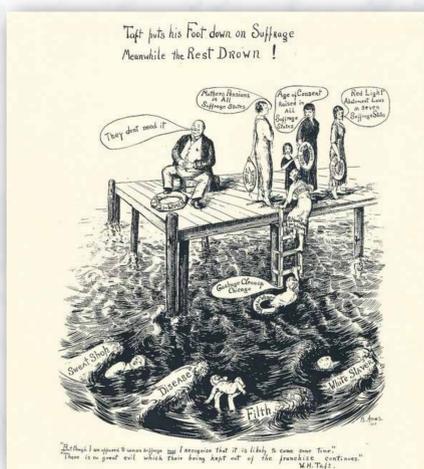
Blanche Ames. MASS HUMANITIES

Woman Suffrage Flowers. Uncle Sam should "Prune away Prejudice" with the tools of logic, education, and truth. Suffrage is flowering in several western states while a caterpillar threatens suffrage flowers in the east. WOMAN'S JOURNAL, MAY 22, 1915



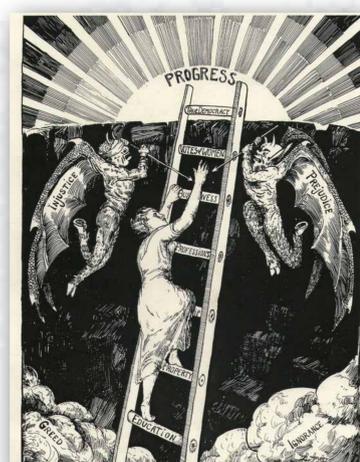
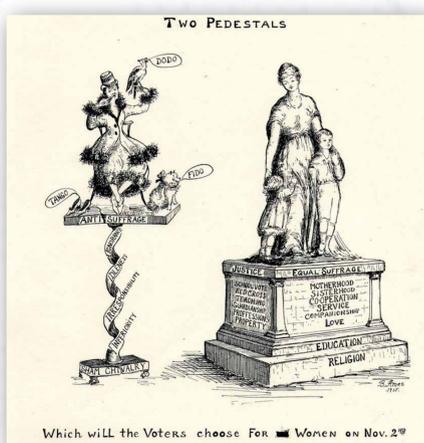
The New Cradle. This cartoon shows Faneuil Hall (the "Cradle of Liberty") being enlarged to accommodate girls as well as boys. BOSTON TRANSCRIPT, BOSTON AMERICAN SUFFRAGE SUPPLEMENT, APRIL 17, 1915

Taft puts his foot down on Suffrage. This cartoon mocks President Taft's opposition to voting by women. It contrasts progressive reforms in states that established women's suffrage with unaddressed national problems like sweat shops and disease. WOMAN'S JOURNAL, JUNE 5, 1915 AND SEPTEMBER 18, 1915



Anti-Allies and the Dog. Anti-suffrage groups including some women, political bosses, and liquor interests try to hold back progress toward suffrage. "Reardon" (the dog) was an anti-suffragist state representative and Treasurer of the Anti-Suffrage League. WOMAN'S JOURNAL, OCTOBER 2, 1915

Two Pedestals This image contrasts "Sham Chivalry," that puts women on a pedestal while denying equal rights, with the pedestal of "Justice" and "Equal Suffrage." The question "Which will the Voters choose For Woman on Nov. 2nd" refers to an unsuccessful 1915 suffrage referendum in Massachusetts. BOSTON TRANSCRIPT, SEPTEMBER, 1915



The Next Rung. The woman is climbing the ladder of progress as "Injustice" and "Prejudice" try to hold her back. "Education" and "Property" ownership help but "Votes of Women" will bring "True Democracy." WOMAN'S JOURNAL, NOVEMBER 20, 1915