



MichiganWomenForward



Clara Arthur

(1858 - 1929)

Inducted: **1989** *Locale:* **Detroit** *Era:* **Historical**

Area(s) of Achievement: **Children's Rights, Suffrage**

Clara Arthur, suffragist, 'had all the qualities of a great leader,' said The Detroit News. 'She could plan, and she could wait. Defeat did not confuse her; convinced that she could win, she kept on fighting until doubts were removed, the hesitant were assured, the stupid were outvoted. And having won a victory in one field, she moved to another.'

In 1885, Clara Arthur helped found the Michigan Equal Suffrage Association. In 1906, she was elected president and, under her leadership, the state constitution was changed to allow women to vote on tax and bond issues. In 1912, she started the campaign for women's suffrage that resulted in adoption of the state amendment in 1918.

During her lifetime, Arthur was widely known as the "Mother of the Playground Movement." Her work eventually led to a system of 138 playgrounds and 17 swimming pools in Detroit with a budget of more than \$1,000,000 by 1929.

She helped develop the women's club movement and was chair of the industrial and child labor committees of the Michigan Federation of Women's Clubs. Arthur championed the cause of garment workers and succeeded in getting the first factory inspection for Michigan women workers. She served on the National Child Labor Committee and worked hard to discourage child labor and to raise the age of consent from 11 to 14 years.

Arthur was a founding member of the Detroit Anti-Tuberculosis Society. She is credited for her early efforts to build the Detroit Tuberculosis Sanitarium.

Though her contributions have been largely ignored in Michigan history, she was known to those of her day as 'a great Detroiter, a great American, a great woman.'

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