Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE0897

Nicholls, Elizabeth Webb

(1850 - 1943)

Born	18500221, Adelaide South Australia Australia
Died	19430803, North Adelaide South Australia Australia
Occupation	Activist, Suffragist

Summary

Elizabeth Webb Nicholls was born in Adelaide to Mary and Samuel Bakewell in 1850. She joined the Christian Woman's Temperance Union (WCTU) in 1886, and was elected provisional president in 1888. In 1889 she became Colonial president, a position she held until 1897. From 1894-1903 she was the Union's Australian President, and post-Federation, she served as State President from 1906 to 1927. She joined the South Australian Women's Suffrage League and subsequently became a League Councillor. In 1894 Elizabeth Nicholls assumed the role of Colonial Superintendent of the WCTU's Suffrage Department. She was appointed to the Board of the Adelaide Hospital from 1895-1922 and was a justice of the peace – one of the four first women – from 1915. She died in 1943

Details

Elizabeth Webb Nicholls was born in Adelaide to Mary and Samuel Bakewell in 1850. She married Alfred Nicholls in 1870, and had five children as well as bringing up two orphaned relatives. She joined the Christian Woman's Temperance Union (WCTU) in 1886, and was elected provisional president in 1888. In 1889 she became Colonial president, a position she held until 1897. From 1894-1903 she was the Union's Australian President, and post-Federation, she served as State President from 1906 to 1927. She probably joined the South Australian Women's Suffrage League in early 1889 and later became a League Councillor. It was under her leadership that the WCTU gained 8,000 of the 11,600 signatures for the League's 1894 petition to Parliament. Following the submission of the petition, Elizabeth Nicholls took on the role of Colonial Superintendent of the WCTU's Suffrage Department. The legislation granting suffrage to women was passed in December 1894, and she then travelled around Adelaide and country South Australia giving talks about how to enrol and vote. Her 'Platform and Principles' is an example of her straightforward approach. From 1895-1922 she served on the Board of the Adelaide Hospital and was a justice of the peace – one of the four first women – from 1915. In addition she was actively involved with the Women's Non-Party Political Association and assisted Bessie Rischbieth to form the Australian Federation of Women's Societies (later known as the Australian Federation of Women Voters) in 1922. She died in 1943

Published resources

Edited Book
Torch-bearers : the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of South Australia, 1886-1948, McCorkindale, Isabel, 1949

Resource Section
Nicholls, Elizabeth Webb (1851-1943), Mune, Marie, 2006,
http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A110023b.htm

Book Section
Elizabeth Webb Nicholls (nee Bakewell), 2001

Bessie Rischbieth, Ogilvie, June, 1988

Book
In her own name : women in South Australian history, Jones, Helen, 1926-, 1986

Fresh evidence, new witnesses : finding women's history, Allen, Margaret (Margaret Ellen), 1947- ; Hutchison, Mary and Mackinnon, Alison, 1942-, 1989

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Site Exhibition
The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia, Smart, Judith and Swain, Shurlee (eds.), 2014,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders

Archival resources

State Library of South Australia
Young Women's Christian Association of Adelaide : SUMMARY RECORD

Woman's Christian Temperance Union of South Australia : SUMMARY RECORD

Author Details
Robin Secomb

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