

Jesse Leech Davisson

[mlaschweickart](#)

[April 14, 2015](#)



<https://womensuffragemovementindayton.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/jesse-leech-davisson.jpg>

A Local and National Suffragette

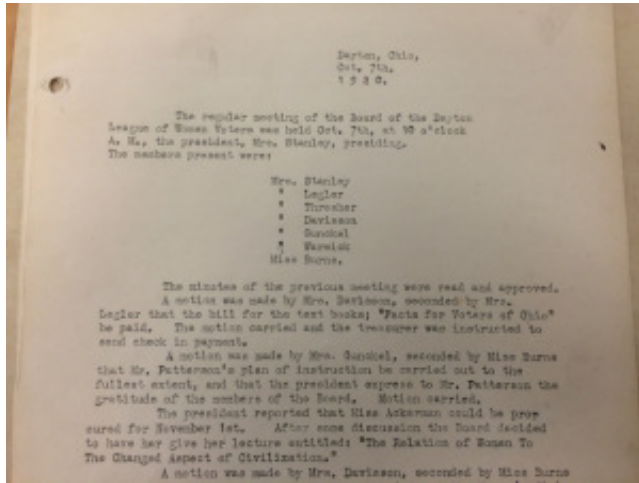
There is no comprehensive collection on Davisson, but due to her extensive participation in the Women's Suffrage Movement locally, she appears frequently in the Dayton Metro Public Library's Woman's Suffrage Association and League of Women Voters Collection (MS-004). There is a large amount of official correspondence between Davisson and the state organizational leader Mrs. Harriet Taylor Upton, meeting minutes and diaries, and writings about the movement written by Davisson herself (MS-004). She appears in the Women's Club Records, the League of Women Voters Collection (MS-123), and the Wright Brother's Collection (MS-1) maintained by the Wright State University Special Collections and Archives. Davisson served as vice-president of the League of Women Voters. Milton Wright mentions Davisson in his diary as having visited Katharine Wright to discuss woman's suffrage (MS-123; MS-1).

Davisson was the main force in the Women's Suffrage Movement in Dayton, Ohio, and linked the local movement to the larger national movement through her work with leaders like Carrie Chapman Catt (MS-004, 11-12). She both attended and spoke at lectures and meetings on the subject. Davisson also wrote on the topic; her works "Would Have Women of Nations Work for Peace: Mrs. Frances G. Richards Says Real Sufferers of European Struggle Are Women and Children Who Are Left Behind; President, Mrs. Davisson, Submit Report" and "An Appreciation" showcase her efforts and actions in the Women's Suffrage movement (MS-004, 48; 54). She was president of the Woman's Suffrage Party of Montgomery County and had a role in coordinating the first Woman's Suffrage Parade in Dayton on October 24, 1914. Some of her other duties as president of the WSPMC were to write letters on behalf of the cause, arrange accommodations for meetings to be held, attend luncheons and other suffrage functions, organize meetings and the speakers to attend (also arrange for publicity for the meetings), and travel to other conventions and meetings out of state to represent Ohio. Davisson was "elected in 1912 as an Honorary Vice President, which made her a member of the Executive Committee of the State in the Ohio Woman's Suffrage Association," (MS-004, 28). As president of the WSPMC, she worked closely with state organizational leader Mrs. Harriet Taylor Upton (MS-004, 28-31). (MS-004) note, "Mrs. Davisson was very highly respected, not only by Daytonians, but also by Mrs. Upton, who trusted her in many instances with secrets that she didn't reveal to the other members of the Executive Committee," (10) Her suffrage activities were even mentioned in the *Dayton Daily News*, on September 24, 1914 she was mentioned as the head of a local delegation going to Cleveland, Ohio for a state suffrage parade planned for October 3, 1914 (MS-458 Finding Aid). [Click on the link below to view the full article].

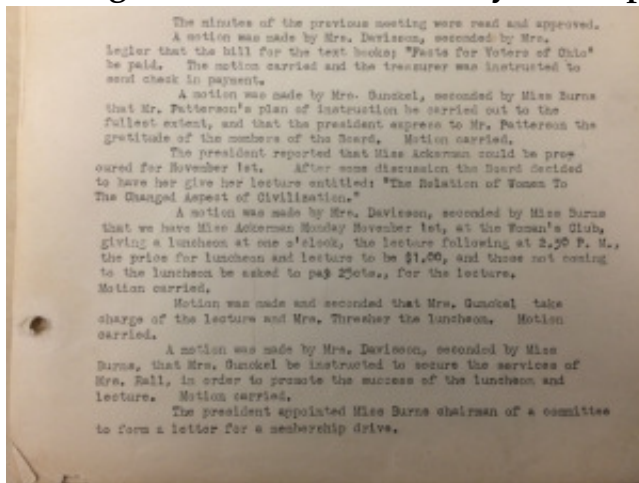
Sept. 24, 1914 Dayton Daily News "Dayton Women Will Go to Cleveland to March in Suffrage Parade"

(<https://womenssuffragemovementindayton.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/sept-24-1914-ddn-dayton-women-will-go-to-cleveland-to-march-in-suffrage-parade.pdf>)

Davisson would aid in the formation of the Dayton chapter for the League of Women's Voters on 1921, following the passage of the 19th Amendment. She served as their first Vice President, and aid in the development, "of a number of programs such as citizenship schools, county reorganization projects, city budget surveys, relief surveys, consumer projects, questionnaires, lecture series, trained personnel projects and radio projects," (MS-123 Finding Aid). There is no record of how long she maintained this office, but there exist multiple correspondences within the collection that indicate she was active with the Dayton League for many years. Davisson died on June 30, 1940 (MS-004 Finding Aid, 201).

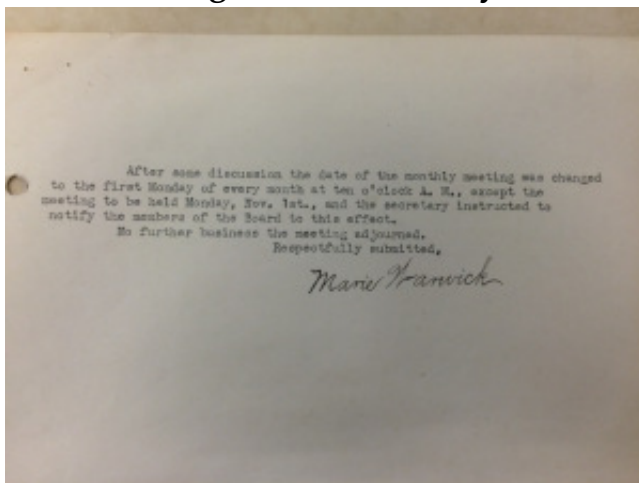


<https://womenssuffragemovementindayton.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/minutes-for-league-of-women-voters-dayton-chapter-pt-1.jpg>



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<https://womenssuffragemovementindayton.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/minutes-pt-3.jpg>

More than a Lawyer's Wife



Jesse Leech Davisson was a political leader and activist, became a founding member and president of the local Women's Suffrage Party of Montgomery County. She was born in 1859 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to Richard T. and Mary Ann Leech, who were residents of Dayton, Ohio where she was raised. She later married Oscar F. Davisson, a prominent Dayton lawyer in 1889, with whom she had two children, Richard and Marian (MS-004 Finding Aid). She served as the first president of this organization, from June 11, 1912 until the ratification of the 19th amendment in 1920.

Photo 1 Citation: Jesse Leech Davisson. "Mrs. Oscar F. Davisson of Dayton, Ohio, is one of the most recent members of the Advisory Council of the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage. Mrs. Davisson is President of the Dayton and Montgomery County Woman Suffrage Association and is a member of the Executive Committee of the Ohio State Woman Suffrage Association.," 1915 (Attributed to the photographer Edmonston; Library of Congress).

Photos 2-4 Citation: Minutes from the League of Women Voters Dayton Chapter meeting, c. October 7, 1920 (WSU Special Collections and Archives).

Photo 5 Citation: Jesse Leech Davisson and other suffragists outside of a New York City Coffee House, March 31, 1915. (Library of Congress).

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