

Emily Clark from LeRoy - -Where Are You?

While doing research for next years exhibit "Remember the Ladies*" I mentioned the project to Dr. Judy Jensen, who is a retired professor from SUNY Brockport. Judy now volunteers at the Susan B. Anthony House in Rochester. She asked what I knew about Emily Clark of LeRoy, who is mentioned in Susan B. Anthony's diary. I had forgotten about Emily Clark. She was an activist during the early 1850s and was primarily involved with the temperance movement that was supported by many suffragists. But I have decided that she is an enigma.

Susan B. Anthony mentions that she was in the company of Emily Clark of LeRoy in May 1852 while she was in Batavia lecturing on temperance:

"Miss Clark addressed the people of Batavia last evening, in a most earnest and truthful manner; and was listened to with marked attention. After the address the Secretary of the Society stated its objects and the means by which it is proposed to effect them, and called upon the friends present to co-operate with the Women's New York State Temperance Society"

There is another account that mentions that during the summer of 1852, Emily Clark, Mrs. Vaughn and Mrs. Attilia Albro traveled throughout the state collecting 28,000 signatures on a temperance petition. They canvassed thirty counties, organizing temperance societies and urging New Yorkers to adopt a liquor law similar to the temperance law passed in 1851 in Maine, known as the "Maine Law." In January 1853, the ladies attended the Albany Temperance meeting. This group included Amelia Bloomer. They presented the petition, with the 28,000 signatures and asked the New York State Legislature to proceed with a prohibitory law. "In a brief and dignified speech, Emily Clark presented the petition - after which they returned to the convention and reported the success of the mission."

In 1853, Emily addressed the Whole World Temperance Convention on the topic of electoral change: "Neolithic, the fearful wreck of manhood, now the destruction of all that is noble, generous and manly in youth, nor all the suffering of womanhood, nor all the miseries of childhood we so great but they can be remembered by the temperance ballot box."

From the New York Tribune, which printed her address: "The arguments advanced to silence women's voice on this subject are, perhaps, quite as strongly supported by the Holy Scriptures as those drawn from the same sources to sustain the orthodox of that climax of abominations, American slavery, the Devine right of kings. (followed by great applause)."

So who was Emily Clark of LeRoy? It certainly seems that she was working with some very important women, but where did she come from and what happened to her?

I checked the Ingham University database and it appears that Emily Clark graduated from Ingham in 1849. The catalogue for that year, mentions that Emily was from LeRoy. But was she living in LeRoy with her family? Or was she living in LeRoy on her own? And was she born in LeRoy? So far,

I haven't been able to find an Emily Clark living with any of the Clark families in LeRoy. I emailed Wilfred Vasile to see if he could find anything on Emily Clark in his genealogy files. He said that she doesn't appear on the 1850 census but he did find a notice in the January 2, 1856 LeRoy Gazette that mentions that Emily Clark married J.R. Jackson of Potsdam on December 26, 1855. According to the 1890 Ingham Alumnae catalogue, Emily Clark taught two years in Painsville, Ohio and a year in Warren, Ohio and 2 years in Mt. Morris, NY. It also mentions that she married John R. Jackson in 1855 and had two children. She was a Lecturer in 1859-60 on the Constitution of U.S. with reference to slavery; Lecturer on Temperance. She lived in Malone, NY; Minneapolis; Valley Springs, Dakota; Halifax Court House, Va. and in 1890 was living in Bon Air, Virginia.

What I suspect, is that when she graduated from Ingham, she became involved with the temperance movement and for a couple of years she traveled around, speaking and organizing temperance groups. Apparently, even after her marriage in 1855 she was still lecturing on slavery and temperance. She believed that to make changes

it would be necessary to secure electoral advantages, and that would include securing suffrage for women.

There are so many unanswered questions about Emily Clark. Who were her parents? When was she born and where? Who was her husband? Why did she move around so much? Was that because of her husband's job? When did she die? Where is she buried? A lot of questions, and right now, not many answers.

*This is a reference to a comment made in a letter written by Abigail Adams to her husband, John Adams on March 31, 1776. Part of her comment:

"I long to hear that you have declared an independency. And, by the way, in the new code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation."

