

The Progressive Era – [Grades 9-12]



Jennie B. Powers, a Local Progressive Reformer

Suggested Lessons

A template for teacher lessons written by Jennifer Carroll., for the Historical Society of Cheshire County. 2022





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Jennie B. Powers, a Local Progressive Reformer

Introduction

This packet contains suggestions for an introductory lesson to the Progressive Era, one that incorporates local history and primary sources. All of the necessary primary sources noted in the lessons can be requested, for free, from the Historical Society of Cheshire County at dired@hscconh.org.

Lessons are sequenced to facilitate an optional visit to the Historical Society of Cheshire County and to support success in the suggested culminating activity.

Learning Goals

This unit asks students to define a progressive, in terms of the early 20th century definition. They will analyze the life of Jennie B. Powers, agent for the Keene Humane Society, in order to decide if she fits that definition. Students will tour the city of Keene to learn more about Powers and other contemporary progressive reformers of the turn of the 20th century. They will think critically about whether or not the Progressive Era ended in the 1920s and they will make connections between progressives of the early 20th century and progressives today.

This plan addresses historical thinking and media literacy standards. Students will explain historical events and issues and demonstrate their awareness of civic responsibility. See Appendix A for a complete list of C3 and State of NH Standards covered by this unit.

Essential Questions

1. What is a progressive? Was Jennie Powers a progressive reformer?
2. Was there just one Progressive Era? Can we find evidence of progressive reforms today?

Essential Understandings

1. Jennie B. Powers was one of many women during the Progressive Era who fought for reforms in their local communities.
2. Jennie B. Powers' own writings and photography are primary sources.
3. Jennie Powers' life and career illustrate a modern American woman at the turn of the 20th century.
4. SPCAs and Humane Societies were some of the first organizations to tackle animal abuse and child abuse cases in the country.
5. Each generation of American citizens leads movements to reform societal ills.



Transferable Skills and Understandings

Students will be able to independently use their learning to

1. Understand that individuals play a role making change on a larger scale.
2. Understand that significant events happening locally are often also reflected nationally.
3. Use primary sources as a means of interpreting history.

Historical Thinking Skills Acquisition

1. Students will use local history to develop questions about national history events.
2. Students will analyze historical sources.
3. Students will make inferences about the past using evidence.
4. Students will gain chronological awareness.

Content Knowledge Acquisition

1. The Progressive Era was diverse, having many reform movements.
2. Protecting the rights of animals, children and spouses are examples of Progressive Era reforms.
3. The Keene Humane Society was established to protect the rights of work animals in 1875.
4. Humane societies around the country expanded their mission in the 1890s to include protections for children.
5. Jennie B. Powers was the first woman hired by the Keene Humane Society to carry out the Society's mission.
6. Jennie B. Powers used firearms to protect herself and to euthanize animals.
7. Humane societies in the early 20th century had the right to work with law enforcement to remove children from their homes and place them in the care of others.
8. Poverty and abuse have been a part of our history forever.
9. During the Progressive Era, society's view of women shifted away from the Cult of Domesticity in favor of the era of the New Woman.
10. First-hand accounts and photographs are a form of primary sources.
11. Newspapers can be seen as either a primary or secondary source.
12. National history is intricately tied to local history.



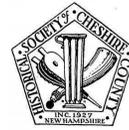
Lesson Summaries

<u>Pre-HSCC Visit Lessons</u>	Key Source(s) Used
<p>Lesson 1 Who is a Progressive? Students will read President Theodore Roosevelt's 1912 speech <i>Who is a Progressive?</i> Teacher will ask students to annotate the article and then work in pairs to create a list of criteria for a progressive. Teacher will facilitate a discussion wherein students share their criteria list as a class to create a working definition of what defines a progressive.</p>	<p>1912 speech <i>Who is a Progressive</i></p>
<p>Lesson 2. Was Jennie B. Powers a Progressive? Students will watch the short film <i>Jennie B. Powers: The Woman Who Dares</i>. They will then revisit their definition of a progressive and analyze the ways in which Jennie Powers does or does not meet the criteria. Option: use the worksheet Analyzing the Film.</p>	<p>Vimeo Film. Jennie B. Powers: The Woman Who Dares.</p> <p>Analyzing the film worksheet</p>
<p>Lesson 3 (option). How do we know about Jennie Powers? Use HSCC lessons on Primary vs. Secondary Sources. Have students discuss the difference between the two. Rewatch the film, <i>Jennie B. Powers</i> and have students complete the worksheet Identifying Primary & Secondary Resources in Jennie B. Powers. In the worksheet students will be asked to identify the types of sources that were used in the making of the film and write about how those sources contribute to learning about Jennie B. Powers. (Note: this lesson may take one day to complete)</p>	<p>Lesson Plan: Primary vs. Secondary Sources</p> <p>Identifying Primary & Secondary Resources Worksheet</p>
<p>Lesson 4. What Can a Primary Source Tell Us? Students separate into three groups to analyze a 1906 newspaper article about Jennie Powers. Each group will make notes about one of the following topics: animal rights, children's rights, and the role of women in society. The class will discuss their findings as a group. The goal is to get students asking questions about why things were that way? and what does it mean? Teacher may also discuss whether or not a newspaper article should be considered a primary or secondary source.</p>	<p>1906 Boston Post article (jpg)</p> <p>1906 Boston Post article (transcribed)</p>

<u>HSCC Visit</u>	Key Source(s) Used
<p>Lesson 5. Progressive Reformers in Our Own Backyard. Students will take a downtown walking tour with HSCC staff to learn about Jennie B. Powers and other Progressive reformers of the 1890s-1920s.</p>	<p>Walldogs Mural Downtown sites</p>

<u>Post-HSCC Visit Lessons</u>
<p>Lesson 6. The Progressive Era. Teacher can build on students' understanding of local-level Progressive reforms to transition into their unit on the Progressive Era.</p>

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Lesson 7. Is there only one Progressive Era? Teacher leads a discussion about whether or not progressive reforms only existed in one time period. Compare what they know of other time periods and today to the Progressive Era of the 1890s-1920s.

Lesson 8. Today's Progressive Reformer. Students research a contemporary progressive reformer or reform movement, present their findings, and make an argument as to what makes that person/movement progressive.



Appendix A: NH State Standards & C3 Frameworks

The following standards tie in with the story of Jennie B. Powers.

C3 Frameworks

Civics: Processes, Rules, and Laws

D2.Civ.14.9-12. Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.

History: Change, Continuity, and Context

D2.His.2.9-12. Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.

D2.His.3.9-12. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.

History: Perspectives

D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

D2.His.8.9-12. Analyze how current interpretations of the past are limited by the extent to which available historical sources represent perspectives of people at the time.

History: Historical Sources and Evidence

D2.His.11.9-12. Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.

D2.His.12.9-12. Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to pursue further inquiry and investigate additional sources.

Causation and Argumentation

D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.

D2.His.16.9-12. Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.

Communicating and Critiquing Conclusions



D4.2.9-12. Construct explanations using sound reasoning, correct sequence, examples, and details with significant and pertinent information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanation given its purpose.

D4.7.9-12. Assess options for individual and collective action to address local, regional, and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy identification, and complex causal reasoning.

NH Social Studies Standards

Civics: The Nature and Purpose of Government.

The Keene Humane Society and Jennie B. Powers worked with the county sheriff's office to enforce local, state and federal laws. Teachers could address the varied partnerships between county government and private organizations in the past as well as today.

1. SS:CV:1. Identify structures and function of local/county government.
2. SS:CV:12:1.2: Examine how institutions and individuals make, apply, and enforce rules and laws.
3. SS:CV:12:2.4: Evaluate how individual rights have been extended in the United States.

Civics: Rights & Responsibilities.

Jennie B. Powers was an engaged citizen, who used her position as a woman in the humane society to protect the rights of animals and humans.

1. SS:CV:12:4.1: Demonstrate responsible practices within the political process.
2. SS:CV:12:4.2: Investigate how knowledgeable and engaged citizens have acted to preserve and extend their liberties.
3. SS:CV:12:4.3: Explain why the preservation of liberty requires the participation of knowledgeable and engaged citizens.

History: World Views and Value Systems

Jennie B. Powers used photography as a means of calling attention to societal ills. Similar to Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine, she exhibited her photographs during lectures as a way of exposing a truth in the community.

1. SS:HI:12:3.2: Analyze how the arts and science often reflect and/or influence major ideas, values and conflicts of particular time periods.



Detailed Background for Teachers

General Information

Jennie B. Powers was once known across the country as The Woman Who Dares, cited by the Boston Post newspaper as having arrested more men than any other woman in the country by 1906. She was born Jennie Belle Carter in 1864 in Brattleboro, VT. In her youth, Powers developed a love of the natural world, often collecting specimens of insects, reptiles, and small animals. As she grew into her teenage years, she learned to shoot. By the time she reached adulthood and was married, Powers had become very involved in preventing cruelty to animals.

In 1903, the Keene Humane Society hired Jennie Powers as its first female agent. Soon she was investigating and working to prosecute hundreds of cases of abuse each year. Within a couple of years, Powers was deputized by the county sheriff, making it easier for her to arrest accused abusers. She continued to work as the humane society agent in this region until her death in 1936.

Jennie Powers' legacy is remembered in many ways. In 1967, for instance, the Keene Humane Society named their 250 acre site the Jennie B. Powers Memorial Shelter in her honor. Today the Monadnock Humane Society continues her legacy of honoring and respecting the relationship between humans and animals.

Significant Local Events

- 1864. Jennie Belle Carter was born in Brattleboro, VT.
- 1875. The Keene Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was established following a speech by Mr. George T. Angell of the MA SPCA.
- 1879. The Keene SPCA voted to incorporate as the Keene Humane Society.
- 1881. Jennie married Frank A. Powers of VT, at age 17.
- C.1882. Jennie lost her first child.
- 1889. Jennie Powers opened a taxidermy business in her home.
- 1893. Jennie helped to establish a natural history museum in the Brattleboro library.



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- 1898. Jennie had her first case as an agent of a humane society in VT.
- 1903. Jennie Powers was hired as the Keene Humane Society's first female agent, following a speech she gave on the prevention of animal cruelty.
- 1905. Jennie was promoted to deputy sheriff on humane society matters.
- 1905. Jennie began documenting her work using photography.
- 1905. Photo activist Jacob Riis visits Brattleboro to lecture on *The Other Half*.
- 1906. Jennie Powers became known as *The Woman Who Dares* across the country after winning an award from the MA SPCA and the AP Press picked up the story.
- 1910. Jennie divorced her husband and moved into the humane society's apartment.
- 1914. The humane society was renamed the Cheshire County Humane Society.
- 1920s-1930s. Grace Richardson began work as the city of Keene's social worker, taking on cases related to people, which allowed the humane society to begin to refocus its attention on prevention of cruelty to animals.
- 1936. Jennie Powers died of pneumonia. Harry Frechette, her assistant, became the new humane society agent in Keene.
- 1967. The humane society moved to a 250-acre farm in Swanzey and named their facility the Jennie B. Powers Memorial Shelter.
- 1970. The humane society was renamed the Monadnock Region Humane Society.
- 1999. The humane society broke ground on their Learning & Adoption Center, combining a shelter with educational programs, community room, veterinary clinic, and walking trails.
- 2019. Elaine Wallis and Noella Cotman painted a large mural of Jennie Powers in downtown Keene.
- 2022. The Historical Society of Cheshire County & SALT Project created a short film on the life of Jennie Powers.



Connections to National Events

- 1873. US Congress passed the "28-hour law" to prevent the ill treatment of livestock in transit on trains.
- 1874. Henry Bergh, head of the NY SPCA removed 10-yr old Mary Ellen Wilson from an abusive home with the help of local Methodist missionary Etta A. Wheeler. The Society's lawyer took on the first child abuse case to remove Mary Ellen permanently from the home. SPCAs across the country began taking on child abuse cases.
- 1875. The New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was established as the first child protection organization.
- 1877. First large-scale organization for assisting the poor was established, the Charity Organization Society in Buffalo, NY, which opened offices across the country and began training 'social workers' in the late 19th c.
- 1887. Jacob Riis began documenting urban poverty in NYC.
- 1889. Jane Addams established the Hull House in Chicago.
- 1894. The American Humane Society adopted the slogan "The man who is cruel to his beast would be cruel to his wife and child."
- 1910. The US Supreme Court ruled that a wife could not file assault and battery charges against a husband because those matters were considered private.
- 1912. The Federal Children's Bureau was established.
- 1920. Spousal abuse became illegal in all US states.
- 1920. There were 440 settlements modeled after Hull House across the US, training social workers.
- 1920. The 19th amendment passed, giving most women in the US the legal right to vote.
- 1922. Some 300 non-governmental child protection societies were in operation across America.



- 1930s. The Great Depression caused many private nonprofit agencies to lose funding and close, including many animal rights/child protection organizations.
- 1935. The Social Security Act passed as part of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. This law gave further assistance to the elderly and unemployed.
- 1956. The number of private nonprofit agencies dedicated to child protection had dropped from 300 in 1922 to 10 agencies in 1956.
- 1962. Pediatrician Henry Kempe wrote an article on *The Battered Child Syndrome*, bringing national attention to child abuse into the 1970s.
- 1962. Congress revised the Social Security Act to include the Child Protective Services agency. This forced states to establish government agencies to protect children.
- 1966. Congress passed the Animal Welfare Act focused on the handling, transport, and sale of pets as well as laboratory research. It only included six types of animals.
- 1974. In 1974, Congress enacted the child abuse prevention and treatment law, CAPTA (Public Law 93-247) requiring states to establish child abuse reporting procedures and investigation systems. 60,000 cases were reported the first year.
- 1976. A federal law passed restricting underground dog fighting.
- 1978. Indian Child Welfare Act– Congress attempted to curb the number of Native American children who were being removed from their homes. Prior to that, about 25-35% of Native children were forcibly removed from their homes and placed in non-Indian homes or institutions.
- 1985. Federal law expands prevention of cruelty to animals in research laboratories, after PETA investigates testing done on monkeys in laboratories.
- 1990. The federal law was expanded– all pets must be kept at shelters for 5 days before selling them to a new owner in order to curb the sale of stolen pets.
- 2000. Child abuse reports to the government were about 3 million.



About the Walldogs Mural, Jennie B. Powers, in Keene, NH

Summary

In the early 1900s, the local humane society could be called in by local law enforcement to investigate job sites or private homes of those who may be abusing their animals. Mrs. Jennie B. Powers was the humane society agent who investigated those cases. Armed with a deputy sheriff badge, a revolver, a camera and her journals, Powers often documented abuse and helped to protect vulnerable animals and humans.

Jennie B. Powers appears front and center in a mural painted in her honor, located at 120 Main Street in downtown Keene, NH. On either side of her one can see pets, farm animals, and children being cared for. In an age when animal cruelty laws were more defined than laws against family abuse, humane societies often led the charge to protect the rights of children and wives who were abused and neglected. Her work could be dangerous, requiring bravery and physical stamina. More than once she received death threats so she often slept with her revolver under her pillow.

Mural Designer Bio(s)

The mural was designed by Elaine Wallis and Noella Cotman of Cornwall, Ontario. They were inspired by the fact that Jennie Powers was a woman with no fear and one of the first women deputy sheriffs in New Hampshire.

Related Murals

Other murals that relate to local residents who worked tirelessly for reform include Catharine Fiske and Jonathan Daniels.



Appendix B: Additional Resources

Local Resources

HSCC Primary Sources

- Correspondence to JBP, mainly from MA SPCA and responses to her letters regarding animal rights. Of note: letter regarding horse abuse in Hollywood films and letter regarding inhumane transport of eggs by rail. Record Group 115, Keene Humane Society Collection.
- Annual reports from the Keene Humane Society as well as regional and national animal rights groups. Record Group 115, Keene Humane Society Collection.
- Journal excerpts kept by JBP, include word for word interactions with abusers and county officials as well as her diagnoses of animal ailments. Record Group 115, Keene Humane Society Collection. RESTRICTED as names of individuals are given. See director of education.
- Secretary minutes and financial records for KHS. Record Group 115, Keene Humane Society Collection.
- Photographs taken by the Society/JBP. Subjects include: animals, children, elderly, extreme poverty. Record Group 115, Keene Humane Society Collection. RESTRICTED ACCESS. See director of education.
- Regional/National publications on animal rights, mostly MA SPCA.
- Newspaper Ads, Brattleboro Reformer, 1910s. Wanted ads for people to adopt children from Jennie B. Powers.
- Newspaper articles, Keene Sentinel, 1900s-1930s. Articles related to the work of Jennie B. Powers and the Keene Humane Society.

Broader Potential Resources

- Book, Schneider, Dorothy. *American Women in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920*. New York : Facts on File, c1993.
- Article, American Humane Association. "[Mary Ellen Wilson: How one girl's plight started the child-protection movement.](#)"
- Article, Animal Welfare Information Center. [Legislative History of the Animal Welfare Act.](#)



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- Blog, Brown, Janice. *New Hampshire's First Women Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs*. 10 Aug 2015. Cowhampshire.com
- Blog, Brown, Janice. *Human and Animal Rights Activist, Cheshire County NH, Deputy Sheriff Jennie Belle (Carter) Powers*. 14 Mar 2020. Cowhampshire.com
- Book, Capinera, John L., ed., *Encyclopedia of Entomology*, 2nd ed. Springer Science: Dordrecht, 2008. (researched Prof. Charles Fernald of MA College of Agriculture)
- Book, Bogre, Michelle. *Photography as Activism : Images for Social Change*. Amsterdam ; Boston : Focal Press, c2012.
- Book, Gordon, Linda. *Heroes of Their Own Lives : the Politics and History of Family violence : Boston, 1880-1960*. New York, N.Y., U.S.A. : Viking, 1988.
- Book, Myers, John E.B. [*A Short History of Child Protection in America*](#).
- Book, Ware, Susan. *Modern American Women : A Documentary History*. Boston : McGraw-Hill, c2002.