

Dr. Lydia Hammond Strowbridge

(1830 - 1904)



Lydia Hammond, born in Freetown in 1830, and John W. Strowbridge, born in Solon in 1827, were married in 1851. They moved to Cortland's Monroe Heights where they lived for nearly half a century. She was considered an invalid in her youth and also in her later years. John was known to suffer heart problems early as an adult. Health does not appear to have restricted their dedication to causes, however.

Lydia determined to make medicine a career and studied with local doctors. As John went off to war, Lydia enrolled in the Hygeio Therapeutic Medical College of New York City. As one of Cortland County's earliest women physicians, her practice concentrated on women's and children's

diseases. She supported the women's dress reform movement, abolition, women's voting rights, and temperance. She and her husband were members of the Universalist Church. On one occasion while at her son's home at the corner of Monroe Heights and Cortland Street (Groton Avenue), two men broke in, dragged her by the hair outdoors, and continued to bang her head on the ground. Her cries for help brought out a male neighbor. That sent the violators on the run to two nearby saloons, where Lydia identified them to police.

In 1869 she and seven male speakers took part in the 21st anniversary of the Friends of Human Progress, at Waterloo, New York. Its theme was the failure of our social system as well as our moral and physical lives. A female reporter from New York City described Lydia's appearance as "dark complected, about 37 years old, with sharp brown eyes, a pleasant demeanor, clad in a bloomer costume of gray trousers being loose and hanging well, and her skirt descending an inch or two below the knee. The body of her coat fitted lightly..."

In January 1898, John Strowbridge drove his cutter to the DL&W railroad station to pick up his wife returning from Marathon. On Pendleton Street near Port Watson Street he was seen to collapse to the bottom of his vehicle. Two passing physicians corralled the horse and were stunned to find John dead.

Lydia died October 4, 1904 of cancer. Since her husband's death, her own health had once again made her an invalid.

She is commemorated by New York State sign in front of Cortland's hospital on Homer Avenue near the corner of West Main Street.



Photo by Harris. OFFICERS OF THE POLITICAL EQUALITY CLUB.
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Biography based on an article by Mary Ann Kane. Pictures courtesy of Tabitha Scoville, Cortland County Historical Society