



JOAN BALLWEG

PO Box 8952, State Capitol
Madison, Wisconsin 53708-8952
Toll-free: (888) 534-0041
Fax: (608) 282-3641
Rep.Ballweg@legis.wi.gov

WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE

41ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

During my last district day, I held two spring listening sessions at the Berlin Public Library and the Ripon Public Library. I appreciate everyone who took the time to discuss their concerns and suggestions with me. If you did not have a chance to make it out, feel free to [contact my office](#) with your thoughts.

Also while in Berlin, I had the opportunity to tour the home of Lucy Morris Smith. She was recently featured in one of my [previous e-updates](#) for Women's History Month and was influential during the women's suffrage movement.



Lucy was named the first President of the Wisconsin Federation of Women's Clubs, was appointed to the Wisconsin Free Library Commission in 1896 by Governor Robert LaFollette and was known for hosting prominent women, such as Susan B. Anthony, Julia Ward Howe and Elizabeth Cady Stanton in her Berlin home.

I want to thank Sue, the current owner of the home, and Chris, the Berlin Library Director, for allowing me and my staff this tour and providing us with some historical insights into Lucy's story.

My last stop in Berlin was a presentation to the 4th grade class at All Saints Catholic School. We had a great time talking about the structure of state government and playing a game about Wisconsin's state symbols.



In Honor of Women's History Month
Berlin Journal - Bobbie Erdmann



MRS. CHARLES SECOR MORRIS



Did you ever look at the large marker in Nathan Strong Park and wonder who the lady was who is honored there? What did she do? In honor of Women's History Month we'd like to tell you a little about Lucy Smith Morris.

Whenever women's rights or the Suffrage movement is spoken about in Berlin, someone always brings up the little woman who lived in the big house on Park Avenue, Lucy Smith Morris. Berlinites who know of the woman and her efforts and activities point with pride that she lived and worked in this community.

The life of Lucy Smith Morris is a story of great accomplishment for one woman to achieve, even in her long span of years. She was a genius in leadership and was most successful when bringing women together to enrich the quality of their lives while transforming the worlds of culture and reform. Her life stands out as an example of courage, honesty and kindness.

Lucy Smith was born August 28, 1850, on a farm north of Markesan in Green Lake County. She was educated at the Musical Academy in Beaver Dam and the Notre Dame Convent, now Mount Mary College in Milwaukee. Her father, Samuel W. Smith, was elected to represent Green Lake County in the Wisconsin State Assembly in 1863. At that time the Assembly session opened on January 14 and adjourned on April 2. Later her two brothers were also elected to the Assembly, Ned in 1889 and Charles in 1903.

After teaching school for several years, Lucy married Charles Secor Morris of Berlin on May 8, 1876. When 21 years old, Charles established the Fourth Ward Flour and Feed Mill and rapidly expanded it to deal in all kinds of flour, feed, wood, coal, lime and stucco; at another location he manufactured drain tile and bricks. Later, he bought canning factories in Markesan.

In 1887, Lucy and Charles bought a large Queen Ann style home at 721 Park Ave (now 209 E. Park Ave.) which became the center of their social and political gatherings. Lucy was known as a gracious and generous hostess. Through Charles' widespread business interests and Lucy's increasing social prominence, they came to know and entertain a great many interesting and distinguished persons. Lucy became dedicated to the cause of women's suffrage and was close to national leaders of the movement. Notables such as Susan B. Anthony, Julia Ward House, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Jessie Hooper would all be guests of Lucy's when these ladies visited the area on speaking engagements etc.

Lucy recognized the potential of women's political clout if they organized statewide. In 1892 the General Federation of Women's Clubs appointed her correspondence chairman for Wisconsin. She began contacting the almost 500 clubs in the state. Through her efforts, on Oct. 20, 1896, the

Wisconsin Federation of Women's clubs was founded at the Pfister Hotel in Milwaukee. Lucy was elected the first president.

Second only to her interest in the club movement was her interest in the promotion of libraries. She was appointed to the Wisconsin Free Library Commission in 1896 by Governor Robert LaFollette. It later became known as the Wisconsin Library Association and Lucy served as president for 20 years. She also served as president of the Fox River Valley Library Association and on the Berlin Library Board. During her tenure as President of the WFWC, her club members established over 100 libraries around the state of Wisconsin. It is unknown how many Wisconsin communities would not have had free libraries without her help. She was also instrumental in starting the state traveling library service. For her accomplishments in promoting libraries Lucy was named to the Wisconsin Library Hall of Fame in 2018.

Locally, Lucy Smith Morris was a member of Friends-in-Council and founded the Athena Club in 1890, the first Wisconsin club to affiliate with the General Federation of Women's Clubs. Clubs were an important vehicle for women since they helped them refine their education, and taught them speaking and organizational skills. To that end, Lucy wrote a Shakespearian Study, "A Course of Studies in English History" in 1903. The Study was widely used by clubwomen and colleges for a number of years.

She helped to organize Wisconsin's League of Women Voters. In 1930 she was named to the Honor Roll of the League.

Since the Morris' had no children of their own they directed their actions to making the world a better place for other people's children. The couple contributed the funds for the first manual training and domestic science departments of the Berlin High School. They were also instrumental in the movement to start a hospital in Berlin and were involved in the Oakwood Cemetery Board. Charles served on the Berlin City Council and the Berlin Hospital Board.

In 1996 the Berlin Branch of the American Association of University Women applied for and received a 'Wisconsin Historical Society Marker' honoring Lucy's accomplishments. It was placed in Nathan Strong Park and dedicated in 1998.

Lucy Smith Morris died on May 27, 1935 at the age of 84. A gentlewoman with an aristocracy of mind and heart, the City of Berlin would be much poorer without her contributions.

Sources: Berlin Journal, Oshkosh Northwestern, Chicago Sunday Tribune, Education History of Wisconsin, and a variety of papers written about Lucy on file at the Berlin Public Library and the Berlin Historical Society.