

The Westminster Handbook to Women in American Religious History

Editors

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Billings, Mary Charlotte Ward Grannis Webster (1824–1904). Author, missionary, first ordained woman Universalist minister in Texas. Mary Charlotte Ward was born to an Episcopal family in Litchfield, Connecticut,

and converted to Universalism in her teens. She first married (1845–66) Hartford silk merchant Frederick Grannis. They enjoyed European travel and a beautiful home. Being childless, she devoted herself to writing stories, poems, hymns, and travelogues. She published widely, as in the *Ladies Repository*. Her stories expressed her theology, since public preaching was not widely available to women. Next she married Universalist minister Charles Webster (1869–77). As lay preacher, she transitioned toward public ministry. Finally, she married James Billings (1885–98), first Texas Universalist missionary. Based in Hico, they established the Texas Universalist Convention, which ordained her in 1892. Universalism in Texas significantly declined after her death.

DUUB; UUWM; E. R. Hanson, *Our Woman Workers* (1884).

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Brown, Olympia (1835–1926). First American woman ordained by denominational authority, suffragist. Olympia Brown was born in Michigan to Universalist parents from Vermont. Her family supported abolition and female education. She graduated from Antioch College in 1860, during Unitarian Horace Mann's presidency. Influenced by *Antoinette Brown (Blackwell), she graduated from St. Lawrence University and was ordained in 1863 by the Lawrence Association, Malone, New York. Brown was minister in Weymouth Landing, Massachusetts, from 1864 to 1870. In 1867 she spent four months promoting suffrage in Kansas. In 1870 she served the Universalist church in Bridgeport, Connecticut. She married John Henry Willis in 1873 (she kept her surname), and they had two children. The Universalist congregation of Racine, Wisconsin, flourished under her 1876–85 ministry. Brown left parish ministry in 1887 to work for women's rights in Wisconsin and the National Woman Suffrage Association. She demonstrated before the White House when she was in her 80s and lived to cast a vote.

ANB; DUUB; EAWR; NoAW; RLA; UU; UUWM; Dorothy Emerson, ed., *Standing Before Us* (2000); Stephen Kendrick, *A Faith People Make* (1988); E. R. Hanson, *Our Woman Workers* (1884).

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Fahs, Sophia Lyon (1876–1978). Religious educator and Unitarian minister. Sophia Lyon was born in Hangchow, China, to Presbyterian missionaries. She graduated from the College of Wooster in 1897. In 1902 she married Harvey Fahs and they had five children. She received a master's degree from Columbia University Teachers College (1904) and a divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary (UTS) (1926). She taught religious education at UTS from 1927 to 1944 and directed the church school of Riverside Church from 1933 to 1942. As curriculum editor for the American Unitarian Association (1937–51), Fahs launched the New Beacon Series in Religious Education and revolutionized liberal religious education. Fahs believed children should discover their own religious truths through story, biography, and nature before learning Bible stories. She was, in 1958, one of the first Unitarian women ordained to ministry.

ANB; DARB; UU; Barbara Anna Keely, ed., *Faith of Our Foremothers* (1997); Stephen Kendrick, *A Faith People Make* (1988); Papers, Andover-Harvard Theological Library, Harvard Divinity School.

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Soule, Caroline Augusta White (1824–1903). Universalist minister, missionary, and author. Born to a Dutch Reformed mother and a Universalist father, Caroline White was educated at the Albany Female Academy and became principal at the Universalists' Clinton Liberal Institute. She married Universalist minister Henry Soule in 1843. After her husband died in 1852 Soule provided for their five children by writing, teaching, and editing. While she was the assistant editor of *Ladies' Repository* she lived in Iowa and New York. In 1869 she helped organize the Woman's Centenary Aid Association, which grew to 13,000 members. Renamed the Woman's Centenary Association, Soule served as its first president from 1873 to

Hanaford, Phoebe Ann Coffin (1829–1921). Universalist minister, activist, and writer. Phoebe Coffin was born on Nantucket, where her parents' Quaker faith shaped her religious authority and intellectual development. In 1848 she married Joseph Hanaford. She wrote prolifically and edited the *Ladies' Repository* from 1866 to 1868. After converting to Universalism, Hanaford became a licensed preacher and was ordained in Hingham, Massachusetts, in 1868, becoming the first ordained woman in New England. She was called by the Universalist church in New Haven (1870 and 1884) and Jersey City (1874). Her most famous book was *Women of the Century* (1876). She helped edit *The Woman's Bible* in the 1890s. Hanaford worked for *Julia Ward Howe's Women's Peace Conference (1870), and for temperance, abolition, and women's suffrage. She preached funeral orations for *Elizabeth Cady Stanton and *Susan B. Anthony.

EAWR; NoAW; RLA; UU; UUWM; Dorothy Emerson, ed., *Standing Before Us*, (2000); E. R. Hanson, *Our Woman Workers* (1884).

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1880. Soule first preached in 1874, while she was a missionary to Scotland. She was ordained by the Scottish Universalist Convention in 1880, the first woman ordained in Britain.

ANB; DUUB; NoAW; UU; UUWM; E. R. Hanson, *Our Woman Workers* (1884); Papers, Manuscripts, and Archives, New York Public Library.

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