

Florence Halsey



Florence Halsey Passport Photo, Courtesy of Ancestry.

Florence Halsey was a founding member of the Passaic County Parks Commission and one of the leaders of the suffragette movement in New Jersey.

Florence was born in Mahwah, New Jersey on September 3, 1875 to Lewis B. Halsey and Sarah Frances Sheffield. After graduating from Princeton University, Lewis founded Sheffield Farms which became one of the largest dairy companies in the world. Florence attended Wellesley College in Massachusetts where she was a member of the history club, the tennis team, and the Phi Sigma Fraternity. Halsey traveled to France during the first World War and served as a Red Cross ambulance driver for eighteen months. Starting in 1914 Halsey became active in the women's suffrage movement and was a member of the New Jersey Woman's Suffrage Association. During a push for a referendum in New Jersey in 1915, she drove suffrage speakers around the state and produced a press release that read:

“Men of New Jersey be just! One hundred thousand of your women are asking you today for the right of self-government. They do not ask that you give up your right or any privilege that is yours. They ask only for the same right that long ago was made a free gift to all American men, white or black.”

In 1919, she was chosen president of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. In 1929, she was elected chairman of the New Jersey Women's International League for Peace and Freedom's Northern division. Following the passage of the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote, Florence Halsey became president of the New Jersey League of Women's Voters. She also started and served as editor of The New Jersey Civic Pilot, a journal that educated women on voting processes.

Halsey was also active in progressive politics outside of the League of Women's Voters, particularly during the 1920s, and she gave several lectures promoting world peace and women's participation in civic affairs. In July 1926, while living on Goffle Road outside of Hawthorne, Miss Halsey was appointed by Justice Charles C. Black to the preliminary Passaic County Parks Commission. The commission was empowered to hire the most prestigious landscape architects and planners in the United States — the Olmsted Brothers Association. This Commission had the authorization to spend up to \$10,000 in the creation of a survey for the establishment of a County park system.

In 1927 Justice Black moved to make the Passaic County Parks Commission permanent which would have included Florence; however, she rejected her appointment.

Florence retired from her position as an appointed member of the State Board for Old Age Pensions and Board Revisions of State Tax Law in 1933 and moved to Coleman Station, NY where she lived until her death in 1945 at the age of 69.