

Island Girl: Justice Florence Kerins Murray

4 November 2010

Museum of Newport Irish History

Marian Mathison Desrosiers Ph. D.

Achievements

- Respected military leader
- Newport community elected official
- State senator representing Newport
- Educator of youth and lawyers
- National leader of judicial prominence
- Pioneer for women in Rhode Island

2 Kay Street, Newport



Lisdoonvarna, County Clare



Federal Census Newport 1900

- John Kerins age 40 Head of Household
Immigrated from Ireland 1880
- Catherine Kerins age 33 Married in 1887
Immigrated from Ireland
- Children

John	age 11
William	age 10
Raymond	age 8
Lillian	age 5
Pauline	age 2
- Living at 565 Thames Street, Ward 5

Carey School and 18 Narragansett Avenue



Rogers High School 1933



Syracuse University 1938



- Class officer for four years
- Editor *Daily Orange* Newspaper
- Editor *Syracusan* magazine
- Alpha Chi Omega Sorority

Prudence Island Teaching and the Hurricane of 1938



Boston University Law School 1942

- BU Law first enrolled women in 1872
- Only female graduate in the 1942 class
- Rank 14 out of 73
- One of 133 out of 354-passed written and oral bar exam in Massachusetts in 1942
- Admitted to the Massachusetts bar while in uniform, 12 October 1942



Leadership: War and Post-War Army Service 1942-1948

- Field Inspector for Five Training Centers for WAC
- Director of Third Service Command for 20,000 women
- Lt. Colonel and Legion of Merit



Marriage of Florence and Paul Murray 21 October 1943



Murray as Lawyer

- Admission by exam to RI bar 1947
- Fifth woman lawyer in RI history
- Individual law practice
- Admission to practice before U.S. Supreme Court, U.S. Tax Court, and U.S. District Court
- RI Delegate to National Association of Women Lawyers Meetings

1948 Newport Election

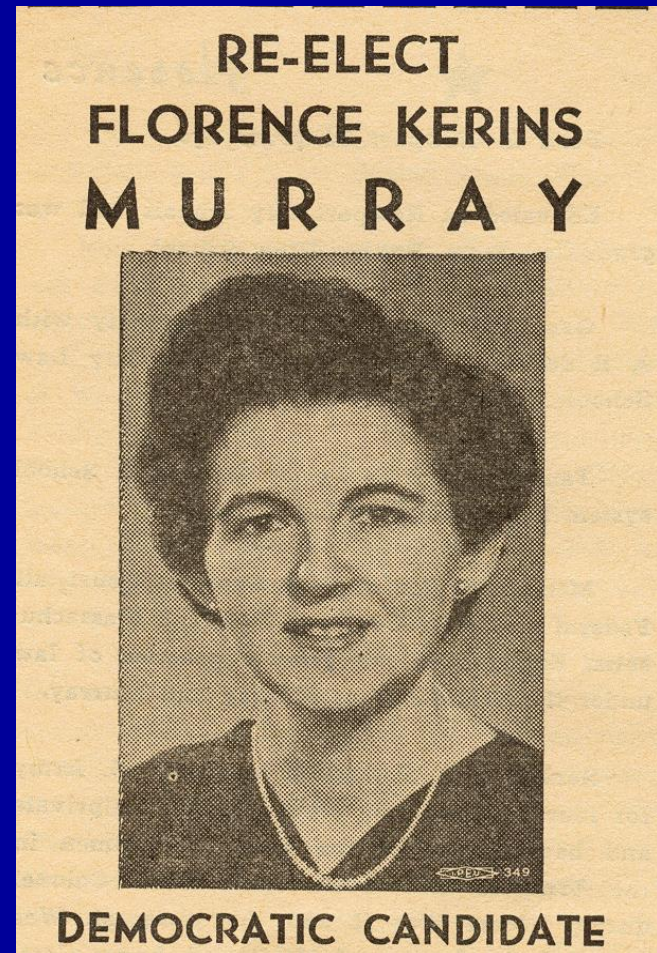


- 1948- wins under new RI primary law
- Age 32-youngest woman ever elected
- Importance of Democratic Party precinct chairman
- Importance of RI Bar Association

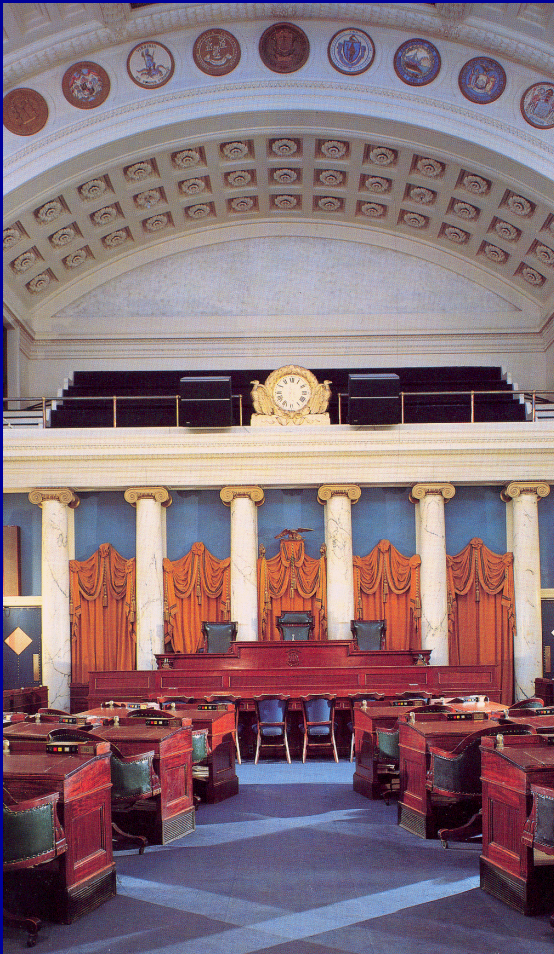
Newport School Committee 1953

Chairman Florence Murray

- Equal rights for women teachers
- Technology in schools
- Health and nutrition
- Construction and staffing of two elementary schools and campus style Rogers High School



RI State Senate 1948-1956



- RI State Scholarships
- State Aid to Schools
- Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act
- Breaking barriers: first woman chair of RI Senate Committee Special Legislation

Florence and Paul Murray with Son Paul, Born on 31 March 1951



Senate Success 1949-1956

- Tax exempt status for Preservation Society of Newport
- Newport Development Authority
- Narragansett Bay Authority
- Newport Music Festival
- Black Ships Festival
- Rochambeau Commission
- Fort Adams Museum and Recreation Site

First Woman Superior Court Judge in Rhode Island, 7 May 1956

- Graduate of respected law school
- Exemplary service in the armed forces during World War II
- Member of state and federal bar
- Elected to local and state public office four times



Champion of Rights and Progress for Women

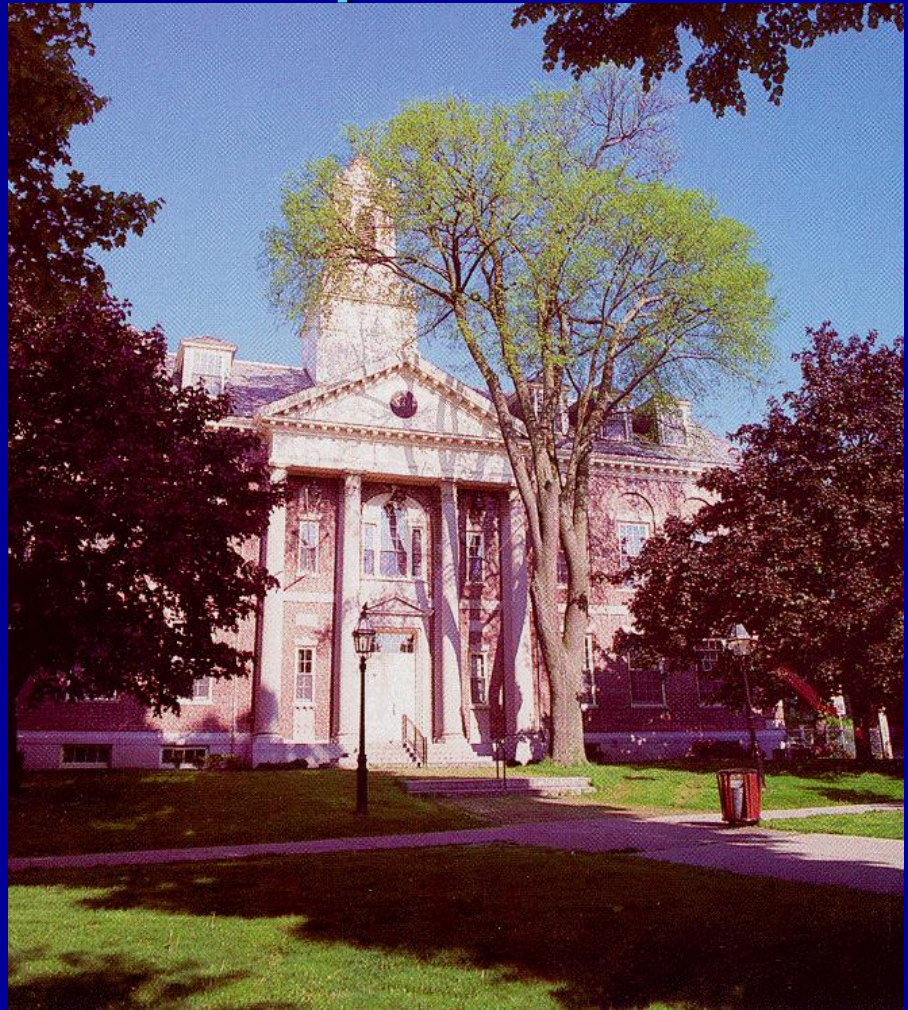
- Presidential Commission on the Status of Women 1961, advocated equal pay for equal work
- Study to establish the Family Court of RI
- Founding Mother of National Association of Women Judges
- Paved the way for two dozen women judges in RI

First Woman Supreme Court Justice in RI

- After 22 years as Trial Court Judge (1956-1978), Murray was appointed by Governor J. Joseph Garrahy to the Supreme Court of RI
- From 1979 to 1996 she served as the first woman jurist on the highest court

Justice Florence Kerins Murray

Judicial Complex



Newport's Own Justice Florence Kerins Murray

- Patriot
- Public Servant
- Distinguished Jurist
- Champion of the Rights
and Progress of Women

