



*Cordially yours,
Elizabeth Towne.*

On the back of this “calling card” photo, Elizabeth Towne printed a list of her accomplishments*

* Member, Executive Board, International New Thought Alliance (INTA); INTA President, 1923-25; INTA Director of Organization, 1925-26; Editor, *Nautilus* Magazine, Holyoke; Founder, President, and International Lecturer: American School of Christian Metaphysics and Psychology; Honorary President, Women’s Club of Western Mass.; President, Holyoke League of Women Voters; Trustee, Holyoke Women’s Club; Member, Holyoke Chamber of Commerce

Mrs. Elizabeth Towne: Pioneering Woman in Publishing and Politics (1865 – 1960)

TZIVIA GOVER



Editor's Introduction: *This fascinating article explores the life of editor, writer, and "New Thought" leader Elizabeth Towne and her unsuccessful bid for mayor of Holyoke in 1928. Both the suffrage and the anti-suffrage movements had strong roots in Massachusetts. Despite progressive legislation in many other areas, the Massachusetts legislature remained a major stumbling block to women's enfranchisement. In 1920, the year the Susan B. Anthony (Woman's Suffrage) Amendment was ratified by the U.S. Congress, seven states already granted women the right to vote in state elections. In other states some municipalities allowed women to vote in various local elections, such as city, town, and school board.*

In 1922 the first two women won election to the Massachusetts state legislature: Susan Walker Fitzgerald (1871-1943) from Jamaica Plain and Sylvia M. Donaldson (1849-1937) from the Brockton/Plymouth district. In 1925, Republican Edith Nourse Rogers was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, thereby becoming the sixth woman ever elected to Congress. Although Rogers initially ran and won in a special election to fill a seat left vacant by her husband's untimely death, she served a total of thirty-five years (1925-1960). She completed eighteen consecutive

terms before deciding not to run against John F. Kennedy in 1960. To date she remains the longest serving Congresswoman.

In 1920 Eliza Daggert of Attleboro became the first woman to run for mayor in Massachusetts, attracting national headlines. Similar to other pioneering women across the state in the 1920s and 1930s, she suffered a landslide defeat. Thus, Elizabeth Towne's failure to win the mayoral seat in Holyoke in 1928 was far from unusual. Over a decade later, in 1939, Alice D. Burke of Westfield became Massachusetts' first woman mayor. A former teacher, Burke beat the incumbent by 127 votes in her third attempt to unseat him. Author Tzivia Gover is a journalist, poet, and teacher who lives in Holyoke.

* * * * *

It was just three days before Holyoke's municipal election, and once again Elizabeth Towne took the podium to advance her campaign, this time in Holyoke High School's auditorium. Coming on the heels of a heated presidential race between Herbert Hoover and former New York Governor, Alfred E. Smith, Holyoke's mayoral race of 1928 had cause to be a sleepy one. Voters were tired of campaign speeches and curbside rallies for candidates' causes. But on this November day, a crowd of more than one hundred had ventured out in cold, wet weather to hear what Towne had to say.¹

Thanks to her, this wouldn't be just any election. This year, for the first time, a woman was running for mayor of Holyoke. To liven things up further, Towne was running against the sitting mayor, Fred G. Burnham, and one of the most popular former mayors in the city's history, John F. Cronin.

And just as this was not a typical political race, Towne was not a typical candidate. Being female was just one on a long list of traits that set her apart in a New England mill town in the late 1920s, less than a decade after women nationwide had won the right to vote.

¹ Information cited in this article pertaining to Holyoke's election campaigns of 1926 and 1928 comes from reports published in the *Holyoke Daily Transcript and Telegram* from those years, as well as campaign posters and other printed matter archived in the Holyoke Public Library's local History Room. Elizabeth Towne also reported on the ups and downs of the campaign in her magazine, *Nautilus*, which was published monthly between 1898 and 1951.

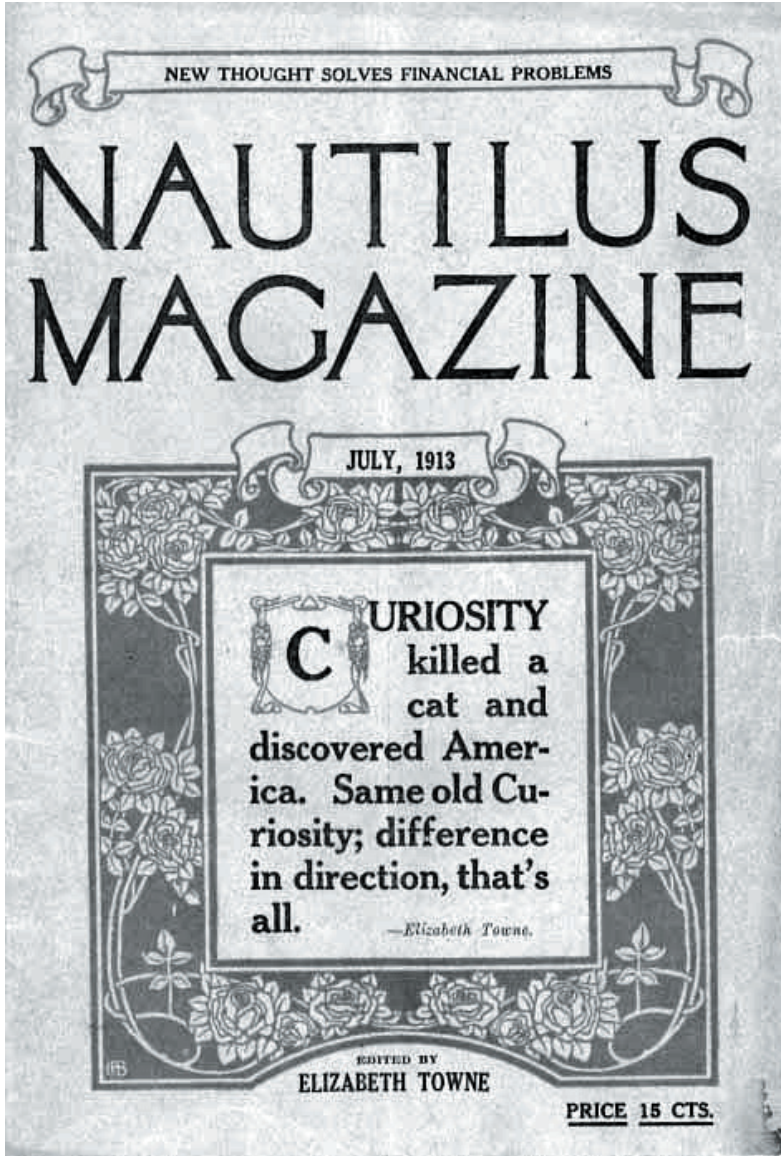
Born in Portland, Ore., in 1865, Elizabeth Towne was the daughter of John Halsey Jones, one of Oregon's earliest pioneers.² Towne dropped out of school at age fourteen to marry. In 1900, however, thirty-five years old and the mother of two teenage children, she left her husband and began publishing a magazine. Called *Nautilus* and featuring articles about spiritual healing, her fledgling journal attracted among its subscribers a man from Holyoke, Massachusetts by the name of William E. Towne. Towne, a stenographer at a paper manufacturer, began corresponding with Elizabeth. Before long, she reversed her father's footsteps and headed east. In May of 1900, just months after her divorce from her first husband was granted, Elizabeth arrived in Holyoke, married William Towne, and became a pioneer in her own right.³

Towne became a leader in the "New Thought" movement, a precursor to today's New Age Movement, which is said to have been founded in the nineteenth century by a New England clockmaker named Phinneas P. Quimby.⁴ New Thought came of age at around the same time Towne was coming into her own as a woman. At the turn of the twentieth century, and with the introduction of inventions such as the telegraph, telephone, and electricity, the limitations of the physical world seemed to disappear. At such a time, a philosophy that celebrated the forces of unseen streams of mental energy flourished. New Thought centers were opening around the country, and well known figures such as Frank Baum, creator of "The Wizard of Oz," R.F. Outcault; Buster Brown's creator, and Elbert Hubbard, who popularized the Arts and Crafts movement, took up the cause.

² "Pioneer Lumberman Dead," *The Oregonian*, March 22, 1906, p. 16 and *Portrait and Biographical Record of Portland and Vicinity Oregon*, Chapman Publishing Company, Chicago, 1903, pp. 113-114.

³ I first learned of Elizabeth Towne's biography in an account in Holyoke's local newspaper: "Positive Thinking: 'New Thought' Blossomed in Holyoke" by Marisa Giannetti, *Holyoke: A Weekly Union-News Magazine*, January 18, 1996. Further details came from various sources, including Towne's book, *Experiences in Self-Healing*, (Holyoke, MA: The Elizabeth Towne Company, 1905). Another informative article is "Elizabeth Towne – Great Figure in One of Holyoke's Great Eras," by Mrs. William G. (Minnie) Dwight, *Holyoke Daily Transcript and Holyoke Telegram* (hereafter abbreviated *Daily Transcript*), June 1, 1960, p. 10.

⁴ Information about the New Thought movement cited in this article comes from a variety of sources including: *Spirits in Rebellion: The Rise and Development of New Thought* by Charles S. Braden (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1977); *Each Mind a Kingdom: American Women, Sexual Purity, and the New Thought Movement, 1875-1920*, by Beryl Satter (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001); and websites including "New Thought" at <http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/Newthoug.html>; "A Brief History of New Thought," by Roger and Lydia Weiss, <http://website.lineone.net/~cornerstone/nthistory.htm>



Cover of *Nautilus Magazine* (July 1913)

Headings: “New Thought Solves Financial Problems”
and “Curiosity Killed a Cat”

Although New Thought had an impressive band of followers nationwide, in Holyoke, the Townes were said to be the only followers. While their neighbors might have phoned a doctor or taken medicine to cure a headache or a cold, Towne would more likely have prescribed to her followers a vegetarian diet, deep breathing exercises, and positive thinking: In her 1907 health treatise, *Just How to Wake the Solar Plexus*, Towne declared: “The quality of your body, including the brain, determines the quality of your environment. You are your own lord and master, the arbiter of your own destiny.”

Towne’s magazine became the leading New Thought journal at a time when over one hundred such periodicals were being published.⁵ An impressive enterprise (*Nautilus* had up to 90,000 subscribers a month and an international reach), the magazine was a family business. Elizabeth Towne acted as publisher and editor, William was treasurer and a regular columnist, and Elizabeth’s son from her first marriage, Chester Struble, was the managing editor.

A strong local voice in the women’s suffrage movement, Towne also distinguished herself by becoming Holyoke’s first female alderman, first female candidate for mayor, and a radical thinker who set forth her ideas for ending poverty in pamphlets and articles in which, among other things, she proposed a universal wage of \$5 a week for every man, woman, and child.⁶

Holyoke voters in the 1920s would have considered some of Towne’s ideas unusual; but if they’d known the full breadth of her views, they might have considered her scandalous. Chances are they weren’t aware that three decades before, while still living out West, Towne was accused of sending obscene materials in the mail after she published an article in which she recommended extramarital sex for traveling businessmen.⁷

She did, however, manage to attract the attention of her Holyoke neighbors for more mundane eccentricities. She flung open the doors and windows of her home in all seasons, as she was a devout believer in the healthful benefits of fresh air and sunshine. She welcomed as guests to her Cabot Street home Chinese diplomats, Indian religious leaders, and at least one newly released prisoner, all of whom she had either met during her international lecture tours, or, as in the case of the prisoner, she had reached through her writing. She smoked cigarettes at a time when ladies

⁵ Paul Tyner, *Review of Reviews*, 1902.

⁶ Pamphlet dated 1934-1935 in the collection of the Holyoke Public Library, Holyoke History Room.

⁷ Correspondence of Kay Struble, Elizabeth Towne’s granddaughter, dated May 9, 1973 and May 12, 1978 and conversations with Elizabeth Towne’s surviving family members.

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Advertisement promoting one of Elizabeth Towne's many publications, *Nautilus Magazine* (July 1913)

didn't and practiced meditation before the word was part of the average New Englander's lexicon.⁸

Given all of this, it shouldn't be surprising that Towne would face an uphill battle in her bid for mayor. During her final campaign speech of the election season, two city aldermen took it upon themselves to disrupt the proceedings and fire questions at the candidate.

"Aldermen Patrick F. Monahan and Milton S. Spies were the questioners but Mrs. Towne refused to answer them," one newspaper reported. They probably posed some of the questions that had dogged her throughout her campaign. Towne had been accused of seeking office as a publicity stunt (to which she replied that as a woman already internationally known she had no need to seek additional publicity) and for wanting to gain office in order to attain powerful positions for her grown son and husband (to which she responded that such a motive would be counter to her best interests, as her son and husband helped her run her publishing business, and she couldn't afford to set them up in any other position).

The heckling kept up until, according to a newspaper account from the time, a voice from the audience called out to the man who was speaking, "Sit down, you fathead." At this, Towne's detractors retreated and the rally continued.⁹

When she decided to run for mayor, Towne was still riding on the momentum of having been elected the city's first female alderman-at-large in December of 1926, with 7,334 votes, giving her a substantial majority, besting six male contenders. That win situated her as one of the state's first women to sit on a board of aldermen.

In 1926, the year Towne broke into electoral politics, Calvin Coolidge was president and some two dozen women were on the ballot for seats in Congress nationwide. At that time, in addition to her regular duties as editor of the *Nautilus*, and being a wife, mother of two, and grandmother of four, Towne had assumed the editorship of the *International New Thought Alliance Bulletin*, was finishing her two-year term as international lecturer for the same organization and with her husband attended a New Thought conference in London. She was also active in the Holyoke League of Women's Voters. Now, she could add alderman to her list of titles and duties. She was the pioneering woman in Holyoke politics and the first

⁸ Letter from Kay Struble to Jed Mattes, Literary agent, dated May 12, 1978, from family's private effects, also descriptions in *Nautilus* magazine and conversations with Alice Smith of Holyoke, Mass. (June 20, 2003), one of Towne's former neighbors.

⁹ Towne, Elizabeth, "Alderman Towne Explains Reasons for her Candidacy," *Daily Transcript*, Dec. 1, 1928, p. 10.



247 Cabot Street, Holyoke (undated)

This image was taken sometime after 1911, when the house was rebuilt after a destructive fire. The sprawling architecture reflects the fact that the house served as both living quarters and publishing company. The basement housed equipment for mailing and printing the *Nautilus* along with other books and pamphlets that the Elizabeth Towne Publishing Company produced. The first floor contained offices. The second floor housed the Towne's private living area: bedrooms, bathrooms, living, dining room and kitchen, as well as private offices for Elizabeth and William Towne. The third floor housed two domestic workers and a large meeting room that Elizabeth Towne used when she hosted lectures and other public functions.

married woman alderman in the state (several single women had already become aldermen in Woburn and nearby Springfield).

Towne was not the only female breaking new ground. All around the world, women were defying convention and making headlines for doing “unwomanly” things, beginning perhaps in 1920, when women won the right to vote. In 1927, a woman doctor swam the English Channel, an American “girl” (Ruth Elder) piloted an airplane to Paris, and Liverpool, England, elected its first female mayor. Closer to home, Helena Hill Weed, a grandmother, ran for mayor in Norwalk, Connecticut (but was defeated). In Concord, New Hampshire, Helen Gwendolyn Jones, age twenty-four, ran for mayor, and the newspapers assured that her “campaign does not interfere with household duties.”¹⁰

Holyoke welcomed Towne to city politics with a mix of friendly acceptance and leery skepticism. In her campaign for alderman, Towne’s colorful personality, more than her gender, seemed to set her apart in the eyes of most Holyokers. After that race, a post-election commentator made a joking reference to Towne’s open consideration of offbeat spiritual practices, quipping that she must have “hypnotized” the city’s women voters. Alluding to Towne’s penchant for verbosity, the columnist went on to warn that “The Board of Aldermen of 1927 is in for a good many midnight sessions with Alderman Towne still talking.”¹¹ Towne herself was walking on air. She gave the news to her family of *Nautilus* readers in the February issue of her magazine:

Congratulations are in order! On December 7th, I was elected Alderman at-Large in the city of Holyoke, the pioneer woman candidate for public office in this city ... The women say that they are the ones who put me in! And the men are saying that it was they who did it! But just between you and me, I rather think that they both had a finger in the pie.

One writer from nearby Willimansett, who identified himself as Rimeo-line, wrote a poem celebrating Towne’s installation as Alderman. The piece, titled “Alderman Towne,” appeared in the spring of her first term. It read in part:

¹⁰ Information on area women’s political achievements of the time are taken from assorted articles in the *Daily Transcript*.

¹¹ “Political Pot Pourri,” *Daily Transcript*, Dec. 8, 1926, p. 4.

The Alderman who wears a gown,
 Hesitates not to put facts down
 Facts both of truth and pity.
 She has a vision or sweet dream
 That Holyoke has the civic steam
 to push it up the hill.
 She seeks to help the city grow,
 up from the valley far below
 Where its past lies somber and still.¹²

As Alderman, Towne never lost sight of her role as writer and publisher. She treated the city newspaper, the *Holyoke Daily Transcript and Telegram*, as one of her own periodicals. She was a frequent contributor to the *Transcript's* newly established "Safety Valve" column, an informal letters-to-the-editor forum. As if the column had been launched for her benefit, Towne published her views on everything from automobile safety to the condition of the city's roads – sometimes on a daily basis. Her letters to the editor ran from five hundred to over one thousand words. Later, when the newspaper didn't cover her race to her satisfaction, she wrote her own articles, referring to herself in the third person, including quotes and observations. On the topic of Prohibition, she wrote a three-column editorial in which she argued against "free and unrestricted use of intoxicating drinks," but against the Republicans' handling of the issue, and in particular presidential hopeful Herbert Hoover's. She concluded:

Remember that all of this bootlegging and hi-jacking business has grown up under Andrew Mellon as head of the department for enforcing prohibition. And Andrew Mellon had to come out for Mr. Hoover before Mr. Hoover could be nominated as the Republican nominee for President. Also, it has been announced repeatedly since his nomination that if Mr. Hoover is elected then Mr. Andrew Mellon will remain in the cabinet. That means that no doubt he will remain as head of the prohibition enforcement department of the cabinet and we shall continue to grow these vicious conditions that have come upon this country because of the hypocritical habit of the Republican Party of talking dry like a Ku Klux Klaner, and at the same

¹² *Daily Transcript*, April 27, 1927.

time acting wet through all of the branches of its enforcement department.¹³

Predictions that Towne would run for mayor began the day she won the race for alderman. “Mrs. Elizabeth Towne is not only the pioneer woman alderman but she is quite likely to be the pioneer woman mayor,” columnist William Flagg wrote in the next day’s *Transcript*.

Not surprisingly, Towne took out her nomination papers for the mayoral race on the day they became available (and three weeks ahead of the other two candidates). She asserted that she would give the race her best effort, and if she didn’t succeed the first time, she’d be back again until she was victorious.

But because she was traveling, and then apparently immersed in a period of silence or meditation, rumors began to mount that Mrs. Towne would not go through with the campaign. In October of 1928, she sought to set the record straight. She wrote a column in the local *Holyoke Daily Transcript and Telegram* that illustrated her unique style. It combined New Thought parlance with a passion for local politics and a flair for self-promotion:

“The wish is father to the thought.” I wonder whose thought it is that “fathers” those recurrent rumors to the effect that Elizabeth Towne will withdraw her candidacy for mayor. It would be interesting to know ... I shall be candidate for mayor in the coming election . . . I was traveling in the West and visiting in Portland, Ore., all the month of August, and I have been pretty much “in the silence” for the month of September. I am just emerging from “the silence” . . . Beginning about November 7 I shall get busy on the best campaign for mayor that I know how to make . . . I am going to give the city of Holyoke a chance to try out Elizabeth Towne’s brand of public service and enterprise for the upbuilding of the city of Holyoke.¹⁴

Towne would have her work cut out for her. Not only was she still a relative new-comer to Holyoke, but perhaps most importantly, female mayors were still a novelty. Nationwide, the first female mayor was elected in 1887, when Susanna Madora Salter, aged twenty-seven, was placed on the

¹³ *Daily Transcript*, October 16, 1928

¹⁴ *Daily Transcript*, October 10, 1928.

ballot in Argonia, Kan., as a joke. The gag was meant to embarrass women who were said to be stepping out of line by expressing the desire to enter politics, but the joke backfired when Salter won the count.¹⁵ In 1926, the year Towne campaigned for alderman, Bertha Knight Landes became the first female mayor of Seattle, and the first female mayor of a major U.S. city. Neighboring Northampton wouldn't see a female mayoral candidate on its ballot until 1933 when Rose Casey Hayes ran unsuccessfully in the city's Democratic caucus.

To beat the odds she knew were stacked against her, Towne went on to conduct the most expensive and extensive campaign Holyoke had seen in a local election. She estimated that she would spend the equivalent of the mayor's annual salary, \$5,200, on campaign expenses. She took out quarter- and half-page newspaper ads on a regular basis and held numerous campaign rallies. Towne, who opposed political parties, which she said bred selfish interests, ran as a grassroots candidate. She funded her own campaign rather than accept money that might make her beholden to any person or cause. "I am tied to no political machine; to no group; to no individual. I am free to make all appointments IN THE INTEREST OF THE PEOPLE OF HOLYOKE," one campaign poster, replete with Towne's characteristic profusion of capital letters, read. If elected, Towne promised she would build a new junior high school, support local ownership and control of the city's gas and electric department and ensure fair bidding on city contracts.

Despite the idealistic promise with which Towne entered the race, her campaign quickly took on an embattled air. One of her first acts as a mayoral candidate was to submit a letter to the *Transcript* in which she claimed the newspaper had misreported the time and date of her first campaign appearance. "I understand that 'the opposition' in Holyoke, the machine politicians, resort very frequently to the little trick of publicizing the wrong date when they happen to be opposed to the candidate who is to speak," she wrote.¹⁶ From there Towne went on the offensive, accusing the incumbent mayor, whom she saw as her biggest challenger, of being a machine politician who handed out favors to his cronies. Towne argued that not only was Fred G. Burnham basking in undeserved glory for the city's thriving economy (which she credited in part to a mild winter that netted a surplus in the snowplowing budget), but that he was profiting from city contracts for cement, coal and feed for city-employed horses by

¹⁵ "Susanna Madora Salter – First Woman Mayor," by Monroe Billington, *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, Autumn, 1954 (Vol. 21, No. 3), pp 173-183.

¹⁶ *Transcript*, November 7, 1928, p 8

awarding contracts friends and even his own enterprise, the F.G. Burnham Company.¹⁷

While Towne campaigned at full throttle, her opponents showed a marked lack of enthusiasm for the race. Cronin made a handful of campaign appearances, and Burnham couldn't be bothered to show up at political rallies hosted by his opponents. In the end, he attended a single rally, just days before the election. When he finally issued a statement to the press, he used the opportunity to slam Towne. Two days before the election, he was quoted as saying "The vagaries, hallucinations and arguments of the 'New Thought' mind temporarily diverted from their proper channels into problems political, are alike unexplainable and like the ways of Divine Providence, passeth all understanding." Towne rebutted in another letter to the *Transcript*: "Though I may look up, as well as down; though I may look forward with enthusiasm, my two feet are planted firmly upon the earth and I am very much on the job." On the eve of the election, it was clear that Towne would not defeat her opponents. But while no one seemed to think Towne would win, her campaign was considered formidable. That is, until the votes were counted.¹⁸

On Election Day, Holyoke voters turned out in record numbers. Of the nearly 20,000 who came to the polls, more than half (11,816) voted for Burnham. A healthy 7,490 voted for former Mayor John F. Cronin. Only 478 cast a vote for Towne.¹⁹

In the aftermath of his landslide victory, an elated Burnham greeted hundreds of well-wishers who turned out at his office early the next morning with messages of congratulations. Letters and messages poured in even more quickly, including a letter of support from Holyoke's famous Siamese twins, Margaret and Mary Gibbs.²⁰

Towne, meanwhile, issued the tersest message of her political career. Her eighty-eight-word statement read:

I congratulate Mr. Burnham on being elected by the majority of votes and I wish him every success. Naturally I am sorry I did not win yesterday's election, but I was not greatly surprised. "They said" no mayor could be elected without "the machine" but I had hoped it could be done. Two Holyoke men

¹⁷ Various articles in the *Transcript* and archival items, including printed matter and campaign posters, found in Holyoke History Room, Holyoke Public Library.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ "Sweeping Victory," *Daily Transcript*, Dec. 5, 1928, pp 1, 17.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

politicians have tried it, one received 67 votes, if I remember it, and the other a hundred and something. The woman did not do so badly by comparison. I shall not try again.²¹

An admirer wrote of her nearly twenty years later that Towne ran for mayor “knowing that every possibility was against her, but wanting to prove that a woman could run for the office.”²² It’s more likely that Towne expected to win, if not in that election, then the next. But she never got the chance. As the country fell into the Depression that followed the stock market crash of 1929, Towne faced a financial downfall of her own. The popularity of *New Thought*, and thus her magazine, had already peaked and was now declining. Towne could no longer finance a campaign like the one she ran in 1928.

Elizabeth Towne continued to publish *Nautilus* from her house on Cabot Street until August of 1951, when, citing health issues, she sold the magazine to the Pacific Coast Authority, another *New Thought* publication. She remained in the house on Cabot Street for nine more years, her health declining, until at age ninety she could only sit in her wheelchair and read a bit each day or hum the Welsh tunes of her ancestors, which she still recalled from childhood.²³ In February of 1960 she entered a local nursing home, and a few months later, at age ninety-five, she died.²⁴ Rather than be buried she elected to be cremated, a highly unorthodox practice at the time, and one which once more, and for the last time, succeeded in raising eyebrows among her neighbors.

* * * * *

Similar to many other small New England cities and towns, it is easy to live in Holyoke, but to be of Holyoke is a different matter entirely. Despite the fact that Towne became an internationally known leader of *New Thought*, author of dozens of books and pamphlets, and publisher of the largest *New Thought* periodical in the country, in 1903, a columnist in the local newspaper observed, “Not so many Holyokers realize the importance or scope of the work that Mrs. Elizabeth Towne . . . is doing.” The writer continued, “If Mrs. Towne’s work is not so well known of in Holyoke, it

²¹ *Daily Transcript*, December 5, 1928.

²² *Holyoke Daily Transcript and Telegram*, Jan. 29, 1945, untitled article signed, “Dr. Raymond C. Barker,” former editor of “*New Thought Bulletin*.”

²³ Letter from Kay Wister to Garrison Struble Twing dated May 9, 1973 and *Daily Transcript*, May 11, 1955.

²⁴ Elizabeth Towne died of cardio-vascular disease on June 1, 1960.

certainly is beyond the limits of this city, especially in New York, Boston, and Chicago.”

Towne never made it into the city’s official story. She was ignored in the local history as it was written up in a 1948 booklet and was given only a passing mention in a 1973 book titled *Holyoke Women Who Made a Difference*. When I began researching her life, the local library had only a handful of old copies of *Nautilus* magazines, and not a single book by Towne, despite the fact that she was the author of dozens of volumes. Nor is any trace of her legacy archived in the city’s Wistariahurst Museum, which is located across the street from the site of Towne’s former home. In 1991, when a man researching an article about Towne asked why she wasn’t included in the city’s official record, Holyoke insider and local historian Ella Merkel DiCarlo explained, “She came and she went and left no offspring here.” DiCarlo added that other Holyoke families could trace their roots in the city back fourteen generations. She herself gave Towne little more than a passing mention in her own book, *Holyoke-Chicopee: A Perspective*. After Towne’s death, DiCarlo observed, “Intellectually she may have not appealed to the average person.”²⁵

Followers of the New Thought movement, however, hailed Towne as a leader. In the opening sequences of Rhonda Byrne’s hit movie, *The Secret*, one of Mrs. Towne’s books can be seen. In fact, the New Thought philosophy she helped to popularize is at the heart of many of the New Age teachings, including the law of attraction, which *The Secret* and many other popular self-help philosophies advance.

Towne’s obituary in *The New York Times* hailed her as a leader of the New Thought movement and the woman’s suffrage movement, and notes the impressive circulation of her magazine, the *Nautilus*.²⁶ As for politics, for the time being, one could say that Towne remains undefeated. No one has yet surpassed her in her quest to become the city of Holyoke’s first female mayor.



²⁵ A book written on the occasion of Holyoke’s centennial by Marcella R. Kelly, former superintendent of Holyoke Public Schools. Ella Merkel DiCarlo, chronicler of city history (*Holyoke-Chicopee: A Perspective* published by the local *Transcript-Telegram*, 1982) notes Towne’s absence from the City’s official history, including Kelly’s book. In a letter included in the small collection of Towne’s papers in Holyoke Public Library’s History Room, DiCarlo notes that she herself received three pages, as compared to Towne’s single paragraph, in Kelly’s book.

²⁶ In addition to being remembered the *New York Times* (her obituary ran under the heading “Notables who died this past week” June 2, 1960, p. 33), Towne’s obituary also appeared in other major newspapers of the time, including *The New York Herald Tribune* and the *World Telegram and Sun*, among others.