

Picture

Birth:

Death:

Father:

Mother:

Dorothy Newman is well known as a leader in the labor movement and in the Kent County Democratic Party. Recognized as one of “Twelve Outstanding Women” by the Greater Grand Rapids Women’s History Council, her career started in Grand Rapids at McInerney Spring and Wire in 1948, shortly after she came to the United States from her native England as the bride of Henry Newman. Already the mother of one son, Michael, she was forced to leave McInerney when she became pregnant with her second son, Steven. After his birth, she returned to the workforce as a production worker at General Motors and began her long association with the United Auto Workers (UAW).

Newman achieved many “firsts,” including being the first woman appointed to serve on the UAW International Constitutional Committee, and she was a strong and consistent advocate for the rights of women. Her work with the UAW Community Action Program culminated in 1978 with her election as chair of the Kent County UAW-CAP Council. She was also active in the Democratic Party at the local, state, and national levels and served as a representative to the Democratic National Convention on three occasions. Newman received numerous awards in recognition of her work, including, among others, the YWCA Tribute Award, the Kenneth Robinson United Way Award, and the Bread and Roses Award from the University of Michigan.

In her interview Newman describes her childhood as the daughter of a commercial fisherman in Parkgate, Cheshire, England. She was the eighth of eleven children and the first girl in the family. Her life was strongly influenced by her experiences during World War II, when, due to her brothers' absence, she was forced to quit school in order to help at home and in support the family. Ultimately, the war years proved to be a pivotal time in her life, since it was during the war that she met her future husband, Henry, an American serviceman stationed in England. After the war, they built a new life together in Grand Rapids and Dorothy made her mark as a long-time labor and community activist.

Other Resources

<http://www.ggrwhc.org/twelve-outstanding-women-newman>