

Lucretia *Bradley* Hubbell

Birth: May 7, 1821
Hopkinton
Washington County
Rhode Island, USA

Death: Mar. 12, 1907
Norwich
New London County
Connecticut, USA

She was the daughter of Joshua and Dorcas Bradley; wife of artist Algernon S. Hubbell who was several years her junior. Lecturer and physician/phrenologist. Friend of famed Dr. Mary Edwards Walker.

A sport balloonist, she purchased a hot air balloon and in March of 1855 made her solo ascension, becoming the first woman in the country to do so. She crashed but survived with minor injury. *THE DAY*, New London, Connecticut, Monday, September 12, 1898, pg. 6 ["First Female Aeronaut"] published the story as recounted in Lucretia's own words over four decades later:

"I rose with perfect calmness and great velocity to a height of over two miles, my whole feelings being those of indescribable tranquility and gratified delight. There was no perceptible breeze until I reached the highest point of my voyage, directly over the Delaware, when four heavy currents struck my balloon on all sides with equal force. Finding my balloons full, I opened the valve three times in succession, and while letting off gas as fast as I could, the balloon at the same time rapidly emptying itself from the mouth, a very strong undercurrent forcing up the mouth of the balloon caused a roaring like the ocean in a heavy storm, followed by a noise like the discharge of a cannon and a sudden fall of about 100 feet.

I then looked up and saw the balloon all shattered, with the exception of two pieces, one being about one-eighth the size of the balloon. I threw out my sand and grappling iron, placed myself firmly in the car in an upright position, my hands extended clasping the handles on each side. I alternately looked on each side and admired the grandeur and beauty of the scene; in fact I spent ten minutes singing a song of praise to the Creator of such a scene of beauty and sublime grandeur. Rapidly descending, I landed safely but with great force in the center of a large clover field in Still Valley, New Jersey, four miles from Easton, at 11:30 o'clock a. m., having been up just an hour, 20 minutes of which was after the bursting of the balloon."

She later purchased another balloon which she stationed at Almyra, New York during the state fair and invested money for the building of a scientific machine to manufacture gas on an improved plan.

Her obituary was published in the "Boston Daily Globe", Boston, Massachusetts.

Family links:

Parents:

[Joshua Bradley \(1775 - 1849\)](#)

[Dorcas Rathbun Bradley \(1783 - 1825\)](#)

Spouse:

[Algernon Sidney Hubbell \(1837 - ____\)*](#)

Siblings:

[Abby Ann Bradley \(____ - 1830\)*](#)

[Mary R Bradley \(____ - 1880\)*](#)

[Sarah Manwarring Bradley Williams \(1808 - 1888\)*](#)

Abby Ann Bradley (1813 - 1830)*
Lucretia Bradley Hubbell (1821 - 1907)

*[Calculated relationship](#)

Note: No dates are inscribed on the stone.

Burial:

[Yantic Cemetery](#) , Norwich, New London County, Connecticut, USA

From: "Hubble, Rick" <hubblerw@comcast.net>
To: "Hubble, Hilbert R" <hubble@comcast.net>
Sent: Sunday, October 5, 2014 11:58:27 AM
Subject: RE: Algermon and Lucretia

Algermon S. is a patent holder (see article in 2013 Annual). See attached for some info on Lucretia. I could not find the book "The Spleen"

From: hubble@comcast.net [<mailto:hubble@comcast.net>]

Sent: Friday, October 03, 2014 9:53 AM

To: Hubble, Rick

Subject: Re: Algermon and Lucretia

rick,
3658 (3375). Algermon Sidney 1837- called an artist mar 1858 Lucretia Bradley d/o Joshua & Dorcas (Rathbun) 1821-11 March 1907 Norwich CT both bur Yantic cem; no issue. Lucretia has the distinction of being the first woman to go up in a balloon. The event occurred in Easton PA 1865. She made many other ascents and on one trip the gas bag exploded at a height of three miles but she descended safely by parachute. Anymore I should add?
Hilbert

From: "Hubble, Rick" <hubblerw@comcast.net>
To: "Hubble, Hilbert R" <hubble@comcast.net>
Sent: Friday, October 3, 2014 11:29:40 AM
Subject: Algermon and Lucretia

Hilbert,

There is not much info in A&R on #3375 Algermon Sidney and his wife Lucretia Bradley. Is there more info that you have going into the new addition?

rick

The First Woman Aeronaut.

The first American woman aeronaut, Mrs. Lucretia B. Hubbell of Norwich, Conn., is still living, and has a thrilling story to tell of her adventure at Easton, Penn., forty-three years ago, witnessed by several thousand people. Mrs. Hubbell was then unmarried, and a lecturer on phrenology. She decided on an aerial flight "for pleasure and expansion of the lungs," to say nothing of a good advertisement. The balloon was a fine and large one of silk, and shot up so rapidly into the cold air that the aeronaut's hands were benumbed. While she was opening the bags of ballast with her teeth the balloon burst. By a strange chance the fragments formed a perfect parachute and drifted eleven miles further, landing with a hard bump in a New Jersey clover field. The daring young woman escaped without a scratch and had an immense audience at her lecture that night.

Children of Fashion.

For the children the world of fash-

Freeland, PA: May 2,
1898

instead it assumes a petty air and

Lucretta Bradley Hubbell continues her lectures at Chapin's Hall. Admittance free, this evening.

Wm. Stuart, editor of Binghamton Republican says: "Mrs. H. is a woman of superior ability, energy and enterprise, and is a talented, indefatigable and worthy Lecturer and Practitioner."

An assortment of Fire Clay Urns, or Flower Vases, plain and ornamental, the

March 7, 1861: Cleveland, Ohio

who had the privilege will always remember her strong, earnest life and character" (obit, *Benzonia Banner*).

Sources: *History* bio, facsimile and signature H&G obit* [Fp].

1654 (1484). Richard Mansfield Hubbell of Hubbell & Gardner photographers Main St Norwich CT 1901 (city directory) s/o 674.Samuel (3d) & Betsey (Shelton) 1815-? mar Delia Clark 1835 d/o Enoch & Sarah (Fenn), 1814-1859; issue:

3375 (2729). Algernon Sidney 1837-? mar Lucretia Bradley 1858 d/o Joshua & Dorcas (Rathbun), 1821-? no issue.

He is named in E. Fuller's "Checklist of CT Photographers...1839-1889" from *Bulletin* of The Connecticut Historical Society, Winter 1982. In the 1900 Norwich census he described himself as inventor, photographer and portrait painter. In the 1900 directory, his wife was called phrenologist, physician and aeronaut.

Sources: *History H&G* [Fv].

1657 (1487). Samuel B. Hubbell cabinet maker Chemung co NY 1860 (cen) s/o 676.Abraham & Amelia (Burr) c1819 CT (ae41, 1860)-? mar Ellen Lewis, c1819 CT-?; issue (order uncertain):

3376a (2730). Richard M.

3376b (2731). William W.

3376c. Amelia 1847 Chemung co (or c1852, ae8, 1860)-?

First Woman Balloonist.

Mrs. Lucretia Bradley Hubbell, now living at Norwich, Conn., was the first woman to go up in a balloon.



MRS. HUBBELL, THE COSTUME WORN AT HER ASCENSIONS IN 1855.

The ascension was made at Easton, Penn., March 25, 1855. At the time Mrs. Hubbell was twenty-seven years old. The ascension was a decided success, and the papers of those days extolled the achievement as one of the most marvelous with which women was accredited.

Nominated Him For "It."

Oct 6, 1898: Republican News:
Laport, PA

Even as the practices of abdominal surgery expanded, some lay and medical observers protested against these trends.²² It seemed to many of them that technical acumen threatened to overwhelm established theories and modes of therapy, to violate the integrity of the human body, and to undermine traditional morality. For some of these observers, bodily integrity was a spiritual rather than a surgical matter. At least one author pointed out the key paradox of this new surgical mind-set: while surgeons could now remove the spleen at will, they did not (nor did they claim to) actually *understand* the organ. In a short 1878 tract entitled “The Spleen,” **Lucretia Hubbell** suggested that the spleen was a mystical and unknowable machine, one of the last organs to resist the onslaught of medical science. “As all the medical schools have failed to discover for what purpose this organ was made and what its office is—being the only organ that has not been fully explained—and as God must have had some object in creating this organ,” **Hubbell** wrote, “I have been led to study and investigate it.”²³ **Hubbell** gave the spleen a heroic, divine identity, pointing to the body’s place in a divine plan. Splenectomy raised the specter of surgery overrunning God’s fine work.

Practitioner, spiritualist, and patent medicine entrepreneur, **Hubbell** portrayed the spleen itself as the limiting obstacle to the hegemony of scientific medicine. Addressing the prospective patient, **Hubbell** asked, “Would you put your clock in the hands of a man to repair who did not understand the pendulum? did not know its use? Indeed you would not; yet you put yourself in the hands of a doctor to repair the beautiful machinery of your body, when he tells you that he is unacquainted with the operations of the spleen, does not know what the Creator meant it for.” Surgeons were “experimenting” with a system that baffled them. Even when their experiments failed miserably, killing their patients, they remained blind to their misadventures, never finding fault with their own contrivances. She warned patients that “by some experiment he [the surgeon] may shut off the currents of the battery and kill you at once, as millions of others have been ... for do not patients die suddenly under the treatment of doctors every day... They say the patients have a relapse, but the true cause is they had shut down the battery unawares.”²⁴ **Hubbell**’s message gave a mechanistic yet divine identity to this organ. The spleen represented a mystery that should be respected and regarded with spiritual reverence. Throughout the decades of surgical innovation, similar objections remained implicit in popular literature, and even in medical writing.

A few surgeons admitted their physiological ignorance of the spleen, but surgical experimentation continued. Large numbers of abdominal injuries in industrial and everyday accidents and steady improvements in surgical mortality provided opportunities for perfecting the technique of splenectomy. New York surgeon Francis Markoe acknowledged in 1894 that, even though surgeons were mastering splenectomy in cases of injury, their knowledge about the spleen in disease remained speculative at best. Splenectomy in cases of disease showing splenic enlargement could be justified only as a last resort. Clearly, an enlarged spleen by itself was not a

Lucretia Hubbell, Aeronaut.

The first American woman aeronaut was Mrs. Lucretia Hubbell, who is still living at Easton, Pa. She took her first flight for pleasure, and, though the balloon burst and she had a narrow escape from death she was not deterred from repeating the experiment.

Women In Colorado.

Women are in the fore in educational

The evening Times-Washington
April 4, 1898

members.