

## COLORADO LETS WOMEN VOTE!

"Let the women vote! They can't do any worse than the men!" was the slogan on the placards of women marching down the streets of Colorado's towns in 1893. Thousands of woman suffrage leaflets were distributed to people in their homes and on the streets. The **Rocky Mountain News** and other newspapers supported voting rights for women.

A statehood enabling act was passed by Congress in 1864, but statehood was rejected in an election that year, because those voters did not want the tax burden of state government when they could have a territorial government paid for by the federal government. Another enabling act was passed in 1874, and a convention was called to draft the constitutional structure for the state. Most of the delegates were Republicans. Three were Spanish-speaking men, and two spoke only German. There were no women delegates. Religion, regulation of corporations, and woman suffrage were major subjects debated by the delegates when they talked about what a state constitution should contain.

The Colorado Women's Suffrage Association's members brought in petitions signed by thousands of citizens who urged the delegates to give Colorado the "honor" of being the first state in the Union to include universal women's suffrage in its constitution. It was pointed out that full voting rights had been extended to Wyoming women in 1869, and they would continue to vote when that Territory became a state.

As early as 1868, former Territorial Governor John Evans was working to get voting rights for women into the state constitution, and Territorial Governor Edward McCook included a statement favoring woman suffrage in his first address to the legislature. The efforts of the woman suffrage activists failed. The issue was supported by only two delegates to the constitutional convention — Agipeta Vigil and Judge Henry P. Bromwell. Although the delegates included in the constitution the right of male Negroes to vote, they denied that right to all women. The reason given was that miners who were delegates believed that mountainous Colorado was "men's preserve." It was said that some people thought that such an innovation was so radical that it might cause Congress to deny statehood.

However, the new constitution did recognize women by giving them the right to vote in school elections. It instructed the General Assembly to enact laws to extend women's voting rights if approved by a majority of people voting in a general election.<sup>1</sup> Colorado entered the Union, nicknamed the "Centennial State," on August 1, 1876.

### Woman suffrage campaigns.

Woman suffrage had been introduced in Colorado's territorial legislature in 1868 and 1870, but was defeated each time. In 1877, under the new state constitution, it was brought to a vote of the people (only men were voters) and again defeated, even though Susan B. Anthony and other well-known suffrage leaders campaigned throughout the state. The measure passed only in Boulder County.

The Non-Partisan Equal Suffrage Association of Colorado was reactivated for another campaign in 1893, when it met at Unity Church which was located at 17th and California. It had dropped "woman" from its name in the belief that the word "equal" would have greater appeal to voters. By this time, a number of organizations had been formed in Colorado. Their members supported universal voting rights for women and worked together in the campaign. The Women's Christian Temperance Union was a well-organized advocate of both temperance and women's suffrage led by Mary Shields who spoke eloquently for both issues. In Presbyterian churches, the Ladies Aid Society was formed to support the campaign. The

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<sup>1</sup> Abbott, Leonard, McComb. **Colorado**, pp. 52–69.

Fortnightly Club of Denver was organized in 1877, the Monday Literary Club in 1881. Along with labor groups and political parties, these organizations made up a strong proponent front.<sup>2</sup>

Minnie Reynolds, a **News** reporter, handled the press work of the suffrage association in the 1893 campaign, and reported that 75% of the editors in Colorado supported the cause of woman suffrage. Women wrote pro-suffrage columns, and the papers printed editorials favoring voting rights for women. **The Queen Bee** was published by Caroline Churchill from 1880 until 1926, speaking out for woman suffrage and protesting against social injustice. Ellis Meredith, also a **News** reporter, was the chief strategist in the women's vote movement. These women journalists of the Denver Women's Press Club were determined to keep the public informed and working for woman suffrage.<sup>3</sup>

Help came from the National American Women's Suffrage Association when Carrie Chapman Catt was sent to direct the campaign and organize the suffrage movement. Suffrage clubs were formed in Longmont, Colorado Springs, Greeley, Georgetown, Breckenridge, and Denver. Opponents of woman suffrage were poorly organized and consisted mainly of liquor interests. There were some women who said they "had all the rights they wanted." The suffrage clubs answered the charge that women did not want to vote! The turnout of women who successfully campaigned for the election of Ione Hanna to the Denver school board election in the spring of 1893 (women could vote in school elections) showed that women were determined to exercise their right to vote.

With the leadership of Carrie Chapman Catt, national leaders came to Colorado to speak for woman suffrage throughout the state. Appeals for support of woman suffrage were made on the basis that women voters would support the silver standard issue, improved schools, the establishment of churches, and racial equality. A large meeting room and an office for the corresponding secretary of the suffrage association in Denver's Tabor Opera House were provided by Mrs. Elizabeth (Baby Doe) Tabor, wife of U.S. Senator H. A. W. Tabor. Many women who were prominent in Denver's society actively supported the campaign, and their clubs gave added strength to the movement.

The closing of mines in the mountains and drought on the prairies brought hard times to Colorado in the early 1890s. Populism spread from Kansas and Texas where the political parties were being changed to meet the desires of the people. A Populist People's Party organized with support from farmers and miners to elect Davis H. Waite, an Aspen newspaper editor, as governor. In his inauguration speech, Waite pointed out that permitting women to vote in school elections had improved the school system, and called for the passage of legislation to give women the right to vote in all elections.

Several woman suffrage bills were introduced in the 1893 session of the General Assembly. The bill sponsored by Rep. J. T. Heath, of Montrose and Delta counties, had the support of the Populist Party, the Farmers Alliance, and the women's suffrage organizations. It passed in both houses of the legislature and was referred to the voters. There were no other issues on the ballot and the political groups who opposed the issue were not prepared for the strength of the suffrage campaign. The Populist Party favored woman suffrage, as did many county Republican conventions. In addition, individual Democratic and Republican politicians supported women's right to vote. Both Governor Waite and former Governor John Routt were strong supporters of woman suffrage. It was argued that Wyoming women had been voting for several years without causing any harm. Woman suffrage had been included in the Wyoming territorial constitution in 1869 and carried over into the state constitution in 1890 when Wyoming joined the union.

The men voting in the November 7, 1893, election approved the women's suffrage law by a vote of 35,798 to 29,451. Colorado was the first state in which a male electorate approved woman suffrage by popular election.<sup>4</sup> At the victory celebration, Carrie Chapman Catt was praised for her work. One speaker

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<sup>2</sup> Carolyn Stefanco, "Networking on the Frontier: The Colorado Suffrage Movement, 1876-1893," in Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson, **The Women's West**.

<sup>3</sup> Billie Barnes Jensen, "Let The Women Vote," **Colorado Magazine**, Winter 1954.

<sup>4</sup> Zeke Sher, "When Women Won Colorado," **Denver Post Empire Magazine**, March 4, 1979.

described her as the "noble woman, to whom more than any one other person we owe the glorious fact of our citizenship." Colorado men who voted for woman suffrage were thanked because they "showed the world yesterday that they were neither afraid nor ashamed to give their women equal rights with themselves."<sup>5</sup>

Because the vote was on a referred statute, women's right to vote does not appear in the state constitution. *Article II, Section 5. Freedom of elections*, reads: "All elections shall be free and open; and no power, civil or military, shall interfere to prevent the free exercise of the right of suffrage." If there is any constitutional guarantee of woman suffrage, it might be in the State Equal Rights Amendment, *Article II, Section 29. Equality of the Sexes*, which states: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the state of Colorado or any of its political subdivisions on account of sex."

### **Colorado women vote**

The first woman to register and vote in a Colorado general election was Eliza Pickrell Routt, whose husband had been the last governor of the Territory of Colorado and the first governor of the state. In the first election with Colorado women voting, Governor Waite was deeply disappointed when women voters failed to support him.<sup>6</sup> They voted instead for a more conservative Republican candidate, and three Republican women were elected to the General Assembly. They were Clara Cressingham and Frances Klock of Denver and Carrie Holly of Pueblo. Each served only one term, but were followed by Olive C. Butler (Republican), Martha A. B. Conine (Nonpartisan), and Evangeline Hartz (Populist), elected to the House in 1896.<sup>7</sup> In 1912, Helen Ring Robinson, a Denver Democrat, was the first woman elected to the state senate.

Colorado politics in the early 1900s was characterized by economic growth, individual ambition, and a corruption in government that frustrated reformers. The political parties were strongly competitive. The Populists briefly took control of the state government in the early 1890s, but made few changes. In 1909, John Shafroth, a Democrat, was elected governor with a General Assembly comprised of all Democrats. During his administration, a progressive reform movement emphasized the importance of tourism and stressed educational opportunity for all. Good roads were an important political issue. For the first time, the ethics of political contributions were questioned and reporting of campaign expenses was required.<sup>8</sup> Labor laws were improved, and elections were regulated.

The system of initiative and referendum was adopted in 1910 by a vote of the people. It established a mechanism for citizen initiative by which an issue can be brought to a vote of the people at the next general election if a sufficient number of qualified voters have signed a petition, or issues may be referred for vote of the people by approval (vote) of the legislature. This form of direct legislation has influenced action by Colorado's League of Women Voters in the succeeding years.

Although women were elected to both state and local offices and the property rights of women were expanded, their influence was mostly felt in their support for reforms in government. Edward P. Costigan, a lawyer who had defended striking coal miners after the infamous "Ludlow Massacre," and Arapahoe County Judge Ben Lindsey, who is best known for his work for juvenile justice, were the leaders of a reform movement in the early 1900s. They organized a State Voters' League that worked for reforms in government and in the political parties. The organization did not last, but many of their ideas eventually were adopted.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Jensen, *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Abbott, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

<sup>7</sup> Center for the American Woman and Politics, *News & Notes*, Winter 1991.

<sup>8</sup> Lamm & Smith, *Pioneers and Politicians*.

<sup>9</sup> Colin B. Goodykoontz, *Papers of Edward P. Costigan* (Denver: World Press, 1941), pp. 14–23.

Mabel Cory and Edward Costigan had been classmates and class officers in Denver's East High School graduating class of 1892. She was one of the first kindergarten teachers in Denver, and was president of Woman's Club of Denver from 1913 to 1916. After they married, she expressed her strong interest in politics as they worked together in the Progressive Republican movement. This group was determined to make changes in the party organization and clean up what was perceived as corruption in city and state government.<sup>10</sup> Aligned with Costigan and Lindsey, was Josephine Roche, a social worker who became the first woman on Denver's police force. In 1928, she helped Mabel Costigan organize the *Woman Citizens League of Colorado*. When the movement did not achieve desired results, the Costigans became Democrats.

The Colorado women's suffrage organization worked for national woman suffrage, and Mabel Costigan was one of its most active members. When her husband was appointed to the U.S. Tariff Commission in 1917 by President Wilson, they moved to Washington. There she transferred her abundant energies to leadership in the District of Columbia Suffrage Association, working to give all women citizens of the United States the voting rights that Colorado women had won in 1893. As a board member of NAWSA in 1919, she chaired the Committee on Food Supply and Demand. She was appointed by Carrie Chapman Catt to the first board of the National League of Women Voters, founded on February 14, 1920, when it became apparent that the Nineteenth Amendment would be ratified.<sup>11</sup>

### **The national suffrage campaign.**

The Colorado campaign became a model and inspiration for the woman suffrage movement in other states, although the Nineteenth Amendment would not be ratified until 1920. Idaho and Utah both approved women's suffrage in 1896. Then came Washington in 1910; California in 1911; Kansas, Arizona, and Oregon in 1912; and Montana and Nevada in 1914. In 1917, New York became the first state east of the Mississippi to approve women's suffrage. It was followed in 1918 by Michigan, Oklahoma, and South Dakota. The focus moved in 1918 to the national scene when the "Anthony Amendment" was introduced in the U.S. Senate by California Senator A. A. Sargent and in the House of Representatives by Montana Representative Jeanette Rankin. After long debate, filibuster, and delay, the Amendment passed in both the House of Representatives and in the Senate.

When the Amendment went to the states for their ratification in June 1919, the National American Woman Suffrage Association lobbied for the amendment in all states. Even the states where women already had full suffrage were slow to ratify. On June 10, the Amendment was ratified by the first three states. Many state legislatures were not in session, and special sessions had to be called. On December 12, 1919, Colorado became the fifteenth state to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment. Wyoming, the first to give women voting rights, was the twenty-seventh to approve the Amendment.<sup>12</sup> Ratification by the required thirty-six states was completed when ratification passed the Tennessee Senate by a single vote. It was approved by Congress on August 26, 1920.

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<sup>10</sup> Fred Greenbaum, **Fighting Progressive**.

<sup>11</sup> Louise M. Young, **In The Public Interest**.

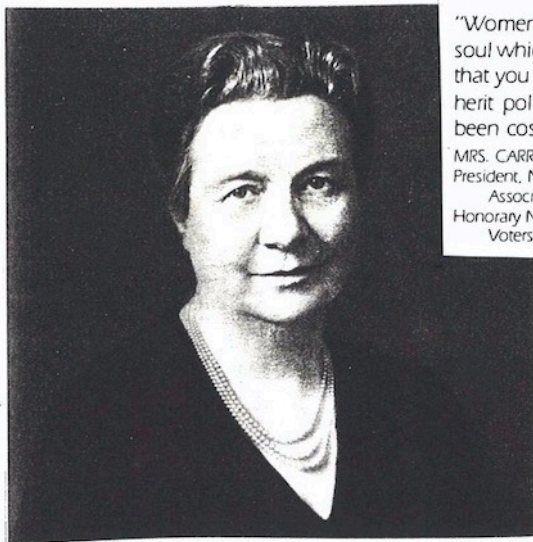
<sup>12</sup> Eleanor Flexner, **Century of Struggle**, pp. 327–335.



JOSEPHINE ROCHE



MAUD WOOD PARK  
LWV President, 1920-24



BELLE SHERWIN  
LWV President, 1924-34

"Women have suffered an agony of soul which you can never comprehend that you and your daughters might inherit political freedom. That vote has been costly. Prize it!"

MRS. CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT., 1859-1947  
President, National American Woman Suffrage Association, 1900-1904 and 1915-1920  
Honorary National President, League of Women Voters, 1920-1947



MABEL CORY COSTIGAN  
WCLC President, 1928-31



Oct. 25, 1938

## Women Voters to Conduct School

Plans for the campaign school, sponsored by the League of Women Voters in cooperation with the Junior Chamber of Commerce and American Association of University Women, were completed at a meeting held Friday. Mrs. Josephyne Hildrich Johnson outlined the plans for the school which is to be held here October 25.

Committee chairmen assisting



JOSEPHYNE JOHNSON

Mrs. Johnson gave their reports. They are: Miss Louise Kampf, tickets; Mrs. Helen Pierce, finances; Miss Martha Lou Lemon, general arrangements; and Mrs. E. Bland Cresap, publicity.

The school, which is entirely non-partisan, will be divided into three sections: an afternoon meeting at 4, a dinner at 6 and an evening forum at 7:15. All meetings will be held at the First Christian church.

At the afternoon meeting members of the local league and representatives of both democratic and republican parties will present the technique of nominating and electing a candidate, showing each progressive step from the party caucus thru the convention and primary to the ballot box. Highlights of both democratic and republican systems will be presented.

At the dinner meeting Dr. Fred Bramhall of Boulder will speak on "Cross Currents in Colorado Politics." Dr. Bramhall has spoken in Colorado Springs many times. He will be remembered as one of the popular speakers who appeared at the Colorado Springs forum meetings during 1936 and 1937.

Dr. Edith Bramhall, who has recently returned from Czechoslovakia, and is a well known authority on state government reorganization, will be one of the members of the panel for the evening forum.

## SUNDAY GAZETTE AND TELEGRAPH

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1938

## IGNORANCE AND INDIFFERENCE FOES OF GOOD GOVERNMENT; CAMPAIGN SCHOOL TUESDAY

Ignorance and indifference on the part of the citizen were attacked as "real foes of good government" in a nonpartisan campaign school in Colorado Springs were announced in a Junior Chamber of Commerce "Get Out the Vote" program broadcast by radio station KJVR Tuesday night.

Wesley B. Davidson, Colorado

the states to pass intrastate

The new act calls for a minimum of 25 cents an hour and a minimum work week of 44 hours during the first year.

Andrews advised employers who are uncertain whether the act covers them to comply rather than penalties.

Andrews suggest that they let their consciences be their guide. "but I would be very wise in both a legal and economic standpoint to conform to the law. They should make a mistake, it would be too bad."

The administrator said that in the next four days he hoped to complete issuance of all definitions and regulations congress called on to make. Tomorrow, he said, would make public his general definition of professionals, salesmen, outside salesmen and others engaged in a retail capacity of whom are exempt from statute.



Colorado Springs life insurance agent, and Mrs. Muri Houseman, representing the League of Women Voters and the American Association of University Women, appeared on the program.

Mrs. Houseman said the campaign school, sponsored by the League of Women Voters in cooperation with the Junior Chamber and University Women's association, will be conducted in three sessions Tuesday, October 25, at the First Christian church.

"At the afternoon meeting, opening at 4 p. m.," she said, representatives of both republican and democratic parties will present the technique of nominating and electing a candidate showing each progressive step from the party caucus thru the convention and primary to the ballot box of the general election.

"An address on 'Cross Currents in Colorado Politics,' will be given at the dinner meeting. The members of the panel for the evening forum at 7:15 p. m., will discuss candidates with respect to their qualifications and all sides of the campaign issues, will be considered. All sessions of the campaign school are open to the public.

"The school presents an excellent opportunity for all citizens to obtain accurate information which they will need to vote intelligently. With elections more frequent than in any other country in the world,

the politics and government growing more complicated all the time, it does seem that anything that increases the political knowledge of the average citizen is particularly worth while at this time. The realization of this need for political enlightenment has been the chief motive of the campaign school in Colorado Springs this fall," Mrs. Houseman declared.

## To Be Discussed Here by Leaders

Highlights of the evening session of the Campaign School conducted under the auspices of the League of Women Voters Tuesday, October 25, at 7:30 o'clock at the First Christian church, will be a panel discussion on election issues, both state and national. Topics covered will include: "State Reorganization," "Government Spending," "Foreign Policy," "Amendments" and "Trends in Government."

Those who participate in the panel will be Dr. Frederick Bramhall, from the University of Colorado; Dr. Roy E. Brown, from Denver University; Mrs. W. Lewis Abbott and Edith C. Bramhall from Colorado college; and Norman Baker, a lawyer representing the Colorado Springs Junior Chamber of Commerce. The Junior Chamber of Commerce is co-operating with the League of Women Voters, as is the American Association of University Women, in urging enlightened voting, though from a non-partisan viewpoint.

The panel discussion will follow a dinner meeting at 6 at which Dr. Frederick Bramhall will talk on "Cross Currents in Colorado Politics." Reservations for the dinner may be made at the Chamber of Commerce.

First session of the school will be at 4 p. m., when there will be a presentation of the process of choosing candidates by the various media of our political system, from the precinct caucus thru the party assembly, primary and general election.

Thru the co-operation of radio station KJVR the League of Women Voters will bring you a program consisting of interviews with representatives of the organizations co-operating with the league in the drive for intelligent voting at the November election. Mrs. E. Bland Cresap, publicity director for the league, will conduct the interviews.

All sessions of the school are free to the public, altho, of course, there is a nominal charge for the dinner.

**Campaign School** Taking part in the panel discussion at the First Christian church at 7:15 p. m. Tuesday will be: Dr. Edith C. Bramhall, Colorado college