

## P R E F A C E

Woman suffrage was probably the most sweeping change in the political history of the United States and of the entire world. Women's role in the cast of history was for many years one of support and nurturing members of the family on a very personal level. It took a long time for people to see that that role could be expanded to include participation in the government of the nation and its communities -- nurturing democracy. *The roots of the League of Women Voters lie deeply in the suffrage movement.* The League founders were women who had devoted many years to working for universal voting rights for women.

The bold and forthright women and their families who pioneered the West brought with them the seeds of the suffrage movement. They knew well the suffering and privation of life on the frontier and they accepted the responsibilities for creating new homes, new communities, and new governments. They organized and worked to gain the right to vote in their new states. It is no wonder that *women of the western states were the first to be successful in the fight for woman suffrage!* Wyoming, 1869. Colorado, 1893. Idaho and Utah, 1896. Washington, 1910. California, 1911. Kansas, Arizona, and Oregon, 1912. Montana and Nevada, 1914. New York — the first state each of the Mississippi, 1917. Michigan, Oklahoma, and South Dakota, 1918. And when they won, they turned to their sisters in the other states to help them gain the same rights.

From the beginning of the Woman Suffrage Movement at the Seneca Falls meeting in 1848 to the last convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association in Chicago in 1920, women and the men who affiliated themselves with the movement fought a battle for the rights of women to vote in the elections of the United States -- the constitutional right of every citizen. They had learned the strength of organization that won ratification of the 19th Amendment, and were not willing to abandon that power. When Carrie Chapman Catt called for the formation of a new organization dedicated to continue the work for women's rights and issues, she was greeted with enthusiastic applause. And the League of Women Voters was founded on February 14, 1920, in Chicago.

In Colorado, the League was not organized until late in 1928, at the beginning of the Great Depression, but it became an effective network of women who made the most of their talents to create and maintain lasting influence on state and local government. Throughout its 67-year history, the women of the League were prominent in their communities. The names of these leaders, and the risks they took in acting on their principles, are detailed in this history. There are some discrepancies in how names are spelled for early records were hand-written. Some appear only with the title "Mrs." and the last name -- as was the custom.

*This history is dedicated to those intrepid founders and to all of the women and men who have been members, served on local and state boards, researched studies, wrote reports, answered phone calls and letters, ran for government offices, circulated petitions, and devoted countless volunteer hours to the work of the League.*

.. .Wilma R. Davidson