

The Delaware Women's Suffrage Centennial Monument



*Dedicated at Legislative Hall, Dover, Delaware
on Wednesday, October 13, 2021*



Dedication of the Delaware Women's Suffrage Centennial Monument

*Legislative Hall, Dover, Delaware
Wednesday, October 13, 2021*

PROGRAM

Greetings and Introductions

Jackie Griffith, *Chair
Delaware Women's Suffrage
Centennial Committee*

Remarks

Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester
Lieutenant Governor Bethany Hall-Long
Remarks by Senate and House Leadership
Representative Valerie Longhurst
Senator Nicole Poore

Brief History of Women's Suffrage in Delaware

Professor Emerita Anne M. Boylan

Induction of two Sussex County Suffragists,
Mary Seward Phillips Eskridge of Seaford and
Margaret White Houston of Georgetown,
into Delaware Women's Hall of Fame

Melanie RossLevin, *Director
Office of Women's Advancement
and Advocacy*

Unveiling of the Monument

Past and Present Female Elected Officials,
Cabinet Officials and Members of the Judiciary

Closing Remarks

Richard B. Carter, *Chair
Delaware Heritage Commission*



Delaware Women's Suffrage History: A Special Note — University of Delaware Professor Emerita Anne M. Boylan, long a leading historian of the Delaware Women's Suffrage movement, has recently published a wonderful new book about the fascinating history of the movement. Entitled "Votes for Delaware Women," it is available online by going to: <https://www.rutgersuniversitypress.org/bucknell/votes-for-delaware-women/9781644532072>. In addition, the Delaware Heritage Commission is in the process of obtaining copies of the book which will be available for sale in coming months either at the Delaware Public Archives on at the state's online bookstore, https://shop.delaware.gov/index.php?cPath=118&sort=2a&filter_id=322.

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The cause of Women's Suffrage—extending to American women the right to vote—had its official origin at a meeting at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. Though that was the formal beginning of a movement that lasted for more than seven decades until enactment of the 19th, or Women's Suffrage, Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, many women had been raising a call for equal suffrage at least since the latter half of the 18th century. With the beginning of the 20th Century, the battle intensified and several of the newer western states adopted women's suffrage at the state level. Even with America's entry into World War One in 1917, the fight continued until the U.S. Congress finally passed the 19th Amendment in June 1919. At that point, requiring ratification by three-fourths, or 36, of the then-48 states, the amendment began making the rounds of the different states. By the late Spring of 1920, 35 states had ratified the amendment and the measure's proponents thought that Delaware might pose the best chance from among the remaining states for the crucial 36th ratification. Sadly, they were proven wrong, through no fault of the many Delawareans who fought for it. This monument honors the role of Delaware women and men in that long struggle.

The Delaware Women's Suffrage Centennial Committee was organized by the Delaware General Assembly and the Delaware Heritage Commission some three years ago to organize a centennial observance, of which this monument was to be the focal point. Sadly, the onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic in early 2020 caused many of the planned events to be postponed or done virtually and in some cases cancelled. But the work on the monument has continued and today's dedication ceremony, though a long time coming, is the result of hard work by many Delawareans.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project has been very much a collaborative effort. We are indebted to all the many Delawareans who have assisted in making this monument a reality. Specifically, we would like to thank the Delaware Public Archives, the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, the Delaware Heritage Commission, the Delaware Women's Suffrage Centennial Committee, University of Delaware Professor Emerita Anne M. Boylan, the Hon. Valerie Longhurst, the Hon. Nicole Poore, the Delaware General Assembly, the Delaware Department of State, the Legislative Hall Print Shop and the Division of Research of the Legislative Council, the Delaware Division of Facilities Management, William V. Sipple and Son, Inc., of Milford, Delaware, and all others who have helped, for their invaluable assistance.

Side One of Delaware Women's Suffrage Monument



*"We are called the Iron-Jawed Angels.
Is that supposed to be an insult?"*

DELAWARE SUFFRAGE LEADER MABEL VERNON

IN TRIBUTE TO THE HEROIC EFFORTS OF THOSE DELAWAREANS WHO FOUGHT UNCEASINGLY FOR
GENERATIONS TO BRING ABOUT PASSAGE OF THE WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE AMENDMENT TO THE U.S.
CONSTITUTION, AN EFFORT THAT ULTIMATELY SUCCEEDED IN 1920.

Mabel Vernon (1883 – 1975)



Mabel Vernon is shown above in Washington in August 1917 carrying a banner to the White House while being escorted by police. Ms. Vernon was born in Wilmington, Delaware, where her father was editor and publisher of the *Wilmington Daily Republican*. Part of a large Quaker-Presbyterian family, she attended Swarthmore with future national suffrage leader and founder of the National Woman's Party Alice Paul. After graduating in 1906, Vernon taught Latin and German in a Pennsylvania high school before attending a National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) conference in Philadelphia in 1912. She later returned to college and earned a master's degree in political science from Columbia University in 1924.

Vernon has been described by her fellow activists as the first, and perhaps the most outstanding, of National Woman's Party organizers. She participated in the 1919 "Prison Special" tour, which did much to dispel popular fears of NWP militancy and win sympathy for the sacrifices that NWP activists had made for the suffrage cause.

Vernon was also notable for her audacious demonstrations during major presidential addresses—calling out to President Wilson during his Independence Day speech in 1916. After Wilson's closely contested reelection in November 1916, she and other NWP activists secured front-row gallery seats for his annual address to Congress. During the speech, Vernon and the others (one of whom was fellow Delawarean Florence Bayard Hilles) unfurled a suffrage banner from inside Vernon's coat, an action that won publicity across the country. Vernon was also among the first group of NWP women sentenced to brief terms in the District jail when she was charged with obstructing traffic while picketing the White House in June 1917. Vernon remained active in the NWP in the 1920s and served as its executive secretary. *(Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress)*



THESE WOMEN AND MANY OTHER DELAWAREANS FOUGHT FOR MANY YEARS TO GIVE AMERICAN WOMEN THE RIGHT TO VOTE. SOME EVEN SUFFERED ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT. AT LAST, ON AUGUST 26, 1920, THE 19TH AMENDMENT BECAME PART OF THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION.

Descriptions of Images on Side Two of Delaware Women's Suffrage Monument

(Compiled with the help of Dr. Anne Boylan, UD Professor Emerita)



Delaware Suffragists Leave Wilmington for Demonstrations in Washington, D.C.

On a seemingly unremarkable day, Saturday, May 9, 1914, a rather remarkable Delaware woman and her fellow suffragists joined thousands of other women from around the country and became part of something that would forever change the lives of women. The photo, which appeared in the May 10, 1914 edition of Wilmington's *Delmarva Sunday Star* newspaper, shows a group gathered at the Wilmington, Del., train station that day for the a trip to Washington, D.C. to attend a national women's suffrage parade. Mrs. Florence Bayard Hilles, **No. 9**, (daughter of Thomas F. Bayard, former United States Senator, U.S. Secretary of State, and Ambassador to Great Britain) led this small contingent of Delawareans. This was to be the culmination of grand nationwide demonstrations when local suffrage parades were held and resolutions were adopted in every state of the Union. Those in the photo in addition to Mrs. Hilles are: **No. 1**, Miss Mabel Fowler, **No. 2**, Mr. John F. Thomas; **No. 3**, Mrs. John F. Thomas (Josephine); **No. 4**, Mrs. Annie Melvin Arniel; **No. 5**, Miss Rebecca Arniel; **No. 6**, Miss Mayme Statnekoo (then about 16 years old); **No. 7**, Mr. Donald Stephens; **No. 8**, Miss Marguerite Wallace; **No. 9**, Mrs. Hilles; **No. 10**, Miss Mary R. de Vou; **No. 11**, Mr. Frank Stephens; **No. 12**, Mrs. Elise Stokes (Mrs. Reuben) Satterthwaite; **No. 13**, Mrs. Agnes Keehan (Mrs. Harry) Yerger; **No. 14**, Mrs. May Keehan Stroman of Philadelphia; and **No. 15**, Mrs. Annie Magee. May 9, 1914, marks the beginning of serious marching and picketing in Washington, D.C. No members of this small group were arrested initially. However, seven Delawareans later went to jail in Washington for their beliefs. Mrs. Annie Arniel deserves special mention. A factory worker, Annie was arrested eight times and served a total of 103 days in jail. When finally released and returned to Wilmington after her last confinement of 60 days, her health had been broken. She never fully recovered. All the women in the photo would continue to march and picket, but two in the photo, Mrs. Hilles and Annie Magee, were among those later arrested for picketing the White House. They were sentenced and served time in federal prison before being pardoned by President Wilson.

Delaware Women's Rights Crusader Florence Bayard Hilles

Mrs. Hilles, of New Castle (1866-1954), a member of Delaware's prominent Bayard family, was the daughter of Thomas Francis Bayard of Wilmington, who served in the U.S. Senate, as U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain and as U.S. Secretary of State. Mrs. Hilles is shown here speaking at a Washington, D.C. suffrage rally, circa 1916 (photo from the collection of the Library of Congress). Later in her career, Mrs. Hilles served as president of the National Woman's Party. She was among those arrested for picketing at the White House during the Woodrow Wilson Administration and was briefly imprisoned.



Delaware native Mary Ann Shadd Cary (1823 – 1893)

was an American-Canadian anti-slavery activist, journalist, publisher, teacher, and lawyer. She was the first black woman publisher in North America and the first woman publisher in Canada. Shadd Cary was an abolitionist who became the first female African-American newspaper editor in North America when she edited *The Provincial Freeman* in 1853.

Mary Ann Shadd was born in Wilmington, Delaware, on October 9, 1823, the eldest of 13 children of Abraham Doras Shadd (1801–1882) and Harriet Burton Parnell, who were free African-Americans. Growing up, her family's home frequently served as a refuge for fugitive slaves; however when it became illegal to educate African-American children in the state of Delaware, the Shadd family moved to Pennsylvania, where Mary attended a Quaker Boarding School.

In 1840, after being away at school, Mary Ann returned to West Chester and established a school for black children. She also later taught in Norristown, Pennsylvania, and New York City. In 1856, she married Thomas F. Cary, a Toronto barber who was also involved with *The Provincial Freeman*. She had a daughter named Sarah and a son named Linton. After her husband died in 1860, Shadd Cary and her children returned to the United States.

During the Civil War, at the behest of the abolitionist Martin Delany, she served as a recruiting officer to enlist black volunteers for the Union Army in the state of Indiana. After the Civil War, she taught in black schools in Wilmington, before moving to Washington, D.C., where she taught in public schools and attended

Howard University School of Law. She graduated as a lawyer at the age of 60 in 1883, becoming only the second black woman in the United States to earn a law degree. She wrote for the newspapers *National Era* and *The People's Advocate* and in 1880, organized the Colored Women's Progressive Franchise Association.

Shadd Cary joined the National Woman Suffrage Association, working alongside Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton for women's suffrage, testifying before the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives.

Alice Ruth Moore Dunbar-Nelson (1875 – 1935)

Alice Dunbar-Nelson, educator, author and social activist, was born on July 19, 1875 in New Orleans, Louisiana to Patricia (Wright) Moore and Monroe Moore. She attended public school in New Orleans and enrolled in the teacher training program at Straight University in that city in 1890. Two years later she graduated and began teaching in New Orleans.

Moore developed her literary skills while teaching and soon became a prolific writer. Her first book, *Violets and Other Tales*, a collection of short stories, was published in 1895. Later that year she published *The Goodness of St. Rocque and Other Short Stories*. Through her career Alice Moore wrote four novels, two volumes of oratory, dramas, newspaper columns, two collections of essays, poems, short stories and reviews, many of which drew on her extensive knowledge of Creole culture. In all of these collections, Alice Moore proved to be a perceptive critic of American society.



Alice Moore was married three times. Her first marriage was to Paul Laurence Dunbar, the poet. Dunbar noticed her picture and one of her poems in the Boston Monthly Review in 1895, and was instantly infatuated. They began a two-year correspondence and finally met in February 1897. They were married on March 6, 1898 in New York City, New York and moved to Washington, D.C. The marriage initiated a tumultuous relationship and they separated in 1902. As husband and wife they shared literary pursuits and celebrity status in Washington, but their life together was marred by Paul's physically abusive treatment of Alice. In one incident she was sent to a Washington, D.C. hospital where she nearly died after his attack.

After the separation Alice Moore Dunbar moved to Wilmington, Delaware. She worked at Howard High School in an assortment of positions, and was involved in several intimate relationships with both men and women. She secretly married fellow teacher Henry A. Callis in 1910, but divorced him shortly after. It was not until her third marriage in 1916 to Robert J. Nelson, a journalist and political activist, that she was involved in a stable relationship.

Alice Moore Dunbar-Nelson had worked with social and cultural organizations since her youth in New Orleans. Her marriage to Nelson, however, seemed to encourage greater involvement in the public arena. She became active in Delaware and regional politics as well as in the civil rights and women's suffrage movements.

In 1914, she helped establish the Wilmington chapter of the NAACP, which received its charter in 1915. Also in 1914, she published a series of six articles in Wilmington's *Sunday Star* newspaper, exposing the appalling conditions for African Americans. She also became the first president of the Wilmington Equal Suffrage Study Club when it was established in March, 1914.

She spent several months in Pennsylvania in 1915, working to rally voters to support a state suffrage referendum that was on that state's ballot that fall. During World War I, Dunbar-Nelson served as a field representative of the Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense. Later she served on the State Republican Committee of Delaware. From 1929 to 1931 she was executive secretary of the American Friends Inter-Racial Peace Committee.

Dunbar-Nelson was co-editor with her husband of the *Wilmington Advocate*, the local African American newspaper. She wrote initially for the *Advocate* and then became a successful syndicated columnist. Dunbar-Nelson's career peaked in the 1920s and early 1930s when she wrote reviews and essays for newspapers, magazines and academic journals. She also continued to write stories, poems, plays and novels. Her work reached a national audience which made her a popular public speaker.

In 1932, Alice Dunbar-Nelson moved to Philadelphia when her husband became a member of the Pennsylvania Athletic Commission. Soon afterwards her health began to deteriorate. In September 1935, she was admitted to a Philadelphia hospital for a heart ailment. She died there on September 18, 1935 at the age of sixty.

Blanche Williams Stubbs (1872 – 1952)

Blanche Stubbs was born in Wisconsin, on February 29, 1872. Blanche entered Howard University in Washington, D.C., graduating in 1892. Upon graduation, she settled in Wilmington, Delaware to teach at The Howard School, which was, by the 1890s, black-run and the only four-year high school for African-Americans in Delaware. In 1912, she joined with other African-American Wilmingtonians to establish the Garrett Settlement House, named for the city's famed abolitionist leader, Thomas Garrett. She was an early and consistent supporter of the Wilmington Branch of the NAACP, chartered in 1915. She led the Equal Suffrage Study Club contingent in Wilmington's large suffrage parade on May 2, 1914.



On June 3, 1920, one day after the Delaware State Legislature had refused to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment, she scheduled a public lecture at the settlement house on "The Equality of Men and Women." During the 1920s, Blanche was active in Republican Party politics, both nationally and locally, and served as state chairman of the black-led National Republican Women's Auxiliary Committee. As NAACP branch Vice-President, she worked with other leaders in the organization to mitigate the routine humiliations of segregation. She continued her work as director of the Garrett Settlement until it closed in 1949. Blanche died on March 11, 1952. She was eulogized as one of the most prominent women in Wilmington's African-American community. For her work and contributions to the civic life of Wilmington, Blanche was honored by the Alumni Association at Howard University in June 1951.



Ethel Cuff Black (1890 – 1977)

Miss Cuff was one of the founders of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated. She was elected the sorority's first vice president and attended the Deltas' first public event, the Woman Suffrage Procession in Washington, D.C., in March 1913. Prominent suffragist Mary Church Terrell lobbied on behalf of the Deltas to win them a place in the parade, where they were the only African American organization represented.

Ethel was born in Wilmington, Delaware. Her father, Richard Cuff, was a tanner in an African-American owned business. Her maternal grandfather was a Civil War veteran. In Bordentown, New Jersey, she attended the Industrial School for Colored Youth and graduated with the highest grade point average.

At Howard University, she was chairwoman of the collegiate chapter of the YWCA. During college, she was also the vice-president of Alpha Kappa Alpha, but later voted to reorganize the sorority and formed Delta Sigma Theta with twenty-one other women. Due to illness, she graduated from Howard in 1915. She was also the first African-American teacher at Public School #108 in Richmond Hill, Queens, New York. During the 1920s, she taught history at the State College for Colored Students, now Delaware State University.

She was married in 1939 to real estate agent David Horton Black.

Mabel Lloyd Ridgely (1872 – 1962)

Based on a biography by Meghan Willis, undergraduate student, Binghamton University, Binghamton, New York.

Mrs. Henry Ridgely, also known as Mabel Lloyd Ridgely, was born to Charles G. Fisher and Philippa Lloyd Fisher on April 13, 1872 in Washington, D.C. At the age of twenty-one, she married Henry Ridgely and the young couple settled in Dover, Delaware. One year later, in 1894, they had a daughter who was named after Mabel's mother, Philippa. Throughout her life Mrs. Ridgely was a prominent figure in both state and local politics.

During World War I, Mabel chaired the Women's Liberty Loan Committee for the state. In regard to this position Mabel made the following statement, "Every war has proved our courage. Sacrifice has begotten sacrifice. Obstacles have been met, have been overcome. Now that German peace efforts are abroad and the epidemic* is at home, stalking hand in hand, opposing the Liberty Loan, arise with all the energy at your command. Let American womanhood answer with their bonds."



Mrs. Ridgely was an important agent in the Women's Suffrage movement in Delaware. She was the

* Mrs. Ridgely was referring to the great "Spanish Influenza" pandemic of 1918-1919, then devastating the world.

President of the Ratification Committee for Delaware in 1919. Mabel, along with other leaders, interviewed fifty-two legislators and other “influential men” regarding their stance on women’s suffrage. In addition to the interviews, Mabel Ridgely was also a voice of the Committee. She made a statement to the State Democratic Committee on January 22, 1920 and won over their support. In addition, Mabel “served as the first president of the Delaware Chapter of the League of Women Voters.”

Mabel Lloyd Ridgely was also the President of the Delaware Equal Suffrage Association and led the suffragists of Kent County. With this position came a lot of press exposure and statements, one of which Mrs. Ridgely made on March 22, 1920. She exclaimed, “Suffrage is an assured fact . . . Delaware was loyal to America in 1776. She will be loyal to America in 1920. She will prove her loyalty by her action . . . in the historic state house at Dover, whose walls witnessed the birth of the first state of the union, and will witness the birth of justice to the daughters of the Union.”

The association lobbied and protested in Dover, Delaware where Mabel resided. One of these encounters included the Delaware General Assembly, which became known as the “war of the roses.” On March 25, 1920, suffragists, or “suffs,” who wore yellow roses, and the Anti-Suffragists, or “antis,” who wore red roses on their boutonnieres flooded into Dover. Both parties made their sides known in a spirited debate, often resulting in conflict and name calling. Mrs. Mabel Lloyd Ridgely was one of the “main speakers for the suffs.” The suffragists were even accused of kidnapping the chairman of the committee who was responsible for “presenting the suffrage amendment on the floor” with the goal of “preventing the vote they knew they would lose.” Their prediction was correct, and their efforts proved unsuccessful, when the amendment was defeated in a vote of twenty-three to nine on April 1, 1920. The “special session [was] the last, greatest, and most colorful suffrage battle in Delaware’s history.” Mrs. Ridgely responded to the loss in the *Morning News* on April 21, 1920 claiming, “Of course the failure to ratify is a fearful disappointment. But it really is only a brief delay.”

Mrs. Ridgely was also founder of the annual “Old Dover Days” event and the president of the Delaware Public Archives Commission, which contributed to her role of preserving local history. While the Old Dover Days festival would preserve tradition, Mabel and her husband played a key role in maintaining, preserving, and restoring the physical history of Dover as well. In their free time, the busy couple renovated local historic landmarks and buildings. Some of the Ridgelys’ projects included the Old State House, the Golden Fleece Tavern turned Capitol Hotel, and the John Dickinson Mansion.

Henry Ridgely passed away in 1940. Mabel’s devotion to her husband did not falter. Almost a decade after her husband’s death, in 1949, she organized various documents concerning the history of her husband’s family and published them in a book, *What Them Befell—The Ridgelys of Delaware and their Circle in Colonial and Federal Times, Letters, 1751–1890*.

Mrs. Ridgely remained in Dover and an active member in her community up until her death on January 11, 1962. As a result of all of her statewide women’s suffrage activism, Mabel was inducted into the Hall of Fame of Delaware Women. Her legacy lives on through the continuation of the Old Dover Days festival, a Research Room in her name within the Delaware Public Archives, and the historical landmarks that she saved.

Biography of Mrs. Catherine Boyle, 1879-1955

By Victoria Auer and Caroline Klinger, students, Padua Academy, Wilmington, Delaware

Edited by Anne M. Boylan, University of Delaware

Catherine Magdalen Thornton Boyle, the second of seven children of Irish immigrants Catherine Shields Thornton and Patrick Thornton, was born in Delaware in 1879. Hers was a working-class family; her father was a fireman, and two brothers worked as laborers in a cotton mill. In January, 1900, in a Roman Catholic ceremony, she married Thomas Boyle of New Castle, Delaware, a moulder in a steel mill. Although the 1900 census found her still living with her parents, by 1910 she and her husband were renting quarters in Wilmington, Delaware and by 1920, they had purchased a home on Yonge Street in New Castle, Delaware, where her mother and brother Henry joined the household; Boyle lived the rest of her life in New Castle. She bore six children, only three of whom survived infancy: Thomas, Jr. was born in 1902, Catherine (later Burrows) in 1904, and Bernard in 1916 (he died in 1923). Thomas, Jr., a spinner in a rayon mill, along with his wife and five children, returned to live with his parents during the Depression of the 1930s.



Boyle began contributing to the Congressional Union, predecessor of the National Woman's Party (NWP) in 1915. During the flu epidemic of 1918, Boyle used her nurse's training and opened her home to "twenty-seven men working in a powder factory and nursed them all through influenza because no doctors could be found for them." It seems likely that Boyle joined the wartime production effort during that time because by 1918, Boyle was employed by the Bethlehem Steel Company's plant in New Castle, Delaware. There, she was in contact with militant suffragists, most notably Florence Bayard Hilles, who, despite her pedigree as the daughter of a high-ranking politician, "donned a working women's uniform and became a munitions worker." Together with eight other Delaware women munitions workers, Boyle and Hilles traveled to Washington, D.C., in June, 1918, in an unsuccessful effort to meet with President Woodrow Wilson. In their appeal to the president, they stressed the dangerous nature of their work and their desire, through the right of suffrage, to be "recognized by our country as much her citizens as our soldiers are."

Boyle returned to Washington in January 1919, with Florence Bayard Hilles, Adelina Piunti, Mary E. Brown, Annie Arniel, and other Delaware women to participate in the watchfire movement at the White House in support of woman suffrage. Carrying banners and setting watchfires, suffragists from the NWP protested, picketed, and burned copies of President Wilson's speeches. At some point, Boyle posed for a studio portrait in Wilmington, formally dressed and holding a tricolor suffrage flag. Impending changes at the New Castle work place may have reinforced Boyle's interest in militant suffragism. The plant was preparing to transition to postwar production and very likely trim its workforce. It seems plausible that Boyle and her coworkers

anticipated or may have already been informed of upcoming layoffs. Indeed, the plant downshifted just a month after Boyle joined the 1919 protests.

Given the choice of a fine or jail time for starting fires on the White House grounds, Catherine Boyle willingly served five days. Conditions in the jail were deplorable and the days tedious. Many pickets became ill and experienced rashes, vomiting, and excruciating pain. After her jail time, she returned to Wilmington with Mary E. Brown and Naomi Barrett; all three were guests of honor at a luncheon honoring NWP Delaware chairman Florence Bayard Hilles at the Hotel du Pont. A local newspaper described the three as looking “none the worse for their experience, but proud that they had been imprisoned for the cause of political freedom for women.”

Following the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920, Boyle worked as a nurse in Delaware, both in maternity care and in private-duty work. Her husband Thomas succumbed to pneumonia and bronchitis in February 1943. Catherine Boyle died on March 11, 1955; after a funeral Mass, she was buried at St. Joseph's on the Brandywine cemetery in Wilmington, Delaware. In writing her obituary, her family happily claimed her as “a pioneer in the women's suffrage movement” in Delaware and “a member since its beginning of the National Woman's Party.”

*Eva Halpern (Mrs. Albert) Robin, (1878-1969),
President, Delaware Equal Suffrage Association, Child Welfare Advocate,
Criminal Justice Reformer*

By Melanie Grant and Victoria Bartlett, students, and faculty sponsor, Dr. Colleen Hall, Padua Academy, Wilmington, Delaware. Additional research and editing by Anne M. Boylan, University of Delaware

On June 26, 1919, as President of the Delaware Equal Suffrage Association, Eva Robin led a celebratory luncheon lauding Congressional passage of the Susan B. Anthony amendment. “We are here to celebrate a great victory,” she declared. “Suffrage for women is now inevitable. Let our slogan be, ‘A Vote for Every Women by 1920.’” Under her leadership, the group successfully lobbied Delaware's governor to call a special session of the General Assembly for spring, 1920, in order to consider ratifying the Nineteenth Amendment. Having guided the Delaware Association's strategy during the effort to get the amendment through Congress, she took on the task of organizing her co-workers for the ratification struggle before stepping down as president in November 1919 in favor of a more politically connected leader with state-wide visibility, Dover's Mabel Lloyd Ridgely. Despite Eva Robin's confidence and the efforts of state and national suffrage leaders, in June 1920, the legislature adjourned without ratifying.



Born Rivka Halpern in Russia on November 15, 1878, the young girl immigrated to the United States in 1883 with her parents, sisters, and brother-in-law. In Russia, the family had been middle class, enjoying the services of a cook and laundress, and supported by the father's salary from his counting-house position. But when her parents lost their savings through a bad investment, they made the decision to leave. With help from a German Jewish Charity Society, they settled in Pittsburgh, where her mother took in boarders to contribute to the family economy. Soon renamed Eva by a schoolmate, she learned English (the family spoke Yiddish at home) and managed to attend high school at a time when, as she once noted, her contemporaries were working in factories stripping tobacco or in stores serving as cash girls. In Pittsburgh, she met her future husband, Albert (Abe) Robin, also a Russian immigrant. With her encouragement, he completed his medical degree at the Western University of Pennsylvania (now the University of Pittsburgh) in 1898. Albert Robin moved to Delaware; he and Eva married in 1899 and soon made their home in Wilmington.

Albert Robin had a distinguished career as a physician, becoming the Delaware state pathologist (1899-1903), professor of bacteriology at Temple University (1900-07), medical director of a sanatorium for white tuberculosis patients (1910-1920), and a dogged campaigner in the "pure food and drug" movement of the day, as well as a passionate advocate for clean water supplies to combat typhoid and other diseases that spread quickly in crowded urban areas.

Eva Robin traced her awareness of gender inequality to the sad death of her younger brother, Yosela, in Russia. As the only boy in a family of girls, Yosela was destined to be her father's heir, who "when God had summoned" their father, would speak for him. "Presumably," she commented, "no female heir, according to Jewish tradition, was qualified." She remembered, too, having to claim her right to an education beyond primary school. Her father considered her "marriageable" when she reached sixteen, but her response—"a flood of tears"—caused him to abandon the idea.

In Wilmington, Eva Robin became one of the few Jewish members of the New Century Club, a hive of white women's civic activism that had been founded in 1889. There, she met suffragists such as Emalea Pusey Warner and Gertrude Fulton Nields, as well as the firm anti-suffragist Emily Bissell, with whom Albert Robin worked in anti-tuberculosis labor. She chose suffrage, joining the Wilmington Equal Suffrage Association in 1911. As the mother of young children, she participated energetically in the New Century Club's Child Welfare Committee, giving public talks on the topic of children's needs; in 1911 Wilmington's mayor appointed her as a delegate to a "Mothers' Congress" in Washington, D.C. In addition, she became a vocal member of the Juvenile Court Association, evidence of a commitment to criminal justice reform that she would retain throughout her life. The Club's Current Events Committee offered another forum through which she developed her public speaking skills, lecturing on topics related to Russian history and literature, and in 1917, on the Russian Revolution. She participated in fund-raising for the Hebrew Charity Association and United Hebrew Charities, but she and Albert lived apart from what she termed Wilmington's "Jewish district." She remembered "wend[ing] my way afoot" to that area to buy food items "for which we both yearned but could not get in our neighborhood grocery stores."

After joining the Wilmington Equal Suffrage Association, Eva Robin quickly became active in the work of the state association, an affiliate of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). Before

the group's ties with Delaware's Congressional Union (CU) frayed, she attended CU meetings and the two groups worked together on an unsuccessful 1915 effort to amend the state constitution to enfranchise women. By 1916, however, she had firmly cast her lot with the Delaware Equal Suffrage Association and was hosting NAWSA visitors at her home. At the Delaware Association's annual meeting in November 1917, she became the group's first vice-president.

It would have been clear to Eva Robin upon her election that the Delaware Equal Suffrage Association was suffering from a leadership vacuum. With the United States involved in the Great War, many Delaware suffragists were devoting their time to war work through the Red Cross and Liberty Loan campaigns, and suffrage activity was in abeyance. NAWSA leaders Carrie Chapman Catt and Maud Wood Park visited Delaware in May, 1918, seeking to rouse the state's suffragists to be prepared if the U.S. Congress, as expected, passed the suffrage amendment and sent it to the states for ratification. Once Eva Robin took charge during that summer, and then agreed to assume the organization's presidency, there was a palpable quickening of the group's pace. With NAWSA's backing, her organization mounted a massive petition drive designed to pressure Delaware's two senators into voting to ratify the amendment. The 11,000 signatures made no difference; both men voted "no."

In a statement that Eva Robin appears to have authored, the women expressed "profound regret" at the senators' "attitude," and forthrightly asserted that they "desire no longer to be represented by proxy at the ballot box, but we wish to express, unfettered by any assumptions of masculine superiority, our own political convictions at the polls." The group then targeted for defeat in the 1918 Congressional elections both Delaware's anti-suffrage Senator Willard Saulsbury and its equally anti-suffrage at-large Representative Albert Polk. Both lost their seats. By early December, when Eva Robin issued a public plea for Delawareans to support the passage and ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, the Delaware Equal Suffrage Association had left its doldrums behind.

When Congress sent the Nineteenth Amendment to the states for ratification, in June, 1919, prompting the Wilmington "victory luncheon," Eva Robin had already led the Delaware Equal Suffrage Association through a fund-raising campaign and an expansion of its membership. She oversaw the process of lobbying the governor to call the special session and organized legislative and ratification committees to interview legislators and count votes, serving as ratification chairman for the city of Wilmington and ratification supervisor for the entire state. In anticipation of the special legislative session in spring, 1920, the group agreed to open a headquarters in the state capital, Dover. Robin handed the presidential gavel over to Mabel Ridgely. During the special session, she was an active advocate for ratification.

Once woman suffrage became part of the U.S. Constitution, Eva Robin turned to her interests in child welfare, education, juvenile justice, the Wilmington Prisoners' Aid Society, and the women's auxiliary of the Physicians and Surgeons Hospital. At the same time, her involvement in Jewish affairs increased; she gave her "executive talents" to the Wilmington Jewish Community Center and in 1924 became president of the Wilmington Council of Jewish Women, succeeding sister-suffragist Sallie Topkis Ginns. After Albert Robin's sudden death in 1927, she moved with her youngest child, Annette, to New York and began preliminary work on a biography of Dr. Robin. There, she developed an interest in the Marshall Stillman Movement, a program designed to divert young men from lives of crime through physical exercise.

Having retained a close interest in her native Russia, she grew particularly fascinated by the Soviet experiment, combining that interest with her concern for juvenile justice reform. In 1931 (accompanied by Annette) and again in 1934, she travelled to the Soviet Union to study Soviet education and the Soviet criminal justice system, keeping notes on her experiences and hoping to publish a book on the subject. She was unsuccessful, however, in interesting publishers in her manuscript. During the Second World War, her earlier travels and her role as director and host of “The Saturday Forum Lunch Group” at her Manhattan apartment brought her to the attention of the U.S. House of Representatives Special Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), headed by Martin Dies. In particular, the Committee cited the lunch group’s stated hope for a “speedy victory and lasting peace the world over” as well as its sponsorship of a talk by the historian Herbert Aptheker as evidence that it might be a “communist front organization.” In 1948, her “phone was tapped” and “an F.B.I. investigator came to see” her, requesting the names of speakers and the subjects on which they spoke. In 1953, reflecting upon her experience of “being investigated,” she railed against the anti-communist crusade of Senator Joseph McCarthy and considered herself lucky to have escaped stricter scrutiny of her involvements. Eva Halpern Robin spent her final years in New York, where she died on May 21, 1969.



Women workers, wearing suffrage sashes and carrying suffrage banners, picket near the White House in this February 1917 photograph colorized by Sanna Dullaway for Time magazine. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division / colorized image courtesy of Sanna Dullaway.

Delaware women arrested and jailed in the fight for Women's Suffrage



A policewoman (in white) arrests Delawarean Annie Arniel (center left) for picketing the White House. In 1917, the NWP decided to step up pressure on President Wilson and organized pickets in front of the White House. Calling themselves “silent sentinels” the women picketed the White House, in Lafayette Park and at other government buildings. In June 1917 the police began arresting picketers. Initially they were usually released without charge, but when the protests continued the penalties became more serious. Alice Paul and other women were sentenced to up to 6 months in Occoquan Workhouse. Some prisoners held hunger strikes and were force-fed by prison authorities. Released prisoners were sent on nationwide tours by the NWP and spoke to crowds wearing their prison uniforms. Catherine Boyle, of New Castle, Delaware, holds a suffrage flag.

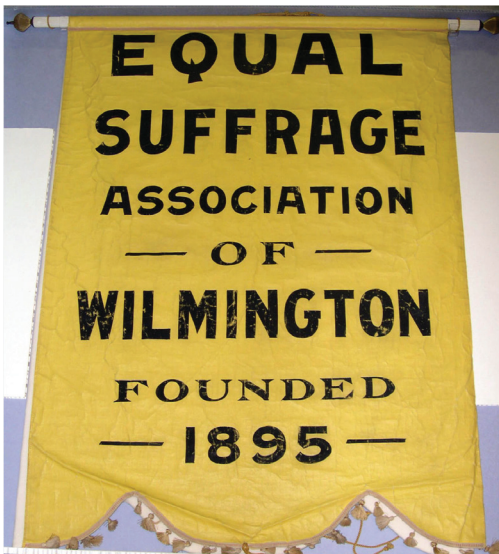
A number of Delaware women were among the protesters. Seven served jail time: Mabel Vernon, Florence Bayard Hilles, Annie J. Magee, Naomi Barrett, Annie Arniel, Catherine Boyle, and Mary Brown. Annie Arniel of Wilmington, who had worked in a munitions factory, spent the most time in jail. She was arrested 8 times and spent a total of 103 days in jail. After one of her arrests Arniel told the *Sunday Star*, a Wilmington paper, “We were good enough to work in the steel plant and help load shells for the battle-fields of France, but we are still not good enough to vote, it seems. Can anyone see justice in this?”

The National Woman's Party continued the protests until 1919, when Congress passed the 19th Amendment.

Photo credits: Photographs from the Records of the National Woman's Party. Library of Congress and Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

(Excerpted from an article by Janet Lindenmuth, “Delaware’s silent sentinels, Delaware women in the fight for women’s suffrage,” Widener Law Library Blog, March 23, 2012.)

*Images from the University of Delaware's online exhibit,
 "Votes for Delaware Women — A Centennial Exhibition" (2020)*



"Wilmington Equal Suffrage Association Founded 1895" [banner], circa 1915. Facsimile image of original canvas (47.75 x 34.5 inches). Courtesy of Delaware Historical Society.



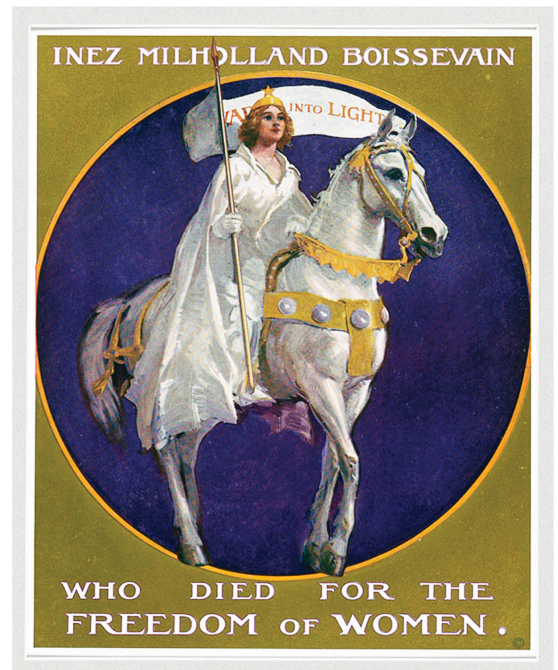
Photographic postcard of Arden Suffrage Parade, circa 1913. Facsimile image courtesy of Arden Craft Shop Museum.



"Gen. Rosalie Jones. Suffrage Army [photograph reprint], Newark, Delaware, February 20, 1913. Courtesy of the Newark Historical Society.



This pennant, used nationally at rallies and protests, showcases the pro-suffrage colors of purple and gold.



"Inez Mulholland Boissevain who died for the Freedom of Women" [poster from pageant, "Forward into Light," commissioned by the National Women's Party, 1924]. Woman Suffrage Collection.

This exhibition was curated by Anne Boylan, Ph.D., Professor Emerita of History and Women and Gender Studies, University of Delaware. The exhibition opened in the Special Collections Gallery of Morris Library at the University of Delaware on February 10, 2020. Almost all of the content from that gallery installation is represented in this WordPress presentation online. Library assistance for research, design and installation of this exhibition was provided by L. Rebecca Johnson Melvin, Dustin Frohlich, and Timothy English. The full exhibition may be seen online at: <https://exhibitions.lib.udel.edu/votes-for-delaware-women/>

The Fight for Ratification of the Women's Suffrage Amendment in Delaware, 1920

By Richard B. Carter

To understand why the Delaware General Assembly, and more specifically, the Delaware House of Representatives, refused in the end to ratify the 19th—or Women's Suffrage—Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in the Spring of 1920, it helps to go back a bit in time. Delaware's General Assembly had during almost all of the 19th Century been largely dominated by old-fashioned, southern-leaning Democrats, harking back to Delaware's history of slavery. They had refused to ratify the three post-Civil War amendments to the U.S. Constitution, the 13th, 14th and 15th, which had the cumulative effect of enfranchising former slaves and giving them the full privileges of U.S. citizenship. Even though these provisions had long since become the law of the land, they remained unratified in Delaware as a symbolic gesture until the Republicans, then known as the "Party of Lincoln," won control of the General Assembly in 1901.

Delaware's governor at the time of the Suffrage battle was John G. Townsend, Jr., a Republican and a brilliant agri-businessman and banker from Selbyville, down at the bottom of the state. Townsend was probably the most progressive governor Delaware had ever had at a time when Republicans tended to occupy the liberal end of the political spectrum.

The Townsend Administration was then in the midst of what was known as "The Great School Fight," when progressives, including Townsend, tried to bring about the modernization of Delaware's public school system by consolidating more than 400 separate school districts, most with a single one-room school, into modern consolidated districts. Among his allies in that fight was Pierre S. du Pont, then CEO of the DuPont Chemical Company and later founder of Longwood Gardens. DuPont ultimately rebuilt almost all of Delaware's black schools and many of its white schools at his own expense.

Most of the state's leading Women's Suffrage strategists had wanted to bring up ratification the year before, soon after it had been passed by the U.S. Congress, when Delaware would have been just one more state considering the measure. But the timing was all wrong because of the school fight. At the beginning of the special session, Mrs. Florence Bayard Hilles, prominent suffrage leader from New Castle County, and her allies in the suffragist cause hoped for an early victory. They had been working throughout the state ever since the suffrage amendment had been approved by Congress the year before, preparing for the inevitable ratification struggle in Dover. They had wanted to bring it to a vote in the fall of 1919, but Governor Townsend felt that he could not risk destroying the school code by calling a special session at the height

of the school fight. After great hue and cry, the school modernization plan was finally narrowly approved by the General Assembly, but it proved very costly to Townsend politically. Now that Delaware seemed to be the deciding factor in the national suffrage battle, the suffragists knew their task would be even harder.

Delaware was home to some of the nation's leading champions for women's suffrage—women like Florence Bayard Hilles, Mabel Vernon, Alice Dunbar Nelson and Blanche Williams Stubbs, to name a few. A great fight erupted in Dover, with national figures on both sides descending on Delaware's then sleepy little state capital and marching in the streets, collaring legislators, and loudly debating the issue.

Hundreds, even thousands of letters and telegrams poured in from all over the country, urging the governor and legislators to ratify or to defeat.

Prominent persons of all descriptions from President Wilson on down contacted the governor and the legislators. The Democratic and Republican National Committees had endorsed the amendment and the national chairmen had contacted their Delaware counterparts. Legions of suffragists appeared in the streets of Dover, wearing yellow jonquils as their symbol. Equally imposing legions of anti-suffragists appeared with red roses on their lapels. The factions marched through downtown Dover, singing marching songs and chanting slogans. Their banners stretched across city streets and they commandeered large halls for rallies. They marched around the Dover Green and into the Old State House, then the home of the General Assembly in those days before Legislative Hall was built in the early 1930's. There they buttonholed legislators and argued their case. The house and senate chambers were beginning to resemble florist shops, buried as they were under increasing quantities of jonquils and roses. As a staff member of the State Senate, I'm proud that it voted for ratification in relatively short order.

The House of Representatives was another story. The anti-suffrage battle erupted into full flower there, where Delaware's leading suffrage opponent, Wilmington aristocrat Mary Wilson Thompson, went about organizing her forces in the same masterful way her father, Civil War Calvary General James Wilson had shown in his capture of fleeing Confederate President Jefferson Davis following Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse in 1865. Among her leading allies in the fight were Wilmington social service proponent Emily P. Bissell and Elizabeth Bradford du Pont Bayard, sister-in-law of suffrage leader Florence Bayard Hilles, and wife of Thomas F. Bayard, Jr., who was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1922.



Governor John G. Townsend, Jr.

Among the anti-suffrage leaders in the House was Wilmington Representative John E. “Bull” McNabb. In her book, *Votes for Delaware Women*, Delaware suffrage historian Anne M. Boylan notes that McNabb, “flinging a common slur for African Americans around the House chamber...deplored the ratification process, claiming that if women won the right to vote, ‘Democrats will never elect another Representative to the Legislature from Wilmington.’ Lobbing the slur a second time, he advocated taking away voting rights from Black men, as well.” This ugliness was contrasted by many suffrage leaders, both White and Black, who made common cause in their efforts to bring about voting rights for all citizens. It cannot be denied, however, that in Delaware as in some southern states, White suffragists were willing to sacrifice the cause of Black suffrage if they thought that would help them achieve their own ends.

In the end, the Delaware House of Representatives, after initially defeating the ratification bill by a vote of 22 opposed to 9 in favor on April 1, 1920, refused even to bring up the matter of ratification again during the special session. Although the Republicans held not only the governorship but majorities in both houses of the General Assembly, there were deep factional divides within the party lingering from the Great School Fight of the previous year. And so, the Delaware suffrage fight was lost temporarily.

The battle then moved to Tennessee, where, despite many of the same divisions and tensions that had characterized the Delaware suffrage fight, the legislature did ultimately vote to ratify the amendment by a one-vote margin, putting it over the top on August 18, 1920. This was reportedly due to the entreaties of one state representative’s mother, who implored her son to support the measure. When it came to making this progressive gesture, Delaware was outdone by a state where, only a few years later, the famous Scopes Monkey Trial took place, in which school teacher John T. Scopes was convicted of a misdemeanor for teaching the theory of evolution in a public school. His trial made international news as Scopes’s attorney, Clarence Darrow, and the state, represented by the visiting grandee, William Jennings Bryan, fought it out.

Delaware’s General Assembly finally got around to ratifying the Womens’ Suffrage Amendment quietly and with little fanfare in 1923, some three years after it became the law of the land nationally.

If you will indulge me in a personal note, I was particularly interested in Delaware’s suffrage fight because I spent seven years of my life researching and writing about the life of then Delaware Governor and later U.S. Senator John G. Townsend, Jr., whom I had known in my childhood and who was in the thick of the events in that tumultuous special session. He served as the Republican governor of Delaware from 1917 to 1921 and this had been one of the most important chapters in his long and interesting political career.

Townsend, a native of Maryland's Worcester County, had brought his young family to Selbyville, Delaware in 1893, with his wife and children and all their belongings loaded into a Deerborn wagon hauled by a team of mules. Telling this story to my father, he said that "the only thing that was paid for was the mules." He went from there to becoming an amazingly successful businessman and Delaware's largest property owner.

Governor Townsend was an ardent supporter of Women's Suffrage and announced that support in his 1917 inaugural address while the matter was still being considered by the U.S. Congress. His younger daughter, Mrs. Lyla Townsend Savoy, with whom I was friendly late in her life, told me that she was a student at the Delaware Women's College in Newark at the time, where she had become a staunch women's suffragist, and convinced her father to support the suffrage cause.

After the pro-ratification side lost the suffrage fight, many predicted that Townsend was finished politically, since the ratification bill's rejection by the House had been due in large part to lingering resentments against him by downstate legislators over the Great School Fight. He did take a few years off from 1921 to 1928, during which he greatly expanded his business empire. But in 1928, he ran as the Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate. The seat was then held by Democratic incumbent Thomas F. Bayard, Jr. Delaware being Delaware, Bayard, who had opposed ratification, was the brother of Florence Bayard Hilles, who had been one of the great champions of women's suffrage both in Delaware and nationally, and an ally of Townsend's in the fight. Townsend won the 1928 election and went on to serve two terms in the U.S. Senate. Throughout that time, he and Mrs. Hilles, who had gone on to become chair of the National Woman's Party, remained staunch allies in the fight to expand women's rights. At the start of every two-year session during his 12 years in the Senate, he was one of the prime sponsors of legislation for an Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Although I'm proud to say that Delaware has enacted an equal rights amendment for our state constitution, an amendment to the U.S. Constitution remains a matter of contention even today.



Suffrage March in Washington, D.C., 1914 (courtesy of the Library of Congress).



Official Program—Woman Suffrage Procession, cover illustration by Benjamin M. Dale, March 3, 1913. Facsimile image courtesy of Library of Congress.