

For Mr. O. T. Banton
From League of Women Voters
Mrs. Kenneth Brown, President
429-7439

April, 1976

The long fight for "Votes for Women" ended in 1920 with the 19th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. The National League of Women Voters was organized in February 1920 to educate the new women citizens, and to work for "needed legislation." In October of the same year a state league was organized in Illinois.. The group of wives, mothers, and distinguished professional women who started the Illinois League had no pattern of organization, no money, no standards of work, no public understanding of their purpose, and some active opposition from women who wished to see all political education in the hands of the parties.

(newspaper clippings)
Local records indicate that a "Macon County League of Women Voters" was organized in December, 1923, with fifty-five members. A meeting was held in Kaeuper Hall of Millikin University with Mrs. J. T. Ramsey, state organizer, and Miss Edith Rockwood, state executive secretary, after months of ^{local} effort by Mrs. G. A. Wright, Miss Amanda Elliott and others. Officers selected at the meeting were:

President - Mrs. Metlin Craig

Vice President - Miss Beatrice Atlass

Recording Secretary - Mrs. Robert Sylvester

Corresponding Secretary - Mrs. Della Hubbard

Treasurer - Mrs. Grover Poole

Directors - Mrs. George A. Wright
Mrs. Eugenie Bacon
Mrs. G. E. Chamberlain
Mrs. E. Myrtle Edwards
Miss Eugenia Allen - all of Decatur
Mrs. D. W. Earl of Forsyth
Mrs. Carl Hoover of Macon
Mrs. David Downing of Niantic
Mrs. Hayden Veech of Long Creek

123
378
45

Miss Beatrice Atllass took over the presidency because of Mrs. Craig's illness, and then resigned in September of 1924, with Mrs. P. W. Wipperman taking over until the December election.

In December, 1924, new officers were elected in a meeting at the YWCA. They were:

Mrs. Ray Evans	President
Mrs. Ed Smith	Vice President
Mrs. R. F. Sylvester	Recording Secretary
Mrs. H. R. Baker	Corresponding Secretary
Mrs. Grover Poole	Treasurer

The State League of Women Voters presented the Macon County League with a large wool flag on a standard at this meeting as a reward for having sold the largest number of "Get Out the Vote" bulletins in the state.

Mrs. Myrtle Edwards spoke at ~~this~~^{the} meeting and indicated that the issues the League was interested in at the time were:

At the national level - entrance into the World Court

At the state level -

- ratification of the National Child Labor Amendment and cooperation with the government in the promotion of the hygiene of maternity and infancy.
- shortening the working day for women in industry.
- the Australian ballot, and shortening the ballot by the removal of the presidential electors;
- appropriations for the farm colony for women offenders of the law;
- establishment of women on the jury service;
- general merit system in Civil Service;
- repeal of the state law placing the power of quarantine and examination for venereal disease in the courts;
- non partisan election system in local elections, and election of the judiciary.

247.
23

There is (then) a gap in our records until April of 1927, when Mrs. G. F. Miller was elected president of the Macon County League of Women Voters at a meeting held in the YWCA. Other officers were :

Vice President	Miss Patricia Hunt
Secretary	Mrs. G. I. Covalt
Treasurer	Mrs. W. A. Ivey

Miss Emily Taft of the State League office spoke to the group on that day.

Mrs. Miller resigned in March, 1928, because of illness, and Miss Patricia Hunt took office then, along with Mrs. G. I. Covalt as Vice President; Mrs. C. H. Quickel, as Treasurer; Mrs. Cora B. Ryman, as Corresponding secretary; Mrs. J. E. Brookshier, as recording secretary; and Mrs. James O'Mara and Mrs. G. F. Miller as Directors. Mrs. Covalt succeeded Miss Hunt as president in April of 1929, at a business meeting held in city hall. Mrs. Dow Harvey of the state league was the speaker and talked of the problem of the one room school. The state government was paying school districts \$10 for each child in attendance at that time. Other officers elected were:

Vice President	Mrs. Cora B. Ryman
Recording secretary	Mrs. Maye Duncan
Treasurer	Mrs. Winifred E. Drennan

In March of 1930, the ^{business} meeting was held in the supervisors room of the court house. Plans were made to celebrate on March 27th the tenth anniversary of the national organization. Officers elected were Mrs. G. I. Covalt, president; Mrs. Cora B. Ryman, vice president; Mrs. Maye Duncan, secretary, and Mrs. Winifred E. Drennan, Treasurer.

The record of this early League ends in 1931 with election of Mrs. Maye Duncan as president; Mrs. C. M. Borchers, as Vice President; Mrs. Leo Michl, as Treasurer; and Mrs. O. H. Quickel as Secretary.. Several of the women were to travel to Springfield in the next week to hear discussion of bills which had been endorsed by the League. The issues they were interested in at that time were the Massachusetts ballot, child welfare bill, motor drivers' license fee, and the eight hour day for women. The group voted to forward greetings to Mrs. Paul Douglas, the former Emily Taft.

In September of 1931, the Decatur Herald reported that the League of Women Voters was completing plans to revive the study groups, which had been discontinued two years previously, with a study on taxation. In the same month The League and the Civics division of the Woman's Club sponsored meetings with Miss Louisa K. Fast of New York City speaking on "Disarmament". No further references to Decatur's first League of Women Voters could be found.

In 1945, according to Mrs. James Leigh, another group of Decatur women met to determine how to form a unit of the League of Women Voters. In remarks made on September 21, 1966, the 20th anniversary of that League, Mrs. Leigh said: "One of the man sized problems facing us in our first year was getting a dynamic person for president. We wanted someone who was well known in the community but not some one who represented any particular social or economic sector. During the war years Decatur had what was known as the Victory Canning Center. It was part of the general conservation movement of those years along with the Victory Clothing Center and the many Victory Gardens. Families in all

walks of life brought fruits and vegetables to the Canning Center for processing for a small fee. Miss Blossom Redmon was the Center's very successful and popular director. She knew hundreds of families, she could organize, she had an excellent sense of humor and she was interested vitally in the work being done by the Leagues elsewhere. - It was difficult to persuade her to be our first president but we managed." Mrs. Walter T. Fisher, state League president, Mrs. Orville Foreman, state vice president in charge of legislation, and Miss Julia Macpherson, state organization secretary, helped with this League second/organization in Decatur. In April of 1946 Miss Blossom Redmon was elected president; Mrs. Paul Temple, vice president; Mrs. Jesse Birks, secretary; Mrs. John Kuhns, treasurer; and Mrs. David Wood a director, at a meeting at the Y.W.C.A. Twenty-six members paid dues and became charter members on the spot. Those members were:

Mrs. Mary Andrews
Miss Barbara Bailey
Mrs. R. J. Baker
Mrs. L. V. Crouch
Mrs. Douglas Johnson
Mrs. Lawrence E. Knuth
Mrs. John C. Kuhns
Mrs. James Leigh
Mrs. Charles Lippert, Jr.
Miss Anne H. McFarlane
Mrs. R. C. McMillen
Mrs. C. Dale Patrick
Mrs. A. D. Pierson
Mrs. George Read
Mrs. John Rehtin
Miss Blossom Redmon
Mrs. Lewis Reynolds
Mrs. Clifford E. Smith
Miss Barbara Stauber
Mrs. R. B. Stauber
Miss Elizabeth Stiller
Mrs. Paul Temple
Mrs. Forest Womack
Mrs. David G. Wood
Miss Margaret Wood
Miss Marian Wood

The women were divided into three study groups, with Mrs. George Read as chairman of a group meeting mornings; Mrs. Charles Lippert chairman of ~~one~~ ^{a group} meeting afternoons, and Mrs. James C. Leigh as chairman of ~~the~~ ^{an} evening group. They planned to meet every other week to study issues of importance, with the entire membership meeting together three times a year.

At the first meeting of ~~this~~ ^{the} new board a decision was made to study legislation concerning the control of the Atomic Bomb, to be followed by studies of the United Nations Organization, and the problem of food for Europe and the hungry of the world. As local study projects, public health, housing and schools were mentioned. Mrs. Leigh, in her anniversary remarks, said: "One of our first discussions was about the feasibility of Atomic Control. (We're still fretting about it.) Another discussion centered on a local issue, whether the Decatur School Special Charter was good or bad. (We still have school problems). In 1947, our records show that Judge Greanias, Robert Witker, former Secretary of the Community Chest, and the Rev. Crothers of the Westminster Church presented a panel discussion on Local Institutions and Welfare Conditions - again we're still working and still interested."

Throughout 1946, these additional "charter" members joined the new League:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p><u>In May</u>
 Mrs. Jesse B. Birks
 Mrs. E. C. Hamill
 Mrs. William Hatfield
 Mrs. J. D. MacKechnie
 Mrs. James Moore
 Mrs. Madeline Babcock Smith
 Mrs. I. A. Wallins</p> | <p><u>In June</u>
 Mrs. A. H. Berg
 Mrs. B. L. Fryxell
 Mrs. Gerald Harwood
 Mrs. C. M. Jack
 Mrs. H. J. Pettee</p> |
|---|---|

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p><u>In July</u>
 Mrs. Robert Lewis
 Mrs. Robert Glenick
 Miss Ethel Parkinson
 Mrs. Robert A. Wood</p> | <p><u>In September</u>
 Mrs. H. Wayne Hill</p> |
|--|--|

In October

Mrs. Horace Garman
Mrs. R. E. Greenfield
Mrs. Jack Greider
Mrs. Walter Myers
Mrs. Maurice Sly
Mrs. Elbert Smith
Mrs. M. J. Wright
Mrs. William Beatty
Mrs. Harly F. Brock
Miss Gladys C. Galligar
Mrs. David Greider
Mrs. Everett McConnell

In November

Mrs. J. A. Hartley
Mrs. Frederick D. Leach
Nellie Jo Sager

In December

Mrs. J. A. Melrose
Miss Christine P'Simer
Mrs. Eric Stern

In January, 1947

Mrs. Walter McLaughlin
Mrs. M. H. Goldman

In 1953, at the suggestion of the National League, the name of the local organization was changed from League of Women Voters of Macon County to League of Women Voters of Decatur, since, by League rules, a county league could not take action below the county level, ~~and~~ the local league had always been (and was) interested in local issues, as well as state and national issues.

The early principles of the League, set forth in 1920, have not changed: "The League of Women Voters would always welcome women of all political parties. It would never tell the individual voter what candidate to support, but would try to supply facts on which to base a decision. By agreement of its members, after study and discussion, the league would take stands on specific issues and work for measures which it believed were in the public interest. It would be a service organization to all citizens, not confining its benefits to its members." *

second

Women who have served as president of the/Decatur League are:

Miss Blossom Redmon
Mrs. Melvin Goldman
Mrs. George Kuhns
Mrs. Floyd Birt
Mrs. Clifford Smith
Mrs. John Donovan
Mrs. H. W. Gibson
Mrs. L. L. Colvis
Mrs. Neal Doubleday
Mrs. Henry Pachrach
Mrs. Thomas L. Hurst
Mrs. Clifford Smith
Mrs. W. H. Tilley
Mrs. Keith Westenhaver
Mrs. Robert C. Schade
Mrs. Robert W. Ohlsen
Mrs. Charles J. Meyerson

This material was prepared during the presidency of Mrs. Kenneth Brown in 1976.

There is (then) a gap in our records until April of 1927, when Mrs. G. F. Miller was elected president of the Macon County League of Women Voters at a meeting held in the YWCA. Other officers were :

Vice President	Miss Patricia Hunt
Secretary	Mrs. G. I. Covalt
Treasurer	Mrs. W. A. Ivey

Miss Emily Taft of the State League office spoke to the group on that day.

Mrs. Miller resigned in March, 1928, because of illness, and Miss Patricia Hunt took office then, along with Mrs. G. I. Covalt as Vice President; Mrs. C. H. Quickel, as Treasurer; Mrs. Cora B. Ryman, as Corresponding secretary; Mrs. J. E. Brookshier, as recording secretary; and Mrs. James O'Mara and Mrs. G. F. Miller as Directors. Mrs. Covalt succeeded Miss Hunt as president in April of 1929, at a business meeting held in city hall. Mrs. Dow Harvey of the state league was the speaker and talked of the problem of the one room school. The state government was paying school districts \$10 for each child in attendance at that time. Other officers elected were:

Vice President	Mrs. Cora B. Ryman
Recording secretary	Mrs. Maye Duncan
Treasurer	Mrs. Winifred E. Drennan

In March of 1930, the ^{business} meeting was held in the supervisors room of the court house. Plans were made to celebrate on March 27th the tenth anniversary of the national organization. Officers elected were Mrs. G. I. Covalt, president; Mrs. Cora B. Ryman, vice president; Mrs. Maye Duncan, secretary, and Mrs. Winifred E. Drennan, Treasurer.

Governmental issues of interest to the League of Women Voters in 1976 cover a wide range. A reexamination of the United Nations Organization is proposed at the national level, and an evaluation of sources of energy and the government's role in meeting future needs. Leagues in Illinois have just completed a study of the current level of ^{state} services in the child welfare field. The Decatur League is undertaking a new study of School District #61. In addition, ^{in our bicentennial year} all Leagues are still working for ratification of the 27th Amendment to the Constitution which would ensure that "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."