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WOMEN IN LOUISVILLE: MOVING TOWARD EQUAL RIGHTS

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The struggle for woman's rights had continued for more than a century before women attained the right to vote. Efforts on behalf of equal rights are ongoing, and many of the arguments which we hear today echo those that have been espoused over the years. Nationally, the earliest efforts toward achieving woman's rights came in the early nineteenth century with attempts at gaining higher education for women, improved conditions for women working in factories, and in a concerted effort at the abolition of slavery. Women's first efforts at organization were within these spheres. Later, more widespread organizations came with the participation of upper class urban women in the reform movement that swept the country in the nineteenth century. Upper class women often had extra time and participation in "Christian good works" became a socially accepted outlet for their talents. Work within these spheres gave women a means of organizing and a method by which they gained the political acumen and experience to organize in their own behalf. When women were excluded from many of the activities of the abolitionists solely because of sex, the seed for the organized woman's rights movement was planted. Because of their indignation at being excluded from participation in the World Anti-Slavery Conference in London during the summer of 1840, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott eventually called the first Woman's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848.¹

The South was virtually excluded from every aspect of this early activity. A political life centered upon defending and maintaining slavery stifled the growth of the reform movement that was

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¹ Russel Blaine Nye, *Society and Culture in America, 1830-1860* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), pp. 38-39.

flourishing elsewhere. This directly affected the growth of the woman's movement in the South. Though plantation life was far from universal, its social code prevailed. Unionization was not a means of organizing as there was little industrial development and therefore no demand for women factory employees. Throughout the entire struggle for woman's rights and for equal suffrage, the southern women lagged far behind their sisters in the North.²

Louisville, being located in a border area, reflected characteristics of both North and South. Because Louisville was a city of significant size and close to other cities, such as St. Louis and Cincinnati which were part of lecture tours for speakers in various reform causes, citizens of Louisville were exposed to the ideas of woman's rights and would later participate in and closely follow the progress being made in the North and West. But unionist activity was absent in Louisville, as was the early push for higher education for women. Louisville's southern character was also evidenced in concern about the Negro vote. This was exhibited primarily in the States' Rights issue. The fear and distrust of federal intervention demanded that states determine when and if women were to vote. There was always friction over the merit of a federal amendment as opposed to state by state constitutional amendments. The apprehension of enfranchising a goodly number of Negro women added to this concern.

The myth of southern chivalry and the genteel nature of southern women also played a major role. Though the majority of the women in the South were in no position to reap the benefits of this protection and indulgence, the myth made it more difficult to demand additional rights for women as they were assumed to have the superior position. What need could they have for more rights or the franchise when they were already the more privileged sex? Closely tied to this was the theme that ran through all reports of woman's rights events in Louisville. Much attention was given to the appearance, social class, and dignity of the participants. While it is true that only upper class women had the time to pursue equal rights, only those women could have made the idea acceptable through constant reassurance that their role and appearance were not changing. After all, it was this woman, the upper class, well dressed, refined woman, who had to be preserved.³

² Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle* (New York: Atheneum, 1959), pp. 94-95.

³ Little information has been retained on the woman's movement in Louisville. Those women who participated have kept no records and files of the Louisville Woman Suffrage Association have been lost. The local newspapers and the memories of living participants remain the major sources of information.

Closely related to this idea of woman's position was her manner of dress. Clothing for the male and female so readily differentiated the sexes that much attention was given to appearance. There was so much clamor over the "Bloomer" dress, which utilized trousers, that advocates were forced to abandon it lest it jeopardize other efforts within the movement.⁴ Jane Grey Swisshelm, who became a leading advocate of abolition and woman's rights and who had lived in Louisville for a short time, commented on men's preoccupation with women's dress: "While men were defending their pantaloons, they created and spread the idea that masculine supremacy lay in the form of their garments, and that a woman dressed like a man would be as potent as he."⁵ This was true nationally, but even more so in the South where woman's "fragile nature" was reflected in her dress. With every major development in the woman's rights movement in Louisville there were discussions concerning the apparel worn by female participants. When meetings and appearances were kept within the confines of accepted decorum, there was a continued effort by the press to reassure the public that the meetings were not made up of "strong-minded women in ill-fitting petticoats," but of women "dressed as ladies dress" who "bore themselves like ladies of refinement."⁶

As early as 1828, Louisville had hosted an apostle of woman's rights, Frances Wright. Born in Scotland in 1795, friend of Lafayette and other free thinkers, she pioneered as a woman lecturer. Miss Wright edited a newspaper in the Indiana utopian colony of New Harmony which Robert Owen had founded. She spoke to her audiences, mostly male, about equal education for women and argued that men were themselves degraded by the inferiority imposed on women.⁷

In 1852, Lucy Stone arrived to lecture Louisvillians on the rights of women. Miss Stone was a national woman's rights leader. She was instrumental in organizing woman's rights conventions in the 1850's, and her arrival in Louisville in November created quite a stir. George D. Prentice, editor of the *Louisville Journal*, had been involved in scheduling Miss Stone's appearance in Louisville and was to act as her escort during her stay. This is especially interesting because only a few years earlier Mr. Prentice had been a

⁴ Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, pp. 83-84.

⁵ Jane Grey Swisshelm, *Half A Century* (Chicago: The Chicago Legal News Company, 1880), p. 140.

⁶ *Courier-Journal*, 27 October 1881.

⁷ A. J. G. Perkins and Theresa Wolfson, *Frances Wright: Free Enquirer* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1939); Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, p. 28.

leader in the uproar against Jane Gray Swisshelm when she had become the first woman to publish her own newspaper. He "gave the world a two-third column leader on it" and proclaimed "She is a man all but the pantaloons."⁸ Nonetheless, he helped to bring Lucy Stone to Louisville to lecture; the *Journal* reported that "although public speaking is generally regarded as implying bold presumption in a woman, we are assured that she is modest and unassuming."⁹

The audiences were made up primarily of men and "the preponderance, husbands."¹⁰ They came to hear her speak at Mozart Hall on four successive nights on the topics of "Woman's Rights," "The Political and Legal Rights of Woman," "The Bible Position of Woman," and "Marriage."¹¹ As was to become the pattern when advocates of woman's rights came to Louisville in the nineteenth century, fear was expressed about the ideas proposed, their possible effect on the women of Louisville, and unending reasons were given why women should be happier with their present status.

The *Daily Courier* reprimanded Miss Stone and those "with whom she acts," declaring disbelief that they "can ever accomplish the ends at which they aim. . . . And if we were so unfortunate as to believe they ever could, we should at once set ourselves to praying that they might not." After further recrimination it was suggested that "Miss Stone strive to make men better, not women worse."¹² The *Daily Democrat*, in a lengthy discourse entitled "Woman's Rights," allowed that by "our defective town education they may have only studied how to spend the means of their husbands in fine dressing or parties," but also reminded its readers that "they inherit one-third of his estate in fee." The *Democrat* wished to forget about equal rights and legal reforms and concentrate on social reform, to give women "the right to learn — the right to open the door to a visitor without calling a servant — and the right to appear in a clean, homespun or calico dress, without a full toilet, or paint, or the loss of caste."¹³

With the Civil War, all activity for woman's rights came to a standstill. The leaders of the movement had been active abolitionists and continued their support of that cause. In 1863, they organized the National Woman's Loyal League which pledged support

8 Jane Grey Swisshelm, *Half A Century*, p. 114.

9 *Daily Courier*, 2 and 3 November 1853; *Louisville Daily Journal*, 2 November 1853.

10 *Daily Courier*, 2 and 3 November 1853.

11 *Louisville Daily Journal*, 3 November 1853.

12 *Daily Courier*, 5 November 1853.

13 *Daily Democrat*, 5 November 1853.

for the government as long as it continued its war for freedom and set about collecting signatures petitioning Congress to pass the Thirteenth Amendment. Other women involved themselves in nursing or relief work. Still others, especially in the South, took control of matters at home while the men were at the battlefield.¹⁴

In 1872, The Louisville Library Association contracted with Elizabeth Cady Stanton to speak as part of a newly established lecture series. Elizabeth Cady Stanton was a national leader in the woman's rights movement and had called the first woman's rights convention at Seneca Falls. Mrs. Stanton delivered her lecture at the Masonic Hall on the topic of "The Coming Girl." Admission was seventy-five cents. It was reported that "many of the most respectable ladies and gentlemen of Louisville were present and afforded the lecturer every evidence of interest in her discourse."¹⁵

Mrs. Stanton first discussed the physical well-being of women. She disapproved of the fashion requiring young women to press in their ribs, "pinch their waists, and cut off circulation of blood for a space of several inches around that part of the body." She disapproved mainly because "deep breathing is necessary for deep thought, and tight lacing prevents both."¹⁶ She then addressed herself to the financial status of women. She wanted women to receive pay for their work around the house. She wanted them to study Latin, Greek, and mathematics, asserting that "anyone who could wear forty pounds of clothes around their person and 40,000 hairpins in their hair could stand much more."¹⁷ She finally insisted that every minister who demanded brides to promise to "obey" should be "impeached before the Supreme Court of the United States for violating the 13th Amendment." Mrs. Stanton closed by letting her audience know that she did not intend to go to heaven disenfranchised.¹⁸

Her lectures aroused fears of what this new movement might mean. It was feared that this new woman might be off to the theater or to balls with young men "while her husband is at home sleeping off the weariness caused by his day's labor and while her child is sick with scarlet fever in the hands of the nurse."¹⁹ The

¹⁴ Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, pp. 105-12.

¹⁵ *Courier-Journal*, 19 November 1872; *Louisville Commercial*, 16, 18, and 19 November 1872.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Louisville Commercial*, 15 and 17 November 1872.

Courier-Journal wrote an editorial "About Women" expressing fear that the "wave" which had been "rolling" across other sections of the country now "beats against our doors." The lengthy editorial traced the path of women through the downfall of Rome, where although they had "acquired the rights and privileges of men, they descended in the moral scale, lost their dignity and honor." It was feared that the "cause has fallen into bad hands."²⁰

In 1873, Louisville was shocked by the appearance of Virginia Woodhull. Although an exponent of woman's rights and equal suffrage, Mrs. Woodhull's chief notoriety had come from her espousal of free love. Mrs. Woodhull had been involved in national scandals and had been the first woman nominated for president on an equal rights ticket — a ticket which included black abolitionist Frederick Douglass as her running mate without his permission. The only announcement of Mrs. Woodhull's lecture was a paid advertisement on the front page of the *Courier-Journal* announcing her lecture on "The Scare Crows of Sexual Slavery" to be presented at Weisinger Hall on September 1. She also spoke in New Albany at the Opera House on "Marriage, Free Love, and Divorce."²¹ Attendance was poor; relief was expressed that she "can find no affinity in this pure-minded community" and that "ladies" who went "doubtless wished themselves home again since subjects which are veiled in decent society and whose discussion is polluting and contaminating were handled with a familiarity which was sufficient to excite disgust."²²

The early 1870's marks the beginning of vocal opposition from two of Louisville's most distinguished men — Dr. Stuart Robinson, one of the most eminent southern clergymen, and Henry Waterson, editor of the *Courier-Journal*. Dr. Robinson was pastor of Second Presbyterian Church and was very outspoken in his views. In 1861, he had published a weekly church paper entitled "The True Presbyterian" in which he expressed his very adamant views on the rights of the church, its independence of state affairs, and in which he also expressed and defended the South in its struggle for independence. He was consequently threatened with arrest and imprisonment and escaped to Canada where he remained until 1865.²³

²⁰ *Courier-Journal*, 19 November 1872; *Louisville Commercial*, 16, 18, and 19 November 1872.

²¹ *Courier-Journal*, 31 August 1873.

²² *Ibid.*, 2 September 1873.

²³ J. Stoddard Johnston, *Memorial History of Louisville* (2 vols.; Chicago: American Biographical Publishing Company, 1896), II, 537.

When Dr. Robinson returned as pastor of Second Presbyterian Church, he was no less vociferous in his views. On 13 November 1872, a letter to the editor appeared in the *Courier-Journal* announcing the lecture of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and speaking against the prejudicial idea that the lecture podium is not a place for women.²⁴ Dr. Robinson was furious and led a scathing attack against the Library Association and Mrs. Stanton. Dr. Robinson, himself a member of the Library Association, was angry that the organization should allow a lecturer who "assaults . . . our social order, Christianity, and civilization." He was the more enraged because the lecture was to take place at the Masonic Temple, for the Bible says, "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for it is a *shame* for women to speak in the churches."²⁵

Dr. Robinson felt that it was improper for a woman to take the podium. "It has long been accepted that women may teach, as long as it is to young women or boys," but it was "against Christianity and our very society" for her to overstep this boundary. He was very fond of using Scripture to defend his position, explaining: "To all who receive scripture, this is plainly set forth in the account of the creation of man and woman"; "Woman was created not as an independent being but as a 'helpmate for man'"; and "She was not created to be a distinct or separate independency in the social order, but to constitute one element of a family to stand by the head of the family." Dr. Robinson warned the public, "Let it be understood that going to hear Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton will be understood to acknowledge a decided "weakening and decay" of prejudice in favor of the Christian social order." Though the Bible had always been used as a defense against the new demands for women, Dr. Robinson was Louisville's most effective exponent of this philosophy, and he continued his protests and warnings by frequently addressing the subject from his pulpit.²⁶

This period also marked the beginning of an attack by Henry Watterson that was to continue for almost fifty years. Mr. Watterson had been editor of the *Daily Journal* and in 1868 had become editor of the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, a consolidation of the *Courier*, the *Democrat*, and the *Journal*. Sometimes Watterson insisted that he was not opposed to suffrage for women because they were women any more than he was opposed to suffrage for Negroes merely because they were colored. He insisted that his opposition

²⁴ *Courier-Journal*, 13 November 1872.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 16 November 1872.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

was to the indiscriminate extension of the franchise. But at other times he would claim opposition to suffrage for women precisely because they were women. He wanted to prevent their being dragged into the mire of politics, to prevent the coarsening of the feminine character, and to keep them ignorant of dirt.²⁷ The idea that women had a superior position that was being endangered had always been espoused in Louisville when the question of equal rights for women emerged, but Henry Watterson was its most ardent champion. He believed that woman was the "Keeper of the World's Sanctuary — the Moral Light of the Universe" and that the woman's movement would drag her down from her high place and degrade her.²⁸

When the question of women jurors arose, he grieved for them: "The women, God help them! Once our superiors, now our equals."²⁹ As women's dress began to change, he expressed concern because "Half clad they appear upon the streets, half naked in dance rooms, and I do not dare describe how they appear on the ocean beaches." His greatest concern was that they have the "ambition to know all the evil the boys know."³⁰ Like other male opponents he was determined to keep woman on her pedestal whether she wanted to remain there or not.

Watterson sparred with other southern newspapers, most notably the *Mobile Register* and the *Galveston Texas News*, because they criticized his stance on woman's rights. In 1918, the *Galveston Texas News* accused him of being controlled by the same ideas that controlled him in 1876.³¹ But in speaking of his copious writings on the theme of woman's rights, Henry Watterson expressed his belief that when the press elsewhere was shirking its duty, the *Courier-Journal* was giving it a "leading position and abundant space." This is true. Throughout the struggle for woman's rights, this newspaper, though opposing the movement in its editorials, gave it thorough coverage, indeed more space than any other newspaper in the city including those which supported it.³²

Not only did Watterson use his own editorial page to fight suffrage for women, he contributed articles to the *Woman Patriot*, the

²⁷ Joseph Frazier Wall, *Henry Watterson, Reconstructed Rebel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 317-19.

²⁸ *Courier-Journal*, 30 September 1917.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 2 February 1918.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 10 March 1918.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 8 March 1918.

³² *The Bulletin: The Woman's Club of Louisville* (October, 1956), pp. 4-5.

journal of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage. Apparently he felt no disdain for women organizing politically if the purpose was to halt other women's political organizations. Interestingly, Watterson once wrote:

If "votes for women" were the end of it and all there is to it, less account might be taken, for, under many conditions, women could by their votes do much good and womanly work. But "votes for women" is the least part of it. Beneath lies—nay, yawns—an abyss of revolution, menacing not only government and politics but the whole human species.³³

Woman's legal position in Kentucky was grossly unequal during the nineteenth century. Women in Kentucky had practically no legal existence as the law of coverture still prevailed. A woman could make no will, enter into no contract, own no personal property. If she worked for wages, they belonged to her husband who also had the right of management over any real property she might own through inheritance. Children were under sole guardianship of the father. The "age of consent" for single women was twelve, which was also the age of lawful marriage. If the husband died without a will, the wife was entitled to one-third of his personal property if he had children, one-half if he had none. Thus, a man without property might marry a woman owning personal property and upon his death the law permitted the wife to take only one-half of what was rightfully hers while the remainder went to his next of kin. The husband could also dispose of her personal property while he lived or by will divest her or her children of it totally.³⁴

It was toward changing these inequities that women began to organize. In Louisville, the event which gave impetus to organization came in 1881 when the American Woman Suffrage Association held its eleventh annual meeting at the Opera House in Louisville. It was the first time the convention had been held so far south, and the *Courier-Journal* made note of this in welcoming the convention and expressing wonder at the convention's being held so far out of the way, taking it as evidence that the people of other cities had grown tired of the subject.³⁵

Only a small scattering of women was present in the male dominated audiences of the earliest woman's rights meetings in Louis-

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Rozel Weissinger, Esq., of the Louisville Bar, "The Husband and Wife Statute of 1894," 15 May 1894; H. Marshall Buford, "The Rights of Property for Married Women Under the Laws of Kentucky." Read before the Lexington Bar Association (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke and Company, 1871).

³⁵ *Courier-Journal*, 9 October 1881.

ville, but a more balanced group heard Elizabeth Cady Stanton in 1872, and the audiences which heard the 1881 convention speakers were predominantly female. It is also significant that the convention and the presence of national leaders helped to alter the attitudes of many in the city. Prior to the convention, readers were assured that:

. . . the last twenty years have convinced the women of this generation that they do not want to vote; that it would be harmful to the country and themselves if they could vote, and that of all the trouble and grievances, real or imaginary, under which they suffer, the denial of the elective franchise is the most far-fetched and imaginary of them all.³⁶

The gentlemen in Louisville seemed to have some of their fears allayed by the dignity and intelligence of the participants of the convention. Among the eminent national speakers who attended were Lucy Stone, Julia Ward Howe, author and lecturer of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" fame, physician Mary F. Thomas, and a host of other women who had gained notoriety as leaders of the woman's movement. The apprehensive seemed to find the greatest solace in the fact that "ninety percent of them were married" and that their dress was that of "ladies." Indeed there was no sign of the woman who had been expected — the one who "must of necessity wear her hair short, and sport pantaloons cut after the most approved fashion of the male person." Elaborate descriptions were given of the "toilets" worn by many of the women in order to assure the public "that there is nothing uncouth in the dress . . . of the woman's rights advocates."³⁷

While the members of the convention and editorial writers theorized on the proper role of women, one participant expressed disappointment in the convention. In a letter to the editor, "Lover of Justice" expressed the practical position of those who dealt with the question on a more mundane level:

The greatest wrong of all the women have suffered, and which has caused my heart to bleed most freely and has made me most indignant; a wrong in comparison with which their not having the ballot is as nothing, was not mentioned at all. I refer to the great wrong of not allowing women to propose marriage to gentlemen.

. . . how would you feel, gentlemen, if the case was reversed? Suppose you were compelled to be still and only allowed to accept or reject such suitors as chanced to present themselves?

. . . She ought to have an equal voice in who shall be her life partner . . .

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 24 October 1881.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 28 October 1881.

to atone for the past let the women have, for a while, the exclusive right to make love, that men may by experience, be led the better to sympathize with woman's wrongs and the more carefully guard her rights. And to make full compensation for the past, I would even favor taking from men the right to refuse so that every marriageable man would be compelled to accept whatever marriageable woman offered herself. Let this arrangement hold for a limited time, say five or ten years, and after that let both sexes be on an equality in this respect, so that society shall no longer be matrimonially one-sided.³⁸

On October 26, after the closing of the convention, a meeting was held at the Young Men's Christian Association for the purpose of organizing a Woman's Suffrage Association in Kentucky. It was noted that the convention had aroused considerable interest on the subject, especially among the women. Colonel John H. Ward moved that the title "Kentucky Woman's Association" be used, and the motion carried. Officers were elected: Laura Clay, President (Miss Clay of Lexington was the only officer whose residence was other than Louisville); Colonel John H. Ward, Vice President; Mrs. A. C. Bower, Recording Secretary; Mrs. S. Goddard, Corresponding Secretary; and Mrs. Housch, Treasurer.³⁹ This was the first state society in the South, but it was never able to gather much momentum. Local societies in Louisville, Lexington, and Richmond affiliated with the state organization, but it was unable to create any new clubs. Laura Clay attributed the Association's failure to grow to its narrow purpose. She insisted that winning the franchise was too abstract and distant for the aspirations of Kentucky women. More likely, lack of leadership was the main factor as Laura Clay busied herself with other matters, mostly on a national level, and gave little effort to the Association. The Association maintained a paper existence until 1888.⁴⁰ In November of that year, the Kentucky delegates to the American Woman Suffrage Association conference in Cincinnati organized the Kentucky Equal Rights Association (KERA), again with Laura Clay as President. This Association proved to be a strong force in the Kentucky movement.⁴¹

After the convention, the battle for woman's rights intensified. In 1882, John H. Ward, Sallie Bennett, and Mary B. Clay of Lexington were given a hearing by the Kentucky Senate Judiciary Committee. Their plea included the right to vote, but emphasized legal reform for married women. No action was taken, but the

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Paul E. Fuller, *Laura Clay and the Woman's Rights Movement* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1975), pp. 23-24.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

effort to improve women's legal position had begun.⁴² Awareness of women's problems was heightened in October 1886, when Louisville was the site of the fourteenth annual Woman's Congress held under the auspices of the Association for the Advancement of Women. The purpose of the Congress was to discuss questions of interest and importance to women. Sessions were held at Warren Memorial Church, and the admission price to evening sessions was twenty-four cents. Audiences were large even though the sessions met during the last days of the Southern Exposition being held in Louisville.⁴³

Also significant at this time was the formation of the Woman's Club of Louisville. Its beginning was initiated by Mrs. Susan Howes Look Avery. Mrs. Avery, the descendant of a long line of Puritan ancestors, was born in Conway, Massachusetts, 27 October 1817. In 1844, she married B. F. Avery, and two years later they moved to Louisville where he established his plow manufacturing business. Mrs. Avery appears to have been the earliest local advocate of woman's rights. Her daughter, C. Bonnycastle Robinson, recalled that Louisville's first suffrage meeting was held in her parlors with Lucy Stone as her guest.⁴⁴ Mrs. Avery, her daughter Helen, Mrs. Patty B. Semple, and Mrs. Andrew Cowan made a list of women to be invited to discuss the idea of forming a woman's club. Thirty-nine of those invitations were accepted, and in March 1890, they gathered in the red-carpeted library of the Avery home, now the site of the Heyburn Building. Those in attendance were: Mrs. C. J. F. Allen, Mrs. B. F. Avery, Mrs. C. P. Barnes, Mrs. Ira Sayre Barnett, Miss M. G. Bartlett, Miss Lucy Belknap, Mrs. W. B. Belknap, Mrs. J. W. Bowser, Mrs. Alfred Brandeis, Dr. Florence Brandeis, Miss Anna Bryan, Mrs. John Castleman, Mrs. A. P. Cochran, Mrs. Andrew Cowan, Miss Josephine Danforth, Mrs. C. G. Davison, Miss Juliet Davison (Mrs. W. R. Belknap), Mrs. Albert Day, Mrs. W. H. Fosdick, Miss L. D. Hampton (Mrs. Val Cowling), Mrs. Isham Henderson, Dr. Julia A. Ingram, Miss Mary Johnston, Miss Mary Lafon, Dr. Anna F. Lawrence, Mrs. John T. McCauley, Miss Mary Virginia Meldrum, Miss Hallie Quigley, Miss Belle Quigley, Miss Carrie Richardson, Mrs. C. Bonnycastle Robinson, Mrs. Patty B. Semple, Miss Ellen Semple, Mrs. J. G. Shanklin, Mrs.

⁴² Laura Clay, "Kentucky" in *History of Woman Suffrage*, Editors Susan B. Anthony and Ida Husted Harper, eds. (6 vols.; New York: Arns and *The New York Times*, 1969), IV, 665-66.

⁴³ *Courier-Journal*, 20 October 1886.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 13 May 1923; *The Bulletin: Woman's Club of Louisville* (October, 1956), pp. 4-5.

Charles F. Smith, Mrs. Mahlon Stambach, Mrs. Ida E. Symmes (Mrs. Charles R. Coats), Mrs. R. A. Watts, and Mrs. L. P. Yandell.⁴⁵ The women of the Club would work tirelessly to improve the legal status of women, to gain the right for women to vote in school elections, and for other such reforms as women matrons for women prisoners and improved working conditions for women in industry.⁴⁶

On 9 February 1892 a group of women presented a memorial with numerous signatures and tied with pink and blue ribbons to State Senator George Alexander. Accompanying the memorial was a letter from Carolyn Apperson (Mrs. James A. Leech) which assured him that the names had been procured "in a few hours and without the slightest trouble." The letter asked that Senator Alexander place the petition before the General Assembly and that he work actively for the Wortham Bill, which would improve the property rights of women. The bill would enable women to control their own incomes, dispose of their property by will, and grant them equal rights with fathers in the custody of their children.⁴⁷

Two days later, Susan Look Avery, leader of the Louisville women supporting the bill, joined Laura Clay, Mrs. S. H. Sawyer, Mrs. Josephine F. Henry, and Mrs. Eugene B. Farmer in a call on Governor John Young Brown in an effort to obtain his support for the bill. The Governor tried to keep the meeting light and told the women that "when Judge Lindsay introduced the bill defining the property rights of married women in the Senate two years ago, Mrs. Brown had declared herself in favor of the measure, and since that time whatever might be his private views on the subject, he had discreetly kept them to himself."⁴⁸

Though this bill was not enacted, similar bills containing some of the requests of the Equal Rights Association soon passed. The Act of 1893 made two important changes in the status of women: (1) The husband was denied any interest in the wife's real estate during her lifetime, and she was given the right to rent out her real estate and collect the rents; (2) She was given the right to dispose of her estate by last will and testament.⁴⁹ The greatest triumph came on 15 March 1894 when Governor Brown signed into law The Husband and Wife Statute of 1894. In 1894, Courtesy,

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Courier-Journal*, 10 February 1892.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 12 February 1892.

⁴⁹ Rozel Weissinger, Esq., "The Husband and Wife Statute of 1894."

the part of a deceased wife's estate given by law to her husband, and Dower, the portion of a deceased husband's estate given by law to his widow, were equalized. The wife was to be given the same one-half interest in her deceased husband's estate as he had in her property. The Act also stated that marriage gave to the husband during the life of the wife no interest in the wife's property, real or personal; it gave her the right to contract, sue, or be sued. She could not sell or mortgage her real estate or make a contract for the future sale or mortgage of the property unless her husband joined with her in the deed or contract. But she alone had the right to rent her real estate, collect the rents, and make contracts for its improvement. The mother did not, however, get rights to equal custody of her children. The General Assembly also placed a clause in the charter of second class cities giving women the right to vote for and be eligible as school officers on the same terms as men.⁵⁰

In January 1895, Susan B. Anthony and Carrie Chapman Catt spoke in Louisville en route to the National American Woman's Suffrage Association meeting in Atlanta. Miss Anthony delivered a lecture entitled "Suffrage for Women" and Mrs. Catt spoke on the workings of female suffrage in the only state of the union — Wyoming — where it had been in force for a quarter of a century. The lectures were given to an audience "of both sexes" in the Sunday School room in the Unitarian Church at Fourth and York.⁵¹

By the end of the nineteenth century the changes that had taken place with regards to women were great. But there was much yet to be done. On 27 March 1895, the *Courier-Journal* issued a "White Satin Edition" for women. The issue was devoted primarily to topics of interest to women and was encased in white satin. But the only articles which were not strictly "traditional" were the club reports, one reporting progress made in the Legislature and the role of the Woman's Club in this. The following advice was given with a recommendation for more exercise on the part of women:

Every woman who has experienced the delights of running along the beach after her dip in the ocean remembers with regret her sense of freedom and her agility in walking, unhampered by trailing skirts and tight lacing, and she cannot help longing for dress reform. This is yet a long way off, and now the best we can do is don a skirt of light weight which clears the ground.⁵²

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Courier-Journal*, 10 and 13 January 1895.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 27 March 1895.

Women who sought reform were still openly ridiculed. Susan Look Avery appeared before a committee of the State convention of the Populist Party which was meeting in Louisville, asking recognition on behalf of the woman's suffrage movement. The committee declared itself to be "dead against" it and threw the whole matter over to the at large convention. The results were reported in this manner:

The funniest thing was when they insisted upon the ladies representing the Woman's Rights Party favoring the audience with a song . . . As little Tom Tucker sang for his supper, so must they warble for their plank, and the suffrage party must now have a singing school attachment in order to keep up with the times.⁵³

Nationally, a fourteen year lull in the woman's movement began in 1896. From that year until 1910, no new states granted suffrage to women. Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton died, and Carrie Chapman Catt resigned as President of the National American Woman Suffrage Association because of ill health. Kentucky reflected the stagnation in the national movement. Little progress was made after 1894, and in 1902, the Act of 1894 which granted school suffrage to women of second class cities of Kentucky was repealed; the charge was made that the ignorant and degraded and especially the Negro women voted in such large numbers as to outweigh the influence of educated and public spirited women and that educated women did not desire nor exercise the right they had been granted. This was the only instance in the history of the national movement where the franchise was won and then taken away by action of a legislature. Kentucky legislatures appear to have always been ambivalent about their position on the issue of woman's rights.⁵⁴

This marked the beginning of a racist tone in the suffrage movement in Kentucky. White women became more willing to compromise on suffrage qualifications. They began to argue for "Anglo-Saxon and literate supremacy" because white women in the South outnumbered black men and women.⁵⁵ In 1908 prominent Louisville men and members of the Legislature had asked the Woman's Club for help in getting passage of a bill to make the election of school board members non-partisan. The women formed a committee, helped to draw up a bill, and worked for its passage. The bill was

⁵³ *Louisville Times*, 5 July 1895; *Courier-Journal*, 5 July 1895.

⁵⁴ Paul E. Fuller, *Laura Clay and The Woman's Rights Movement*, pp. 89-93.

⁵⁵ Madeline McDowell Breckinridge, "Kentucky" in *History of Woman Suffrage*, Editors Susan B. Anthony and Ida Husted Harper eds.; VI, 207-15.

defeated in 1908 but became law in 1910. Feeling that their efforts had cleaned up the school system, the women began to increase their demands for the school franchise. By 1912, the Woman's School Campaign Committee had come to represent more than sixty women's organizations in the city and thousands of women.⁵⁶ And in that year the KERA succeeded in getting passage of a bill giving the right to vote in school elections to women. This time the law was statewide but applied only to women who could read and write.⁵⁷ It is ironic that a movement that grew out of the abolitionist movement had come to accept rights that excluded most black women.

From this point on, there was a constant flurry of activity. In 1910, women won the right to vote in the state of Washington. This helped to create a resurgence in the movement nationally. In October 1911, the forty-third annual Woman Suffrage Convention was held at the Seelbach Hotel in Louisville. The enthusiasm was so strong and the impact of the speakers so great that Mrs. Herbert Mengel, in an address toward the end of the convention, declared "We are ready for a real baptism in the militant spirit, for while we are interested in the growth of suffrage in the South, we have hardly pushed it as we might have done. The stimulus derived from this meeting will send us far. You are welcome because we like you and we need you."⁵⁸

The convention had begun on a festive note. Washington had recently passed a suffrage amendment, and California had become the sixth state to do so the day before the assembly convened. The delegates wore white and gold buttons emblazoned with six stars. There was much jubilation as the delegates entered the city, and a special celebration was held after the first day of the convention.⁵⁹ The roster of speakers was also quite impressive. President Dr. Anna Howard Shaw spoke as did Jane Addams of Hull House in Chicago and Dr. M. Carey Thomas, President of Byrn Mawr College. But the real sensation was Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst, British militant suffragette and founder of the Women's Social and Political Union, who made a surprise visit. She urged the women to use militant methods to secure the vote noting that militancy "pays financially and politically." There was much enthusiasm and commotion surrounding Mrs. Pankhurst during her

⁵⁶ *Courier-Journal*, 4 October 1914.

⁵⁷ Paul E. Fuller, *Laura Clay and the Woman's Rights Movement*, p. 93.

⁵⁸ *Louisville Herald*, 22 October 1911.

⁵⁹ *Courier-Journal*, 19 October 1911.

stay, including both written and verbal battles between her and Henry Watterson.⁶⁰

The meeting had been scheduled for the DeMolay Commandary at 212 West Broadway. On October 21, several hundred persons had been unable to crowd into the convention hall, and other speakers addressed the overflow crowd outside. It was decided then to move the convention to Macauley's Theatre, but even there "every seat was taken and two hundred or more were standing in the aisles and at the rear of the house."⁶¹

Though the current leaders of the woman's movement in Louisville would never become militant, their tone became more adamant. Patty B. Semple, who had worked ardently and consistently for school suffrage, had nevertheless done so in a very low key manner. She now asserted, "Our club will be twenty-one years old in November, and — we want to vote."⁶² Louisville women, most notably Mrs. John Little and Mrs. Charles Weaver, began speaking frequently in support of woman suffrage.⁶³ Miss Virginia Robinson, President of the Louisville Woman Suffrage Association, even held a debate, in which she was the victor, against Judge Charles B. Seymour, a first for Louisville. After the debate, Judge Seymour even drew up a plan for granting full suffrage.⁶⁴ Efforts were made to register women to vote in the elections. Special pink registration blanks had been printed, having no blanks for names of parties as candidates for the school board were no longer backed by a particular political party. The traditional white forms were still used for men.⁶⁵

Louisville continued to host speakers for woman's rights. In April 1913, Mrs. Philip Snowden, a leader of the non-militant suffrage movement in Great Britain, spoke at Macauley's Theatre. She was introduced by Carolyn Leech who noted that when Mrs. Snowden first spoke in Louisville, she had been greeted by a few hundred people at the Woman's Club. On this occasion, Macauley's Theatre was packed.⁶⁶ In response to an unfavorable editorial by Henry Watterson, Mrs. Snowden challenged him to a debate. He declined, "I can imagine no greater waste of time than a battered

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 23, 24 and 25 October 1911.

⁶¹ *Louisville Herald*, 24 October 1911; *Courier-Journal*, 22 October 1911.

⁶² *Courier-Journal*, 21 October 1911.

⁶³ *Louisville Herald*, 13 and 31 January 1912.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 20 January 1912.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 26 September 1912.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 23 April 1913.

old man and silly old woman bandying words across a broomstick."⁶⁷

Speakers were also gathered for an assault on the Kentucky Education Association when it convened at the First Christian Church on Fourth Street. The home of Mrs. August Schachner was next door to the church. The Louisville Woman Suffrage Association (LWSA) set up booths in the front yard, and Abby Meguire (Mrs. Neille) Roach, Mrs. Lee Bernheim, and Mrs. Schachner distributed literature and sold buttons and pencils to the visitors to the convention. Mrs. Harry Whiteside chaired a speaker's committee and scheduled five lecturers for each of the three days of the convention.⁶⁸ The speakers were among the best male supporters of woman suffrage in Louisville and the surrounding area. They included: S. J. Duncan-Clark, associate editor of the *Chicago Evening Post*; Reverend Maxwell Savage, who explained that a party where there are no women is called a stag party — and a nation which does not allow women to take part in activities is a stag-nation; Desha Breckinridge, editor of the *Lexington Herald*; and Robert McDowell who presented his suffrage primer with questions and answers that pointed out the absurdity of arguments against woman suffrage.⁶⁹

In the fall of 1913, Louisville celebrated the centennial of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry's victory over the British in the War of 1812 because the Commonwealth had furnished the "great majority of those who participated most gallantly in the splendid battles on the lakes." The major festivity was the Perry Centennial Parade on October 2, and a march for woman suffrage became its longest unit. Mrs. John Breckinridge Castleman was in charge of the suffrage brigade. She named as her chairmen: Mrs. Robert Carrier, finance; Mrs. Samuel C. Hennig, float; Mrs. Richard J. Menefee, banners and mottos; and Miss Jennie M. Flexner, press. College women marched in cap and gown, and others wore white. The women were headed by a mounted squad of seventy-five women on horseback. A float reproducing one of those in the recent Washington parade was in the procession also.⁷⁰

The parade came only two years after the first suffrage parade was held in New York; it was the first to be held in the South. Leading the parade were General and Mrs. John B. Castleman. General Castleman had served in the Confederate Army as a Major

⁶⁷ *Louisville Herald*, 29 April 1913.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 25 April 1913 and 1 May 1913.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 2 May 1913.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 21 September 1913.

and in the United States Army as a Brigadier General. He had, from the beginning, supported woman's suffrage, attended meetings with his wife, and participated in many suffrage activities. His presence lent an air of distinction to the movement in Louisville. The participants were dressed in white and wore yellow streamers with the words "Votes for Women" which had been distributed to marchers as well as those riding in automobiles. Young women were dressed to represent the states where the vote had been given to women. At the rear was "Miss Kentucky" with a veil covering her face to typify the darkness of the state.⁷¹

The LWSA was active in many other ways. In June 1913, it had begun a public speaking class for women at the public library. The purpose of the class was to teach women who had had no experience in public speaking to express themselves effectively before an audience. It was believed that more women speakers were needed to further the cause of suffrage.⁷²

In December the LWSA, with the aid of R. A. McDowell, drew up a bill to give suffrage to the women of Kentucky. Mr. McDowell was a prominent Louisville attorney, former assistant City Attorney, and a member of the Board of Aldermen. The bill was introduced into the Assembly. Though it did not pass, this was the first serious attempt to gain an amendment to the Kentucky Constitution allowing for suffrage for women.⁷³

In May 1914, the LWSA chose new officers. Many of the officers remained the same but occupied different positions as had been the case throughout the history of the Association. Mrs. Samuel C. Henning became president with Miss Emma J. Woerner, Mrs. John C. Graham, Miss Caroline Leib, Mrs. Harry R. Whiteside, Mrs. Clara McGhee, Mrs. W. W. Daviess, and Mrs. W. H. Bradbury becoming vice presidents. Miss Elizabeth Robertson became corresponding secretary; Miss Margaret Shelley, recording secretary; Mrs. Charles Semple, treasurer; and Miss Ruth Sapinsky, auditor. One year previously, membership in the Association had stood at five hundred. In a year, the membership had grown to seventeen hundred.⁷⁴

In this year the suffrage cause took a giant step forward when the LWSA opened a permanent headquarters at 525 South Fourth

⁷¹ Paul E. Fuller, *Laura Clay and The Woman's Rights Movement*, p. 132; *Louisville Herald*, 3 October 1913.

⁷² *Louisville Herald*, 4 June 1913.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 19 December 1913.

⁷⁴ *Courier-Journal*, 16 May 1914; *Louisville Herald*, 16 May 1914.

Avenue. The headquarters was open every day from nine o'clock a.m. until five-thirty p.m. Mrs. L. S. Knolenberg was in charge. Posters supporting the suffrage cause and giving information were placed in the windows and changed daily. These attracted much attention from the public.⁷⁵ A melting pot was installed at the headquarters where donated gold was melted for use in financing the work of the Association. Mrs. Knolenberg suggested that in contributing these gold ornamentations the women of Louisville were engaged in shaking off their shackles. The purpose of the headquarters was primarily to obtain full suffrage for women, but was also to encourage full use by women of those rights they already had.⁷⁶

In January 1915, the LWSA launched an extensive membership campaign. Different types of letters were mailed to club women, social workers, school teachers, presidents of organizations, and housekeepers, outlining the relation of suffrage to their specific activities. The work was directed by Abbey Mequire Roach, Chairman of the Membership Committee. By the end of the summer, eleven hundred and thirty new members had been added to the membership rolls.⁷⁷

In the same month, the suffrage film "Your Girl and Mine" was shown at the Alamo Theater. The film featured the prominent suffrage leader Dr. Anna Howard Shaw. Local suffragists Mrs. A. T. McDonald, Mrs. E. A. Mathey, Mrs. J. J. Brooks, Mrs. Harry Buckley, Mrs. Ella H. Ellwanger, Miss Margaret Shelley, Mrs. Thomas C. Crutcher, Mrs. Patty B. Semple, and Miss Dorothy Knolenberg stationed themselves in the lobby and distributed suffrage badges and literature. Before the evening production, Professor Rueben Post Halleck gave a brief address, making the point that the film did not exaggerate women's conditions and that every law focused upon in the play existed on the statute books of many states. Theater parties were given, and tea was served at the suffrage headquarters.⁷⁸

When the LWSA held its annual election meeting in 1916, Mrs. Herbert Mengel was again elected president. During the year membership had grown from forty-five hundred to sixty-five hundred.⁷⁹ Through these years Louisville women remained actively involved

⁷⁵ *Louisville Herald*, 10 September 1914.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 10 and 11 September 1914.

⁷⁷ *Louisville Herald*, 21 January 1915 and 16 October 1915.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 28 January 1915.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 14 May 1916.

in the work of the KERA as well, most notably in the meeting of the National Congressional Campaign Committee which met at the Seelbach in March 1916, by invitation of the KERA. Carrie Chapman Catt again came to Louisville along with other women active in the national movement. Meetings were held at the Woman's Club and at the auditorium of the Seelbach.⁸⁰ The Men's Equal Suffrage League of Louisville also took part, sponsoring an address by Edwin P. Morrow who was destined to become governor of Kentucky at a time when he would be able to sign the bill giving suffrage to women in the state.⁸¹

With United States involvement in World War I came a decided change in the activities of women's organizations in Louisville. The Louisville Woman's Emergency Association, organized during the Spanish-American War, came to include practically every woman's organization in the city. Its President was Mrs. George Avery, suffrage activist and daughter-in-law of Susan Look Avery.⁸²

The suffragists under the LWSA decided to till the soil in order to provide food for the war effort. Mrs. Herbert Mengel said, "We are obliged to fall in line," and the motto "Every Yard a Garden" was adopted to represent the Association's work. All woman's clubs were asked to aid in the production of food, and the city was asked to plough vacant lots and prepare them for planting.⁸³

In October 1917, Louisville held a War Garden Fair at 659 South Fourth Street. The fair was given under the auspices of the National League for Women's Services and the National Emergency Food Garden Committee. Women participated by displaying the fruits of their labor; illustrated manuals with tips for storing the food were made available, and the women undertook to have as many people as possible to sign pledge cards for food conservation.⁸⁴

In April 1918, the women held a parade, but this time it was for women war workers. Three thousand women marched in Red Cross uniforms or in whatever attire they normally wore while carrying on their war work. They were called "militant patriots" and were said to be marching in "war array."⁸⁵ Again, Carrie Chapman Catt spoke in Louisville, but this time it was as a member of the Na-

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 20 March 1916.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 28 March 1916.

⁸² Laura Clay, "Kentucky" in *History of Woman Suffrage*, IV, 677; *Louisville Herald*, 2 March 1917.

⁸³ *Louisville Herald*, 11 and 25 March 1917.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 26 and 30 October 1917.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 3, 6, and 7 April 1918.

tional Council of Defense, and she spoke on the international efforts women were making towards the war effort.⁸⁶

Nationally, the woman's movement became divided on the issue of patriotism versus work for suffrage. The traditional leaders chose to support the war effort, but a faction broke away to form the National Woman's Party. The NWP was more militant, picketed the White House; many were jailed and force-fed.⁸⁷ When Mrs. Elizabeth St. Clair arrived in Louisville to speak on behalf of the National Woman's Party, the Louisville and Kentucky suffrage associations issued statements repudiating the party and condemning its methods. Mrs. Mengel, vice president of the LWSA, explained that they were anxious to escape "any imputation of being in sympathy with such methods of publicity as picketing the White House." She issued the following statement:

The KERA and the LWSA are affiliated with the National Woman Suffrage Association and have no connection with the Woman's Party, otherwise known as the Congressional Party. The LWSA wishes that it be clearly understood that it condemns altogether such methods of publicity as the picketing of the White House; that it considers such methods unwise and inexpedient even in normal times, and that during the present crises, they reach the limit of disloyalty.⁸⁸

Later in an editorial, the *Courier-Journal* supported the local organizations in their denouncements of militant suffragettes, calling the militants "fatuous, unwomanly and reprehensible," and expressing gratitude that local leaders had no "lot with the feminine freaks who cavort in front of the White House."⁸⁹

In the same month, Miss Doris Stevens spoke in Louisville. Miss Stevens was one of sixteen prominent eastern society women who had been jailed in Washington. Mrs. St. Clair Thompson spoke also. The lecture turned into a protest meeting when a telegram was read informing the speakers that recently arrested suffragists had been sentenced to thirty days in jail. At this point some of the Louisville members broke from the established suffrage organizations. A committee was organized with the purposes of maintaining a permanent association to look after the interest of the NWP in Kentucky. Misses Helen Norton, Louise P. Jones, Edith Callahan, Cornelia Beach, Marie Verhoeff, Emma Dolfinger, Mrs. A. B.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 29 May 1918.

⁸⁷ In Washington as in England when women were arrested for picketing and jailed, they often refused to eat. Officials responded by forcing tubes into the noses of the women in order to force food into them. See Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, pp. 285-87 and Doris Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom* (Freeport, NY: Liveright Corporation, 1920), pp. 190-209.

⁸⁸ *Louisville Herald*, 6 August 1917.

⁸⁹ *Courier-Journal*, 12 March 1919.

Carrier, and Mrs. Edwin D. Roberts became members of the committee. Miss Callahan was chosen to go to Washington to take up the work of picketing, and she expressed her willingness to go to prison for a cause which she believed in with all her heart.⁹⁰

In February of the following year, another member of the NWP spoke in Louisville. Mrs. Abbie Scott Baker addressed a "large gathering of suffragists in the red room of the Seelbach." She spoke of the plans and purposes of the national organization and referred to the particular problem of the South. In reference to the argument that enfranchisement would allow Negro women to vote, she stressed the fact that there were "6,000,000 more white women than colored women south of the Mason and Dixon line, and 2,000,000 more white women than colored men and women."⁹¹

While the Louisville branch of the NWP kept the suffrage issue alive and the LWSA made some meager efforts toward the cause of universal suffrage, the drive took a back seat to the war effort. But though little work was directed toward suffrage during or after the war, it was obvious that universal suffrage was inevitable. In September 1918, the *Courier-Journal* changed its stance on the suffrage issue explaining that "this is not a reversal of the *Courier-Journal's* views. It is rather the progress of its position." Citing the war as having "taught us to turn from things which in ordinary times were sound, but which will be obsolete in the ordinary times to come," the editorial promised that the "Old Lady on the Corner" would "turn the corner and walk straightway into the ranks of some of her younger sisters."⁹² By May of the next year, the *Courier* had decided that "all the fears aroused by the spectre of woman suffrage seem to have been groundless, along with the hopes."⁹³

At the 1919 meeting of the KERA, Congressman J. Campbell Cantrell and Congressman Alban W. Barkley spoke. Congressman Cantrell told the convention that he decided to support suffrage for women because he got tired of being opposed to a proposition against which there was no argument. And Congressman Barkley believed that "if women are too good to vote, they are too good to scrub, too good to endure the hardship and drudgery of raising men who can vote." He felt that if they were "boxed up in glass cases for men to pass by and look at but never allowed to touch . . .

⁹⁰ *Louisville Herald*, 19 August 1917.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 6 February 1917.

⁹² *Courier-Journal*, 27 August 1918.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 8 May 1920.

they would have the vote mighty soon.”⁹⁴ Early in June 1919, the federal amendment providing for full suffrage for women was passed. The original draft had been made in 1875 by Susan B. Anthony. After forty-four years the amendment had passed both houses of Congress.

On 6 January 1920, the opening day of the Kentucky General Assembly, the amendment to the federal constitution extending political rights to women was ratified. Just how far the idea had progressed is evident in the activities on the day of passage. No speeches were given in favor of the amendment. Governor Morrow had earlier made an appeal to the General Assembly declaring that “party loyalty, faith-keeping with the people, and our long-boasted chivalry all demand that the General Assembly of Kentucky shall break all previous speed records in ratifying the amendment.”⁹⁵ Some opposing arguments were given, contending that the federal amendment was a usurpation of state’s rights, expressing fear because of Negro women, and claiming that less than five percent of the women of Kentucky wanted to vote. Among the women who had come to view the occasion, there was opposition from the Laura Clay faction because of desire for a state amendment. They still favored a state amendment as opposed to a federal one.⁹⁶ But the resolution which had been introduced by Representative Joseph Lazarus of Louisville had no trouble in passing. The vote in the House was 71-25; in the Senate, 30-8. The measure was given more support by Republicans than by Democrats.⁹⁷

Later, in order to insure that the women of Kentucky would be able to vote regardless of ratification of the federal amendment, the General Assembly passed a bill giving women the right to vote for presidential electors. Governor Morrow withheld his signature until the final day in hopes that the required number of states would ratify the constitutional amendment giving full suffrage to women. But as this did not occur, he signed the bill late in March in room 543 of the Seelbach Hotel in Louisville.⁹⁸ Special ballots were prepared for women as they were granted equal suffrage under the Kentucky law only in the choice of president and in school elections. Party affiliation was not included on the ballot because they were not eligible to hold office except for the non-

⁹⁴ *Louisville Herald*, 11 and 12 March 1919.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7 January 1920.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Courier-Journal*, 30 March 1920.

partisan school board offices. It was not necessary to use these ballots since Tennessee ratified the federal amendment in August giving full suffrage to women.⁹⁹

Confidence was so great that a National League of Women Voters, virtually replacing the National Woman Suffrage Association, had been formed months prior to final ratification. The Louisville and Kentucky suffrage associations met in May at the Seelbach. Mrs. Carolyn Leech presided, and the guest speaker was Mrs. Maud Wood Park, president of the national organization. At this time the LWSA and the Louisville School Election League joined to form the Louisville League of Women Voters.¹⁰⁰

On October 5 and 6, registration was held for the November election. Anyone wishing to participate in the upcoming presidential election would have to register on one of these two days in order to be qualified to vote. After registration had been completed, 51,106 women and 60,271 men had registered to vote in Louisville.¹⁰¹ Fear continued to be expressed in such headlines as "Negroes Out in Full Force"¹⁰² and "White Women Lag at Polls in Wards Here."¹⁰³ In order to "Care for the Fair Sex" efforts were made to spruce up voting places,¹⁰⁴ and Martin Evans, Clerk of the Jefferson County Elections Commission, announced that women would not have to give their age when registering if they could convince officials that they were older than twenty-one.¹⁰⁵

On 3 November 1920, Louisville women voted for the first time in a national election. It was reported that "many of the large mills and factories will be closed" to assure women the chance to vote, and that "in all retail stores, banks, and business houses which remain open, arrangements have been made to give an opportunity to women employees to exercise their right to suffrage."¹⁰⁶

The women who had worked so long to achieve the vote had accomplished their purpose. Having attained their goal, they had also lost the strongest driving force behind their movement. When the LWSA became the League of Women Voters, direction was taken towards educating and encouraging the woman voter. Classes and information were provided for women to make them more qualified voters, but little was done towards achieving greater reforms.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 5 and 19 August 1920.

¹⁰⁰ *Louisville Herald*, 18 April and 4 May 1920.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 8 October 1920; *Courier-Journal*, 8 October 1920.

¹⁰² *Courier-Journal*, 6 October 1920.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 7 October 1920.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 25 April 1920.

¹⁰⁵ *Courier-Journal*, 11 September 1920.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 2 November 1920.

In 1921 The Women's Democratic League opened its headquarters. The organization had a school of citizenship and made a house-to-house campaign to instruct women in political affairs. The Women's Democratic League also sponsored classes for women.¹⁰⁷ Efforts were directed mainly toward educating women in the use of the ballot and in achieving passage and enforcement of laws relating to the welfare of women and children.¹⁰⁸ One exception to this came with the attempt by the National Woman's Party to attain passage of an Equal Rights Amendment. The local branch of the NWP had remained active and rallied to support the ERA. In January 1920, they had elected officers: Chairman, Miss Edith Callahan; Vice-Chairman, Miss Emma Dolfinger; Secretaries, Miss Sophie Preston Hill, Mrs. Leonard Hewett, Mrs. Wyncie King, Miss Louise Jones, Miss Lila Rowell, and Miss Lydia Kirwan.¹⁰⁹ The main activity of the Louisville women was that of knocking on doors and speaking with people in order to gain support for their cause.¹¹⁰

Leaders of the LWSA and the Louisville School Campaign Committee had never agreed with the NWP, and the ERA widened the gap. Opposition was led by Mrs. Rueben Post Halleck. She insisted that the blanket equality bill would fail to insure equality and might deprive women of those rights they had gained. Mrs. Halleck went to Washington to represent Kentucky at a conference called by the National Consumers League to consider the proposal. She believed that "there are inescapable facts showing that the inherent differences between men and women are permanent. Women will always need many laws different from those needed by men. Mere equality is not enough."¹¹¹

It is significant that the same arguments and fears expressed with regard to the Equal Rights Amendment today were used in the early 1920's when the first efforts were made to attain such an amendment. The striking difference is that those arguments were used by the women who had led the struggle for the franchise and for greater rights for women. The LWSA had worked for years to achieve passage of legislation to guarantee protection for women in factories, prisons, and various other situations. They feared that the years they had spent in achieving this protection would be nul-

¹⁰⁷ *Louisville Times*, 1 January 1921; *Louisville Post*, 13 September 1923.

¹⁰⁸ *Courier-Journal*, 30 April 1921.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 3 January 1920.

¹¹⁰ Interviews with Miss Edith Callahan, 10 June 1978 and Sophie Preston Hill (Mrs. Jacques Albert), 16 June 1978.

¹¹¹ *Courier-Journal*, 5 November 1922.

lified in one broad swoop with the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. This issue only served to widen the rift between the two groups who were "at dagger's point."¹¹² The older group had worked for many years within the confines of established social procedures to make the idea of suffrage acceptable. They feared the militant and non-conformist methods of the younger group would jeopardize what they had spent years to achieve. A former activist recalled that they thought "we were trying to push things a little harder than was necessary and it was time to slow up and be sweet and feminine — and we weren't. . . . They didn't want to have anything to do with us." The younger women wanted to be associated with "women who were doing things." They felt the LWSA was too slow.¹¹³

The LWSA kept to more dignified tasks. They sponsored lectures and meetings and depended upon donations and fees to maintain their work. The members of the NWP were not so fortunate. When they chose to have speakers, funds were not readily available. When Louise Jones Reager wanted to supply a place for Mable Vernon to speak, she relied upon her father's parlor and borrowed chairs from a local company to plan a festive reception for a woman she "adored." She was humiliated when only a "handful of people" came.¹¹⁴

About six weeks after Doris Stevens spoke, the group decided to sponsor a lecture by another member of the NWP, a Miss Mullins, in the Red Room of the Seelbach Hotel. To pay expenses they sponsored a rummage sale in an empty lodge hall on East Market Street.¹¹⁵ The local NWP was very well organized, and systematic canvassing of the city was the primary work. Mrs. Reager's area was The Point. They covered the city well but according to Mrs. Reager, most people had never heard of the NWP and did not know the meaning of or care about either suffrage or equal rights for women.¹¹⁶ These are not the kind of activities in which the LWSA would have participated.

Neither group was representative of the women in Louisville. Both parties were made up of the better educated, socio-economic elite. As Mrs. Reager noted, most women in Louisville were "not the least bit interested" in their work. That these young women

112 Interview with Louise Jones Reager, 16 August 1978.

113 *Ibid.*

114 *Ibid.*

115 Letter from Lila Rowell (Mrs. Paul Leblank), 8 September 1978.

116 Interview with Louise Jones Reager, 16 August 1978.

were was due partly to their exposure. They were from liberal backgrounds and had the support of their families. Miss Norton had participated in the early New York Suffrage Parade while in school there.¹¹⁷ Edith Callahan was the daughter of Patrick Henry Callahan, a politically active, liberal-minded father. Miss Jones had visited England with her mother when the Pankhursts were gaining notoriety there.¹¹⁸ The ideas of the NWP were acceptable to these young women because of their backgrounds. Few Louisville women would have had this exposure to new ideas. But the effectiveness of this group was undermined by its youth; most left Louisville to continue their education, and the impact of the group diminished.¹¹⁹

Though this small group of women took an interest in equal rights for women and were "indignant that men should treat us as though we were inferior,"¹²⁰ most of the women in Louisville could not conceive of the concept of equality, not even members of the LWSA. This is evident in the words of Mrs. Halleck. Another of Louisville's early woman leaders, Patty B. Semple, was asked if she felt passage of the nineteenth amendment made women eligible for the presidency. Her response was that it would be "the craziest thing imaginable" because "The Lord never fitted women for such an office."¹²¹ More shocking to today's woman might be the jubilant words of Mrs. John Woodbury, Chairman of the Woman's Democratic League, who described the new status of women by saying: "They stand ready for battle with clean brooms on their shoulder."¹²²

117 Letter from Helen Norton, 22 July 1978.

118 Interview with Louise Jones Reager, 16 August 1978.

119 Interviews with Miss Edith Callahan, 10 June 1978, Sophie Preston Hill (Mrs. Jacques Albert), 16 June 1978, and Louise Jones Reager, 16 August 1978.

120 Interview with Louise Jones Reager, 16 August 1978.

121 *Courier-Journal*, 23 August 1920.

122 *Ibid.*, 24 April 1921.