

Organization News

Rhode Island Ratification Day

NO more dramatic setting, it seemed to the women of Rhode Island, ever staged great event than that which greeted the Ratification of the Federal Suffrage Amendment on Jan. 6, 1920. Women knew that Rhode Island men were willing to go far to please the eager Presidential Suffrage Electorate which awaited but a stroke of the pen for full enfranchisement but after two futile attempts to secure a special session in July and again in September, naturally the inevitable questions arose even in the hearts of the most optimistic, "Will they do it?" "Dare they do it?"

When however, the announcement was made through the press several days prior to the opening of the Assembly by the Republican State Committee through the Chairman, Hon. Joseph P. Burlingame, that by a suspension of the rules, ratification, contrary to well-nigh every precedent, would be accomplished on the first day of the Assembly, the statement was taken on its face value and plans for an elaborate Victory Dinner were laid by the Providence

League of Women Voters, and former Congressman Jeanette Rankin was engaged to speak on that evening by the R. I. League.

The longed-for day dawned clear and cold, like a cleanly cut diamond in its beautiful mantle of snow. Miss Elizabeth Upham Yates, beloved historian and pioneer of the suffrage cause, lay in her home on a bed of pain but with hand outstretched to the telephone to get the latest developments. Women thronged the State House as early as ten-thirty though the Legislature did not convene until twelve. Seats on the floor were at a premium, every Representative having been besought for the coveted pasteboards days before. Suffrage workers filled the house and galleries save the East section which was occupied by the Governor's party in the midst of which sat the first lady of the state, Mrs. R. Livingston Beeckman, who though saddened by the death that morning of her dear friend, Mrs. Hope Shepley-Hollister, had come with her usual gracious interest to witness the final scene in the fifty years' drama.

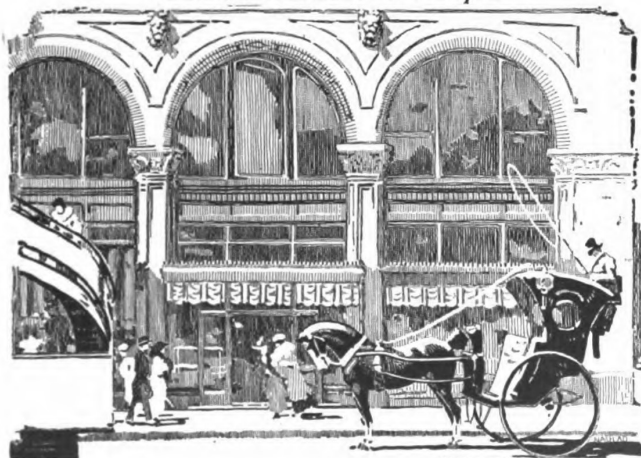
A BOUQUET of white carnations with yellow streamers graced the speaker's desk, behind which the Speaker, Hon. Arthur P. Sumner, a life-long enemy of woman suffrage and who asked the privilege of casting the first vote against the amendment, wielded the gavel. His forbidding countenance struck terror to the hearts of the bravest present who wondered if by chance as speaker he could hold up the act at the last moment.

Such fears proved groundless. After the summoning of the Senate to meet with the House in Grand Committee, the Governor read his annual message in which he recommended immediate Ratification. Affairs then moved quickly to a climax. Among the measures proposed, including the bonus for soldiers, and the day-light saving bill, the resolution providing for ratification took first place. It was passed on roll-call, 89 to 3, under suspension of the rules. The three dissenting votes were those of the Speaker, Arthur P. Sumner, William H. Taylor of Bristol, and Albert R. Zurlinden of Lincoln. But two speeches were made and these hardly worthy of so momentous an occasion by the two floor leaders, William R. Fortin, Republican, of Pawtucket and William S. Flynn, Democrat, of Providence, in which the strength of women's will and the abolishment of the property qualification in Rhode Island were extolled. Luigi De Pasquale, a member of the House, took this occasion to state his conversion to the suffrage cause.

THE vote taken, a rush was made across the corridors to the Senate. There action marched with even greater rapidity. The Chair was occupied by a friend of the cause, Lieut. Governor, Emery J. San Souci and within a few moments, with no accompanying speeches, the Resolution was passed by viva voce vote, with but one dissenting voice, that of John H. McCabe, Democrat, of Burrillville. Followed the usual dispatches to our great leader, Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, to Alice Stone Blackwell and to others eagerly awaiting the outcome. The cartoon of the *Journal* cartoonist of excited women upsetting the staid old dome of the State House was no exaggeration of the joy which prevailed.

The Victory Dinner on the eve of Ratification was a wonderful success. Held at the select Turks Head Club, wholly democratic in the happy mingling of men and women of all walks of life, who have stood from the beginning shoulder to shoulder in their fight for women's rights, with prominent state officials, among whom were again numbered Gov. Beeckman and his beautiful wife, conversing freely with political party leaders and distinguished men and

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women in private life, it was a memorable occasion, one worthy to be recounted to the children and grand-children of future generations.

THE turkey dinner served was a good one and the program was an excellent feast in itself. Twenty speakers held forth on the glories of the victory and, wonderful to relate, they were all brief and to the point so that the toast-mistress of the dinner, Mrs. James W. Algeo, was able to conclude with the Doxology at 10:15.

In making up the program, Mrs. Algeo had planned carefully to invite all who had played a well-nigh indispensable part in bringing about so great a victory and judging from the number present who had been more than fifty years in the work and also from the fact that hardly a refusal was received except through necessity, she was quite successful.

In the absence of the Right Reverend James DeWolf Perry, who was called away at the last moment, Mrs. Edward L. Marsh invoked in a few sincere and earnest words the divine blessing. At the conclusion of the dinner, all stood for a few moments to honor the memory of Mrs. Hope Shepley-Hollister who had endeared herself to the people of the state by her splendid work during the war in the Women's Committee, Council of National Defense. Jolly little speechlets were then made by Gov. Beeckman, who invited women to come in and clean house from the inside, Hon. Joseph H. Gainer, who welcomed the fresh and untainted point of view of women in politics, and by other party leaders who gave the women much good advice which the chairman said they would receive with much humility of spirit and then do exactly as they pleased, which was just what the men expected them to do, judging from the applause which greeted her remark.

MR. THOMAS W. BICKNELL, Rhode Island's historian, aged 85 years young, read an original poem, as did also Miss Enid M. Pierce.

Mrs. Edward L. Marsh and Mrs. Edward H. Whitney, President of the Federation of Church Societies, struck the note of lofty Christian idealism in their conception of what the vote of women should bring to the body politic and Miss Mary E. Jackson cast a flaming sword in our midst in her presentation of the wrongs that must be righted among our colored brothers and sisters.

Mrs. Jerome Fitts, Secretary of the Rhode Island Equal Suffrage Association, who sat in the place of honor next to Governor Beeckman, in her toast to the Antis under the forlorn but still stubborn leadership, of the Honorable Speaker of the House, Arthur P. Sumner, brought down the house in gales of laughter.

Telegrams and letters were read or referred to from Miss Elizabeth Upham Yates, the Mas-

sachusetts Suffrage Association, Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, Anna Garlin Spencer, Miss Sarah Eddy, Mrs. Nathan W. Littlefield, Miss Mary B. Anthony, Mr. Arnold B. Chace, Mrs. Maud Howe Elliott, and Mrs. LeBaron C. Colt.

Mrs. J. K. Barney spoke for the pioneers, some of whom were present, including Mrs. Amey M. Jewett, Mr. Thomas W. Bicknell, Miss Ruth Haskell, and some who could only be represented by proxy, such as Mrs. Barton A. Ballou, Mrs. Amey A. Edmands, and Mrs. George Gladding.


Other speakers were Hon. Joseph P. Burlingame, Chairman of the Republican State Committee, Hon. Alberic A. Archambault, Chairman of the Democratic State Committee, Ex-Senator Henry B. Kane, Mr. Walter A. Presbry, Chairman of the Providence Police Commission, Judge Frank E. Fitzsimmons, Collector of the Port, Ex-Governor L. F. C. Garvin, Hon. Samuel H. Davis, and Hon. Richard W. Jennings whom the toast-mistress presented last as "the noblest Roman of them all" for it was he who drew up the Presidential Suffrage Bill which became a law in 1917. She recalled how Mr. Jennings, while in the Legislature had led fights for other good bills brought in by the women

and how in the early days "straight as Dick Jennings" used to be a metaphor often employed on the Hill.

THE signing of the Ratification Resolution by Governor Beeckman was witnessed by a large delegation of suffragists representing the various organizations the next day, Jan. 7, at eleven o'clock. Gov. Beeckman had three pens before him on the inkstand and alternated them in affixing his signature twice on the documents before them while the photographers were busy taking pictures of the group. He handed the first in a silver handle to Miss Mary B. Anthony who represented the Old Guard among the suffrage workers. The second in a black handle he passed to Mrs. James W. Algeo who stood for the newer elements in the suffrage work in the state. Later Mrs. Barton P. Jenks and Miss Mabel E. Orgelman were given pens. Thus ended in a most satisfactory manner the glorious victory which will long be remembered in the annals of Rhode Island.

SARA M. ALGEO.

See page seven hundred seventy for some Convention information.



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