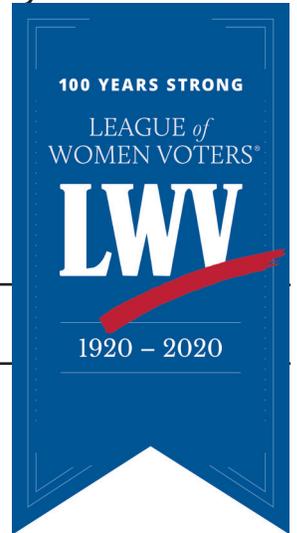




THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, VIRGINIA

BULLETIN

Volume 49, Issue 2
February, 2020



P.O. Box 10133, Blacksburg, VA 24062-0133
<http://www.lwvmcva.org>

Celebration Events

Introducing Black Suffragists

Smithsonian Institution exhibit



Tuesday, March 3, 10:30 a.m.

Warm Hearth Village Center

Carolyn Rude, Virginia Tech professor emerita, presents this
“lost” part of history.



100th Anniversary Celebration

View the film for *Free*

Iron Jawed Angels

Saturday, March 14, 2 p.m.

Lyric Theatre

The movie shows the bravery of the women who worked for the passage of the 19th amendment.

About 4 p.m. -- After film
enjoy a *Champagne Celebration*

This Celebration is co-sponsored by League, NAACP Montgomery County-Radford City-Floyd County Branch and Lyric Theatre

The League of Women Voters, a community-based organization, encourages the informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

A Year of Celebration

We hope all of you will come to these events, but don't come alone. The talks, the performances, the forums are a great way to introduce your friends to the League and to educate your children and grandchildren about the history and drama of women's struggle to win the right to vote.

African-American Suffragists: On Tuesday, March 3, 10:30 a.m. at Warm Hearth Village Center Virginia Tech professor emerita Carolyn Rude, will introduce some of the heroic African-American women who battled within the suffragist movement for respect and the power of the ballot box. Her talk is co-sponsored with Lifelong Learning Institute at Virginia Tech.

Yellow Rose or Red Rose: Scenes from the Suffrage Movement: Saturday, March 21, 10-11 a.m. Warm Hearth Village Center join Virginia Tech and Radford University students and faculty for a special performance of scenes from suffrage plays, personal correspondence, songs, and speeches to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment. The event, co-sponsored with Lifelong Learning Institute at Virginia Tech.

League Annual Dinner with speaker Rachel Bitecofer: Thursday, April 23, Annual League Dinner at Warm Hearth Village Center, a rising star in the national political dialogue, Rachel Bitecofer, will speak. Bitecofer, assistant director of Christopher Newport's Wason Center for Public Policy, has received national coverage for her election forecasting model that analyzes the nation's increasingly divisive politics. Local officials will be invited to join us. The event begins at 5:30 p.m. with a social gathering, dinner at 6:30 p.m. and speaker at 7:15 p.m.

Women and the Vote: Saturday, May 2, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Alexander Black House. Students from Virginia Tech and Radford University will present a devised theatrical work that explores the women's suffrage movement in the United States. Small groups of audience members will move from room to room to experience various scenes, songs, and speeches. More information about making a reservation will be available soon.

July 4th Parade: We're planning to have League members participate in Blacksburg's Fourth of July parade with signs commemorating our 100th anniversary. Plano join us in the march.



Rachel Bitecofer

Barter Theatre Trip: Wednesday, July 8, the League and Lifelong Learning Institute at Virginia Tech will travel to Barter Theatre to see "Winter Wheat" - a play about the dramatic and suspenseful 1920 fight in Tennessee over ratification of the 19th Amendment. We will depart by bus from the Blacksburg Community Center at 9:15 a.m. for a 2 p.m. matinee at Barter Stage II, returning home by 7 p.m. The cost is \$43/person for transportation and the performance. Lunch will be "on your own" at Abingdon.

In addition, League member will be doing much serious work to register more voters for our presidential and congressional election on Nov. 5. Come join us and make a difference!

Suffrage Champions Close To Home



One of the historic markers is unveiled in Richmond.

Women in small communities throughout Western Virginia including Montgomery County and towns like Buchanan and Eagle Rock also joined the fight for women's suffrage. These Equal Suffrage Leagues sprouted as Lila Meade Valentine crisscrossed the state building support for the 19th Amendment.

The Montgomery County Equal Suffrage League organized in Christiansburg with 10 members in 1915. Mrs. Benjamin Mosby (Margaret Kasey) Hagan was president. One of the members was Mrs. Mary Moore Davis of Blacksburg, who in the 1920s became one of the first women professors at Virginia

Tech credited with establishing Tech's home economics degree program.

In nearby Botetourt County, the officers and members of Equal Suffrage League of Buchanan, organized in 1914, included well known names such as Breckinridge, Moomaw, and Booze, the Botetourt County registrar. The League was headed by Miss Sally Gilliam, president, and the vice president had a familiar name - Mrs. Obenshain.

Another fact about Western Virginia: When Congress passed the 19th Amendment in June 1919, Republican Congressman C. Bascom Slemple was the only member of the Virginia delegation to vote for the 19th Amendment.



from Beth Obenshain, president

“Dear Cousin”

A Suffragist’s Letters to Blacksburg

Lila Valentine married into one of the wealthiest families in conservative 1886 Richmond but by 1914 had become a feminist champion building a statewide political movement for women’s suffrage. Her cousin was Virginia’s first elected state superintendent of schools who pulled Virginia’s schools into the modern era, before becoming Virginia Tech’s seventh president.

A small archive of letters between these two cousins - Lila Meade Valentine and Joseph Dupuy Eggleston II - gives us today a glimpse of how politically fraught and divisive the struggle for women’s right to vote had become in Virginia and nationwide. Their letters also provide an unintentionally humorous snapshot of how prominent men in politics, business, and education dodged and weaved to avoid having to take a public stand on the issue of women’s suffrage.

“Dear Cousin,” begins Valentine’s letter of May 1914 to Eggleston at his Virginia Polytechnic Institute office. This letter and three others she wrote as president of the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia seek an invitation to speak to Tech’s faculty and student body. The letters and Eggleston’s carefully diplomatic responses are archived in the university’s Special Collections in Newman Library.

By the time Valentine wrote this first letter, she was already crisscrossing the state to build support for women’s suffrage. “I am planning a trip to Big Stone Gap where Mr. and Mrs. John [?] are to get up suffrage meetings in the neighborhood generally. Now as I pass Christiansburg and Blacksburg on my journey out, would it not be possible for me to speak to the students and faculty and citizens generally some date between the 8th and 15th of June?”

She also asks his help in providing names of women who might be willing to organize a local meeting. “I am having most encouraging success in organizing substantial leagues in any community where a meeting can be arranged.”

Her cousin, however, insists in his letter, “...I really do not see how it is possible. We are now right in the middle of examinations, and the students are busy day and night and will be until the close of the session, June 17th. ...so that even if you were to come here, it would be impossible to get up an audience for you under such conditions as these.”

The next year, Eggleston continues to find reason after reason - whether spring, fall or winter - why it is impossible for his cousin to stop on one of her many trips through the state to speak at Virginia Tech.

His most tortuous excuse in November 1914 bemoans the harshness of Blacksburg’s winters. “...I do not advise you to come during the winter. We have more winter weather, and more varieties of winter weather, and more mean winter weather than I imagined would be experienced in the whole state of Virginia. The winters at Richmond are like a day at Palm Beach in comparison.”

Despite the lack of encouragement from her cousin, Valentine kept up a busy schedule traveling across the state to Big Stone Gap and Wytheville. No community seemed too small for her. She reported success in small crossroads such as Burkeville and Crewe and Blackstone.

Eggleston does send her several women’s names as possible contacts in Blacksburg and Christiansburg, a Mrs. R.H. Hudnall of Blacksburg and Mrs. Henry Stone and Mrs. R. B. Spindle of Christiansburg. He points out that he does not know their stand on women’s suffrage - and he is prompt to state: “I have not attempted to force my views upon any one, although I have been prompt to state my position when it has been asked.”

Both of these cousins were reformers - we could even say heroes - who left a strong imprint on the state of Virginia.

When Eggleston first became state superintendent of schools in 1906 there were only 75 high schools in the entire state. Despite having to struggle against a parsimonious General Assembly, he grew the number of high schools to 448 by the time he left to become president of Virginia Tech in 1913.

Valentine not only grew the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia into the largest political organization in the state, she was also in demand up and down the East Coast as a speaker. She was earlier honored as a crusader for public education and health care for children.

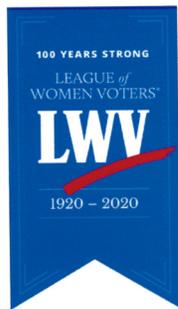
Valentine accomplished so much despite frail health. Even though her home state of Virginia voted against ratification of the 19th Amendment, she lived to see women’s suffrage ratified in 1920. She registered to vote from her sick bed, but died before she could cast her first vote. She was 56.

Her cousin, although he kept her at arm’s length from his domain at Virginia Tech, expressed his admiration for her ability to inspire. “Dr. J.M. McBryde [Eggleston’s predecessor as president of Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College], who, by the way, is not in favor of woman’s suffrage, told me recently that you had made an address at Columbia, S.C. which attracted such attention that not only was a league organized in Columbia, but throughout the state.

“How I do wish I could talk like that!” wrote the college president to his suffragist cousin.

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March 3

Talk on Black Suffragists

March 14

Champagne Celebration and film

March 21

Original Play - Yellow Rose, Red Rose

JOIN THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS TODAY

Become a member of the League of Women Voters. The annual membership fee is \$50. This payment includes local, state, and national membership dues. Members receive The National Voter, The Virginia Voter, and The Montgomery County Bulletin.
Email: Membership@lwvmcva.org.