★ PART ONE ★

Former Women Members

"I'm No Lady, I'm a Member of Congress"

WOMEN PIONEERS ON CAPITOL HILL, 1917–1934

GREAT TRIUMPHS AND HISTORIC FIRSTS highlight women's initial foray into national political office. Four years after Jeannette Rankin was elected to the House of Representatives in 1916, women won the right to vote nationally, with the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920. Rebecca Felton of Georgia became the first woman to serve in the U.S. Senate in 1922. That same year, Alice Robertson of Oklahoma became the first woman to preside over the House of Representatives. In 1923, Representative Mae Ella Nolan of California became the first woman to chair a congressional committee. Two other women followed her lead, including Mary Norton of New Jersey, the first woman elected from the East Coast, who would chair four House committees during her quarter-century career. In 1932, Hattie Caraway became the first woman elected to the Senate. Several other women attained prominent committee positions, including Representative Florence Prag Kahn of California, the first woman to serve on the powerful Appropriations Committee.

Nevertheless, women were still a distinct minority of the 435 House Members; at their peak during this period, nine served in the 71st Congress (1929–1931). They lacked the power to focus congressional attention on the issues that were important to them.

Jeannette Rankin of Montana, a suffragist and peace activist, was the first woman to serve in Congress. PAINTING BY SHARON SPRUNG, 2004, COLLECTION OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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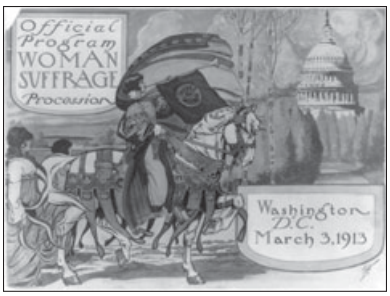


The official program for the March 3, 1913, National American Woman Suffrage Association's procession in Washington, D.C. The cover features a woman seated on a horse and blowing a long horn, from which is draped a "votes for women" banner. The U.S. Capitol is in background.

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Without seniority, and facing institutional prejudices, the early Congresswomen viewed leadership positions as an elusive quest. These adversities raise several questions: What routes did these pioneer women take to be elected to Congress? How did they relate to the women's rights movement in America? Once they arrived in Congress, what agendas did they pursue? What were their legislative interests and committee assignments? What changes did they effect on Capitol Hill? And finally, were they able, or even inclined, to craft a unique identity for themselves?

The Women's Rights Movement, 1848–1920

The beginning of the fight for women's suffrage in the United States, which predates Jeannette Rankin's entry into Congress by nearly 70 years, grew out of a larger women's rights movement. That reform effort evolved during the 19th century, initially emphasizing a broad spectrum of goals before focusing solely on securing the franchise for women. Women's suffrage leaders, moreover, often disagreed about the tactics for and the emphasis (federal versus state) of their reform efforts. Ultimately, the suffrage movement provided political training for some of the early women pioneers in Congress, but its internal divisions foreshadowed the persistent disagreements among women in Congress and among women's rights activists after the passage of the 19th Amendment.

The first gathering devoted to women's rights in the United States was held July 19–20, 1848, in Seneca Falls, New York. The principal organizers of the Seneca Falls Convention were Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a mother of four from upstate New York, and the Quaker abolitionist Lucretia Mott.[1] About 100 people attended the convention; two-thirds were women. Stanton drafted a "Declaration of Sentiments, Grievances, and Resolutions," that echoed the preamble of the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women

Alice Paul (second from left), chairwoman of the militant National Woman's Party, and officers of the group in front of their Washington headquarters, circa 1920s. They are holding a banner emblazoned with a quote from suffragist Susan B. Anthony: "No self-respecting woman should wish or work for the success of a party that ignores her sex."

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

are created equal." Among the 13 resolutions set forth in Stanton's "Declaration" was the goal of achieving the "sacred right of franchise."[2]

The sometimes-fractious suffrage movement that grew out of the Seneca Falls meeting proceeded in successive waves. Initially, women reformers addressed social and institutional barriers that limited women's rights; including family responsibilities, a lack of educational and economic opportunities, and the absence of a voice in political debates. Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, a Massachusetts teacher, met in 1850 and forged a lifetime alliance as women's rights activists. For much of the 1850s they agitated against the denial of basic economic freedoms to women. Later, they unsuccessfully lobbied Congress to include women in the provisions of the 14th and 15th Amendments (extending citizenship rights and granting voting rights to freedmen, respectively).

In the wake of the Civil War, however, reformers sought to avoid marginalization as "social issues" zealots by focusing their message exclusively on the right to vote.[3] In 1869 two distinct factions of the suffrage movement emerged. Stanton and Anthony created the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), which directed its efforts toward changing federal law and opposed the 15th Amendment because it excluded women. Lucy Stone, a one time Massachusetts antislavery advocate and a prominent lobbyist for women's rights, formed the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA).[4] Leaders of the AWSA rejected the NWSA's agenda as being racially divisive and organized with the aim to continue a national reform effort at the state level. Although California Senator Aaron Sargent introduced in Congress a women's suffrage amendment in 1878, the overall campaign stalled. Eventually, the NWSA also shifted its efforts to the individual states where reformers hoped to start a ripple effect to win voting rights at the federal level.

During the 1880s, the two wings of the women's rights movement struggled to maintain momentum. The AWSA was better funded and the larger of the two groups, but it had only a regional reach. The NWSA, which was based in New York, relied on its statewide network but also drew recruits from around the nation, largely on the basis of the extensive speaking circuit of Stanton and Anthony. Neither group attracted broad support from women, or persuaded male politicians or voters to adopt its cause. Susan B. Anthony and Ida H. Harper cowrote, "In the indifference, the inertia, the apathy of women, lies the greatest obstacle to their enfranchisement." Historian Nancy Woloch described early suffragists' efforts as "a crusade in political education by women and for women, and for most of its existence, a crusade in search of a constituency."[5]

The turning point came in the late 1880s and early 1890s, when the nation experienced a surge of volunteerism among middle-class women—activists in progressive causes, members of women's clubs and professional societies, temperance advocates, and participants in local civic and charity organizations. The determination of these women to expand their sphere of activities further outside the home helped legitimate the suffrage movement and provided new momentum for the NWSA and the AWSA. By 1890, seeking to capitalize on their newfound "constituency," the two groups united to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA).[6] Led initially by Stanton and then by Anthony, the NAWSA began to draw on the support of women activists in organizations as diverse as the Women's Trade Union League, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), and the National Consumer's League.

Suffragists parade in New York City in 1916 with a banner that reads "President Wilson favors votes for women." Woodrow Wilson, a reluctant convert to the cause, eventually supported the 19th Amendment which passed the House in 1918 and was ratified by the states in 1920.

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Rebecca Latimer Felton of Georgia, the first woman to serve in the U.S. Senate, poses at her desk in the Senate Office Building. Felton's appointment to an unexpired term in 1922 lasted a day.

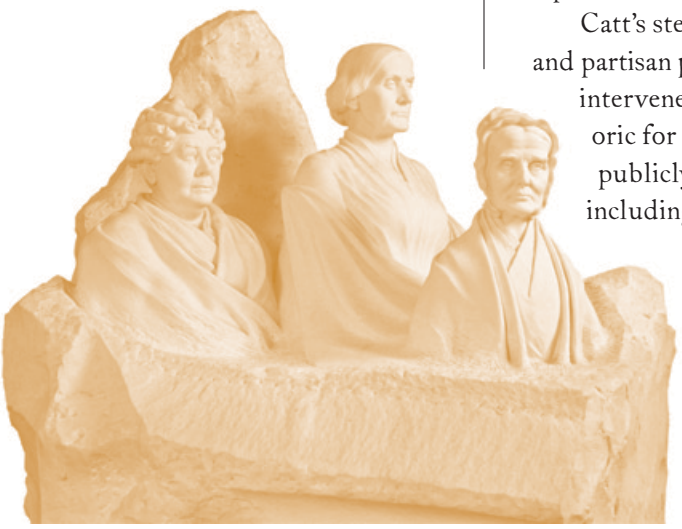
IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

For the next two decades, the NAWSA worked as a nonpartisan organization focused on gaining the vote in states, though managerial problems and a lack of coordination initially limited its success. The first state to grant women complete voting rights was Wyoming in 1869. Three other western states—Colorado (1893), Utah (1896), and Idaho (1896)—followed shortly after NAWSA was founded. But prior to 1910, only these four states allowed women to vote. Between 1910 and 1914, the NAWSA intensified its lobbying efforts and additional states extended the franchise to women: Washington, California, Arizona, Kansas, and Oregon. In Illinois, future Congresswoman Ruth Hanna McCormick helped lead the fight for suffrage as a lobbyist in Springfield, when the state legislature granted women the right to vote in 1913; this marked the first such victory for women in a state east of the Mississippi River. A year later, Montana granted women the right to vote, thanks in part to the efforts of another future Congresswoman, Jeannette Rankin.

Despite the new momentum, however, some reformers were impatient with the pace of change. In 1913, Alice Paul, a young Quaker activist who had experience in the English suffrage movement, formed the rival Congressional Union (later named the National Woman's Party).[7] Paul's group freely adopted the more militant tactics of its English counterparts, picketing and conducting mass rallies and marches to raise public awareness and support. Embracing a more confrontational style, Paul drew a younger generation of women to her movement, helped resuscitate the push for a federal equal rights amendment, and relentlessly attacked the Democratic administration of President Woodrow Wilson for obstructing the extension of the vote to women.

In 1915, Carrie Chapman Catt, a veteran suffragist since the mid-1880s and a former president of the NAWSA, again secured the organization's top leadership post. Catt proved an adept administrator and organizer, whose "Winning Plan" strategy called for disciplined and relentless efforts to achieve state referenda on the vote, especially in non-Western states.[8] Key victories—the first in the South and East—followed in 1917 when Arkansas and New York granted partial and full voting rights, respectively. Beginning in 1917, President Wilson (a convert to the suffrage cause) urged Congress to pass a voting rights amendment. Another crowning achievement also occurred that year when Montana's Jeannette Rankin (elected two years after her state enfranchised women) was sworn into the 65th Congress on April 2, as the first woman to serve in the national legislature.

Catt's steady strategy of securing voting rights state by state and Paul's vocal and partisan protest campaign coincided with the Wilson administration's decision to intervene in the First World War—a development that provided powerful rhetoric for and a measure of expediency for granting the vote.[9] The NAWSA publicly embraced the war cause, despite the fact that many women suffragists, including Rankin, were pacifists. Suffrage leaders suggested that the effort to "make the world safe for democracy" ought to begin at home, by extending the franchise. Moreover, they insisted, the failure to extend the vote to women might impede their participation in the war effort just when they were most needed to play a greater role as workers and volunteers outside the home. Responding to these overtures, the House of Representatives initially passed a voting rights amendment on January 10, 1918, but the Senate did not follow suit before the end of the 65th Congress. It was not until after the war, however,



Sculptor Adelaide Johnson's Portrait Monument to Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony, honors three of the suffrage movement's leaders. Unveiled in 1921, the monument is featured prominently in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol.

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

Women crowd a voting poll in New York City during elections in 1922. After passage of the 19th Amendment two years earlier, the major political parties scrambled to register women. But a potent voting bloc of women voters, which some observers predicted, never materialized.

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

that the measure finally cleared Congress with the House again voting its approval by a wide margin on May 21, 1919, and the Senate concurring on June 14, 1919. A year later, on August 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment, providing full voting rights for women nationally, was ratified when Tennessee became the 36th state to approve it.

Continued Challenges

But achieving the right to vote, while ending one phase of the women's rights movement, set the stage for the equally arduous process of securing women a measure of power in local and national political office. Scholars have debated whether the women's movement underwent fundamental change or sustained continuity in the years before and after 1920.[10] However, most agree that Rankin and those who followed her into Congress during the 1920s faced a Herculean task in consolidating their power and in sustaining legislation that was important to women. Several factors contributed to these conditions.

The Progressive Era, in which several waves of activists, moving from the local to national level, pursued democratic reforms within political, social, and cultural contexts, had helped sustain the women's rights movement. But the Progressive Era waned after the U.S. entered World War I. With its passing, the public enthusiasm for further efforts decreased, contributing to women's difficulty in the early 1920s to use their new political gain as an instrument for social change.

Just when women gained the vote, voter participation declined nationally. Fewer men and women were attuned to national political issues which, increasingly, were defined by special-interest groups and lobbies.

As Carrie Chapman Catt pointed out, in winning the vote reformers lost the single unifying cause that appealed to a broad constituency of women. The amalgam of the other reform causes tended to splinter the women's rights movement, because smaller communities of women were investing their energies across a larger field of competing programs.

American-born Nancy Langhorne Astor (Lady Astor), left, and Alice Robertson make an appearance at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., in 1922. In 1919, Lady Astor became the first woman to serve as a Member of the British Parliament. Robertson, elected from an Oklahoma district to the U.S. House in 1920, was the second woman to serve in Congress.

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Cartoons from the early 20th century illustrate contrasting views on women's roles in American society. Above, a cartoon published in 1920, shortly after passage of the 19th Amendment, is titled "The Sky Is Now Her Limit." It depicts a woman carrying buckets on a yoke, looking up a ladder with rungs that ascend from "Slavery" and "House Drudgery" to "Highest Elective Offices" including Congress and the presidency. Below, a cartoon published in 1912 suggests an opposite outcome for women who leave the home and familial duties for careers and a greater role in public life.

IMAGES COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Women, contrary to the expectations of many on both sides of the suffrage debate, did not vote as a single, unified bloc. They split over party affiliation, key issues, and the vagaries of parochial politics. They also voted in far lower percentages than predicted. Finally, to the consternation of feminist reformers, they did not vote independently; instead, their voting preferences tended to mirror those of the men in their families.

Complicating these factors was the overarching reality that the political culture would take decades to adjust to the enfranchisement of women. The expectation was that women would be loyal followers under the banner of one or the other major party, with men charting the course. Emily N. Blair, a Missouri suffragist and the vice president of the Democratic National Committee (beginning in 1924) observed: "Women were welcome to come in as workers but not as co-makers of the world. For all their numbers, they seldom rose to positions of responsibility or power. The few who did fitted into the system as they found it. All standards, all methods, all values, continued to be set by men."[11] Carrie Chapman Catt made a similar assessment, noting that there was, at least in one sense, continuity between the suffrage struggle and the 1920s: women's marginalization. She noted that "the unwillingness to give women even a small share of the political positions which would enable them to score advantage to their ideals," was a condition all too familiar for "any old time suffragist."[12]

In Congress, particularly, the pioneer Congresswomen, with several notable exceptions, were far outside the party power structure. Not only did they face institutional prejudices, but many of them (nearly three-quarters of the first generation) were dependent on their husbands or their fathers for their positions. Moreover, these first women in Congress would not agree among themselves which form the political participation of American women should take: as public officeholders or as participants in nonpartisan reform groups?

Nevertheless, fortified by the constitutional victory of suffrage reformers in 1920, the handful of new women in Congress embarked on what would become a century-long odyssey to broaden women's role in government, so that in Catt's words, they might "score advantage to their ideals." The profiles in this book about these pioneer women Members and their successors relate the story of that odyssey during the course of the 20th century and into the 21st century.

Early Congresswomen's Backgrounds

A majority of the early congressional women were born in the 1880s and 1890s and came of age during the Progressive Era. Culturally, the first generation of women in Congress had several commonalities. They were all white; the first non-Caucasian woman would not be elected until nearly half a century after Jeannette Rankin entered Congress. Most were raised Protestant, although there were several notable exceptions: including the first Catholic and the first Jewish women in Congress (Mae Nolan and Florence Kahn, respectively), who represented neighboring districts in San Francisco. Moreover, these women pioneers were exceedingly well-educated, partly because many came from well-to-do families that could afford private schooling and postsecondary education. Many were sent to elite finishing schools. More than half (13) attended university or college and several others graduated from trade schools. Before coming to Congress, many participated as

volunteers and organizers in civic organizations and the social welfare endeavors typical of Progressive Era reformers. These activities included suffrage and electoral reform, missionary and education work, public health, nursing, veterans' affairs issues, legal aid, and childcare. Rankin, at age 36, was the youngest woman elected to Congress during this pioneer generation. Two other women, Mae Nolan of California and Katherine Langley of Kentucky, were in their late 30s as well. At the opposite end of the spectrum was 87-year-old Senator Rebecca Felton. The median age of the women elected to Congress through the mid-1930s was 50. (By contrast, the median age of the men entering Congress during the same period was about 46.)[13]

Few women could draw on previous electoral experience. Mary Norton (a New Jersey County freeholder), Ruth Baker Pratt (a New York City alderman), and Kathryn O'Loughlin McCarthy (a Kansas State representative), were the only women in this era who had held public office before they came to Congress. Several other women had prominent careers as lobbyists, activists, or party officials. Rankin was widely known as an advocate for suffrage reform and Edith Nourse Rogers was a national spokesperson for World War I veterans before she came to Congress. Perhaps the most qualified candidate was Ruth Hanna McCormick, a suffrage lobbyist and GOP official and the daughter of former Ohio Senator and Republican kingmaker Mark Hanna. In 1918, McCormick was appointed head of the newly created Republican Women's National Executive Committee (RWNEC). Initially she assured GOP men that women "do not want jobs, but want good men in office. They have come into politics with their knitting to stay." Subsequently McCormick worked to remove male oversight by the Republican National Executive Committee (RNEC) and secured the power for the RWNEC to make its own appointments. In 1919 she admonished male RNEC colleagues, saying "I marvel at the apprehension of some of you regarding our citizenship. . . . This is our country no less than yours, gentlemen."[14] However, extensive precongressional experience in politics or public affairs was the exception rather than the rule among this group of pioneers.

The Widow and Familial Connections

More often than not, the pioneer women in Congress gained experience in public affairs as political confidantes and campaign surrogates for the Congressmen to whom they were married or otherwise related. Ironically, it was personal tragedy rather than a shared interest in reform that provided political entrée for most early women in Congress. Beginning with Representative Mae Nolan in 1923, eight of the women who followed Rankin into Congress between 1917 and 1934 were widows who succeeded their late husbands. None had held political office. Several, however, were among their husbands' most trusted political advisors, particularly Edith Nourse Rogers and Florence Prag Kahn.

So prevalent was the practice of wives succeeding husbands in this and later generations that the term "widow's mandate," or "widow's succession" was coined to explain it.[15] The prevailing expectation was that the women would serve briefly and provide a seamless transition by carrying forward the legislative business and district interests of their deceased husbands. Local party officials, especially in the one-party South, recruited widow candidates for reasons of political expediency: to

Left to right: Alice Robertson of Oklahoma, Mae Ella Nolan of California, and Winnifred Mason Huck of Illinois pose on the House entrance steps of the U.S. Capitol, February 15, 1923.

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Winnifred Mason Huck of Illinois practices her golf game at the Potomac Park Links in Washington, D.C., in November 1922 with the Washington Monument in the background. Golf was an increasingly popular sport—driven partly by the success of its first bona fide U.S. superstar, Bobby Jones. Huck and later women in Congress took up the sport, in part, to interact with male colleagues who often used the links as an informal forum for transacting legislative business.

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

In this January 1926 photo, Congresswomen Florence Kahn of California (left) and Mary Norton of New Jersey flank Representative John P. Hill of Maryland. The three Members sought to modify the Volstead Act which enforced the 18th Amendment (ratified in 1919) that prohibited the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcohol inside the United States, as well as its importation into the country. Prohibition ended with the repeal of the 18th Amendment in late 1933.

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

hold the seat while awaiting a male successor or to avoid a protracted intraparty fight for an open seat. Media stereotypes reinforced this limited role. Marking the retirement of congressional widow Effiegene Wingo of Arkansas, the *New York Sun* reflected on the phenomenon of widow's succession. "Some of the women who have inherited a seat in Congress have demonstrated their individual ability," the *Sun* observed, "but of most of them it can be said that they submitted with dignity and good taste to a false code of chivalry, served unostentatiously and departed the Capitol quietly, wondering what the men who invented the term-by-inheritance thought they were doing."[16]

While most widows left Capitol Hill after filling out a brief, unexpired term, some, like Rogers, whose 35 years in the House make her the longest-serving congressional woman, enjoyed public careers that far eclipsed those of their male predecessors. Hattie Wyatt Caraway of Arkansas, too, rejected the convention that widows were mere placeholders. As the second woman appointed to the Senate and later elected to fill out the remaining 10 months of her husband's term, Caraway shocked the Arkansas political establishment in May 1932 when she announced her candidacy for a full term. "The time has passed when a woman should be placed in a position and kept there only while someone else is being groomed for the job," she told reporters en route to an election victory and a 12-year Senate career.[17]

Another dimension to this phenomenon, may be described more properly as the familial connection. Four women from this era drew upon the experience of fathers who were established politicians (Winnifred Huck, Ruth Bryan Owen, McCormick, and McCarthy). Huck directly succeeded her late father with no experience in elective politics. In still another twist on the familial connection, Katherine Langley won a special election to succeed her husband, Kentucky Representative John Wesley Langley, after he was convicted and sent to prison for violating Prohibition. All told, 14 of these 20 pioneers drew upon precongressional experience as the wives or daughters of officeholders.

Media Curiosities

By virtue of their gender, the earliest women in Congress were media celebrities: chronicled, quoted, and scrutinized. Perhaps none received more attention than Rankin, whose 1916 election catapulted her into the national spotlight. Manufacturing companies sought her endorsement; cranks sent offers of marriage. She received an unusually large amount of visitors and mail—by one account, 300 letters daily.[18] These demands required her to hire three secretaries to join her in her one-room office.[19] Rankin agreed to write a monthly column for Chicago's *Sunday Herald*, and she signed a lucrative contract ($500 per lecture) with a New York speakers bureau. "To be suddenly thrown into so much limelight was a great shock," Rankin recalled. "It was very hard for me to understand, to realize that it made a difference what I did and didn't do from then on."[20]

An eager press corps soon pegged Alice Mary Robertson of Oklahoma, the second woman in Congress, as a font of colorful quotes. Shortly before assuming office in 1921, Robertson told a reporter that she intended to be a model House freshman: fastidious and silent. "I would rather be like a humble little light that shines a long distance across the prairies than a brilliant sky rocket that flashes in midair for a few seconds and then falls to the earth with a dull thud," Robertson said. "If people think

that I am going to do something sensational they are mistaken. I am a conservative. The platform upon which I was elected is: 'I am a Christian. I am an American. I am a Republican.'" But her propensity to speak her mind made "Miss Alice" the object of intense press coverage. The matronly Congresswoman later declared that Members who wasted taxpayers' money with verbose speeches and parliamentary stalling tactics ought to be "spanked good and plenty."[21]

Other women were thrust into the spotlight as the offspring of prominent political families. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* ran lengthy feature stories on two famous daughters whose fathers were avowed political enemies: Ruth Bryan Owen (a daughter of Democratic giant William Jennings Bryan) and Ruth McCormick (the daughter of Mark Hanna). During her 1928 campaign, McCormick became the first woman featured on the cover of *Time* magazine.[22] Before an adoring press gallery, Owen and McCormick entered the House arm in arm on April 15, 1929, the first day of the 71st Congress (1929–1931), and were sworn in as new Representatives.[23]

Those uncomfortable with Washington social circles or reticent about the media glare received less charitable press coverage, which often focused on a Member's mannerisms, attire, and physical attributes rather than on substantive legislative issues. Katherine Langley was singled out for her flamboyance. "She offends the squeamish by her unstinted display of gypsy colors on the floor and the conspicuousness with which she dresses her bushy blue-black hair," wrote one reporter.[24] Representative Mae Nolan complained that she was regularly misquoted and misrepresented. The press took unmerciful delight in noting that she had taken up golf in her quest for a slimmer figure. Gradually, Congresswoman Nolan withdrew from the spotlight, eventually shunning floor speeches, lobbyists, and especially, journalists. When she retired after a brief House career, the *Washington Post* declared "in Congress 2 years, she did no 'talking.'"[25]

Margaret Speaks, daughter of Representative John C. Speaks of Ohio, sells peanuts to Representative Edith N. Rogers of Massachusetts and Massachusetts Senator Frederick H. Gillett (former Speaker of the House) at the 1926 baseball game between congressional Democrats and Republicans.

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Legislative Interests and Achievements

The majority of the early women Members legislated in areas deemed by their society to be gender-appropriate; women were viewed as caregivers, educators, and consumers. The pioneer women in Congress were scattered across more than 30 committees, most of which ranked as lower-tier panels. Not surprisingly, the largest number of House women (five) served on the Committee on Woman Suffrage before it was disbanded in December 1927. Other assignments given to women Members included seats on committees like Education (four); World War Veterans' Legislation (four); Civil Service (four); Public Buildings and Grounds (four); and Indian Affairs (three).

There were exceptions to this trend. Several women obtained posts on upper-tier committees like Appropriations (Kahn), Naval Affairs (McCormick), Banking and Currency (Pratt), Irrigation and Reclamation (Greenway), and Foreign Affairs (Owen, Rogers, and Wingo).[26] Two women, Mae Ella Nolan and Mary Norton, chaired House committees during this period—Expenditures in the Post Office and District of Columbia, respectively. In the Senate, Hattie Caraway served on two important panels, Agriculture and Forestry and Commerce (eventually rising to second-ranking majority Member on the latter). From the 73rd Congress (1933–1935) through the 78th Congress (1943–1945), Caraway also chaired the

Kathryn O'Loughlin McCarthy of Kansas and her husband, Daniel McCarthy, wed shortly after Kathryn was sworn into Congress in early 1933. She met Daniel, a newly elected Kansas state senator, on the campaign trail in 1932. He had initially opposed women holding public office. "I want it understood that I am not out of politics," Congresswoman McCarthy declared on her wedding day. "I consider marriage an asset and not a liability in the political field."

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ELLIS COUNTY (KS) HISTORICAL SOCIETY

"There are hundreds of men to care for the nation's tariff and foreign policy and irrigation projects. But there isn't a single woman to look after the nation's greatest asset: its children."

—JEANNETTE RANKIN

Enrolled Bills Committee, a minor panel that ensured that the text of bills passed by the House and Senate was identical and was delivered to the White House for the President's signature.

From their earliest days in Congress, women's legislative interests were not monolithic. Members' agendas derived from unique political beliefs, personal ideologies, and constituencies, all of which shaped the contours of their legislative efforts. From her Appropriations seat, Florence Kahn won funding for two major Bay Area projects—the Golden Gate Bridge and the Bay Bridge and helped build up local military installations. Edith Rogers, as chair of the hospitals subcommittee of the World War Veterans' Legislation Committee, procured millions in funding for a national network of veterans' hospitals. Ruth Owen authored legislation to combat the fruit fly, which threatened agricultural interests in her Florida district. From her seat on the Foreign Relations Committee, Owen promoted American participation in international conferences; at the outset of the Great Depression, she advocated the creation of a Cabinet-level department to oversee the health and welfare of families and children—a "Department of Home and Child." Even Rankin, while focusing in her first term on woman suffrage, tended to the needs of miners in her district from her seat on Public Lands.

Congressional women did not vote as a bloc or always agree on the viability of legislation and programs that directly affected their gender as illustrated by the stark differences between the first and second women in Congress (Rankin and Robertson). Rankin, former secretary of the NAWSA, focused on issues affecting women and children. "There are hundreds of men to care for the nation's tariff and foreign policy and irrigation projects," she told voters on the campaign trail. "But there isn't a single woman to look after the nation's greatest asset: its children."[27] Once in the House, she worked to pass a constitutional amendment for the vote in Congress and also sponsored a bill to create an education program on women's health. That legislation came before the House several years later as part of the Sheppard–Towner Maternal and Infancy Act, which allocated $1.25 million annually in federal money for prenatal, maternal, and infant health care education through public health nurses supervised by the Children's Bureau. This marked one of the earliest efforts in U.S. history to secure federal funding social welfare .[28]

Robertson was the only woman in Congress when the Sheppard–Towner legislation was introduced in May 1921. A disciple of limited federal government, she refused to endorse it. She was also an avowed foe of the powerful lobbying groups that backed the measure, namely the League of Women Voters (the NAWSA's incarnation after 1920) and the National Woman's Party (NWP). Congresswoman Robertson denounced the bill as an intrusion into women's private lives. Nevertheless, Sheppard–Towner was signed into law on November 23, 1921, demonstrating the lobbying power and public relations savvy of women's groups while highlighting the glaring lack of women's power within Congress. "If Members could have voted in the cloakroom it would have been killed," recalled a male Representative.[29]

In fact, the legislation that most affected women in the 1920s was won primarily by the organized lobbying of voluntary associations when very few women were in Congress. The Cable Act of 1922 granted married women U.S. citizenship independent of their husband's status, and provided citizenship protection for women who married aliens or who gained U.S. citizenship by marrying an American citizen. The Lehlbach Act of 1923 improved the merit system of the civil service, making it

easier for women to secure federal jobs. After intense lobbying by women's groups, Congress passed the Child Labor Amendment to the Constitution on June 2, 1924, which sought to achieve national uniformity for child labor standards. This amendment would have given Congress the power "to limit, regulate, and prohibit the labor of persons under 18 years of age," had it been subsequently ratified by the states. Finally, in 1923, the NWP pushed for and won the introduction of the Equal Rights Amendment on the 75th Anniversary of the Seneca Falls (NY) Convention of women reformers. The measure was reintroduced scores of times in subsequent Congresses but it languished in committee for nearly 50 years. In the interwar years, no woman Member publicly aligned herself with it both because it was perceived as a threat to existing labor protections for women and because of mistrust of the NWP and its militant tactics.[30]

Several major public policy issues recur in these profiles. One was the debate about Prohibition, the federal ban on alcohol. Congress passed the 18th Amendment in December 1917, prohibiting the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquor within or into the United States. The states ratified the amendment in January 1919. The passage of the Volstead Act later that October over a presidential veto provided the mechanism that enforced the amendment. Lauded by "dry" temperance advocates and derided by "wet" opponents, Prohibition proved a divisive and ultimately unsuccessful attempt to regulate morality through federal legislation. It was eventually repealed in 1933 by the 21st Amendment.

For the women in Congress during this initial period, Prohibition was a significant issue. Women had played a prominent role as temperance reformers and agitators, since the early part of the 19th century. Among the best-known was the leader of the WCTU, Frances Willard, who wielded tremendous influence in the late 1800s as a key congressional lobbyist for Prohibition.[31] None of the early women in Congress were as strident. Most addressed Prohibition in one of two arenas, either on the campaign trail or in legislative initiatives. They were evenly divided over the issue. Among its supporters were Rogers, Owen, Oldfield, and

The women of the 71st Congress (1929–1931) pose on the Capitol steps. From left to right they are: (front row) Pearl Oldfield of Arkansas, Edith Nourse Rogers of Massachusetts, Ruth Baker Pratt of New York, and Ruth Hanna McCormick of Illinois; (back row) Ruth Bryan Owen of Florida, Mary Norton of New Jersey, and Florence Kahn of California.

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

New Yorkers queue up in a bread line near the intersection of Sixth Avenue and 42nd Street in New York City in 1932 during the depths of the Great Depression. One in four American workers were unemployed as a result of the prolonged economic crisis.

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE FDR LIBRARY/NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

McCormick. Rogers's "dry" position was an important factor in her initial special election. Owen's Florida constituents turned her out of office in 1932 when she was reluctant to support legislation repealing Prohibition. Opposition to Prohibition became politically more expedient in the early 1930s, when the focus on the debate shifted from morality to economics. Mary Norton offered the first bill to repeal Prohibition laws. Congresswomen Pratt, Jenckes, and McCarthy also supported efforts to repeal the Volstead Act, arguing that this action might help revive the flagging economy. Jenckes and McCarthy, who hailed from agricultural districts, argued that renewed production of grain-based spirits would benefit farmers.

Another issue that affected women Members during this era was the decade-long argument concerning the payment of a bonus to World War I veterans. The American Legion lobbied Congress shortly after the First World War to fund a bonus for servicemen to compensate them for the wages they lost when they left higher-paying civilian jobs to serve in uniform. Congress approved a bonus in 1922, but the bill was vetoed by President Warren Harding. In May 1924, over the veto of President Calvin Coolidge, Congress passed the Soldiers Bonus Act, which provided veterans a bonus of $1.25 for each day of overseas duty and $1 for each day of domestic service—payable in 1945. Veterans could borrow up to 25 percent of their total bonus amount from a fund created by the bill.[32] By the early 1930s, with the country mired in a devastating depression, veterans organized a march on Washington, D.C., to demand immediate payment of the bonus. The Bonus March on the capital in 1932 involved thousands of protesters and their families who set up camp in the Anacostia Flats, a short distance from the U.S. Capitol. In June 1932, the House approved the bonus bill but the Senate rejected it. Protesters who remained afterward were forcibly ejected by army troops, who used tanks and tear gas to disperse them.

Care for the welfare of servicemen was another arena in which women were widely recognized as experts, because of the development of a large female nursing corps in the years during and after the Civil War.[33] Women Members used that authority to weigh in on both sides of this debate. Congresswoman Robertson, an ally of servicemen during World War I, voted against the first Bonus Bill in 1922, angering so many constituents that they turned her out of office the following year. Congresswoman Nolan was an early advocate of a bonus and challenged the Coolidge administration to make it a higher priority than tax cuts for the wealthy. Willa Eslick of Tennessee was watching from the House Gallery in June 1932 when her husband, Edward, collapsed and died of a heart attack in an impassioned speech supporting the Bonus Bill. At the urging of local servicemen, Eslick ran for her late husband's seat and won election to a brief term, which she dedicated to his legislative

agenda. Isabella Greenway of Arizona, long a patron of veterans, helped renew the debate for a bonus payment after she was elected to Congress in 1933. Greenway was an ally of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, but her relations with the administration eventually cooled when the President's Economy Act of 1933 called for cuts to servicemen's pensions and denied a proposed $2 billion bonus.

The debates over Prohibition and the soldiers' bonus ultimately culminated with the onset of yet another challenge confronting women in Congress during this period, the Great Depression. The stock market crash in October 1929, preceded by years of rampant stock speculation and ineffectual federal regulatory policies spread economic ruin throughout the country. Investors' mounting losses, sharply lower consumer spending, plummeting agricultural prices, and widespread runs on banks sent the economy into a three-year skid. By the winter of 1932–1933, more than 5,500 banks had been shut down, nearly one in four Americans was unemployed, and the gross national product had declined by nearly a third.[34]

The Great Depression decisively influenced the careers of congressional women. For Republicans, it proved disastrous. In 1930, Ruth McCormick's bid for the U.S. Senate was undercut by growing disillusionment with the Herbert Hoover administration's policies for economic recovery. Two years later, Ruth Pratt fell victim to a similar trend when she lost her Manhattan House seat. A trio of Democratic Arkansas widows—Oldfield, Wingo, and Caraway—focused on relief for their agricultural constituencies through a variety of federal measures. Democrats Kathryn O'Loughlin McCarthy and Virginia Jenckes were elected from traditionally Republican districts in 1932 by agricultural constituencies desperate for federal relief. Isabella Greenway of Arizona campaigned partly on her cachet as a friend of the Roosevelt family and partly on her ability to translate that influence into public works jobs for Arizonans. But even for Democratic supporters of the New Deal there were perils and disagreements. Kansas farmers revolted against the Agricultural Adjustment Act, a cornerstone of the early New Deal, and voted McCarthy out of office after only one term. While Congresswomen Jenckes and Greenway supported emergency government programs to prime the economic pump, they were much more skeptical about later New Deal programs that sought to establish a social welfare system including unemployment insurance and old-age pensions.

Crafting an Identity

The passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920 marked a great divide in the women's rights movement in America. A central "paradox of change" for newly enfranchised women was embedded in the suffrage movement itself. Some reformers had sought to liberate women by making them politically equal to men, whereas others fought for the vote believing that women's interests were inherently different from men's, requiring special advocacy that could not be co-opted by existing institutions.[35] This central question, in one form or another, remained unresolved through much of the 20th century and has persisted throughout the history of women in Congress. Did women's historical underrepresentation give these pioneer Congresswomen the responsibility to advocate for all women, even for those beyond the prescribed borders of their districts or states, or could they best promote women's political advancement by eschewing a narrow set of "women's issues"?

Congresswomen in this era favored the latter choice and tended to limit their support to legislation that addressed issues affecting women within the context of their traditional roles as wives, mothers, and dependents.[36] Ruth Baker Pratt of New York refused to champion women's special interests in Congress and, on one occasion, proclaimed that "sex had no place whatever in politics."[37] Nevertheless, she used her profile to urge women to participate in local politics. Pearl Oldfield, the widow of a powerful Arkansas Congressman, agreed with Pratt's assessment. After serving two years in the House, she retired, telling the *New York Times*, "No one should seek or expect public office simply because of her sex, but she has an equal right to appeal to the voters for support on the basis of her comparative ability to render public service."[38] The press reinforced these views. The *Washington Post* celebrated Ruth McCormick's 1930 Senate bid because the Congresswoman "made a straightforward fight for the nomination without appealing for support on the ground that women are entitled to representation. If she wins, it will be on her own merit. If she should lose, she would nevertheless be credited with the most remarkable campaign ever conducted by a woman."[39]

Mary Norton, adept at navigating toward power within the institution, captured that spirit most succinctly when she rebuffed a male colleague who deferred to her as a "lady" during a debate. "I'm no lady, I'm a Member of Congress," Norton replied, "and I'll proceed on that basis." Her remark encapsulated the belief shared by most of her female contemporaries on the Hill—Democrat and Republican—that the surest way for women to attain power and influence in Congress was to work within the prescribed system to mitigate gender differences. That belief would be subsequently reevaluated and challenged.

NOTES

1 Standard biographies of these two women include Lois W. Banner, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: A Radical for Women's Rights* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1980); and Margaret Hope Bacon, *Valiant Friend: The Life of Lucretia Mott* (New York: Walker Publishing, 1980).

2 For more on the convention at Seneca Falls, its participants, and the larger movement it spawned, see Ellen DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in the U.S., 1848-1869* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978). For an overview of the period from the Civil War through 1920, see Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience,* 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994): especially 326–363.

3 See, for example, DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage:* 21–52; Woloch, *Women and the American Experience:* 327.

4 For more on Lucy Stone, see Andrea Moore Kerr, *Lucy Stone: Speaking Out for Equality* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

5 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience:* quotes from 328; see also 329–336.

6 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience:* 334–335.

7 For more on Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party, see Inez Haynes Gillmore, *Up Hill with Banners Flying* (Penobscott, ME: Traversity Press, 1964).

8 For a biography of Catt, see Robert Booth Fowler, *Carrie Catt: Feminist Politician* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986).

9 Woloch, *Women and the American Experience:* 353.

10 Historians debate this point vigorously. William L. O'Neill, in his *Feminism in America: A History* 2nd revised ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989), argues that feminists themselves were responsible for the failure to mobilize women voters in the 1920s. O'Neill believes that the decision taken in the 19th century to focus on the vote to the exclusion of other "social" issues ultimately undermined feminist reform efforts 1) prolonging the suffrage struggle and 2) depriving the movement of cohesiveness after the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920. Nancy Cott, in *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), challenged O'Neill's assertions about the shortcomings of the feminist movement, insisting in part that though the movement struggled in the arena of electoral politics after 1920, it flourished among a host of new volunteer and civic women's

organizations. In this regard, Cott sees more continuity between the pre- and post-1920 eras than does either O'Neill or William Chafe, in *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). Both O'Neill and Chafe stress discontinuity, particularly Chafe, who suggests that women "were caught in a no-win situation" because a shift away from mass political participation had devalued the importance of the ballot. "It appears that the entire political culture was shifting, and even though supposed progress had been made in democratizing the electoral process during the 1910s through direct election of senators, the initiative, referendum and reform, direct primaries, and woman suffrage, the actual value of casting votes at the ballot box had diminished substantially." See Chafe's discussion, *The Paradox of Change:* 31.

11 Quoted in Woloch, *Women and the American Experience:* 357.

12 Quoted in Melanie Gustafson, *Women and the Republican Party, 1854–1924* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003): 194.

13 Allan G. Borgue, Jerome M. Clubb, Carroll R. McKibbin, and Santa A. Traugott, "Members of the House of Representatives and the Processes of Modernization, 1789–1960," *Journal of American History,* 63 (September 1976): 275–302; figures on 291. Roughly 30 percent of men, however, were elected in their 30s.

14 Gustafson, *Women and the Republican Party, 1854–1924*: 179–180; see also Kristie Miller, *Ruth Hanna McCormick: A Life in Politics, 1880–1944* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994).

15 The importance of the widow's mandate is discussed in the introduction to this book. For a full treatment of this phenomenon, see Irwin N. Gertzog, *Congressional Women: Their Recruitment, Integration, and Behavior* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995): 17–36.

16 "Pro and Con," 18 June 1932, *Washington Post:* 6.

17 Susan M. Hartmann, "Caraway, Hattie Ophelia," *American National Biography* Vol. 4 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 369–370.

18 Norma Smith, *Jeannette Rankin: America's Conscience* (Helena: Montana Historical Society, 2002): 115.

19 Smith, *Jeannette Rankin:* 115. The House Office Building had been opened in 1908 and was meant to accommodate all House Members and committees. By and large, each Member was assigned a one-room office.

20 Quoted in Smith, *Jeannette Rankin:* 104; see also, Hannah Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin, First Lady In Congress—A Biography* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974): 57. A highly unusual feature of the lecture contract was that if she voted against a war resolution, the contract could be terminated. Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin:* 62–63; 67.

21 "'Miss Alice' To Be Meek in Congress," 26 February 1921, *Washington Post:* 10; "Spankings to Silence Talkative In House Advocated by Miss Alice," 5 March 1923, *Washington Post:* 4.

22 Miller, *Ruth Hanna McCormick: A Life in Politics:* 193. McCormick appeared in the 23 April 1928 edition, weeks after her Illinois primary victory. Senator Margaret Chase Smith appeared on a *Time* cover in 1959, marking the 40th anniversary of the suffrage amendment .

23 Winifred Mallon, "Another Hanna Looks to the Senate," 9 June 1929, *New York Times:* SM4.

24 Hope Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members: Women in the U.S. Congress* (New York: Praeger, 1973): 64.

25 Constance Drexel, "Mrs. Nolan No 'Crusader'; Mrs. Barrett Gains Note," 24 February 1924, *Washington Post:* ES 3; "In Congress 2 Years, She Did No 'Talking,'" 5 March 1925, *Washington Post:* 9.

26 For committee attractiveness during this period, see Charles Stewart III, "Committee Hierarchies in the Modernizing House, 1875–1947," *American Journal of Political Science* 36 (No. 4, November 1992): 835–856.

27 Smith, *Jeannette Rankin:* 102.

28 Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992): especially 494–522.

29 Quoted in Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*. 27.

30 Gertzog, *Congressional Women:* 148–152.

31 For more on temperance and Prohibition, see Ruth Bordin's *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873–1900* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990) and Thomas R. Pegram, *Battling Demon Rum: The Struggle for a Dry America, 1800–1933* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee Publishers, 1998).

32 Steven Stathis, *Landmark Legislation, 1774–2002* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2003): 185–186.

33 See, for example, Susan M. Reverby, *Ordered to Care: The Dilemma of American Nursing, 1850–1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

34 For a thorough treatment of the Great Depression era, see David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear* (New York: Oxford, 2004).

35 Chafe, *The Paradox of Change:* 23.

36 Gertzog, *Congressional Women:* 148.

37 Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members:* 78.

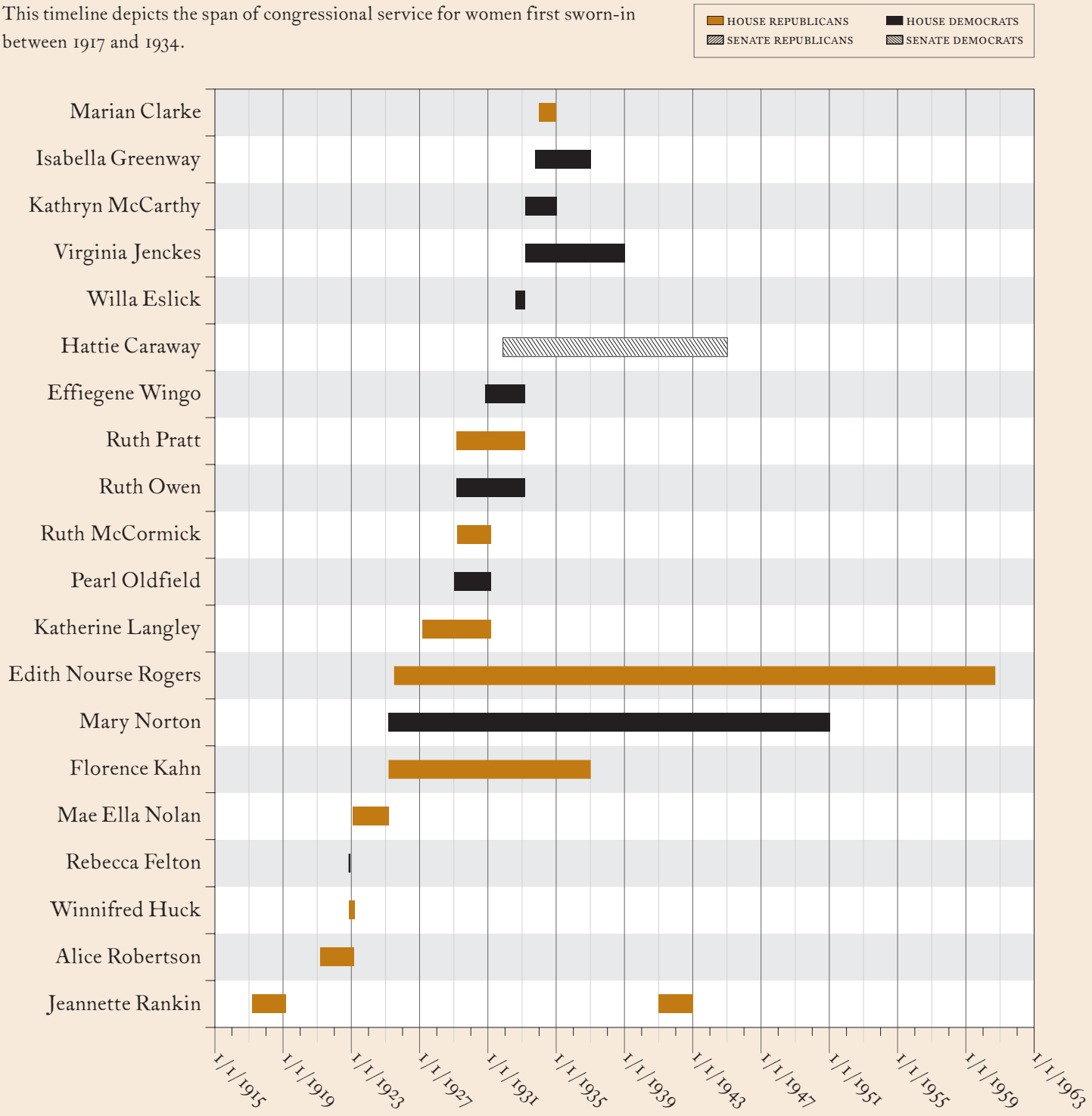
38 "Mrs. Oldfield Decries Feminist in Politics," 19 February 1931, *New York Times:* 3.

39 "Ruth McCormick," 10 April 1930, *Washington Post:* 6.

Visual Statistics 11

Congressional Service[1]

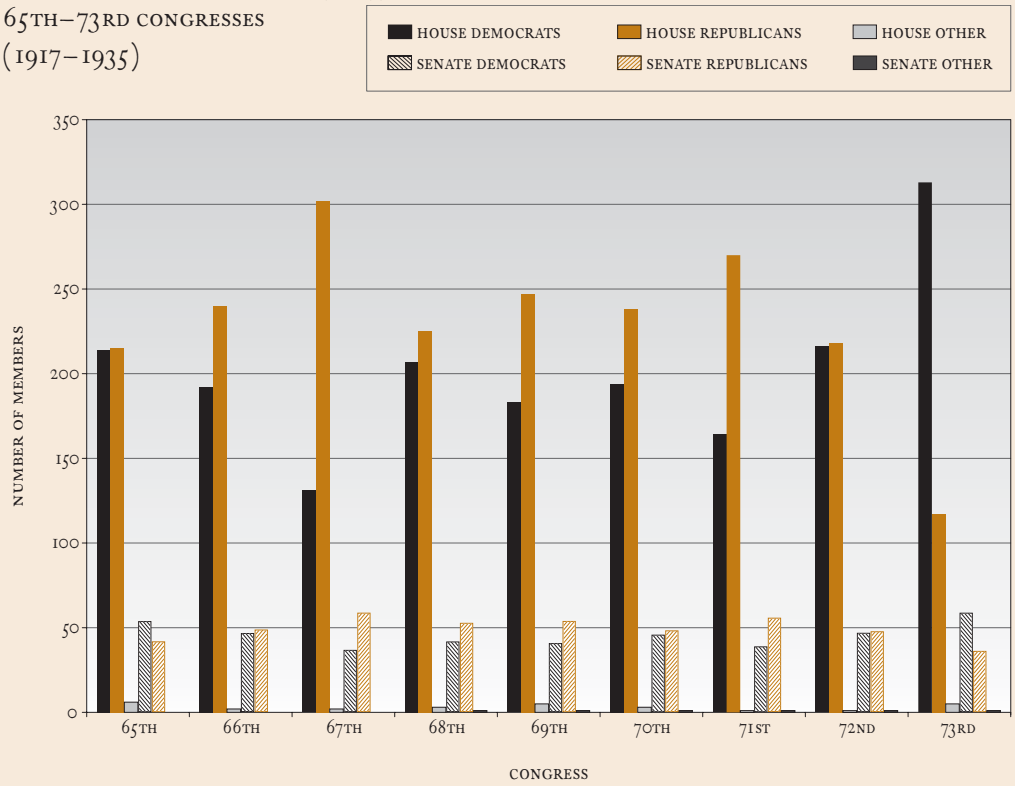
This timeline depicts the span of congressional service for women first sworn-in between 1917 and 1934.



1. Source: *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774–2005* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2005); also available at http://bioguide.congress.gov.

House and Senate Party Affiliation[2]

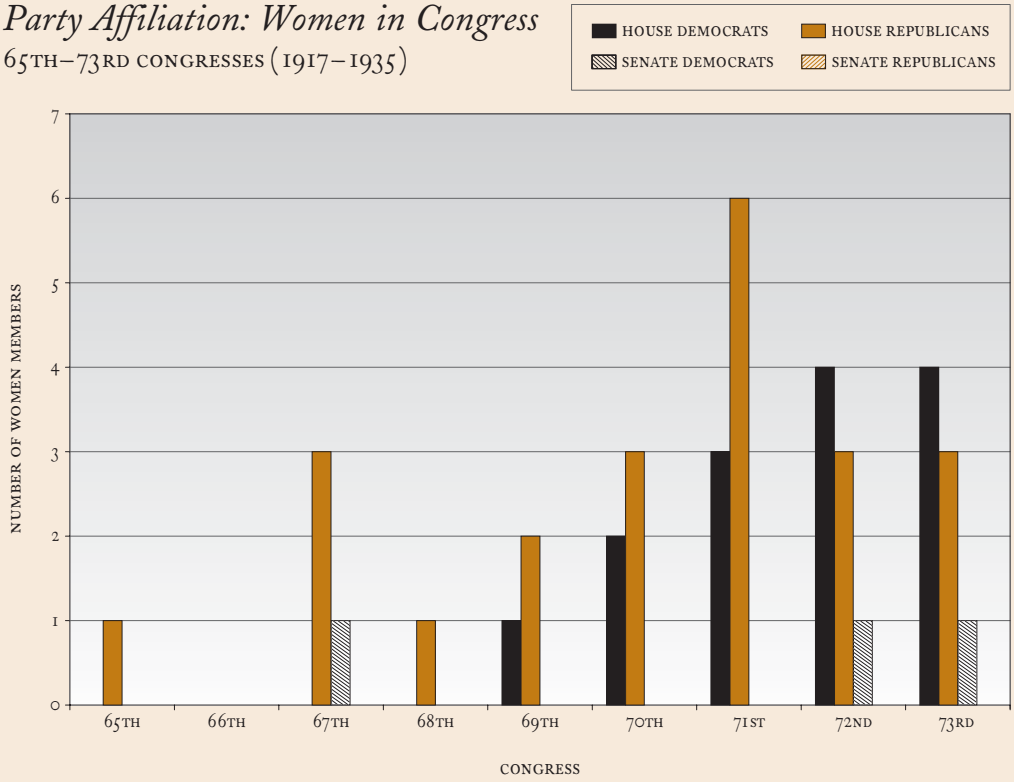
65TH–73RD CONGRESSES
(1917–1935)



This chart depicts the party affiliation of all Members of Congress from 1917 to 1935. The following chart depicts a party breakdown only for women Members during this time period.

Party Affiliation: Women in Congress

65TH–73RD CONGRESSES (1917–1935)



2. House numbers do not include Delegates or Resident Commissioners. Sources: Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives; U.S. Senate Historical Office.

Jeannette Rankin
1880–1973

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE ★ REPUBLICAN FROM MONTANA
1917–1919, 1941–1943

Jeannette Rankin's life was filled with extraordinary achievements: she was the first woman elected to Congress, one of the few suffragists elected to Congress, and the only Member of Congress to vote against U.S. participation in both World War I and World War II. "I may be the first woman member of Congress," she observed upon her election in 1916. "But I won't be the last."[1]

Jeannette Rankin, the eldest daughter of a rancher and a schoolteacher, was born near Missoula, Montana, on June 11, 1880. She graduated from Montana State University (now the University of Montana) in 1902 and attended the New York School of Philanthropy (later the Columbia University School of Social Work). After a brief period as a social worker in Spokane, Washington, Rankin entered the University of Washington in Seattle. It was there that she joined the woman suffrage movement, a campaign that achieved its goal in Washington State in 1910. Rankin became a professional lobbyist for the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). Her speaking and organizing efforts helped Montana women gain the vote in 1914.

When Rankin decided in 1916 to run for a House seat from Montana, she had two key advantages: her reputation as a suffragist and her politically well-connected brother, Wellington, who financed her campaign. Some national woman suffrage leaders feared she would lose and hurt the cause. The novelty of a woman running for Congress, however, helped Rankin secure a GOP nomination for one of Montana's two At-Large House seats on August 29, 1916.[2] Rankin ran as a progressive, pledging to work for a constitutional woman suffrage amendment and emphasizing social welfare issues. Long a committed pacifist, she did not shy away from letting voters know how she felt about possible U.S. participation in the European war that had been raging for two years: "If they are going to have war, they ought to take the old men and leave the young to propagate the race."[3] Rankin came in second, winning one of Montana's seats. She trailed the frontrunner, Democratic Representative John M. Evans, by 7,600 votes, but she topped the next candidate—another Democrat–by 6,000 votes. Rankin ran a nonpartisan campaign in a Democratic state during a period of national hostility toward parties in general. And this was the first opportunity for Montana women to vote in a federal election. "I am deeply conscious of the responsibility resting upon me," read her public victory statement.[4]

Rankin's service began dramatically when Congress was called into an extraordinary April session after Germany declared unrestricted submarine warfare on all Atlantic shipping. On April 2, 1917, she arrived at the Capitol to be sworn in along with the other Members of the 65th Congress (1917–1919).[5] Escorted by her Montana colleague, Rankin looked like "a mature bride rather than a strong-minded female," an observer wrote, ". . . When her name was called the House cheered and rose, so that she had to rise and bow twice, which she did with entire self-possession."[6]

That evening, Congress met in Joint Session to hear President Woodrow Wilson ask to "make the world safe for democracy" by declaring war on Germany. The House debated the war resolution on April 5th. Given Rankin's strong pacifist views, she was inclined against war. Colleagues in the suffrage movement urged caution, fearing that a vote against war would tarnish the entire cause. Rankin sat out the debate over war, a decision she later regretted.[7] She inadvertently violated House rules

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

by making a brief speech when casting her vote. "I want to stand by my country, but I cannot vote for war," she told the House. "I vote no."[8] The final vote was 374 for the war resolution and 50 against. The Helena *Independent* likened her to "a dagger in the hands of the German propagandists, a dupe of the Kaiser, a member of the Hun army in the United States, and a crying schoolgirl"—even though Montana mail to Rankin's office ran against U.S. intervention.[9] NAWSA distanced the suffrage movement from Rankin: "Miss Rankin was not voting for the suffragists of the nation—she represents Montana."[10] Others, such as Representative Fiorello LaGuardia of New York, were quick to defend her.[11]

As the first woman Member, Rankin was on the frontlines of the national suffrage fight. During the fall of 1917 she advocated the creation of a Committee on Woman Suffrage, and when it was created she was appointed to it.[12] When the special committee reported out a constitutional amendment on woman suffrage in January 1918, Rankin opened the very first House Floor debate on this subject.[13] "How shall we answer the challenge, gentlemen?" she asked. "How shall we explain to them the meaning of democracy if the same Congress that voted to make the world safe for democracy refuses to give this small measure of democracy to the women of our country?"[14] The resolution narrowly passed the House amid the cheers of women in the galleries, but it died in the Senate.[15]

Rankin did not ignore her Montana constituency in the midst of this activity. She was assigned to the Committee on Public Lands, which was concerned with western issues. When a mine disaster in Butte resulted in a massive protest strike by miners over their working conditions, violence soon broke out. Responding to pleas from more-moderate miner unions, Rankin unsuccessfully sought help from the Wilson administration through legislation and through her personal intervention in the crisis. These efforts failed as the mining companies refused to meet with either her or the miners.[16] Rankin expected the mining interests to extract a cost for her support of the striking miners. "They own the State," she noted. "They own the Government. They own the press."[17]

Prior to the 1918 election, the Montana state legislature passed legislation replacing the state's two At-Large seats with two separate districts, and Rankin found herself in the overwhelmingly Democratic western district.[18] Faced with the possibility of running against an incumbent or running in a district controlled by the other party, she decided to run for the U.S. Senate. Rankin ran on the slogan "Win the War First," promising to support the Wilson administration "to more efficiently prosecute the war."[19] In a three-way contest, Rankin came in second in the Republican senatorial primary, less than 2,000 votes behind the winner.[20]

Charges that Republicans were bribing her to withdraw compelled her to undertake what she knew was an impossible task—running in the general election on a third-party ticket. "Bribes are not offered in such a way that you can prove them, and in order to prove that I didn't accept a bribe I had to run," she would later recall.[21] The incumbent, Democratic Senator Thomas Walsh, did not underestimate Rankin: "If Miss R. had any party to back her she would be dangerous."[22] In the end, Rankin finished third, winning a fifth of the total votes cast, while Walsh won re-election with a plurality. Ironically, the Republican candidate for Rankin's House district narrowly won.[23]

Afterwards, Rankin divided her time between pacifism and social welfare. She attended the Women's International Conference for Permanent Peace in Switzerland in 1919 and joined the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. In 1928, she founded the Georgia Peace Society after purchasing a farm in that state. Rankin became the leading lobbyist and speaker for the National Council for the Prevention of War from 1929 to 1939. She also remained active in advocating social welfare programs. During the early 1920s she was a field secretary for the National Consumers' League. Rankin's activities largely consisted of lobbying Congress to pass social welfare legislation, such as the Sheppard–Towner bill and a constitutional amendment banning child labor.

It was the looming war crisis in 1940 that brought Rankin back to Congress. She returned to Montana with

her eye on the western House district held by first-term Republican Representative Jacob Thorkelson—an outspoken anti-Semite.[24] Rankin drew on her status as the first woman elected to Congress to speak throughout the district to high school students on the issue of war and peace. When the Republican primary results were in, Rankin defeated three candidates, including the incumbent.[25] In the general election, she faced Jerry J. O'Connell, who had been ousted by Thorkelson from Congress in the previous election. Rankin went into the race confident that the mining industry no longer carried the hefty political influence she faced earlier.[26] Eminent Progressives endorsed her: Senator Robert M. LaFollette, Jr., of Wisconsin and Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia of New York City.[27] On election day Rankin won re-election to the House with 54 percent of the votes cast for a second term—just less than a quarter of a century after she was elected to her first term.[28] "No one will pay any attention to me this time," the victor predicted. "There is nothing unusual about a woman being elected."[29]

As it had 24 years earlier, the threat of war dominated the start of Rankin's new term. She gained appointments to the Committee on Public Lands and the Committee on Insular Affairs, two lower-tier committees that, nevertheless, proved useful to her western constituency. By the time of Rankin's election, the war in Europe was in full force and a debate about U.S. involvement had broken out. In this raging debate, Rankin had taken an arms-length attitude towards the leading isolationist group, the America First Committee. Largely made up of opponents to the New Deal policies of Franklin Roosevelt, Rankin found herself out of sympathy with much of their domestic agenda.[30]

Nevertheless, Rankin made her pacifist views known early in the session. During deliberations over the Lend-Lease Bill to supply the Allied war effort, she offered an unsuccessful amendment in February 1941 requiring specific congressional approval for sending U.S. troops abroad. "If Britain needs our material today," she asked, "will she later need our men?"[31] In May she introduced a resolution condemning any effort "to send the armed forces of the United States to fight in any place outside the Western Hemisphere or insular possessions of the United States."[32] She repeated her request the following month to no avail. That Rankin's stance was not an unusual one was demonstrated by the close margin granting President Franklin Roosevelt's request to allow American merchant ships to be armed in the fall of 1941.[33]

Rankin was en route to Detroit on a speaking engagement when she heard of the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese. She returned to Washington the next morning, determined to oppose U.S. participation in the war.[34] Immediately after President Roosevelt addressed a Joint Session of Congress, the House and Senate met to delib-

"How shall we answer the challenge, gentlemen? How shall we explain to them the meaning of democracy if the same Congress that voted to make the world safe for democracy refuses to give this small measure of democracy to the women of our country?"

—JEANNETTE RANKIN, FIRST HOUSE FLOOR DEBATE ON WOMAN SUFFRAGE, JANUARY 1918

erate on a declaration of war. Rankin repeatedly tried to gain recognition once the first reading of the war resolution was completed in the House. In the brief debate on the resolution, Speaker Sam Rayburn of Texas refused to recognize her and declared her out of order. Other Members called for her to sit down. Others approached her on the House Floor, trying to convince her to either vote for the war or abstain.[35] When the roll call vote was taken, Rankin voted "No" amid what the Associated Press described as "a chorus of hisses and boos."[36] Rankin went on to announce, "As a woman I can't go to war, and I refuse to send anyone else."[37] The war resolution passed the House 388–1.

Condemnation of her stand was immediate and intense, forcing Rankin briefly to huddle in a phone booth before receiving a police escort to her office.[38] "I voted my convictions and redeemed my campaign pledges," she told her constituents.[39] "Montana is 100 percent against you," wired her brother Wellington.[40] In private, she told friends "I have nothing left but my integrity."[41] The vote essentially made the rest of Rankin's term irrelevant. Having made her point, she only voted "present" when the House declared war on Germany and Italy.[42] She found that her colleagues and the press simply ignored her. She chose not to run for re-election in 1942, and her district replaced the isolationist Republican with an internationalist Democrat who had served in three branches of the military, Mike Mansfield.

Rankin continued to divide her time between Montana and Georgia in the years after she left Congress. India became one of her favorite excursions; she was drawn by the nonviolent protest tactics of Mohandas K. Gandhi. During the Vietnam War, she led the Jeannette Rankin Brigade, numbering 5,000, in a protest march on Washington in January 1968 that culminated in the presentation of a peace petition to House Speaker John McCormack of Massachusetts. Her 90th birthday in 1970 was celebrated in the Rayburn House Office Building with a reception and dinner. At the time of her death, on May 18, 1973, in Carmel, California, Rankin was considering another run for a House seat to protest the Vietnam War.

FOR FURTHER READING

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MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

Montana Historical Society (Helena, MT). *Papers:* 1917–1963, 5.5 linear feet. Papers consist primarily of correspondence reflecting concerns of Jeannette Rankin's constituents. Also included in the papers are subject files documenting appointments to military academies, invitations, and requests for government brochures. There is also some personal correspondence, financial records, news clippings, maps, and photographs. A finding aid is available in the repository.

Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University (Cambridge, MA), Schlesinger Library, http://www.radcliffe.edu/schles. *Papers:* 1879–1976, 5.5 feet. Includes correspondence, card files, financial papers, articles, speeches, pamphlets, leaflets, scrapbooks, clippings, photographs, tapes, and a film depicting aspects of her life. Best documented is her vote against World War II and the consequent public reaction, though both terms in Congress are covered. Other correspondence reflects her involvement in the suffrage movement, Vietnam War protest, election reform, and the women's movement, with information on the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Jeannette Rankin Brigade. News clippings make up over one half of the collection.

Some family correspondence with Jeannette Rankin's sisters is included. An unpublished finding aid is available in the repository and on microfilm.

University of California (Berkeley, CA), The Bancroft Library. *Oral History:* 1972, 293 pages. A transcript of the original interview with Jeannette Rankin by Malca Chall from June through August 1972. The interview was conducted as part of the University of California–Berkeley's Suffragists Oral History Project. In the interview, Jeannette Rankin discusses her role in national politics during World War I and World War II, the women's rights movement, and pacifism. Additional materials include photographs, copies of news clippings, magazine articles, and her writings.

NOTES

1 Cited in Winifred Mallon, "An Impression of Jeannette Rankin," *The Suffragist* (March 31, 1917).
2 Norma Smith, *Jeannette Rankin: America's Conscience* (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 2002): 99.
3 Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 101.
4 Ibid., 104.
5 Hannah Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin, First Lady in Congress: A Biography* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs–Merrill, 1974): 68–70.
6 *Washington Wife: Journal of Ellen Maury Slayden from 1897–1919* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962, 1963): 299.
7 In December 1917 during the debate over war with Austria–Hungary, Rankin did speak, though she voted in favor of the resolution. At that time, she said, "I still believe that war is a stupid and futile way of attempting to settle international disputes. I believe that war can be avoided and will be avoided when the people, the men and women in America, as well as in Germany, have the controlling voice in their government." See, Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin*: 84; Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 114.
8 Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin*: 76; Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 112; and Nancy Unger, "RANKIN, Jeannette Pickering," *American National Biography (ANB)* 18 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 142.
9 Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin*: 77; see page 75 for public opinion mail.
10 Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 113.
11 Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin*: 66.
12 When the committee was established, there was a move to make Rankin the chair, despite her belonging to the minority party. See, Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin*: 93–94.
13 Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 123.
14 Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin*: 97–98.
15 Ibid., 99; Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 125–126.
16 Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin*: 88–92; Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 127–133.
17 Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 131.
18 Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin*: 102–103; Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 133–134.
19 Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 135.
20 Oscar Lanstrum received 18,805 votes and Rankin 17,091 out of 46,027 cast. See, Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 137.
21 Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin*: 104. See also, Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 137–138.
22 Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 140.
23 Michael J. Dubin et al., *U.S. Congressional Elections: 1788–1997* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1998): 424; 428.
24 Smith, *America's Conscience*: 172–173. For a contemporary press account of Thorkelson's reputation see, "Democracy's Mental Dissolution Pictured as Nazi Goal in U.S.," 20 July 1940, *Christian Science Monitor*: 15.
25 Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 172–175; Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin*: 153–155.
26 Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin*: 156.
27 Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 176.
28 "*Election Statistics, 1920 to Present*," Office of the Clerk, http://clerk.house.gov/members/electionInfo
29 Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 177.
30 Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin*: 157; Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 180.
31 Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 180–181; Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin*: 158.
32 Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin*: 158–159.
33 Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995): 290–292.
34 Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin*: 160–161; Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 183.
35 Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin*: 161–162. The Mutual Radio Network, which had broadcast the president's address, continued broadcasting in the House Chamber. As a result, portions of the House debate went out live over the radio until House officials realized what was happening during the roll call. As part of a National Public Radio feature, Walter Cronkite reports on this broadcast focusing on the war of wills between Speaker Rayburn and Rankin. "The Lone War Dissenter: Walter Cronkite Remembers Pearl Harbor, Jeanette Rankin," *NPR's All Things Considered* http://www.npr.org/programs/atc/features/2001/dec/cronkite/011207.cronkite.html (accessed August 10, 2004; site now discontinued).
36 Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin*: 162.
37 Unger, "Rankin, Jeannette Pickering," *ANB*: 142.
38 Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin*: 162; Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 183.
39 Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 184.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Josephson, *Jeannette Rankin*: 163–164; Smith, *Jeannette Rankin*: 186.

Alice Mary Robertson
1854–1931

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE ★ REPUBLICAN FROM OKLAHOMA
1921–1923

Alice Robertson, the next woman to follow Jeannette Rankin into Congress, was her predecessor's polar opposite. Colorful, quotable, conservative, and hostile to the women's suffrage movement and its many leaders, Robertson's single term in the House hinged on her rejection of a significant piece of legislation—a proposed World War I Veterans Bonus Bill.

Alice Mary Robertson was born on January 2, 1854, in the Tullahassee Mission in the Creek Nation Indian Territory, now in Oklahoma. Her parents, William Schenck Robertson and Ann Eliza Worcester Robertson, were missionary school teachers committed to assisting displaced Cherokee. After attending Elmira College in New York from 1873 to 1874, Robertson took a job as the first female clerk at the Indian Office at the Department of the Interior in Washington, D.C. Making a brief stop in Pennsylvania in 1879 to work at the Carlisle Indian School, Robertson returned to Oklahoma. In 1885, she founded the Minerva Home—a boarding school to train Native-American girls in domestic skills. This institution later became Henry Kendall College (the present-day University of Tulsa).[1]

Robertson's missionary work put her within a network of progressive reformers and opened the door to a career in politics. In 1891, she earned the admiration of rising GOP politician Theodore Roosevelt, who later described her as "one of the great women of America." In 1905 then-President Roosevelt appointed Robertson the postmistress of Muskogee, Oklahoma, where she served until 1913. In addition to her patronage job, Robertson operated a 50-acre dairy farm with an on-site café, which she named "Sawokla," based on an Indian word meaning "gathering place." Both the farm and the café became a social magnet, drawing politicians, former students, journalists, and local folk. During World War I, she endeared herself to many servicemen by distributing food to soldiers in transit through the local train station. In 1916, the GOP nominated her to run for county superintendent of public instruction, but Robertson lost.[2]

Robertson ran as a Republican for an eastern Oklahoma congressional seat in 1920, challenging a three-term Democratic incumbent, William Wirt Hastings. Trained as a lawyer, Hastings was a formidable opponent who had long ties to the Cherokee Nation; however, Robertson believed she could best represent the interests of her prospective constituents. "There are already more lawyers and bankers in Congress than are needed," Robertson said. "The farmers need a farmer, I am a farmer. The women need a woman to look after their new responsibilities. The soldier boys need a proven friend. I promise few speeches, but faithful work. You can judge my past performances." Robertson campaigned actively only in the confines of the Sawokla Café, where she sidled up to tables of voters and talked politics over a bowl of soup. Lacking coverage from local newspapers, she bought space in the classifieds to reach voters. In a year in which the GOP did well nationally at the polls, Robertson was part of a Republican groundswell in Oklahoma that unseated three Democratic incumbents and made the state's House delegation majority Republican. With support from farmers and veterans, she narrowly defeated Hastings, by 228 votes out of nearly 50,000 cast.[3]

In the 67th Congress (1921–1923), Robertson was rewarded for her lifelong work on Native-American welfare with a seat on the Committee on Indian Affairs. She also received assignments on the Committee on

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Expenditures in the Interior Department and, as the only woman in Congress, on the Committee on Woman Suffrage.

During Representative Robertson's term in Congress, her work on the Committee on Indian Affairs proved frustrating. Bills and committee reports introduced by Robertson remained unconsidered, and on her final day in office, Robertson scolded her colleagues for their lack of attention to the obligations she felt they owed to Native Americans.[4] "I have kept watch through the years of the tribesmen with whom I took the peace obligation so long ago—an obligation never broken," she said, "I protest against such action as . . . would take in depriving thousands of helpless Indian people of the strong defense they can receive through the Interior Department."[5]

Considering Robertson's tepid support for the vote, her assignment to the Committee on Woman Suffrage insulted many reformers. Robertson once remarked that exchanging the privileges associated with Victorian-era womanhood for the political rights enjoyed by men was like, "bartering the birthright for a mess of pottage." She was an avowed critic of women's groups, including the League of Women Voters, "or any other organization that will be used as a club against men." Robertson repeatedly tangled with prominent national women's groups leaders and discouraged participation in nonaligned, nonpartisan groups. "There is an unfortunate tendency on the part of women just now, having hardly found themselves in politics, to criticize faults rather than to encourage virtues," Robertson lectured. "They call themselves non-partisan and stand on the side as harsh critics instead of going right in at the very source of government in their own immediate communities to build up what is best." Robertson advised women to gain valuable experience in local office and state legislatures before seeking candidacy to national office. Women "have gone into politics the wrong way, beginning at the top instead of the bottom," she once observed. "You wouldn't think of jumping into a big Packard car and trying to run it until you had learned how. When a woman shows she is fitted for office, she will receive the call to office just as a man does."[6]

Robertson opposed one of the first major pieces of legislation that affected women—the Sheppard–Towner Maternity and Infancy Act of 1921, which provided for educating the public about pregnancy and other prenatal and infant issues. Despite intense lobbying from women's groups and a strong measure of support in her district, she testified against the "better baby" measure in committee and voted against it on the House Floor. As the only witness to oppose the bill in its entirety, Robertson told the House Interstate Commerce Committee that it was "dangerous class legislation, separating women from the men." Robertson believed the bill would create a federal bureau that would intrude on family life. She also preferred the money be spent on material support, worrying that instructional programs might foster "an autocratic, undefined, practically uncontrolled yet Federally authorized center of propaganda."[7]

The traditionally minded 67-year-old matron posed little threat to the folkways of the male-dominated House. One newspaper reporter described her in the vein of a former House Speaker: "built on the same architectural lines as the late Champ Clark and moving with the same deliberate tread . . . her costume was always black and of cut behind the prevailing mode." Robertson quickly gained the respect of her male colleagues because of her steadfast determination to shun feminist overtures. "I came to Congress to represent my district," she declared, "not women." On June 20, 1921, during a roll call vote on funding for a United States delegation to the centennial celebrations of Peru's independence, Robertson became the first woman to preside over a session of the House of Representatives.[8]

Robertson soon alienated a core group of constituents—World War I veterans—when she opposed a measure that would have allowed them to receive an early payment on their military service pensions. President Warren Harding vetoed the "Soldiers Bonus Bill" in 1922, but it passed over the veto of President Calvin Coolidge in 1924.[9] Robertson suggested that such government doles would only increase public dependency on an ever-growing bureaucracy. She faced withering attacks from veterans' groups inside and outside her district, including

Women "have gone into politics the wrong way, beginning at the top instead of the bottom. You wouldn't think of jumping into a big Packard car and trying to run it until you had learned how. When a woman shows she is fitted for office, she will receive the call to office just as a man does."

—Alice Robertson
Washington Post
March 4, 1923

the Women's Auxiliary of the American Legion, which judged her "unworthy of American womanhood."[10]

Congresswoman Robertson's other legislative work accorded with her district. She secured authorization for the construction of a veterans' hospital in Muskogee to assist the more than 91,000 Oklahomans who served in World War I.[11] Robertson also won approval for an amendment that increased the subsistence rate and rent money for army and navy nurses. She supported higher tariff rates and stricter immigration quotas—positions which Oklahomans broadly approved. Like many midwestern politicians, Robertson also opposed the entry of the United States into the League of Nations. She challenged Representative Meyer London of New York when he urged the release of labor leader Eugene V. Debs from prison.

But when staking out her interest in a second term, Robertson admitted that she had not been able to steer enough money into her beleaguered district to overcome her unpopular votes. "I haven't been able to get any 'pie,' speaking in the language of the restaurant, and there are a lot of Republicans down in Oklahoma who are mighty hungry," she told a reporter. She formally declared her candidacy for a second term and won the GOP primary but faced her nemesis, William Hastings, in the 1922 general election. Statewide, Democrats surged back into office, claiming seven of Oklahoma's eight House seats. Hastings prevailed, with 58 percent of the vote to Robertson's 42 percent, and went on to serve an additional six terms in the House.[12]

Robertson spent the last decade of her life trying, with little success, to fit back into life in Muskogee. In April 1923, a month after she left the House, President Harding appointed her as a welfare worker in the Muskogee Veterans' Hospital. With memories of her Bonus Bill vote fresh in the minds of local servicemen, she was eventually ousted from the hospital position. In 1925 a fire destroyed her Sawokla home and the café, which prompted Robertson to tell a local reporter that she was certain "some of her enemies had set it." Robertson spent her last years supported by generous friends and family and died in relative obscurity on July 1, 1931, at the Muskogee Veterans' Hospital.[13]

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Morris, Cheryl. "Alice M. Robertson: Friend or Foe of the American Soldier." *Journal of the West* 12 (April 1973): 307–16.

Spaulding, Joe Powell. "The Life of Mary Alice Robertson." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1959.

Stanley, Ruth M. "Alice M. Robertson, Oklahoma's First Congresswoman." *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 45 (Autumn 1967): 259–89.

MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

University of Oklahoma (Norman, OK), Western History Collections.

University of Tulsa (Tulsa, OK), Department of Special Collections, McFarlin Library. *Papers:* 1820–1931, approximately 25 feet. Personal and business papers, correspondence, photographs, a large collection of newspaper clippings, memorabilia, and writings. A finding aid is available in the repository and online: http://www.lib.utulsa.edu/speccoll/roberam0.htm.

NOTES

1 Alice Robertson's maternal father, Samuel A. Worcester, argued before the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of the political autonomy of the Cherokee Nation in the 1832 legal case *Worcester v. Georgia*; "Woman Congress Member Likes D.C.," 9 November 1920, *Washington Post*: 1.

2 Hope Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members: Women in the U.S. Congress* (New York: Praeger, 1973): 39; for the section on her relationship with Theodore Roosevelt, see also Nancy Shoemaker, "Robertson, Alice Mary," *American National Biography* 18 (New York: Oxford, 1999): 621–622.

3 Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members*: 39; "Miss Robertson of Oklahoma," 13 November 1920, *New York Times*: 10.

4 Robertson introduced two bills and two committee reports appropriating funds and granting relief to Native American Tribes (HR 8273, HR 10495, H. Rep. 11140, H. Rep. 1452), none of which were ever considered (see the *Congressional Record*, House, 67th Congress).

5 *Congressional Record*, House, 67th Cong., 4th sess. (3 March 1923): 5679.

6 Cited in Susan Tolchin, *Women in Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976); and in Chamberlin's *A Minority of Members*: 39; "Against League of Women," 10 February 1921, *Washington Post*: 6; "Robertson Says Women Must Take Election Risk," 16 March 1922, *Washington Post*: 5; Mayme Ober Peak, "'Miss Alice' Is Content After One Term to Retire to Her Sawokla Farm in Oklahoma," 4 March 1923, *Washington Post*: 75. Robertson's remark about the Packard car was not aimed at any particular woman suffrage leader, Rankin included.

7 Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members*: 41; Constance Drexel, "Miss Alice Fights 'Better–Baby' Bill," 24 July 1921, *Washington Post*: 6.

8 Peak, "'Miss Alice' Is Content After One Term to Retire to Her Sawokla Farm in Oklahoma"; "Woman Presides at House Session; First in History," 21 June 1921, *Washington Post*: 1; "Woman Presides in Congress; Precedent Broken Amid Cheers," 21 June 1921, *New York Times*: 1; Shoemaker, "Robertson, Mary Alice," *ANB*.

9 Stephen W. Stathis, *Landmark Legislation: 1774-2002* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2003): 185.

10 Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members*: 42; Tolchin, *Women in Congress*: 71.

11 Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members*: 41; Arrell Morgan Gibson, *The History of Oklahoma* (University of Oklahoma Press: 1972): 140.

12 "Can't Get Any 'Pie,' But Won't Give Up," 5 December 1921, *New York Times*: 1; "Miss Robertson Opens Reelection Campaign," 5 July 1922, *Washington Post*: 10.

13 "Muskogee County, Oklahoma: Turning Back the Clock," (Muskogee, OK: Muskogee Publishing Co., 1985) http://www.rootsweb.com/~okmuskog/peopleplaces/turnback11.html (accessed 1 August 2003).

Winnifred S. Huck
1882–1936

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE ★ REPUBLICAN FROM ILLINOIS
1922–1923

Winnifred S. Huck, the third woman elected to Congress, spent her short House career carrying on the legacy of her father, William E. Mason, as an ardent and articulate pacifist. As the first wife and mother elected to Congress, she vowed to look after the needs of married women and families and to promote world peace.

Winnifred Sprague Mason was born in Chicago, Illinois, on September 14, 1882. She was the daughter of William, an attorney and a former schoolteacher, and Edith Julia White Mason. Winnifred's father served as a Republican in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1887 until 1891 and in the U.S. Senate from 1897 to 1903. He returned to the House in 1917 to fill an Illinois At-Large seat. During his congressional career, Mason consistently championed labor rights, took a strong antitrust position, and was an avowed pacifist. He was one of the first American politicians to advocate an independent Cuba following the Spanish-American War and to recognize an autonomous Irish Republic. Colleagues and the press denounced the pacifist Mason when he opposed American intervention in World War I, a conflict he shunned as a "dollar war." Winnifred Huck attended public schools in Chicago until her father's first election to the House took the family to Washington, D.C. She graduated from Washington's Central High School. In 1904, she married her high school sweetheart, Robert W. Huck. The couple raised four children: Wallace, Edith, Donald, and Robert, Jr. Robert Huck, Sr., a civil engineer, became a steel company executive, moving the family to Colorado. Later he worked as a construction engineer for the deep waterways commission, relocating the family to Chicago, where Winnifred Huck became active in her hometown community.[1]

When Representative William Mason died in office on June 16, 1921, Winnifred Huck announced that she would be a candidate in the April 22nd primary to fill her father's At-Large seat for the remainder of his term in the 67th Congress (1921–1923) and would also run for a full term in the 68th Congress (1923–1925). On her prospects, Huck commented, "I have come into the political world like a clap of thunder out of a clear sky," but also cited a longtime interest in politics due to her father's influence. Without spending any money on her campaign, and lacking the endorsement of the Illinois Republican Women's Club, Huck narrowly won the nomination. In the primary for the full term, however, she lost the nomination to Henry R. Rathbone, who was later the runner-up in the general election to fellow Republican Richard Yates.[2]

In the special election on November 7, 1922, Huck defeated Democrat Allen D. Albert, amassing more than 850,000 votes and 53 percent of the total turnout. In declaring victory, Huck said "I am going to take my four children to Washington and get busy. I am for world peace, but against entangling alliances and I want to see the soldiers get a bonus." When Huck arrived in Washington, state officials in Illinois had not provided her with credentials. She was concerned that she would not be able to take her seat, later writing, "A Congressman-elect might forget to wear his shoes on the day of his inauguration, but he would never forget to bring his credentials." Illinois Representative James Mann vouched for her election, and the House unanimously agreed to swear Huck into the 67th Congress on November 20, 1922. She was the first woman to represent Illinois.[3]

During her brief fourteen-week tenure, she served on the Committee on Expenditures in the Department

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of Commerce, the Committee on Reform in the Civil Service, and the Committee on Woman Suffrage. She also was a member of the "Progressive Bloc," a group of like-minded Senators and Representatives who gathered in informal committees to discuss the legislative agenda. Huck focused her energies on continuing her father's legislative goals, including support for restrictions on child labor and separate citizenship rights for married women. Winnifred Huck most vocally carried on William Mason's legacy, however, as a pacifist with the goal of creating lasting peace following the end of World War I.[4]

Huck disdained the custom which required new Members of Congress to remain silent and proceeded to offer her opinions on a variety of issues. Her most noteworthy address as a House Member was delivered on January 16, 1923, when she appealed to her colleagues to support a constitutional amendment to hold a direct popular vote for future United States' involvement in any war requiring the armed forces to be sent overseas. Determined to demonstrate the lack of necessity for war, Huck declared, "In a country where the people control the government there is no opportunity for a war to originate." One month later, Huck proposed further legislation which would have barred any American trade with or financial concessions to nations that did not permit citizens to participate in referendums on war declarations. Huck continued her antiwar stance by pleading for the release of 62 men imprisoned for what the Woodrow Wilson administration deemed to be seditious speeches and writing during the war.[5] Huck also introduced a concurrent resolution declaring the people of the Philippine Islands to be free and independent, and she championed self-government for Cuba and Ireland.[6] Critics assailed her legislation as an attack on the executive power to make war and an invitation for foreign aggression, but Huck's passion for the idea of outlawing war came to fruition later in the decade with the 1928 Kellogg–Briand Pact, which was signed by several nations condemning war as a solution for international controversies. Though out of office, Huck enthusiastically supported the pact.

Huck deviated from her antiwar stance on only two occasions. First, she voted in favor of the December 1922 Ship Subsidy Bill, legislation resulting from President Warren Harding's plan to increase American international trade presence by subsidizing the merchant marine—which, in the event of war, would transport troops and weapons.[7] Huck justified her position by noting that President Harding had not urged its passage as a necessary preparation for war.[8] Second, she appointed her son, Wallace, to the United States Naval Academy, forcing the academy to waive its height requirement in accepting the 5-foot- 2-inch youth. She defended her actions by claiming that until her legislation outlawing war passed, the nation would need a "splendid army and an efficient navy."[9]

Before the conclusion of her short term in March 1923, Huck entered another Illinois primary. She sought to fill the vacancy created by the death of Illinois Representative James Mann, who died on November 30, 1922—defending Huck's right to her seat was the last action he took on the House Floor. Huck was defeated in the February 1923 primary by former state senator Morton D. Hull. Following the primary, Huck alleged that Hull had spent $100,000 on his campaign, far exceeding the $5,000 expenditure limit imposed by Congress at the time. The House denied her request to investigate Hull's campaign. Deciding that protesting the outcome would prove futile, Huck did not contest the election.[10]

After her term expired, Huck served as the chair of the Political Council of the National Woman's Party and made her living as a writer, authoring a syndicated newspaper column and working as an investigative reporter. In 1925, posing undercover as a convict in a women's prison, she wrote a series of articles for the *Chicago Evening Post* on the criminal justice system, prison conditions, and the rehabilitation of convicts, creating a national sensation. In 1928 and 1929, Huck worked as a staff writer on the *Chicago Evening Sun,* and she also gave lectures. Suffering failing health during the last five years of her life, Huck lived in Chicago with her family until her death there on August 24, 1936, from complications following abdominal surgery.[11]

FOR FURTHER READING

Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, "Winnifred Sprague Mason Huck," http://bioguide.congress. gov

NOTES

1 "Mason Stirs House" 4 October 1917, *New York Times*: 12; Leonard Schulp, "Huck, Winnifred Sprague Mason," *American National Biography* (*ANB*) 11 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 402.

2 "Mrs. Huck Planning To Work for Peace," 19 November 1922, *Washington Post*: 3; Hope Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members*: *Women in the U.S. Congress* (New York: Praeger, 1973): 44.

3 "Congresswoman Is To Succeed Father," 9 November 1922, *Washington Post*: 9; Winnifred Huck, "What Happened to Me in Congress," July 1923, *Woman's Home Companion*: 4; "First Mother in Congress Will Work for World Peace," 11 May 1922, *Christian Science Monitor*: 5.

4 Schulp, "Huck, Winnifred Sprague Mason," *ANB*; David T. Canon et al., *Committees in the U.S. Congress*, *1789–1946* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2002); "Mrs. Huck Planning To Work for Peace," 19 November 1922, *Washington Post*: 3; "Six Committees Named for 'Progressive Bloc,'" 30 December 1922, *Washington Post*: 4; "'Miss Alice' and Mrs. Huck Chum and Chat, But Differ at Polls," 3 December 1922, *Washington Post*: 18.

5 Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives, *Women in Congress, 1917–1990* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991): 109; "Mrs. Huck Pleads for Prisoners," *Christian Science Monitor*, 11 December 1922: 2.

6 Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members*: 44; *Congressional Record,* House, 67th Cong., 4th sess. (16 January 1923): 1828; *Congressional Record,* House, 67th Cong., 4th sess. (16 February 1923): 3817; "Points to Lesson in Irish Struggle," 1 August 1921, *Washington Post*: 2; Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives, *Women in Congress, 1917–1990*: 6.

7 Schulp, "Huck, Winnifred Sprague Mason," *ANB*: 402.

8 Constance Drexel, "Mrs. Huck For Ship Subsidy," 26 November 1922, *Los Angeles Times*: 13.

9 "Mother, Congresswoman Sends Son to Annapolis," 24 July 1923, *Washington Post*: 2; Quoted in Schulp, "Huck, Winnifred Sprague Mason," *ANB*.

10 Huck, "*What Happened to Me in Congress*: 4; "Mrs. Huck Will Not Contest Hull's Seat," 4 March 1923, *Washington Post*: 1; Whitehead, Frank Insco, "Swan Songs, Tributes," 5 March 1924, *Washington Post*: 1.

11 Schulp, "Huck, Winnifred Sprague Mason," *ANB*: 403.

Rebecca Latimer Felton
1835–1930

UNITED STATES SENATOR ★ DEMOCRAT FROM GEORGIA
1922

Rebecca Felton's brief and essentially symbolic service in the Senate stood in contrast to her decades of participation in Georgia politics and civic affairs. Outspoken, determined, and irascible, Felton was involved in public life from the 1870s through the 1920s. She first entered politics during her husband's successful campaign for the House of Representatives and went on to work as a lecturer and newspaper writer, before becoming the first woman to serve in the United States Senate.

Rebecca Ann Latimer was born on June 10, 1835, in De Kalb County, Georgia, to Charles Latimer and Eleanor Swift. She attended private schools in the area before graduating from Madison Female College in 1852. She married William Harrell Felton, a physician and Methodist preacher, in 1853. They lived on a farm near Cartersville, Georgia, and eventually had four sons and a daughter. During the Civil War, William Felton served as a surgeon despite Rebecca's opposition to secession. Following the war, they worked to restore their heavily damaged farm, and she taught school. Rebecca Felton managed her husband's successful 1874 campaign for Congress when he ran as an Independent Democrat representing up-country Georgia. William served in the U.S. House (1875–1881) and, later, the state house of representatives (1884–1890). Rebecca continued to be a close adviser during his three terms in the House, serving as congressional secretary, and later as his aide in the state legislature. In 1894 William Felton ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. House on the Populist ticket. "Though now a feeble old man," writes Robert Preston Brooks, "he was full of fire and an antagonist to be dreaded." He died in late 1909 at the age of 87.[1]

The Feltons' political partnership introduced Rebecca Felton to politics and public service. She was an active participant in her husband's campaigns. "I made appointments for speaking, recruited speakers, answered newspaper attacks, contracted for the printing and distribution of circulars and sample ballots," she recalled, "and more than all, kept a brave face to the foe and a smiling face to the almost exhausted candidate." Her presence on the campaign trail—an unusual place to find a woman then—drew fire from William's opponents. She would later recall, "I did not stop to think what a change this was for a young woman considered only an ornament and household mistress." As William's congressional secretary in "Washington City," she managed her husband's correspondence and speeches while writing columns for two local newspapers. She was soon known as "our Second Representative from the Seventh."[2]

As William's career came to an end, Rebecca began building on what she had learned and experienced. It was her participation in managing Georgia's exhibits at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 held in Chicago that sparked her interest in national politics. Felton had come into contact with other women activists from around the nation and endorsed many of the crusades of Southern progressivism, including temperance and prison reform. Rebecca also was a gifted writer, whose vigorous prose had made her husband's campaigns memorable. Husband and wife founded a weekly newspaper, *Cartersville Free Press*, and she wrote many of its columns. Her column, "The Country Home," appeared in the *Atlanta Journal* for nearly two decades from 1899 into the 1920s. She also wrote three books: *My Memoirs of Georgia Politics* (1911), *Country Life in Georgia in the Days of My Youth* (1919), and *The Romantic Story of Georgia's Women* (1930).[3]

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

It was through her writings that Felton became a visible presence in Georgia politics. She supported women's suffrage, Prohibition, and public education, especially vocational training for girls, while fighting the state's system of convict leasing. Felton was also prone to making harsh personal attacks on perceived enemies and articulated an often brutal vision of social order. She espoused conventional views about labor-management issues, defending working conditions in southern cotton mills and criticizing labor unions. Looking back on an age noted for intolerance and racism, historians have characterized Felton's judgments about African Americans as especially vicious. Black rapists were of particular concern to Felton and to southerners who shared her views. She blamed the use of liquor to purchase black votes for an increase in threats to southern womanhood. Her views drew national attention when she said in an 1897 address that "if it takes lynching to protect women's dearest possession from drunken, raving human beasts, then I say lynch a thousand a week."[4]

Felton's personal determination, if not her varied political views, was much in evidence in her fleeting Senate career. The sudden death of Senator Tom Watson, an old Populist ally of Felton's, on September 26, 1922, four days after the end of the 67th Congress (1921–1923), gave Governor Thomas Hardwick an opportunity. An earlier opponent of the 19th Amendment, Hardwick saw a chance to erase this blot among women voters while giving his own political career a boost. Announcing his candidacy in the special election to fill Watson's unexpired term, the governor decided to appoint a woman to the seat on an *ad interim* basis. He first offered the appointment to Watson's widow, and when she turned it down, he offered the post to Felton. "It is unfortunate that an elected successor will prevent her from being sworn in," the governor announced. Felton was appointed on October 3rd to serve until a successor was elected, and Hardwick scheduled for mid-October the primary that would begin the process for filling the unexpired Senate term. Felton received the appointment certificate in a public ceremony held in Cartersville on October 7th. Governor Hardwick reminded the crowd that he had originally opposed women's suffrage but said he now believed "it was right" to extend the right to vote to women. Felton said, "the biggest part of this appointment lies in the recognition of women in the government of our country. It means, as far as I can see, there are now no limitations upon the ambitions of women. They can be elected or appointed to any office in the land. The word 'sex' has been obliterated entirely from the Constitution." The press was filled with sympathetic stories about the first woman to become Senator, but they also lambasted Governor Hardwick over his transparent political ploy. The *Pittsburgh Gazette-Times* called the appointment "merely a pretty sentiment . . . an empty gesture." Suffragists began a petition campaign requesting President Warren G. Harding to call Congress into special session and thus allow Felton to be sworn in as Senator before her successor was elected. "It would be too expensive," the president responded, "to summon Congress just to seat a single senator." On October 17, Georgia supreme court justice Walter George defeated Governor Hardwick in the primary to fill the rest of Senator Watson's term.[5]

Now the situation changed. The 17th Amendment provided for a gubernatorial appointment until a successor was elected. In Georgia, dominated by the Democratic Party, winning the primary was tantamount to winning the general election. Once George won the election in November, Felton's tenure as Senator would come to an end. This was certainly how George read the situation. He feared that Georgia would have three Senators on its payroll after the fall elections. When in early November President Harding suddenly called Congress into special session, to begin November 20, 1922, for a Ship Subsidy Bill, an opportunity for Felton to be sworn in suddenly appeared. The 87-year-old Felton convinced Senator-elect George to allow her to present her credentials during the special session. George warned her that this maneuver would be vulnerable to any Senator's objection, but Felton was willing to take the chance. She checked further with Georgia Secretary of State S.G. McLendon, who told her that he had sent the official certificate of her appointment to the Senate and saw no reason against her

being sworn in. On the day of the special session, Felton took her seat in the Senate Chamber, and the following day she was sworn in as that body's first woman Member. It turned out that she was the oldest Senator, too. The swearing-in ceremony was delayed by Montana Senator Thomas J. Walsh, who in a careful address examined the objections to seating Felton and the arguments from Senate precedents that seemed to allow it. Walsh's position was that if the Senate chose to seat her, it should be done because "she was entitled to take the oath" rather than "as a favor, or as a mere matter of courtesy or being moved by the spirit of gallantry." A day later, when the Senate first proceeded to business beneath a gallery filled with women assembled for the occasion, Felton made some brief remarks in which she made a prediction: "When the women of the country come in and sit with you, though there may be but a very few in the next few years, I pledge you that you will get ability, you will get integrity of purpose, you will get exalted patriotism, and you will get unstinted usefulness." Felton then gave her seat to George, who was present for the occasion. She thus gained the further and dubious distinction of being the Senator with the shortest term of service.[6]

Felton returned to Cartersville, Georgia, and continued to write on public affairs. The "grand old woman of Georgia" made a brief appearance at the Capitol in 1927 when Georgia added a statue of Alexander Stephens to the National Statuary Hall Collection. She died in Atlanta on January 24, 1930, at the age of 95.[7]

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MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION

University of Georgia Libraries (Athens, GA), Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library. *Papers:* 1851–1930, 22 linear feet. The papers include correspondence, speeches, articles, and scrapbooks. These materials reflect Rebecca Felton's career as politician, author, newspaper columnist, and lecturer. The papers also document her involvement in the World's Columbian Exposition (1893), the Cotton States Exposition in Atlanta (1895), and as a delegate to the Progressive Republican Convention in Chicago in 1912. Due to preservation concerns, researchers are required to use the microfilm copy. A finding aid is available in the repository.

NOTES

1 Robert Preston Brooks, "Felton, Rebecca Latimer," *Dictionary of American Biography on CD-ROM* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1998; originally published in 1931). The children were John, Mary Eleanor (died in infancy), William Harrell, Jr., Howard Erwin, and Paul Aiken (died in infancy); Hope Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members: Women in the U.S. Congress* (New York: Praeger, 1973): 25–26.
2 Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members*: 26–27.
3 Ibid., 28–29; W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "Felton, Rebecca Latimer," *American National Biography*, 7 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 808–810.
4 Brundage, "Felton, Rebecca Latimer," *ANB*.
5 Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members*: 19–21.
6 Ibid., 21–22; 34–36.
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Mae Ella Nolan
1886–1973

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE ★ REPUBLICAN FROM CALIFORNIA
1923–1925

As the first woman to succeed her husband in Congress, widow Mae Ella Nolan set a precedent by championing the legislative agenda of her late husband, John I. Nolan. Congresswoman Nolan's example influenced many future widows. But her career, which included the distinction of being the first woman to head a congressional committee and all the attendant media attention, proved short-lived.

Mae Ella Hunt was born on September 20, 1886, to Irish immigrants in San Francisco, California, and grew up in its working-class neighborhoods. She attended the public schools in San Francisco, St. Vincent's Convent, and Ayers Business College of San Francisco. After earning a certificate in stenography, she went to work at Wells Fargo Express. In 1913, she married John I. Nolan—a former iron molder and labor activist—shortly after he was elected to the 63rd Congress (1913–1915) on the Bull Moose Party ticket. The couple raised a daughter named Corlis. John Nolan, a San Francisco native and former member of the city's board of supervisors, had been active in the city labor movement and political scene for years. He entered the iron molding trade at age 14 and moved into the ranks of union leadership—as a member of the national executive board of the molders' union, as a delegate to the San Francisco Labor Council, and as a lobbyist representing the labor council in Sacramento. He played a prominent role in the Union Labor Party, at the height of its influence in San Francisco politics during the Progressive Era. In the House, representing a district that covered southern San Francisco, Nolan eventually chaired the Labor Committee and was considered the GOP's leading labor advocate, fighting aggressively against child labor and working for protections for women in industrial jobs.[1] He was considered for Labor Secretary in President Warren G. Harding's Cabinet. Mae Nolan was his constant companion. Corlis was known as the "Daughter of the House of Representatives," and became a regular on the House Floor and a favorite of Speakers Joe Cannon of Illinois and Champ Clark of Missouri.[2]

John Nolan was elected unopposed to a sixth term in November 1922 but died weeks after the election. The Union Labor Party quickly nominated Mae Ella Nolan to succeed her husband. She also received the support of the executive committee of the California Women's Republican League.[3] While campaigning, Nolan embraced a platform that called for relaxing Prohibition laws and supported labor interests. Though the campaign was pushed back two weeks to allow prospective candidates to gather signatures for their nomination, Nolan was the odds-on favorite. She was elected to the remainder of the 67th Congress (1921–1923) and the full term in the 68th Congress (1923–1925) on January 23, 1923, out-polling her nearest opponent, San Francisco Supervisor Edwin G. Bath, by more than 4,000 votes.[4]

Nolan was an immediate novelty because she was the first widow to serve in Congress. As the *Los Angeles Times* observed at the time of her election, Mae Nolan was "intimately associated with the Washington chapters of her husband's life" and familiar with the "pangs and diversions" of congressional politics. In announcing her platform, Nolan likened her program to a memorial for her husband. "I owe it to the memory of my husband to carry on his work," Nolan told the *San Francisco Examiner*. "His minimum-wage bill, child labor laws and national education bills all need to be in the hands of someone who knew him and his plans intimately. No one better knows than I do his legislative agenda."[5]

Though Nolan ran as an Independent, she served as a

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Republican. On February 12, 1923, she was escorted by California Congressman Charles F. Curry to take the oath of office. "I come to Washington, not as a stranger, but as one among friends," Nolan said. "I come with new responsibilities and in a new attitude, however. I can not forget that my election was a tribute to the memory of my late husband . . . and in the belief and expectation that I, who was his close associate in his legislative work for many years, could best carry that work on in his place." To help manage her office, she employed her sister, Theresa Hunt Glynn, who had worked for six years as John Nolan's secretary. Nolan also relied on Representative Julius Kahn, San Francisco's other Congressman, and a personal friend of her husband, for counsel and advice.[6]

In the 67th Congress, Nolan was appointed to the Committee on Woman Suffrage. When the 68th Congress convened in late 1923, she received an assignment on the Committee on Labor. Nolan also was appointed to chair the Committee on Expenditures in the Post Office and received national press attention as the first woman to chair a congressional committee.

Claiming that the workload with her additional assignments was too much, she dropped the Woman Suffrage Committee assignment. It was a convenient moment for Nolan to distance herself from the women's rights movement with which she had a relatively cool relationship, largely because her core labor constituency was unsupportive. In particular, the American Federation of Labor vigorously denounced the Equal Rights Amendment (introduced in Congress during Nolan's first year) because of perceptions that it would erode Progressive Era workplace protections for women in industrial jobs. As the only woman in the 68th Congress, Nolan minimized gender differences. "A capable woman is a better representative than an incapable man, and vice versa," Nolan said. "After all, the chief responsibility in legislative matters rests with the electorate. If it is alert, informed, and insistent, it will get good representation in Washington from either a man or a woman Member of Congress."[7]

Nolan sought to improve wage conditions for laborers, taking up the fight for John Nolan's minimum daily wage bill for federal employees. "Uncle Sam should be a model employer," Mae Nolan said in late 1923. "Wages and working conditions in the Government service should conform to a proper American standard of living. I am in complete sympathy with the movement to increase the compensation of the postal workers and to provide a more generous retirement system." Nolan also supported lowering taxes on working-class Americans and raising them on the wealthy. Further, she championed a bonus for World War I veterans (an idea approved by Congress in 1922 but vetoed by President Harding). "The men who risked their lives in the trenches of Europe should receive their adjusted compensation before we undertake to reduce the tax burden of the very rich," Nolan declared.[8] In her one complete term in Congress, Congresswoman Nolan also gained passage of several bills related to her district, including one transferring the Palace of Fine Arts from the federal government's Presidio to the city of San Francisco and another authorizing construction of a federal building.[9]

Despite her ability to secure solid committee positions, Nolan seems to have had problems stepping from behind her husband's shadow into the full glare of the public spotlight. She expressed frustration at the unblinking press attention lavished on her during her early House career, claiming that she was misquoted and misrepresented regularly. The press also mercilessly derided Nolan's figure—noting at one point that she had taken up golf as a form of exercise to lose weight. She made relatively few floor speeches and soon withdrew from the reporters who sought her out for interviews. By her second year in Congress, the *Washington Post* reported that Nolan "retired into her shell and lobbyists say it is with difficulty that they can obtain a few words with her." When she left the House, a *Washington Post* headline claimed (not quite accurately) that "in Congress 2 years, she did no 'talking.'"[10]

Representative Nolan declined to run for re-election to the 69th Congress (1925–1927), citing the time-consuming workload and her responsibilities as a single parent: "Politics is entirely too masculine to have any attraction for feminine responsibilities." Mae Ella Nolan retired

from Congress and returned to San Francisco. In later years, she moved to Sacramento, California, where she died on July 9, 1973.[11]

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NOTES

1 Kenneth Martis, *The Historical Atlas of Political Parties in the United States Congress, 1789–1989* (New York: Macmillan, 1988).

2 For a concise history of the Union Labor Party in San Francisco politics see, William Issel and Robert W. Cherny, *San Francisco, 1865–1932: Politics, Power and Urban Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986): 139–164. See also, Sally Sloane, "Only Woman in Congress," 16 December 1923, *Washington Post*: F3.

3 Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives, *Women in Congress; 1917–1990* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991) indicates that Nolan ran as an Independent. All other referenced sources indicate that she ran as a Republican. See, for example, Michael J. Dubin et al., *U.S. Congressional Elections, 1788–1997* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1998): 448; "Mae Ella Nolan," *Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress*, available: http://bioguide.congress.gov (accessed 11 January 2005); and Hope Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members: Women in the U.S. Congress* (New York: Praeger, 1973): 46–47.

4 "Congressman Nolan Is Dead," 19 November 1922, *Los Angeles Times*: I10; "Representative Nolan Dies in California Home," 19 November 1922, *Washington Post*: 3; "Widow Sees Nolan's Seat," 30 November 1922, *Washington Post*: 9; "Delay California Election," 11 December 1922, *Washington Post*: 6; "Mrs. Nolan Goes to Congress to Succeed Her Late Husband," 24 January 1923, *New York Times*: 1.

5 "Women in Congress," 27 January 1923, *Los Angeles Times*: II4; quoted in Suzanne Pullen, "First Female California Representatives From the City," 10 November 2000, *San Francisco Examiner*: A7.

6 "Mrs. Nolan Takes Her Place in House," 13 February 1923, *Washington Post*: 4; Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members*: 46. See Mae Ella Nolan's memorial speech at the time of Julius Kahn's (husband of Florence Prag Kahn) death; *Congressional Record*, House, 68th Cong., 2nd sess. (22 February 1925): 4385.

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8 Sloane, "Only Woman in Congress"; Steven V. Stathis, *Landmark Legislation, 1774–2002* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2003): 186.

9 Sloane, "Only Woman in Congress."

10 Constance Drexel, "Mrs. Nolan No 'Crusader'; Mrs. Barrett Gains Note," 24 February 1924, *Washington Post*: ES 3; "In Congress 2 Years, She Did No 'Talking,'" 5 March 1925, *Washington Post*: 9.

11 Susan Tolchin, *Women in Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976): 57.

Mary T. Norton
1875–1959

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE ★ DEMOCRAT FROM NEW JERSEY
1925–1951

For a quarter century in the House, colleagues knew Mary T. Norton as "Battling Mary," a reformer who fought for the labor and the working-class interests of her urban New Jersey district. An apprentice with one of the most notorious Democratic political machines in America, Norton emerged from Jersey City as the first woman to represent an eastern state and eventually chaired four House committees. Norton's career was defined by her devotion to blue-collar concerns.

Mary Teresa Hopkins was born on March 7, 1875, in Jersey City, New Jersey. She was the second surviving child of Thomas Hopkins, a road construction contractor, and Maria Shea, a governess.[1] Mary kept house after her mother died and graduated from Jersey City High School. She moved to New York City in 1896 and attended Packard Business College. She later worked as a secretary and stenographer until she married Robert Francis Norton in April 1909. To cope with the death of her one-week-old son, Robert, Jr., in 1910, she began working at the Queen's Daughters Day Nursery and, within three years, became its secretary. By 1916, she was elected nursery president. It was in her capacity as a fundraiser for the nursery that she made a large number of political contacts. Robert Norton, who died in 1934, supported her career to the end.

After World War I, in search of municipal support for the nursery, she met Jersey City's mayor and powerful political boss, Frank "I Am the Law" Hague. Mayor Hague took office in 1917 and controlled Hudson County politics for three decades with a mixture of patronage, programs for his labor constituency, and, at times, direct intimidation of his opponents. Eager to bring newly enfranchised women into the Democratic Party (and under his political machine), the mayor pressed Norton to enter politics as his protégé. "It's your duty to organize the women of Jersey City," Hague commanded.[2] When Norton, who had not been involved in the suffrage movement, protested that she didn't know politics, Hague snapped back, "Neither does any suffragist."[3] In 1920, with Hague's backing, Norton was the first woman named to the New Jersey Democratic Committee and, in 1921, was elected its vice chairman, serving in that capacity until 1931. She became the first woman to head any state party when she was elevated to chairman in 1932 (she served until 1935 and was again named chairman from 1940 to 1944).

On November 5, 1924, with Hague's key endorsement, Norton won election to a Jersey City U.S. House seat—recently vacated by the retiring Representative Charles O'Brien. As the first woman to represent an eastern state, she beat Republican Douglas Story by more than 18,000 votes (62 percent of the total vote). Re-elected in 1926 by a landslide 83 percent of the vote, she dominated her subsequent 11 elections appealing to a heavily Democratic constituency, increased by reapportionment in 1932.[4]

During her first term, Norton received an assignment on the World War Veterans Legislation Committee. She would later serve on and eventually chair four committees: Labor, District of Columbia, Memorials, and House Administration. As a freshman she also encountered head-on the House patriarchy. Once, when a colleague deferred to her as a "lady," Norton retorted, "I am no lady, I'm a Member of Congress, and I'll proceed on that basis."[5]

Although she befriended Hague for life, Norton maintained that the mayor had not sought to influence her vote in Congress. She shared fundamentally, however, in Hague's desire to promote the interests of the district's mostly working-class and Roman Catholic constituency.

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Norton's crowning legislative achievement came with the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, which she personally shepherded through committee and onto the House Floor for a vote. "I'm prouder of getting that bill through the House than anything else I've done in my life," Norton recalled.

In keeping with the views of the American Federation of Labor, Norton opposed the Equal Rights Amendment which, she feared, would erode legislative protections for women in industry. While rejecting such a constitutional amendment, however, Norton embraced a role as a leading advocate for legislation to improve the lives of working-class families and women. She favored labor interests, introducing legislation to exempt the first $5,000 of a family's income from taxation, creating mechanisms to mediate labor-management disputes in the coal mining industry, raising survivor benefits for women whose sons were killed in World War I, and opposing the Smoot–Hawley Tariff in the late 1920s. Norton also was the first legislator to introduce bills to investigate and, later, to repeal Prohibition as codified in the 18th Amendment. It was eventually repealed in 1933. In 1929 she opposed the Gillett Bill, which would have eased restrictions on the dissemination of birth control information. A staunch Catholic, Norton argued that birth control literature would not be required if "men and women would practice self-control."[6]

When Democrats won control of the U.S. House in 1931, Norton, as ranking Democrat of the Committee on the District of Columbia, became its chairwoman. When a male member exclaimed, "This is the first time in my life I have been controlled by a woman," Norton replied, "It's the first time I've had the privilege of presiding over a body of men, and I rather like the prospect."[7] She was dubbed the "Mayor of Washington" during her tenure as chair from 1931 to 1937. It was an immense job. Since the federal government then administered the District of Columbia, all bills and petitions related to city management (an average of 250 per week) came across Norton's desk. She was acclaimed, however, for her support for a bill to provide the District of Columbia with self-government. Though she failed in that endeavor, Norton won Public Works Administration funds to build a hospital for tuberculosis patients, improved housing, secured the first old-age pension bill for District residents, and legalized liquor sales and boxing.[8]

In 1937, when Labor Committee Chairman William P. Connery, Jr., died, Norton resigned her chairmanship of the District Committee to succeed him as head of the powerful Labor Committee. She had been the second-ranking Democrat on the panel since 1929. When the Democrats gained the majority in 1931, Norton exercised increased influence over the evolution and passage of major legislation. By the time she became chair in June 1937, the so-called Second New Deal was in full swing. While much of the legislation passed during the first phase of the New Deal (1933–1935) focused on economic recovery, the second wave of programs sought to alleviate poverty and provide a social safety net that included Social Security benefits and unemployment insurance.

Norton's crowning legislative achievement came with the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, which she personally shepherded through committee and onto the House Floor for a vote. The only significant New Deal reform to pass in President Franklin Roosevelt's second term, the act provided for a 40-hour work week, outlawed child labor, and set a minimum wage of 25 cents per hour. To get the controversial bill out of the Rules Committee, which determined what legislation was to be debated on the floor and which was controlled by "anti-New Deal" conservative Democrats, Norton resorted to a little-used parliamentary procedure known as the discharge petition.[9] She got 218 of her colleagues (half the total House membership, plus one) to sign the petition to bring the bill to a vote. The measure failed to pass, but Norton again circulated a discharge petition and managed to get a revised measure to the floor, which passed. "I'm prouder of getting that bill through the House than anything else I've done in my life," Norton recalled.[10] In 1940, she teamed up with Majority Leader John McCormack of Massachusetts to fight off revisions to the act and scolded her colleagues for trying to reduce the benefits to working-class Americans, among which was a $12.60 weekly minimum wage. Norton declared, it "is a pittance for any family to live on . . . I think that when Members get their monthly checks for $833 they cannot

look at the check and face their conscience if they refuse to vote for American workers who are getting only $12.60 a week."[11]

During World War II, Norton used her position on the Labor Committee to fight for equal pay for women laborers. She pushed for the creation of a permanent Fair Employment Practice Committee to prevent racial and gender discrimination in hiring and to secure pensions for elective and executive offices by extending the federal employee's retirement system. But she found much of her experience as Labor Committee chair in wartime frustrating because of encroachments on the panel's oversight and the bleak prospects of women's place in the postwar workforce. Critics charged that her committee was "ineffectual" because the War Labor Board and the War Manpower Commission largely determined labor policies.[12] Even House committees, in particular Naval Affairs, wrote legislation that fell properly under Labor's jurisdiction. She blamed part of these intrusions on the fact that the Labor Committee was headed by a woman.[13] "Those who really know our social system, know that women have never had very much opportunity," she said. She forecast that after the war, women would be pressed to vacate jobs and back into the home to make way for demobilized GIs seeking employment.[14]

In 1947, when Republicans regained control of the House and Norton lost her chairmanship to New Jersey's Fred H. Hartley, she resigned her Labor Committee seat in protest. "He has attended only 10 meetings of this committee in 10 years," Norton declared. "I refuse to serve under him." During her final term in Congress, when the Democrats wrested back majority control, she chaired the House Administration Committee.

At age 75, after serving 12 terms, Norton declined to run for re-election in 1950. She served briefly as a consultant to the Women's Advisory Committee on Defense Manpower at the Department of Labor in 1951 and 1952. She left Washington to settle in Greenwich, Connecticut, to live near one of her sisters. Norton died there on August 2, 1959.

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MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION

Rutgers University (New Brunswick, NJ), Alexander Library Department of Special Collections and Archives. *Papers:* 1920–1960, 10 volumes and 10 boxes. Correspondence includes letters from Franklin D. Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Harry S. Truman. Also includes congressional political subjects file, speeches and writings, biographical data, photographs, and scrapbooks. The unpublished memoirs of Mary T. Norton and correspondence concerning possible publication are included. A finding aid is available in the repository.

NOTES

1 It is unclear how many siblings were in the Hopkins family. There were as many as seven, though at least three died in infancy. See, Hope Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members: Women in the U.S. Congress* (New York: Praeger, 1973): 55; "Mary Norton," Marcy Kaptur, *Women of Congress: A Twentieth-Century Odyssey* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1996): 34. Carmela A. Karnoutsos, "Mary Teresa Norton," in "Jersey City Past and Present," published online at http://www.njcu.edu/programs/jchistory (accessed 13 November 2003).

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3 Helen C. Camp, "Norton, Mary Teresa Hopkins," *American National Biography (ANB)* 16 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 529–530.

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9 For further reading on the Fair Labor Standards Act as part of the New Deal, see Michael E. Parrish, *Anxious Decades* (New York: Norton, 1992): 382–383.

10 Kaptur, *Women of Congress*: 46.

11 "Mary T. Norton," *Current Biography, 1944*: 501.

12 Amy Porter, *Collier's*, August 1943, Vol. 112: 22.

13 "Mary T. Norton," *Current Biography, 1944*: 502. See also, John Whiteclay Chambers II, "Norton, Mary Teresa Hopkins," *Dictionary of American Biography*, Supplement 6 (New York: Scribners, 1981): 480.

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Florence P. Kahn
1866–1948

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE ★ REPUBLICAN FROM CALIFORNIA
1925–1937

Succeeding her husband, Florence Prag Kahn used charisma and humor to carve out her own political accomplishments as a California Representative. Going well beyond her husband's service on the Hill, Kahn quickly earned the respect of her colleagues; according to one contemporary observer, "Congress treats her like a man, fears her, admires her, and listens to her."[1] Kahn used her successful career as an example of why the Republican leadership should encourage women to participate in party politics.

Florence Prag was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, on November 9, 1866. The daughter of Polish-Jewish immigrants Conrad and Mary Goldsmith Prag, Florence and her family relocated to San Francisco when her father's business failed. Mary Prag served as an important influence on her daughter. As one of the first Jewish members of the San Francisco board of education, Mary Prag formed political connections with the city's most prominent leaders—these ties invariably assisted her daughter in her future congressional career.[2] After graduating from Girls' High School in 1883, Florence enrolled in the University of California at Berkeley, where she graduated with an A.B. in 1887.[3] Unable to pursue a law degree because she needed to help support her family, Florence Prag taught for more than a decade at Lowell High School in San Francisco.[4] On March 19, 1899, she married Julius Kahn, a former Broadway actor, state legislator, and, at the time, a first-term U.S. Representative from San Francisco.[5] The couple had two sons, Julius, Jr., and Conrad.[6]

For the next quarter century, Florence Kahn helped her husband manage his congressional workload. She acted as his aide and confidante, increasingly so as he fought a long illness late in his career while serving as chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs. Julius Kahn was re-elected in 1924 to the 69th Congress (1925–1927) but died on December 18, 1924. Local Republican Party leaders asked his widow to run for the vacant seat. Steeped in a tradition in which Jewish politicians from San Francisco typically aligned with the GOP, Kahn accepted the invitation to enter the special election because she felt she had already "carried on the work alone" during her husband's prolonged sickness.[7] As she noted, "I feel that through a sense of obligation and duty to my late husband I should accept the responsibility of continuing his work for the people of his district." [8] Kahn won the special election on February 17, 1925, for the San Francisco district, earning 48 percent of the vote against three opponents: Raymond Burr, H.W. Hutton, and Henry Claude Huck.[9] At age 58, she became the first Jewish woman elected to Congress, and was re-elected with little opposition five times.[10]

Kahn had prestigious committee assignments during her House career, positions she received because of her insider's knowledge of the institution, since her years as a political aide and adviser to her husband made her an unusually savvy freshman Member. "One of the things I learned during twenty-five years as the wife of a Congressman is not to meet the issues until they come up and not to talk too much," Kahn told the *International Herald Tribune*. "So I am not going to say that I will do any particular things except to represent my district the best I am able."[11] She also knew enough to avoid being assigned to a committee that pertained little to her district's needs. When first relegated to the Indian Affairs Committee (a fairly common committee for Congresswomen of the period), she protested publicly: "The only Indians in my district are in front of cigar stores."[12] Republican leaders

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relented, and in the 71st and 72nd Congresses (1929–1933), Kahn succeeded her late husband on the Military Affairs Committee, becoming the first woman to serve on the panel. In her first term, she was on three committees: Census, Coinage, Weights, and Measures; Education; and Expenditures in the War Department. She also served on the War Claims Committee in the 70th Congress (1927–1929). Finally, Kahn earned the distinction of being the first woman appointed to the influential Appropriations Committee, one of the two most desired committees during that era, serving on the panel in the 73rd and 74th Congresses (1933–1937).[13]

Pursuing her husband's commitment to military preparedness, Kahn managed to secure expanded military installations in the Bay Area, including Hamilton Air Force Base and the Naval Air Depot in Alameda. A devout proponent of a strong military even in the face of a strengthening peace movement, Kahn defended her stance when she said, "Preparedness never caused a war, un-preparedness never prevented one."[14] While in Congress, she played a major role in appropriating federal funding for the Bay Area's two simultaneous bridge projects in the 1930s, the Golden Gate, connecting San Francisco with the Marin headlands to the north, and the Bay Bridge, which connected the city to Oakland and the East Bay. Kahn's political skill in helping to garner the unanimous congressional support necessary to build bridges over navigable waterways paved the way for the substantial boost to the economic development of San Francisco and the surrounding areas of northern California. Her support for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was so reliable that she became a personal friend of its director, J. Edgar Hoover, who nicknamed Kahn the "Mother of the F.B.I."[15] She also opposed the Volstead Act, which prohibited the production, sale, and possession of alcohol. Believing that the government should not attempt to legislate virtues, Kahn worked to ease Prohibition strictures by permitting the manufacture of beer and wine.

As one of only a handful of women in Congress, Kahn once remarked that "the woman in political office must remember her responsibility toward other women." Heeding her own advice, Kahn worked to institute pensions for army nurses and establish a program honoring the mothers of fallen soldiers; she also publicly expressed concern about low wages for female government employees.[16] Nonetheless, despite passionately believing that women should actively participate in politics, she never considered herself a feminist. "I am not specifically interested in so-called women's questions as all national positions are sexless," Kahn noted.[17] More concerned with the welfare of the Republican Party than with promoting women's rights, Kahn urged Republican leaders to recognize the potential of women (both as voters and as possible candidates) in party politics. Regardless of her motives, Kahn illustrated the significant role women could play in the government. Originally doubted by some colleagues because of her gender, her effective service revealed that women and, in particular, widows who succeeded their husbands, could leave a mark on Congress. "This is theoretically a government of the majority," Kahn noted in a 1939 interview. "We can't let the majority be so indifferent that we will be ruled by a minority. Women must be made to realize the importance of their voice."

Much of Kahn's effectiveness in the House resulted from a vibrant and witty personality that made her presence known from the earliest days of her term. When asked how she managed such a successful legislative record, Kahn snapped back, "Sex appeal!" She usually voted with the Republican leadership, but one line that circulated around the House was: "You always know how Florence Kahn is going to vote (Republican), but only God has the slightest inkling of what she's going to say."[18] Once, New York Representative and future Mayor Fiorello La Guardia attacked her for being "nothing but a stand-patter following that reactionary Sen. [George H.] Moses," a stalwart Republican from New Hampshire. Playing off her Jewish heritage, Kahn quipped, "Why shouldn't I choose Moses as my leader? Haven't my people been following him for ages?"[19]

Electoral shifts within Kahn's district and national politics brought her House career to a close. From 1928 to 1932, the Democratic Party could not find a viable

candidate and, thus, did not run any opposition against Kahn in the general election. In 1934, however, a strong challenge from Democrat Chauncy Tramutolo cut Kahn's winning share of the vote to 48 percent. FDR's 1936 re-election landslide swept congressional Democrats into office, and the San Francisco district was no exception to that trend. Progressive-Democrat Frank Havenner unseated Kahn by 58 percent to 40 percent of the vote.

In 1937, Kahn retired to San Francisco and her Nob Hill home was a gathering place for the city's political elite. During the 1939 Golden Gate Exposition, she was named one of the 12 outstanding women in the state's history. She remained active in civic affairs after she left Congress as a member of the National Council of Jewish Women and co-chair of the northern California chapter of the American Women's Voluntary Service, a World War II citizen's organization. Kahn continued her efforts to involve women in the political process and to assert their rights as citizens. "Women," she argued, "must assume the responsibility of maintaining freedom of speech in this land. They must assume also the responsibility of the ballot through government study."[20] Kahn died in San Francisco, on November 16, 1948.

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Edith Nourse Rogers
1881–1960

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE ★ REPUBLICAN FROM MASSACHUSETTS
1925–1960

As a nursing volunteer and advocate for veterans across the country during and after World War I, Edith Nourse Rogers was thrust into political office when her husband, Representative John Jacob Rogers, died in 1925. During her 35-year House career, the longest congressional tenure of any woman to date, Rogers authored legislation that had far-reaching effects on American servicemen and women, including the creation of the Women's Army Corp and the GI Bill of Rights. "The first 30 years are the hardest," Rogers once said of her House service. "It's like taking care of the sick. You start it and you like the work, and you just keep on."[1]

Edith Nourse was born in Saco, Maine, on March 19, 1881. She was one of two children born to Franklin T. Nourse, an affluent textile plant magnate, and Edith Frances Riversmith.[2] She received a private school education at Rogers Hall School in Lowell, Massachusetts, and finished her education abroad in Paris, France. Returning to America in 1907, she married John Jacob Rogers, a Harvard-trained lawyer. The couple was childless and settled in Lowell, Massachusetts. In 1912, John Rogers was elected as a Republican to the 63rd Congress (1913–1915) and was successfully re-elected to the House for six succeeding terms. He eventually served as Ranking Majority Member on the Foreign Affairs Committee and authored the 1924 Rogers Act, which reorganized and modernized the U.S. diplomatic corps.[3] During World War I, Edith Nourse Rogers inspected field hospitals with the Women's Overseas Service League. "No one could see the wounded and dying as I saw them and not be moved to do all in his or her power to help," she recalled.[4] In 1918 she joined the American Red Cross volunteer group in Washington, D.C. Her work with hospitalized veterans earned her the epithet the "Angel of Walter Reed Hospital."[5] When the war was over, three Presidents— Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover—appointed Rogers as their personal ombudsman for communicating with disabled veterans. She also continued to work in her husband's congressional offices in Lowell and Washington. The Congressman considered his wife his chief adviser on policies and campaign strategy.[6] Their home on 16th Street in northwest Washington became a fashionable salon where the Rogers entertained powerful politicians and foreign dignitaries.

On March 28, 1925, Representative John Rogers died in Washington, D.C., after a long battle with cancer. Edith Rogers declared her plan to run for her husband's seat a week later.[7] Her chief Republican competition for the nomination was James Grimes, a former Massachusetts state senator who ran on a "dry," Prohibition and pro-law-and-order platform. During the campaign, Rogers noted that she had always been a prohibitionist and believed in strict enforcement of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution—a position that won her the support of temperance advocates. In the GOP primary of June 16, 1925, Rogers dispatched Grimes with 13,086 votes to 1,939.[8] Democrats nominated Eugene N. Foss of Boston, a former Massachusetts governor, to challenge Rogers in the June 30th special election. Foss believed the GOP was vulnerable because it did not support stringent tariff policies—a matter of concern especially in the strongly Democratic district which encompassed textile mill cities such as Lowell. Local political observers had nicknamed the northeastern Massachusetts district the "fighting fifth" because of its equal proportions of registered Democrats and Republicans. Having come from a family

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in the textile business, however, Rogers appealed to many textile workers as a more empathetic Republican.[9] "I am a Republican by inheritance and by conviction," she declared.[10] On June 30, 1925, voters overwhelmingly went to the polls for Rogers, who prevailed with 72 percent of the vote—handing Governor Foss the worst political defeat of his long career.[11] Rogers observed, "I hope that everyone will forget that I am a woman as soon as possible."[12]

Rogers was returned to the House by increasingly large margins, eclipsing those of her husband, in her subsequent 17 re-election campaigns. She was charismatic, and her sense of humor endeared her to voters and colleagues. Noting her 18-hour days, the press dubbed her "the busiest woman on Capitol Hill."[13] She was attentive to textile and clothing manufacturers—economic engines in her district, which was a hub of the U.S. textile industry—by allocating federal money to create new international markets and by advocating protective legislation.[14] With her trademark orchid or gardenia pinned to her shoulder, Rogers became a congressional institution and was never seriously challenged during her 18 consecutive terms. In 1950, on the 25th anniversary of her first election, GOP colleagues hailed her as "the First Lady of the Republican Party."[15]

When Rogers was sworn into the 69th Congress (1925–1927), she did not receive any of her husband's former committee appointments, which included Foreign Affairs and the powerful Appropriations panel. Instead, she received middling committee assignments: Expenditures in the Navy Department, Industrial Arts and Expositions, Woman Suffrage, and World War Veterans' Legislation (later renamed Veterans' Affairs). In the 70th Congress (1927–1929), she dropped the first three committees and won seats on the Civil Service and Indian Affairs panels (she stayed on the latter for only one term).

In the 73rd Congress (1933–1935), Rogers won back her husband's seat on the more coveted Foreign Affairs Committee.[16] Her concern with veterans' issues went hand-in-hand with her interest in foreign affairs. Well-traveled and attuned to international affairs, Rogers seemed a natural appointment to that panel. Soon after taking her seat, Rogers began to address the dangers of fascism in Nazi Germany and in Italy. She was one of the first Members of Congress to denounce Nazi racial policies. In 1937 she broke with fellow Republicans to vote against the Neutrality Act, which had won wide support from GOP isolationists. In 1939, Rogers and Democratic Senator Robert Wagner of New York cosponsored a measure to increase the quota for Jewish immigrants in an effort to rescue Jewish refugee children fleeing Nazi persecution. In 1940, she again crossed party lines to vote for the Selective Service Act—creating the nation's first peacetime draft. Rogers eventually rose to the number two Ranking Minority Member post on the Foreign Affairs Committee before she voluntarily retired from it in late 1946, when the Legislative Reorganization Act reduced the number of committee assignments a Member could hold.

In 1947, Rogers gained the chairmanship of the newly renamed Veterans' Affairs Committee when the Republicans took control of the House in the 80th Congress (1947–1949). She again chaired it when power briefly transferred back to the GOP in the 83rd Congress (1953–1955). Veterans' issues had long defined Rogers's House career. In 1926, she secured pensions for army nurses and later helped create a permanent nurse corps in the Veterans' Administration.[17] In the spring of 1930, as chair of the World War Veterans' Legislation Committee's subcommittee on hospitals, Rogers inserted a $15 million provision for the development of a national network of veterans' hospitals into the Veterans' Administration Act. She did so over the objections of the committee chairman, but her diligence was applauded by veterans' groups. "Expecting much from her, veterans always receive much," one wrote. "She never disappoints."[18]

Congresswoman Rogers's crowning legislative achievements came during World War II and in the immediate postwar years. In May 1941, Rogers introduced the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps Act, to create a voluntary enrollment program for women to join the U.S. Army in a noncombat capacity. Her proposal, she explained to

In May 1941, Rogers introduced the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps Act, to create a voluntary enrollment program for women to join the U.S. Army in a noncombat capacity.

colleagues, "gives women a chance to volunteer to serve their country in a patriotic way," as medical care professionals, welfare workers, clerical workers, cooks, messengers, military postal employees, chauffeurs, and telephone and telegraph operators, and in hundreds of other capacities.[19] On May 14, 1942, the WAAC Act was signed into law, creating a corps of up to 150,000 women for noncombatant service with the U.S. Army. A year later that measure was supplanted by Rogers's Women's Army Corps Bill, which granted official military status to the volunteers by creating the Women's Army Corps (WAC) within the Army. Rogers's success opened the way for other uniformed women's services in the Navy (WAVEs) and the Air Force (WASPs).

Congresswoman Rogers, who had witnessed some of the difficulties of post–World War I demobilization and its effects on veterans, sought to ease that transition by putting in place programs to assist servicemen and women who would soon return from Europe and the Pacific. As the Ranking Minority Member of the World War Veterans Legislation Committee, she sponsored a package of measures, later dubbed the GI Bill of Rights, which passed the House in 1944. Among the chief provisions of the legislation were tuition benefits for college-bound veterans and low-interest home mortgage loans. During the 82nd Congress (1951–1953), Rogers spearheaded the Veterans Re-adjustment Assistance Act of 1952, which extended the GI Bill provisions to Korean War veterans.[20] Late in the war, Rogers also proposed the creation of a Cabinet-level Department of Veterans Affairs. The proposal was not adopted in her lifetime but eventually came to fruition in 1989. So beloved by veterans was Rogers that the American Legion conferred upon her its Distinguished Service Cross—making her the first woman to receive the award.

Rogers's intense patriotism and conservative ideology led her to embrace postwar anticommunism. In the early years of the Cold War, she feared the potential insurgency of communism in the United States, making public addresses and floor speeches on the subject.[21] She supported the investigations of the House Committee on Un-American Activities and the loyalty program undertaken by President Harry S. Truman's administration. She later supported the initial investigations conducted by Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin. Her concern about the influence of the "red menace" extended to international organizations. Though she supported the creation of the United Nations, Rogers advocated in 1953 that if China were admitted to the U.N. that the U.S. should withdraw from the organization and evict the organization's headquarters from New York City.

Late in her career, Rogers was mentioned as a possible challenger against Democratic Senator John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts, who came up for re-election in 1958. Observers believed Rogers was the only potential Republican who could defeat Kennedy. But the 77-year-old Congresswoman declined the opportunity. On September 10, 1960, three days before the primary for the 87th Congress (1961–1963), Congresswoman Rogers died of pneumonia in a Boston hospital.[22]

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Katherine Gudger Langley
1888–1948

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE ★ REPUBLICAN FROM KENTUCKY
1927–1931

The career of Congresswoman Katherine Gudger Langley illustrates a highly unusual route to Congress. Her husband, John Langley, resigned his House seat after being convicted of violating Prohibition laws. Katherine Langley then defeated her husband's successor and won election to the House in a "vindication campaign" designed to exonerate her disgraced spouse.

Katherine Gudger was born near Marshall, North Carolina, on February 14, 1888, to James Madison Gudger and Katherine Hawkins.[1] Gudger graduated in 1901 from the Woman's College in Richmond, Virginia, and went on briefly to Emerson College of Oratory in Boston. A short teaching job in speech in Tennessee ended when she left for Washington, D.C., in 1904 to become her father's secretary when he was elected U.S. Representative from North Carolina on the Democratic ticket. That same year she met and later married John Langley, a former state legislator and attorney working for the Census Bureau. The couple settled in Pikeville, Kentucky, where John Langley successfully ran as a Republican for the House of Representatives in 1906. He eventually won re-election nine times in a safely Republican district that was an old unionist stronghold in eastern Kentucky.

Katherine Langley was well known in Washington society and on Capitol Hill, working as her husband's secretary and administrative assistant. From 1919 to 1925 she was clerk to the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds while John Langley was chairman. At the same time, Katherine Langley also was an active member in party politics, serving as the first woman member of the state central committee and founder of the Women's Republican State Committee. She served as a delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1924.[2]

Katherine Langley claimed her husband's seat in the House of Representatives under very unusual circumstances. "Pork Barrel John" Langley was convicted of "conspiracy to violate the Prohibition Act" by trying to sell 1,400 bottles of whiskey.[3] He won re-election in 1924 while his conviction was being appealed. When the U.S. Supreme Court refused to overturn the decision, he resigned from the 69th Congress (1925–1927) on January 11, 1926, and was sentenced to the federal penitentiary in Atlanta for two years. "They believe he was the victim of a political conspiracy," reported the *Lexington Leader* of the district's reaction. The disaffection of Republicans in eastern Kentucky over the lack of effort by Senator Richard P. Ernst to defend John Langley contributed to Ernst's re-election defeat in 1926 to Alben Barkley.[4] Langley's district manifested a persistent sense that Kentuckians were "drinking wet and voting dry."[5] On February 13, 1926, Republican Andrew J. Kirk succeeded Congressman Langley in a special election to fill out the remainder of his term in the 69th Congress.

Katherine Langley resolved to clear her husband's name by running for his seat in the 70th Congress (1927–1929). With John Langley's active help from prison, his wife defeated Kirk in the Republican primary. Langley asked voters to "send my wife, the mother of our three children, to Washington" because "she knows better than anyone else my unfinished plans."[6] Katherine Langley was active on the stump, drawing upon her experience as a speech teacher. She impressed voters with her efforts. "John Langley wears the breeches," one voter commented, "but the lady has the brains."[7] Basking in the glow of her primary victory, she announced that her win

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proved her fitness for office and vindicated her husband. That fall she won election to the House with 58 percent of the vote.[8] A little more than a month later, on December 18, 1926, John Langley was paroled from the Atlanta Penitentiary, having served 11 months of his sentence.[9] Katherine Langley's re-election in 1928 with 56 percent of the vote was more than respectable.[10]

John Langley's conviction and resignation in disgrace left his wife socially ostracized in the conservative Washington social scene. Capital elite did not approve when Langley extended her family's practice of patronage within the congressional office by hiring her married daughter as her secretary.[11] Observers were quick to notice that the former speech teacher followed a more archaic rhetorical style than was favored at the time. "She came from the 'heart of the hills,'" writes Hope Chamberlin. "Coal, 'king of energy,' was dug by 'stalwart and sturdy miners.'" Sometimes given to verse, she described the Kentucky mountaineer as "'a man whose grip is a little tighter, whose smile is a little brighter, whose faith is a little whiter.'"[12] Her reputation grew when she interrupted a debate on tax legislation to praise a Kentucky basketball team.[13] Her committee assignments were not impressive. She was appointed to the Committee on Claims, the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, and the Committee on Invalid Pensions. In the 71st Congress (1929–1931) she also served on the Committee on Education.

In early 1930 Langley achieved an important first. She became the first woman Member to serve on the Republican Committee on Committees, succeeding John M. Robsion when he was appointed as U.S. Senator.[14] As a member of the Committee on Committees, Langley served on the body that assigned Republican Members to the standing committees. The Republican conference specified that each state delegation with a party member would have a seat on the committee. The state's representative on the committee would have a vote equivalent to the size of the state's Republican delegation. Furthermore, each state party caucus would select its committee representative.[15] Langley's achievement is cast in a different light as a result. She was the most senior member of the Kentucky Republican caucus after Robsion left, and her appointment came after the committee assignments were made for the 71st Congress. To take full advantage of this position of influence, she would need to win re-election.

Throughout her House career, Langley continued her efforts to vindicate her husband. She succeeded in convincing President Calvin Coolidge to grant John Langley a pardon. It was issued on December 20, 1928, shortly after Katherine Langley had won her second term. The pardon apparently included an informal proviso that John Langley never run for public office again. Nevertheless, during the holidays in late 1928, he circulated a Christmas message to her constituents.[16] A week later, John Langley declared his intention to seek his House seat again, denying that any condition had been set for his clemency. Katherine Langley issued a statement in Washington that she would not step aside "for John or anyone else," and all talk of John Langley running for his old seat died away.[17]

The election of 1928, with Governor Al Smith of New York, a Catholic and an opponent of Prohibition, running as the Democratic presidential nominee, was devastating to the Democratic Party in Kentucky. Of 11 congressional districts where only two typically went Republican, all but two were lost by the Democrats in 1928. Without Smith at the head of the ticket, Kentucky Democrats expected to do much better in 1930. The continuing impact of the Great Depression hurt Republican congressional candidates, however, especially those from traditionally Republican districts. In those districts the longtime agricultural depression combined with the depressed coal industry to turn the voters against the Republican administration of President Herbert Hoover. Under these circumstances, Katherine Langley took her time to come to a decision about running for another term in the House. In late February 1930, she announced her plans for re-election.[18] In the August primary, Langley faced two opponents.[19] By the fall of 1930, she faced a growing Democratic tide at the polls, and some observers had placed her on the list of vulnerable incumbents.[20]

She narrowly lost to Andrew Jackson May, a Democrat, in her bid for a third term, gaining only 47 percent of the vote.[21] Later the *New York Times* would characterize the 1930 Republican losses in Kentucky as "one of the biggest political form reversals of its history."[22]

Congresswoman Langley retired to Pikeville, Kentucky, where John Langley had earlier resumed his law practice. John Langley died in January 1932 of pneumonia, still arguing that he had been sent to prison unjustly.[23] Katherine Langley served as a postmistress and was twice elected as a district railroad commissioner. She died in Pikeville, Kentucky, on August 15, 1948.[24]

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NOTES

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13 Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members*: 65.

14 "Woman on Committee on Committees," 19 January 1930, *New York Times*: 25.

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16 Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members*: 65. In a Christmas message that year sent to her constituents, John Langley announced that his wife would not be a candidate for re-election in 1930. Whether or not John Langley would take advantage of the pardon to run for his old seat and resume his political career was left ambiguous. A newspaper photo caption suggested that the issue would "be a matter for the family council." See, "Mrs. Langley to Retire From Politics in 1930," 25 December 1928, *Washington Post*: 5; and "Langley May Return to Politics," 2 January 1929, *Washington Post*: 4.

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Pearl Oldfield
1876–1962

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE ★ DEMOCRAT FROM ARKANSAS
1929–1931

Pearl Oldfield succeeded her late husband, Democratic Whip William A. Oldfield, in the House of Representatives. During her tenure, Representative Oldfield sought to remedy the threats that natural disaster and economic depression posed to the livelihood and welfare of her rural Arkansas constituency. Though she had years of experience in Washington as the wife of a powerful politician, Oldfield left Congress after little more than one term, content to retire "to the sphere in which I believe women belong—the home."[1]

Fannie Pearl Peden was born on December 2, 1876, in Cotton Plant, Arkansas, one of five children born to J.A. Peden and Helen Hill Peden. The daughter of a prominent Southern family, Pearl Peden attended Arkansas College in Batesville. In 1901, she married William Allan Oldfield, a Spanish-American War veteran, lawyer, and district attorney for Izard County, Arkansas. William Oldfield was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1908 and went on to win election to 10 additional consecutive terms in Congress. Representative Oldfield served as Democratic Whip for eight years, from 1920 to 1928, and as chairman of the Democratic Congressional Committee from 1924 to 1928. He also attained the chairmanship of the Patents Committee and served on the powerful Ways and Means Committee. "Equivocation and compromise were not in his nature," the *Washington Post* observed. "Party loyalty was his byword." He also was considered a top prospect to head the Democratic National Committee, but he passed on the chance to stand for the post.[2] During her husband's House career, Pearl Oldfield lived with him in an apartment in northwest Washington, D.C., returning occasionally to their Arkansas home in Batesville. After Pearl Oldfield's mother came to live with them in 1914, the Congressman's wife stopped regular travel back to the district to provide for her mother's health-care needs. In the 1920s, a fire destroyed the Oldfields' Batesville home.[3]

William Oldfield had been in poor health since 1925, and the stress and strain of campaigning nationally for Democratic House candidates took its toll on him. Shortly after election day, on November 19, 1928, he passed away after surgery for gallstones.[4] Less than a week later, local Arkansas Democratic Party leaders—seeking a temporary replacement until a candidate could be groomed to replace the powerful Congressman—asked his wife to run for his seat.[5] Originally, leaders wanted Pearl Oldfield just to fill in the remaining four months on her husband's term in the 70th Congress (1927–1929), set to expire in March 1929. They later asked her to campaign for the full term in the 71st Congress (1929–1931) to which her husband had just been elected. Pearl Oldfield agreed. "I am deeply appreciative of the good will shown toward Mr. Oldfield's memory and the expression of confidence in me," she told reporters.[6] On December 8, 1928, the Arkansas Democratic central committee nominated Oldfield—which was tantamount to victory in the southern one-party system.[7]

In the early 20th century, Arkansas politics embodied "the one-party system in its most undefiled and undiluted form." So dominant was the Democratic Party that elections revolved less around issues or political ideology than around petty rivalries, charismatic personalities, and raw emotions.[8] Conservative Democrats commanded the political apparatus and on most major public policy issues differed little from Republican counterparts. Pearl Oldfield tapped into her husband's influential political

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connections as well as public sympathy for her bereavement. On January 9, 1929, Oldfield won election without opposition to fill out the remaining months of his term in the 70th Congress. Voters also sent her to the 71st Congress against Independent candidate R.W. Tucker; turnout was light and surprisingly close, considering the Democratic endorsement of Oldfield. She defeated Tucker with fewer than 500 votes, 4,108 to 3,641 (53 to 47 percent). "I came back to the office to look after things because no one was here to keep things going," Oldfield later said.[9]

Upon being sworn into office on January 11, 1929, Pearl Oldfield became the first woman from the South to serve in the House. In one of her first actions as a Representative, she expressed support for a $24 million appropriation to provide for federal departments' funding of the enforcement of Prohibition laws. "I'm for that $24,000,000 and as much more as they ask for," Congresswoman Oldfield told the *New York Times*. "I don't want them to have any excuse for not carrying out the Prohibition enforcement program."[10] She did not receive committee assignments until the 71st Congress convened on March 4, 1929. As a member of the minority party (the GOP gained 32 seats in the House during the 1928 elections to further solidify their dominance in the Chamber), Oldfield received assignments on three committees: Coinage, Weights and Measures; Expenditures in the Executive Departments; and Public Buildings and Grounds.

"Miss Pearl," as constituents affectionately called her, primarily tended to the needs of her district that covered large portions of northern and central Arkansas. She sponsored legislation to continue federal aid for the rehabilitation of farmland damaged by the severe Mississippi River floods of 1927. Unemployment caused by the Great Depression compounded the economic misery of residents from rural Arkansas. "I want to say that the situation is distressing and most grave with cold, sickness, and actual starvation present in many sections" of the district, Congresswoman Oldfield reported to colleagues in January 1931. Oldfield asked her House colleagues to approve a $15 million food appropriation to alleviate malnutrition in drought-affected areas where Red Cross relief efforts were inadequate to meet the demands for food. "Some Members object to passing the $15,000,000 appropriation for food. They call it the dole system," Oldfield said. "Under ordinary conditions I also would oppose it, but under ordinary conditions Arkansans would not be compelled to make the appeal. But this is an extraordinary situation, and I feel that the end sought to be accomplished justifies any honorable means."[11] She also sponsored legislation to authorize the Arkansas Highway Commission to construct toll-free bridges across the Black River and White River in her district. She described herself as a district caretaker, fastidious about answering constituent mail and regularly attending floor debates. When Arkansas Congressman Otis Wingo passed away in 1930, Oldfield memorialized him on the House Floor as a family man and longtime friend.[12] Several months later, she welcomed his widow, Effiegene Wingo, when she succeeded her husband in a special election. It marked the first time two women from the same state served simultaneously.

Ultimately, however, Oldfield spurned the limelight and preferred anonymity—claiming that she felt unable to govern without her husband's counsel. Just months into her term, she announced she would not run for reelection in 1930. "I accepted the nomination believing I should serve only a few weeks . . . I announced my old-fashioned belief about women and the home, and that belief I still hold," Oldfield admitted.[13] She expressed her "traditional" views over the course of her term. "There are so many things a woman can do that a man can't," Oldfield remarked, in discussing her decision to leave Congress. "Why not do them and let the men do what they can?"[14] Nevertheless, Congresswoman Oldfield understood that a younger generation of women would play a greater role in politics, and she encouraged them to do so with the admonition that they not make their gender a central consideration in weighing a public career.[15]

Oldfield retired from the House in March 1931, and though she often visited Batesville, she remained in the nation's capital caring for her mother, who died in 1933. Although she had no children of her own, she looked

forward to devoting herself to a niece and nephew in retirement, as well as to charitable causes "for children." Pearl Peden Oldfield passed away in Washington, D.C., on April 12, 1962.

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Ruth Hanna McCormick
1880–1944

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE ★ REPUBLICAN FROM ILLINOIS
1929–1931

For more than three decades Ruth Hanna McCormick constantly campaigned as the daughter of Republican kingmaker and Ohio Senator Marcus Alonzo "Mark" Hanna, as the wife of U.S. Representative and Senator Medill McCormick, and as a Grand Old Party (GOP) leader herself. In the late 1920s she forged a personal political machine, a network of Illinois Republican women's clubs potent enough to propel her into elected office. "I don't want to be appointed to anything," McCormick said when asked if she would accept a prominent diplomatic or government post. "That wouldn't appeal to me. I want to be elected in a fair fight on a clean-cut issue."[1]

Ruth Hanna was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on March 27, 1880, one of three children born to Marcus Hanna and Charlotte Augusta Rhodes Hanna. Born into privilege, Ruth Hanna received an elite private school education. In 1896, Ruth accompanied her father while he waged successful campaigns as a U.S. Senate candidate and as manager for Republican presidential candidate, William McKinley.[2] Instead of heading off to college, Ruth followed Senator Hanna to Washington, D.C., where she served as his personal secretary. On June 10, 1903, Ruth Hanna married Joseph Medill McCormick, scion of the family that owned the *Chicago Tribune*.[3] The McCormicks raised three children: Katherine (Katrina), John, and Ruth. Medill McCormick served for eight years as the *Tribune* publisher. The couple participated in various progressive reform activities and lived in the University of Chicago Settlement House, an experience that deepened Ruth McCormick's concern for the welfare of women and children. Unable to purchase a special type of milk needed by one of her children, and appalled by the unsanitary conditions in Illinois dairies, she opened a dairy and breeding farm near Byron, Illinois, to produce sanitary milk for invalids and children.[4]

In 1912, Medill McCormick won the first of two terms in the Illinois legislature as a Progressive-Republican. In Springfield, Ruth was a lobbyist who helped to pass the Illinois Equal Suffrage Act in 1913, a measure ensuring women the vote in municipal and presidential elections. It marked the first time a state east of the Mississippi granted that right.[5] In 1913, McCormick succeeded the confrontational Alice Paul as chair of the Congressional Committee of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). She promoted pro-suffrage congressional candidates at the state level. Medill McCormick, meanwhile, was elected in 1916 to the U.S. House from Illinois and, in 1918, to the U.S. Senate by defeating Democratic Whip James Hamilton Lewis.

Despite her progressive experimentalism, McCormick was a GOP stalwart.[6] When it became apparent that women would soon achieve the vote, she quickly secured her spot within the framework of partisan politics—a move that distinguished her from many other suffragists. In September 1918, Ruth McCormick was appointed to direct the newly created Republican Women's National Executive Committee. Her main task was to organize women voters for the GOP.[7] In 1924, when the Republican National Committee (RNC) reorganized, she became the GOP's first elected national committeewoman from Illinois. That same year, Medill McCormick lost the GOP renomination to the Senate to Charles S. Deneen and committed suicide in 1925. Convinced that her husband lost his seat in part due to low turnout among Republican women, Ruth McCormick devoted herself to organizing women voters statewide. From 1924 to 1928, she raised her visibility and created an important network of GOP women's clubs in Illinois, setting up 90 entities in the state's 102 counties—a ready-made organization that later propelled her to statewide office.[8]

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

In 1928, McCormick left the RNC to run for one of Illinois' two At-Large U.S. House seats. She was a tireless campaigner and an engaging speaker who addressed crowds extemporaneously. McCormick advertised her party experience, not her gender. "The first and most important thing that I want to drive home is this: I haven't gone into this as a woman," McCormick told the *New York Times*. "I am a politician. I have been a political worker for more years than most of the men in the party today."[9] McCormick's platform was straightforward: favoring Prohibition and military preparedness, but with an isolationist tilt. She also supported the McNary–Haugen Bill to extend to American farmers tariff protections afforded to big industry.[10] Meanwhile, McCormick remained neutral in a violent battle between GOP factions: the political machine of Chicago Mayor William Hale "Big Bill" Thompson and opposition led by Illinois Senator Charles Deneen.[11] With thousands of Chicago police and precinct "watchers" guarding polls, primary voters turned out in record numbers, propelling McCormick into the general election. She canvassed the state, traveling more than 34,000 miles in a car and making hundreds of speeches. With her motto of "No Promises and No Bunk," she was the top vote-getter in a field of 10 candidates—winning 1.7 million votes—36 percent of the total.[12]

When she arrived in the capital, McCormick's supporters believed she might get a seat on the Agriculture Committee, considering her experience with farm operations and a large agricultural constituency.[13] But she was appointed to the Committee on Naval Affairs—chaired by Illinois Representative Fred L. Britten, one of the most influential House committees and a coveted panel where no woman had yet served.

Though handed a plum assignment, McCormick, who harbored aspirations for the U.S. Senate or the Illinois governor's office, refused to become ensconced in the House. In an experience typical for a freshman, she did not deliver any floor speeches, though she did push for passage of a farm bill to help relieve overproduction as well as a tariff revision. McCormick also supported President Herbert Hoover's call to repeal the National Origins clause of the Immigration Act of 1924—an issue important to labor that concerned a large part of McCormick's constituency.[14] Much of her time in Washington was spent attending to constituent requests, primarily from Spanish-American War veterans seeking help with pensions.

In September 1929, McCormick announced that she would seek the Republican nomination to the U.S. Senate against the freshman incumbent, Senator Deneen.[15] McCormick won the endorsement of Chicago's Mayor Thompson and Illinois Governor "Lop Ear" Lou Emmerson, who assigned an aide to manage her Cook County campaign. In "Downstate" Illinois, the candidates divided over the World Court issue, with Deneen supporting it and McCormick, the confirmed isolationist, arguing that it would draw America into European wars. In the end, the World Court debate proved decisive.[16] McCormick swamped Deneen with a nearly 200,000-vote plurality on April 8, 1930, becoming the first woman to receive a major party nomination for the U.S. Senate.

In the general election, McCormick faced former Senator James Hamilton Lewis, whom Medill McCormick defeated in 1918. Lewis's flat rejection of American adherence to the World Court deprived McCormick of a key issue.[17] Without a signal campaign issue with which to challenge Lewis, McCormick faced sustained assaults on her Prohibition stand, the economy, and her primary campaign expenses.[18] McCormick vowed to abide by the decision of Illinois voters, who also were scheduled to vote on a Prohibition referendum at the November polls.[19] This position angered women temperance zealots. McCormick's prospects were dimmed when her nemesis, Lottie O'Neill, former vice president of the Illinois Women's Club and a critic of McCormick's "bossism," ran as an Independent Republican and siphoned off a sizeable portion of the women's vote.[20] The failing economy proved most important.[21] Against the backdrop of economic depression and spreading unemployment, the disclosure of McCormick's lavish nomination campaign expenses proved damaging. McCormick told a Senate investigating committee that she had spent $252,000—10 times more than Deneen. McCormick argued the expenditures were necessary to "overcome the organized [political] machines."[22] Eventually the investigation was suspended, but the damage was done.[23] McCormick

polled just 31 percent in a state that gave Hoover nearly a half-million vote plurality two years earlier. Nationally, Republicans lost 53 House seats and eight Senate seats.

Although her career as an elective officeholder came to an end, McCormick had no intention of retiring from public affairs. In March 1932, she married Albert Gallatin Simms, a former New Mexico Congressman who also served in the 71st Congress (1929–1931)—marking the first time two concurrent Members married.[24] McCormick managed two newspapers and a radio station and founded an Albuquerque girls school in 1934. In 1937, she sold her Rock River dairy farm and purchased a 250,000-acre cattle and sheep operation, Trinchera Ranch, in south-central Colorado. In 1940, she helped to manage Thomas E. Dewey's presidential campaign. A horse-riding accident put McCormick in the hospital in the fall of 1944. Shortly after being discharged, she was diagnosed with pancreatitis and died from complications in Chicago on December 31, 1944.

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MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION

Library of Congress (Washington, D.C.), Manuscript Division. *Papers:* In the Hanna–McCormick Family Papers, 1792–1985, 66.4 linear feet. Includes materials relating to Ruth McCormick's political activities 1918–1944. The bulk of the material, 125 of 136 boxes, pertains to McCormick's correspondence between two date ranges: 1927–1930 and 1942–1944. An inventory is available in the repository. Her suffrage activities are extensively covered in the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) Papers, also housed at the Library of Congress.

NOTES

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Ruth Bryan Owen
1885–1954

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE ★ DEMOCRAT FROM FLORIDA
1929–1933

Ruth Bryan Owen, daughter of "The Peerless Leader," three-time Democratic presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan, inherited her father's political gifts as a communicator and, like him, pursued a reform agenda in the House of Representatives. Known for her strenuous campaign efforts, oratory, and devotion to constituent services, Representative Owen became the first woman to serve on the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Ruth Bryan was born on October 2, 1885, in Jacksonville, Illinois. The family moved in response to her father's rising political fortunes—first, upon his election to the Nebraska legislature, to Lincoln when Ruth Bryan was two years old. At age five, she moved to Washington, when her father was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Her mother, Mary E. Baird, was a lawyer who had been admitted to the bar and, as Owen recalled years later, "I would like to emulate her. She is a thoroughly feminine woman with the mind of a thoroughly masculine man."[1] Ruth also doted on her father, often accompanying him on the House Floor. During the ferocious tariff debates of the 1890s, Ruth's frequent appearances led Members to name her "the sweetheart of the House."[2]

Ruth Bryan attended public schools in Washington, D.C., and the Monticello Female Academy in Godfrey, Illinois. She entered the University of Nebraska in 1901 and took two years of classes before marrying the artist William Homer Leavitt in 1903. They had two children, Ruth and John. In 1908, she served as her father's traveling secretary during his third presidential campaign. Despite her fundamentalist father's objections, she divorced Leavitt and, in 1910, married Reginald A. Owen, an officer of the Royal British Engineers. The couple had two more children, Reginald and Helen. The family lived at Reginald Owen's numerous overseas duty posts. In Cairo in 1915, Ruth Owen joined the British Volunteer Aid Detachment as a nurse to care for convalescent soldiers. Owen also established a volunteer entertainment troupe, the "Optimists," that performed at military hospitals in the Middle East.[3] When her husband's health failed in 1919, she moved the family to Miami, Florida, to be near her parents. For the next 10 years, she spoke on a professional lecture circuit and served as a faculty member and on the board of regents at the University of Miami.

A year after her father's death in 1925, Ruth Bryan Owen decided to run for the House of Representatives in a district along Florida's Atlantic coast. In a state that refused to ratify the 19th Amendment, she narrowly lost in the Democratic primary to six-term incumbent William J. Sears by 800 votes. When Owen was widowed the next year, she had apprehensions about her role in politics: that "there was not the friendliest feeling toward any woman taking her place in political life."[4] Yet, Owen did not leave the political arena; she ran again for the same seat in 1928. In an effort to "meet the voters" before the primary election, she reached out to dozens of newspaper editors with promotional materials.[5] Her relief work after a devastating hurricane ripped through Miami in 1927 also drew attention to the determined candidate. Owen's efforts were not in vain, and she triumphed over Sears in the 1928 Democratic primary by more than 14,000 votes.

In the 1926 and 1928 elections, Owen adopted the high-energy campaigning tactics, complete with spirited oratory, which once distinguished her father's campaigns. She was determined to reach as many citizens as possible in the district, then one of the largest geographic districts in the

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

country, stretching more than 500 miles along the Atlantic seaboard from Jacksonville to Key West. She cruised the coastline in a green Ford coupe dubbed "The Spirit of Florida," logging more than 10,000 miles to give 500 stump speeches. Despite her growing popularity, Owen angered Democratic Party leaders for refusing to endorse the presidential nominee, Al Smith, or to appear with him during his campaign stops in Florida. She understood that her connection to the Catholic Smith would be unpopular in the then violently anti-Catholic state. Her attention to constituents' opinions served her well, and Owen easily defeated Republican William C. Lawson with 65 percent of the vote—while the Republican presidential candidate, Herbert Hoover, scooped up Florida's electors with a 17 percent margin of victory.[6] Upon victory, Owen referred humorously to her father's three unsuccessful bids for President: "There! I am the first Bryan who ran for anything and got it!"[7]

The campaign fight, however, was not over for Owen. Lawson contested the election, charging that Owen had lost her American citizenship upon her marriage to an Englishman and then living outside the United States. He claimed that she was ineligible for election to Congress because she had not recovered her citizenship under the provisions of the 1922 Cable Act, which allowed women married to foreign men to petition for repatriation upon their return to the United States, until 1925. This did not allow for the seven years' citizenship required by the Constitution to run for U.S. Representative. Unfazed, Owen put her oratorical skills to work. She offered a persuasive and successful defense of her eligibility before the House Elections Committee, exposing the deficiencies of the Cable Act and leading to an eventual amendment to the law. Her audience convinced, she was sworn in at the start of the 71st Congress (1929–1931) on March 4, 1929. Owen won the Democratic nomination and ran unopposed in the 1930 general election.

Owen swiftly established herself as fiercely loyal to the needs of her Florida constituents. She quickly secured more than $4 million in federal funding to combat the Mediterranean fruit fly pest, which threatened Florida's citrus crop. After a tour of the southern areas of her district, she introduced legislation to set aside thousands of acres of the Everglades as a national park. The measure failed but provided the basis for a later successful designation of the area. Owen also used her position in Congress to argue for federal aid for flood control on Florida's Okeechobee River. During her tenure, she supported the establishment of a new Coast Guard Station and a U. S. District Court in eastern Florida. In perhaps the most controversial move of her time in Congress, Owen voted in favor of the Smoot–Hawley Tariff, which raised duties on imports in May 1929. Considering her father's staunch opposition to tariffs, many political observers expressed shock. Owen insisted she was only following the wishes of the pro-industrialist vote in her district. "To vote 'No' when I know without a doubt that my constituents want me to say 'Yes,'" she said, "would be a form of political treason."[8]

The early success of the fruit fly measure was testament to the novel manner in which Owen kept in touch with her constituents in Florida. In a time before congressional Members maintained district offices, Owen maintained a "resident secretary," Walter S. Buckingham, who remained in Florida and kept her abreast of local events. Buckingham also passed out questionnaires to constituents, polling their wants and needs.[9] Although Owen also developed an intricate plan to visit all 18 counties in her massive district on congressional breaks, she was determined to bring some of her constituents to the nation's capital.[10] She established an annual program (using some of her own money) to bring high school boys and girls from her district to Washington, D.C., for training as future leaders.

Legislation in favor of children and family was a priority in Owen's agenda. She criticized the labyrinthine process of securing help for indigent families in her district. As a remedy, she proposed the creation of a Cabinet-level department to oversee the health and welfare of families and children, a "Department of Home and Child." Owen used her position on the Foreign Affairs Committee—in December 1929 she became the first woman to win a seat on that influential body—to secure funding to send U.S. delegations to international conferences on health and

child welfare.[11] With her well-traveled background, Owen advocated American attendance at international conferences, including the Geneva Disarmament Conference in February 1932.[12] Owen pressed U.S. officials to abide by the resolutions coming out of the 1930 Hague Conference on the Codification of International Law, a conference seeking to enumerate international laws regarding gender, marriage, and nationality, an issue Owen experienced firsthand.[13]

Like her father, Owen maintained a "dry" position, supporting Prohibition and the 18th Amendment. As temperance became more unpopular, particularly among her Florida constituents, Owen's support slipped. She lost the 1932 Democratic nomination to James M. Wilcox, who went on to lose to Sears in the general election. Owen lamented after the election, "I did not turn 'wet' fast enough to suit my constituents."[14] She wished to resign, rather than remain a "lame duck," during the second session of the 72nd Congress (1931–1933), but House Speaker John N. Garner of Texas convinced her to remain until the end of the Congress. Ever true to the wishes of her constituents, Owen voted in favor of repealing the 18th Amendment, despite her personal convictions. In the waning days of the 72nd Congress, she issued a lament fitting to her clever sense of humor. Owen's colleague, Congresswoman Florence Kahn, a Republican from California, read on the House Floor a comic poem Owen had written, entitled, "The Last Will and Testament of a Lame Duck."[15]

Owen's political career did not end after she left Congress. In April 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt appointed Owen, a longtime family friend, as Minister to Denmark—making her the first American woman to head a diplomatic legation. Ironically, one of her first duties was to ease Danish concerns about the high duties created by the Smoot–Hawley Tariff, one of Owen's controversial votes. On July 11, 1936, Owen married Captain Borge Rohde of the Danish Royal Guards. Because her marriage meant that she was a citizen of both Denmark and the United States, she had to resign her diplomatic post, but Owen spent the fall of 1936 campaigning for Roosevelt's re-election. From 1938 to 1954, she served on the Advisory Board of the Federal Reformatory for Women. In 1949, President Harry Truman appointed her as an alternate delegate to the United Nations General Assembly. Owen lived in Ossining, New York, lecturing and publishing several well-received books on Scandinavia. She died in Copenhagen on July 26, 1954, during a trip to accept the Danish Order of Merit from King Frederick IX recognizing her contributions to American–Danish relations.

"I believe that woman's place is in the home. But I believe that the modern mother considers the world her home. The community in which she lives and the children grow is her home and for that reason she should assure herself of the opportunity of getting good government."

—Ruth Bryan Owen, *New York Times*, March 8, 1929

Owen adopted the high-energy campaigning tactics, complete with spirited oratory, which once distinguished her father's campaigns. Upon victory in 1928, Owen referred humorously to her father's three unsuccessful bids for President: "There! I am the first Bryan who ran for anything and got it!"

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Ruth Sears Pratt
1877–1965

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE ★ REPUBLICAN FROM NEW YORK
1929–1933

Ruth Pratt, a New York City icon of government reform and fiscal conservatism, won election to the House of Representatives on the eve of the worst economic disaster ever to befall the country. Congresswoman Pratt's support for the Herbert Hoover administration's cautious programs to remedy the Great Depression held firm, even as the national crisis worsened and Americans, in ever-greater numbers, looked to the federal government for relief.

Ruth Sears Baker was born on August 24, 1877, in Ware, Massachusetts, daughter of the cotton manufacturer Edwin H. Baker and Carrie V. Baker. Ruth Baker attended Dana Hall in Wellesley, Massachusetts, and Wellesley College, where she majored in mathematics. She also studied violin at the Conservatory of Liege in Belgium.[1] In 1904, Ruth Baker married John Teele Pratt, a lawyer and the son of Charles Pratt, a pioneer Standard Oil Company executive and founder of the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. The couple settled in New York City's Upper East Side and raised five children: Virginia, Sally, Phyllis, Edwin, and John, Jr. Ruth established strong ties with the community by engaging in a range of philanthropic activities. When her husband died in 1927, he left Ruth Pratt a fortune estimated at more than $9 million.

Pratt's involvement in Republican politics in New York began during World War I, when she worked with the Woman's Liberty Loan Committee. She served on the mayor's wartime food commission and met Herbert Hoover, then head of the National Food Administration.[2] She remained a Hoover devotee throughout her political life, working for his presidential nomination in 1920 and helping to deliver the New York state delegation to Hoover's side at the 1928 GOP convention.[3] Pratt initially balked at the notion of elective office, choosing instead to focus on the upbringing of her five children. In January 1924, she was chosen as the associate GOP leader of New York's Upper East Side Assembly district—providing her a powerful political base for the next decade.

When she overcame her reluctance to enter the political limelight and campaigned for city alderman against Democrat James O'Gorman, the race received national attention because no woman in New York City history had ever served on the city's governing body. With a heavily Republican constituency, Pratt won by a wide majority on November 4, 1925.[4] As alderman, she clashed repeatedly with Tammany Hall, the Democratic political machine, particularly over the budget, which she believed could be slashed by millions if spending, patronage positions, and rampant graft were curtailed. She became known as the "Watchdog of the Treasury."[5] In 1928, after winning re-election by an even larger margin, she introduced measures to authorize construction of the Triborough Bridge and tunnels under the East River.

Pratt entered the race for an open U.S. House seat in September 1928, when Democratic incumbent William Cohen declined the nomination. Her combination of wealth, social standing, and knowledge of local politics suited New York's "Silk Stocking District," an area that cut a geographical East–West swath across midtown Manhattan and included the city's wealthy parts of the theater district, and the westside docks and shipping businesses. Running on a platform that called for modifying the Volstead Act and the 18th Amendment (Prohibition) to allow for the production of light wines and beer but no hard alcohol, Pratt comfortably won the September 28 primary with 62 percent of the vote.[6] In the general election,

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she emphasized her credentials as an alderman against Democratic opponent Phillip Berolzheimer, who ran as a "wet" anti-Prohibition candidate.[7] She defeated Berolzheimer with 50 to 44 percent of the vote—despite the fact that the Democrats had a strong ticket, featuring New York Governor Al Smith as the party's presidential candidate. "That puts the Seventeenth District, back where it belonged, in the Republican column and I am glad that a woman did it," Pratt rejoiced on election night. "But I did not run as a woman. I ran for the Board of Aldermen and for Congress not as a woman but as a citizen."[8] When she took her seat in the 71st Congress (1929–1931), Ruth Baker Sears Pratt became the first woman to represent New York in the national legislature.

During Pratt's first term, she received assignments on the Banking and Currency Committee, the first for a woman and a nod to her work on New York City's budget and the Library Committee. In her first House speech, she criticized a proviso of the Smoot–Hawley Tariff Bill that raised the duty on sugar imports, arguing that the increase would be needlessly passed on to consumers and would fail to improve the wages and conditions of sugar workers.[9] Pratt's first House bill sought to increase benefits for permanently disabled World War I veterans, though she would later oppose an across-the-board bonus for all veterans.[10] She also favored repealing the 18th Amendment and, after the onset of the Depression in 1929, noted that liquor production, transportation, and sales would create new jobs.[11] In January 1930, from her seat on the Library Committee, Pratt introduced a bill for a $75,000 annual appropriation to acquire and publish books for the blind. With the public backing of Helen Keller, a nationally recognized advocate for the blind, it eventually passed the House and Senate, providing the Library of Congress $100,000 annually to procure Braille books. Pratt also presided over the House as Speaker *pro tempore* on numerous occasions during her first term.

On the Banking and Currency Committee, Pratt and her colleagues contended with the effects of the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and a severe midwestern drought, catalysts for the Great Depression. Pratt introduced a bill amending the Federal Reserve Act to streamline the rules guiding the election of officers of Federal Reserve banks. She also advocated balancing the federal budget and limiting government intervention, once remarking that, "There is a real need for the people once more to grasp the fundamental fact that under our system of government they are expected to solve many problems themselves through their municipal and state governments."[12] In the 72nd Congress (1931–1933), with little fanfare, Pratt was assigned to the Education Committee and left Banking and Currency. She remained a fiscal conservative, however, refusing to countenance federally backed programs to alleviate the nation's economic woes. Pratt praised Hoover's reliance on private funding to curb unemployment. By 1932, as the administration considered additional measures to address the Depression, Pratt rejected the General Relief Bill as a "crowning folly" which would "unbalance the Budget." The bill sought to broaden the powers of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, the central organizational response of the Hoover administration, and to create a public works program to employ large numbers of idle workers. A few hours after Pratt's speech, the House passed the bill, 216–182.[13] She also opposed the Steagall Bill, which called for the creation of a federal insurance guarantee fund to protect individuals' bank deposits.[14]

As a woman alderman and one of the few Republicans in the Democratically controlled Tammany Hall, Pratt and her reform efforts gained the attention of the press. In Congress, however, Pratt's appeal as a crusader diminished as she joined a group of women and became part of the Republican majority and an ardent defender of the Hoover administration. She spoke rarely on the House Floor and the impression of many voters was that she was ineffectual, if not somewhat disinterested in national politics. "New York circumstances put her in the position of an outspoken objector," a *New York Times* writer observed in 1932. "In Washington circumstances have made it possible to play the game with the rest of the team and be good. And in politics as in morals it is hard to find a spectacular way of being good."[15] Nevertheless, her name was mentioned prominently as a possible New York City mayoral

candidate in 1930 and as a GOP candidate for the U.S. Senate in 1932.[16]

Internal politics within her district threatened to derail Pratt's 1930 re-election bid. Able to secure the Republican nomination despite dissension in the party ranks, Pratt faced Tammany Hall's handpicked Democratic candidate, City Magistrate Louis B. Brodsky, in the general election and the journalist Heywood Broun running on the Socialist ticket.[17]

Though she polled only about half the total of her first election, Pratt held on to win by a bare margin—695 votes out of some 45,000 cast. In 1932 she faced yet another tough battle to win re-election to the House. Prior to the 1932 GOP National Convention, a faction in the New York delegation, disenchanted with Hoover, attempted to unseat Pratt as a delegate. The move failed but seemed to weaken her base of support heading into the fall elections.[18] In the Republican primary, she weathered charges from opponents that she had abused the House franking privilege. After securing the Republican nomination, Pratt squared off against Democratic challenger Theodore A. Peyser.[19] With the two candidates agreeing on the substantive issues, the decisive factor in the race became the presidential election. Disenchanted with Hoover's economic policies, American voters swept New York Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his Democratic coalition into the federal government. In what had been an evenly divided House, the Democrats gained a commanding majority as the GOP hemorrhaged—losing 111 seats. In her Manhattan district race, Pratt lost to Peyser in a four-way race by a margin of 53 percent to 44 percent.

"You know politics is nothing but theory with a lot of people, and that's the trouble. To my mind, politics, or at least the thing that makes politics move, is personality. I happen to be one of those who like people, people of all sorts and conditions . . . It seems to me that unless you have some sort of feeling like that, unless you like people and have a sincere interest in them, you ought not to be in the active work of politics. It also seems to me that if you have that sort of feeling you can know what people really need and puzzle out whatever way there may be through public agencies to help them."

—Ruth Pratt, *New York Times*, November 5, 1925

After Congress, Ruth Pratt served as chair of the Fine Arts Foundation, a forerunner of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and was appointed to the Republican Builders, a group formed to renew the party after the defeats of 1932 and 1934. She continued to live in New York City and was president of the Women's National Republican Club from 1943 to 1946. On August 23, 1965, a day before her 88th birthday, Pratt died in Glen Cove, New York.

"New York circumstances put her in the position of an outspoken objector. In Washington circumstances have made it possible to play the game with the rest of the team and be good. And in politics as in morals it is hard to find a spectacular way of being good."

— *New York Times* on Ruth Pratt's House Career, June 19, 1932

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Effiegene Locke Wingo
1883–1962

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE ★ DEMOCRAT FROM ARKANSAS
1930–1933

Overcoming personal tragedy, Effiegene L. Wingo succeeded her late husband in Congress to help her Arkansas constituents cope with an appalling national emergency. In the early days of the Great Depression, Wingo relied on her experience and connections as an active congressional wife to bring relief to her drought-stricken and impoverished Arkansas district.

Effiegene Locke, the eldest of seven children raised by Irish parents and the great-great-great-granddaughter of Representative Matthew Locke of North Carolina, was born on April 13, 1883, in Lockesburg, Arkansas. She attended both public and private schools and received a music diploma from the Union Female College in Oxford, Mississippi. Effiegene Locke then graduated with a B.A. degree from the Maddox Seminary in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1901. Shortly after graduation she met lawyer Otis Theodore Wingo, in De Queen, Arkansas, at a Confederate veterans' reunion. The couple soon married and raised two children, Blanche and Otis, Jr. In 1907 Otis Wingo was elected to a term in the Arkansas state senate, where he served until 1909 before returning to private business. He won election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1912 and to the eight succeeding Congresses. During Otis Wingo's political career, his wife became immersed in the social side of political life in Washington, D.C.

In 1926, a car accident severely injured Representative Wingo, thrusting Effiegene into a far more active role. For four years she worked as an unpaid assistant in her husband's office, becoming his point of contact during long absences as he sought to recuperate from his injuries. That direct experience—tending to constituent requests—gave her valuable exposure to voters and a keen understanding of the district's political and business networks. Following an emergency operation, Otis Wingo (who was serving his ninth term in Congress) died in Baltimore, Maryland, on October 21, 1930. His dying wish was that his wife be chosen as his successor.[1] That appeal prompted Otis Wingo's friend and the chief Democratic contender for the vacant seat, A.B. Du Laney, to peremptorily withdraw from the race and back Effiegene Wingo. Newspapers described that act as "gallant" and "chivalrous."[2] Less than a week after Otis Wingo's death, the Arkansas Democratic and Republican central committees, both of which earlier that year had nominated Otis Wingo for the seat, chose Effiegene Wingo to replace her late husband. Several speakers at the GOP meeting spoke up to offer eulogies for her husband.[3] According to the standard study on Southern politics in the early 20th century, comity between the major parties was a regular occurrence in Arkansas politics. The state's political network was controlled largely by conservative Democrats, who differed little from their Republican counterparts on major issues of public policy. Political scientist V.O. Key explained Arkansas elections by paraphrasing a prominent local politician who described them as "'rivalries' that turn around 'personalities and emotions' of the moment" featuring candidates with "connections" within the political network.[4] Effiegene Wingo, a congressional widow with whom voters empathized, and who enjoyed wide name recognition, fit the pattern well. Facing no competition, she was elected simultaneously on November 4, 1930, to complete her husband's term in the 71st Congress (1929–1931) and to a full term 72nd Congress (1931–1933). She garnered 21,700 votes, more than four of the state's six other Representatives.

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Reflecting on Wingo's election, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* observed that "heart impulses in Arkansas overwhelmed the impulses of the mind." Without crediting Wingo's four years' work in her husband's office, the *Times-Dispatch* surmised that sentimentality had overcome Arkansas voters. The editors wrote disapprovingly, "In this country public office is not a thing to be bequeathed to one's next of kin or one's best friend. Supposedly, it is won on merit, and it should descend through a like channel."[5] Debate was fueled by the fact that Wingo seemed to be part of a larger pattern: She served alongside yet another Arkansas widow, Pearl Oldfield, who was filling out the remainder of her late husband's term in the 71st Congress.

Sworn in on December 1, 1930, Effiegene Wingo received a post on the Committee on Accounts and Committee on Insular Affairs for the remaining months of the 71st Congress. In the following Congress, she served on another coveted and influential committee, Foreign Affairs.[6]

Wingo, like her colleagues, was consumed by the effects of the Great Depression. Natural disasters exacerbated the economic plight of her 11-county district on the western edge of the state, bordering Oklahoma. A severe cold snap in the winter of 1929–1930, followed by a scorching drought in the summer of 1930 created "Dustbowl" conditions. Peach orchards, the leading agricultural commodity, and the poultry industry were decimated. Many farmers lost their livelihoods and had to beg for food to feed their own families. "The failure of many banks because of these conditions has made the situation more difficult," Wingo remarked. "It will take years for the State to rehabilitate herself. The economic situation is so thoroughly demoralized that farmers will lose their cattle, their lands, their homes. People who have known wealth all their lives have nothing. This is a gloomy picture, but a true one."[7] Wingo suspended her social activities in Washington, D.C., to focus on raising relief funds for her district. Appealing to Washington society and working through the American Red Cross, she opened a channel of supplies into her district. Among those who pitched in to help was the humorist Will Rogers, who delivered talks in the district and donated all proceeds and some of his personal money for relief efforts.[8] In Washington, Wingo relied on her daughter, the newly married Blanche Sawyer, and the same staff that her husband had employed, to attend to her busy appointment schedule.

Wingo believed that only federal aid would revitalize the Arkansas economy. In the days before the establishment of New Deal programs, she steered as many projects and as much federal money as she could into her district. She sponsored a bill to complete construction of a railroad bridge across the Little River near Morris Ferry, Arkansas.[9] In addition, she helped guide federally funded programs back home to build additional railroad bridges, a veterans' hospital, a federal building, and other large construction projects, as well as federal loans for public and private building and for welfare grants. Wingo also proposed using federal money to establish a game refuge in the Ouachita National Forest and to establish Ouachita National Park.[10]

In February 1932, citing her physician's directions, Wingo announced that she would not be a candidate for re-election. She remarked to her constituents that it had been a "sweet privilege to serve my people."[11] Wingo spent much of December 1932 at her son's hospital bedside in Connecticut, where he was recuperating from a car wreck.

After Congress, Wingo cofounded the National Institute for Public Affairs. The organization provided college students internship opportunities to enter public service through on-the-job training programs in federal departments. She resided in De Queen, Arkansas, and spent a good deal of time in Washington, D.C., tending to her educational work. On September 19, 1962, while visiting her son, Effiegene Wingo died in Burlington, Ontario.

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Hattie Wyatt Caraway
1878–1950

UNITED STATES SENATOR ★ DEMOCRAT FROM ARKANSAS
1931–1945

Hattie Wyatt Caraway served for 14 years in the U.S. Senate and established a number of "firsts," including her 1932 feat of winning election to the upper chamber of Congress in her own right. Drawing principally from the power of the widow's mandate and the personal relationships she cultivated with a wide cross-section of her constituency, "Silent Hattie" was a faithful, if staid, supporter of New Deal reforms, which aided her largely agricultural state.

Hattie Ophelia Wyatt was born on February 1, 1878, on a farm near Bakerville, Tennessee. Her parents William Carroll Wyatt, a farmer and shopkeeper, and Lucy Mildred Burch Wyatt raised four children. Hattie Wyatt briefly attended Ebenezer College in Hustburg, Pennsylvania. At age 14 she entered the Dickson (Tennessee) Normal College and received a B.A. in 1896. She taught school for several years in rural Arkansas, along with her Dickson fiancé, Thaddeus Horatio Caraway. The couple married in 1902 and raised three sons, all future West Point cadets: Robert, Paul, and Forrest.[1] Thaddeus Caraway rose quickly through the political ranks in Arkansas, serving as a prosecuting attorney, winning election to four terms in the U.S. House and two terms in the U.S. Senate. A fiery orator, he earned the epithets "Fighting Thad" and "Caustic Caraway."[2]

Throughout this period, Hattie Caraway's public role was limited. Behind the scenes, however, friends recalled she played a critical part in her husband's political career. In 1920, during Thaddeus's first run for the Senate, Hattie Caraway worked in his campaign headquarters, spoke on his behalf, and received much of the credit for his election. She was her husband's close political confidante, knew his positions on all important issues affecting Arkansas, and held Thaddeus's "profound respect" as an adviser.[3] While the Caraways tended to avoid social functions in Washington, Hattie often returned home to Arkansas to speak before women's political groups. Years later, in trying to cultivate votes by appealing to voters' sympathies for her plight as a "poor, little widow," Hattie Caraway played down her experience as a congressional wife. "After equal suffrage in 1920," she recalled, "I just added voting to cooking and sewing and other household duties."[4]

On November 6, 1931, Thaddeus Caraway died in office, prompting immediate speculation that his widow would be named to succeed him.[5] A few days after his funeral, Governor Harvey Parnell named Caraway's widow to fill the junior Senator's seat. "I have appointed Mrs. Caraway as United States Senator because I feel she is entitled to the office held by her distinguished husband, who was my friend," Parnell explained. "The office belonged to Senator Caraway, who went before the people and received their endorsement for it and his widow is rightfully entitled to the honor."[6] The *Washington Post* blasted Parnell's rationale. "Representation in Congress belongs to the people of the State," the *Post* editors wrote. "Mrs. Caraway should have been given the appointment on her own merit and not on the basis of sentimentality or family claim upon the seat."[7] Hattie Caraway, however, offered Governor Purnell a safe choice to sidestep choosing from a field of Arkansas politicians who coveted the seat: W.F. Kirby, state supreme court justice; Frank Pace, a lawyer; Hal L. Norwood, state attorney general; and Heartsill Ragon, U.S. Representative. Parnell, whose term as governor expired in January 1933, also was considered a contender for the seat in the 1932 elections.[8]

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE CURATOR

On December 8, 1931, Hattie Caraway claimed her Senate seat. Her first observation upon entering the Senate was: "The windows need washing!"[9] Thus did the second woman to serve in the Senate enter the upper chamber of Congress. But behind the façade of the dutiful widow was a woman who had every intention of not surrendering her seat to a chosen male successor. Parnell's endorsement for the Democratic nomination in the one-party Arkansas system guaranteed Hattie Caraway's election to the remaining 14 months of her husband's term, which expired in early 1933. Caraway won the special election on January 12, 1932, crushing two Independent candidates with 92 percent of the vote.[10] The election forged the creation of the Arkansas Women's Democratic Club, which threw its support behind Caraway and sought to get out the vote and raise money.

Almost immediately after the special election, Caraway faced the daunting prospect of mounting a re-election campaign in the fall of the 1932 without the support of the Arkansas political establishment. But on May 10, the day of the filing deadline for the August 10 Democratic primary, Caraway shocked Arkansans and her six male contenders by announcing her candidacy. She explained to reporters, "The time has passed when a woman should be placed in a position and kept there only while someone else is being groomed for the job."[11] She confided in her journal that she planned to test "my own theory of a woman running for office."[12]

It was an uphill battle against a field of contenders that included a popular former governor and former U.S. Senator. But Caraway had an important ally in Louisiana Senator and political boss Huey Long, with whom Thaddeus Caraway had often allied and whose legislative proposals Hattie Caraway supported. Long had presidential ambitions and wanted to prove his popularity outside his home state by campaigning in the state of his chief rival, Caraway's Arkansas colleague, Senate Minority Leader Joseph T. Robinson. On August 1, nine days before the election, the "Kingfish" mobilized a small armada of cars and a host of Louisiana state employees to canvass Arkansas on Caraway's behalf. Long and Caraway logged more than 2,000 miles and made 39 joint speeches—with the charismatic Louisianan doing most of the talking. "We're out here to pull a lot of pot-bellied politicians off a little woman's neck," Long told audiences. "She voted with you people and your interests in spite of all the pressure Wall Street could bring to bear. This brave little woman Senator stood by you."[13] For the more than 200,000 people who came out to listen in courthouses, town halls, and city parks, Long effectively portrayed Caraway as a champion of poor white farmers and workers and as a Senator whom the bankers were unable to control.[14] In the seven-way primary, Caraway won 44.7 percent of the vote, carrying 61 of the state's 75 counties.[15] Far less surprising was Caraway's landslide victory in the general election that November: In the one-party, Democratic system she out-polled her hapless Republican rival by a nearly nine-to-one margin.

Known as "Silent Hattie" because she spoke on the floor just 15 times in her career, Caraway nonetheless had a facile wit. She once explained her tendency to avoid speeches: "I haven't the heart to take a minute away from the men. The poor dears love it so."[16] Throughout her 14 years in the Senate, she was a strong supporter of President Franklin Roosevelt and his New Deal reforms, most especially farm relief and flood control. "He fumbles," Caraway once said of FDR, "but he fumbles forward."[17] She harbored deep reservations about American intervention in World War II but backed Roosevelt's declaration of war after the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. She was a strict prohibitionist, a critic of lobbyists, and a sympathetic friend to veterans groups. During her tenure in the Senate, Caraway secured $15 million to construct an aluminum plant in her home state and the first federal loan funding for an Arkansas college. During her second term, she voted several times against the Roosevelt administration when she sided with the farm bloc to override the presidential veto of the Bankhead Farm Price Bill, to restrict the administration's use of subsidies to lower food prices, and to readjust the price cap on cotton textiles.[18] She also proved instrumental in preventing the elimination of an U.S. House seat from Arkansas to reapportionment in 1941 and methodically attended to constituent requests.

Once ensconced in the Senate, Caraway set a number of firsts for women. In 1933, she was named chair of the Enrolled Bills Committee; the first woman ever to chair a Senate committee, she remained there until she left Congress in 1945. Caraway became the first woman to preside over the Senate, the first senior woman Senator (when Joe Robinson died in 1937), and the first woman to run a Senate hearing. She also received assignments on the Commerce Committee and the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry.[19] It was from the latter that she was most attentive to the needs of her largely rural and agricultural constituency.

Caraway's record on civil rights was mixed. In one respect she was progressive, as the first woman to endorse and vote for the Lucretia Mott Equal Rights Amendment in 1943—a measure that had been presented to the Senate on 11 prior occasions and which Caraway herself had worked for since 1937.[20] Hattie Caraway chafed at the Senate's institutional prohibitions against women, at one point noting in her journal that she had been assigned the same desk as Felton. "I guess they wanted as few [desks] contaminated as possible," Caraway quipped.[21] Race was another matter entirely, largely because she voted with the unified bloc of her southern colleagues. Caraway voted against the antilynching law of 1938 and, in 1942, joined other southern Senators in a filibuster to block a proposed bill that would have eliminated the poll tax.

Most observers, including some of her supporters, believed Caraway would retire in 1939. But she upset expectations again by declaring her candidacy for the 1938 election. In the Democratic primary, Caraway faced two-term Representative John L. McClellan, a 42-year-old lawyer who declared, "Arkansas Needs Another Man in the Senate." McClellan adopted the antics and soaring oratory that Huey Long once employed to get Caraway elected.[22] Senator Caraway ran on her record of supporting New Deal legislation to alleviate the economic hardships for the state's largely agrarian economy. Throughout the campaign she was forced to defend not only her gender but her age as well. But she held two advantages. The first was wide name recognition and personal contact with voters, especially women. More importantly, although Huey Long

"Sometimes I'm really afraid that tourists are going to poke me with their umbrellas! And yet there's no sound reason why women, if they have the time and ability, shouldn't sit with men on city councils, in state legislatures, or in the House and Senate. . . . Women are essentially practical because they've always had to be. From the dawn of time it's been our job to see that both ends meet. And women are much more realistic than men, particularly when it comes to public questions. Of course, having had the vote for such a short time is a distinct advantage, for we have no inheritance of political buncombe."

—Hattie Caraway, *Current Biography*, 1945

was no longer there to support her, Caraway benefited from the support of the state's Federal Internal Revenue collector and future Arkansas governor, Homer Atkins. She also garnered endorsements from a number of key federal judges, the federal marshal, and several trade and labor unions and a mild endorsement from President Roosevelt, which she advertised widely.[23] In the August 9 primary, which many observers considered another referendum on the New Deal, Caraway prevailed by just 8,000 votes out of more than 260,000 cast.[24]

Though she went on to win the general election in 1938, it was clear that Caraway spoke even less for the Arkansas political establishment than she had in her first term. By 1944, Caraway faced a tough field of Democratic primary challengers in her bid for renomination. Her campaign was uninspired, and she finished last among the four contenders. The winner, a dynamic freshman Representative and former University of Arkansas president, J. William Fulbright, was eventually elected and served for three decades as one of the Senate's most influential Members.

Caraway was still a part of the capital city in her post-congressional years. Franklin Roosevelt nominated her in early 1945 as a member of the Federal Employees' Compensation Commission, where she served for a year. In 1946, President Harry S. Truman elevated her to the commission's appeals board, where she remained until her death on December 21, 1950, in Falls Church, Virginia.

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Willa McCord Blake Eslick
1878–1961

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE ★ DEMOCRAT FROM TENNESSEE
1932–1933

In June 1932, Willa B. Eslick watched as her husband, Representative Edward Eslick, collapsed on the House Floor while speaking in support of the Patman Veterans' Bonus Bill. A moment that otherwise would have been a high point of the four-term Congressman's career instead turned tragic. Willa Eslick soon became the latest widow to succeed her husband. In completing the final fraction of Congressman Eslick's term in the 72nd Congress (1931–1933), she supported legislation to alleviate the economic woes of Depression-stricken farmers and to combat concerns of internal subversion.

Willa McCord Blake was the eighth child born to G.W. and Eliza Blake in Fayetteville, Tennessee, on September 8, 1878. She attended private schools for her primary education and later went to Dick White College and Milton College in Fayetteville. She also attended Winthrop Model School and Peabody College in Nashville, Tennessee. The only time in her early adult life that Willa Blake left Tennessee was to study at the Metropolitan College of Music and Synthetic School of Music in New York City. After her college career, she became active in Democratic politics, served on the Tennessee Democratic Committee, and became a civic activist. Willa Blake married Edward Everett Eslick, a lawyer from Pulaski, Tennessee, on June 6, 1906.[1] Edward Eslick eventually served as a government appeal agent for Giles County, Tennessee, during World War I. In 1924, he was elected as a Democrat to the 69th Congress (1925–1927) and won re-election to the three succeeding Congresses. Eslick represented a Tennessee district that encompassed a sprawling expanse of 11 agricultural counties in the western part of the state. Rooted in the Civil War and Reconstruction Era, Tennessee developed a solid partisan nature in which western and central portions of the state evolved into Democratic strongholds, whereas eastern Tennessee traditionally backed the GOP.[2] In 1930, Speaker Nicholas Longworth of Ohio appointed four Members, including Eslick and New York Representative Hamilton Fish, to a special House committee on communist activities, which garnered national attention.[3] Meanwhile, Willa Eslick accompanied her husband to Washington, D.C., where she followed his career with interest.

As a member of the House Ways and Means Committee in the 72nd Congress, Edward Eslick supported cash payments for American veterans who had served in World War I.[4] On June 14, 1932, the Tennessee Representative began an impassioned speech on the House Floor urging passage of the Patman Veterans' Bonus Bill. With his wife and a ragtag collection of World War I veterans watching from the House Gallery, Eslick slumped over in mid-sentence from a massive heart attack. "We hear nothing but dollars here. I want to go from the sordid side—," he said before collapsing.[5] Willa Eslick attempted to revive her 60-year-old husband as he lay on the floor, but he died soon thereafter.

Only four days later, Tennessee Democratic officials prevailed upon the widow Eslick to seek the nomination for the August special election to fill the vacant seat. William Fry, a former World War I serviceman and Columbia, Tennessee, lawyer, made the appeal on behalf of veterans, friends, and family.[6] She agreed. Eslick defeated three opponents in the August 14, 1932, special election (on the same day as the Democratic primary statewide), garnering 51 percent of the vote to become the first woman to represent Tennessee in Congress.[7] With Congress in extended recess for the fall 1932 general

IMAGE COURTESY OF TENNESSEE STATE LIBRARY & ARCHIVES

elections, Eslick was not officially sworn in until the House reconvened on December 5, 1932. A special lame duck session of Congress, called to deal with the soaring federal deficit and foreign debt, enabled Eslick to serve three months, until March 3, 1933.[8] As a Representative, she received assignments on two committees: the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds—a position her husband held throughout his tenure in the House—and the Committee on World War Veterans' Legislation.

Although Eslick's committee assignments allowed her to further the legislative interests of her husband, they deprived her of a prime platform from which to assist directly the most pressing needs of her constituents, most of whom were farmers struck hard by the Great Depression. Nevertheless, in an effort to improve the lot of Tennessee farmers, she supported a plan aimed at preventing farm-mortgage foreclosures. "There are few comforting words that we who represent agricultural districts may give to our people," Eslick noted in a floor speech. "One is that everybody now recognizes that something should be done for them without delay." She also gave voice to agriculture's traditional mistrust of big industry. "Among those who now advocate succor to the producers of our food products are even included the makers of their machinery and steel tools who are still gouging farmers with war prices," Eslick told colleagues. "They brazenly ask for more tariffs, so that no one can force a moratorium for their excessive costs. They are the source of much corruption in some parts of the land. The farmer can not continue to buy in a protected market and sell in a free one."[9]

Eslick and dozens of other Representatives from rural districts brainstormed during late-night sessions to create other legislative solutions to alleviate the economic burdens imposed on farmers: immediate farm relief measures, efforts to curb overproduction, and voluntary measures that farmers themselves could enact. She voted for the emergency farm parity plan proposed by Texas Congressman Marvin Jones. Representative Eslick also supported a bill that offered federal relief to cotton farmers who reduced their production. She strongly endorsed incoming President Franklin Roosevelt's plans for Tennessee River Valley development and the construction of an electrical-generating plant at Muscle Shoals, Alabama. "For our immediate section of Tennessee," she observed, "much of the gloom has been lifted by the hope which the President elect has given us."[10]

Eslick also carried on her husband's efforts to pass antisubversive legislation aimed principally at communist fellow travelers, radical immigrants, and union organizers. On February 2, 1933, she urged dire penalties for those who sought to undermine the U.S. government.[11] Two weeks later the Judiciary Committee reported on the House Floor a measure (later named the Eslick Bill, after Edward Eslick) directed at any person who "by word of mouth or in writing" advocates "the overthrow or subversion of the government of the United States by force."[12] The legislation had gained added momentum after Giuseppe Zangara, a naturalized Italian bricklayer, attempted to assassinate President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt during a February 15, 1933, public rally in Miami, Florida. Chicago Mayor Anton J. Cermak was killed in the fusillade of bullets. Zangara, who spoke broken English, was quickly linked with radical extremists and communist groups. The Eslick Bill was related to other legislation aimed at preventing "criminal syndicalism," or union organizing, in both the agricultural and industrial sectors. The 72nd Congress adjourned in early March, before the measure was taken up on the House Floor.

Willa Eslick was not eligible for re-election to the 73rd Congress (1933–1935), since Edward Eslick died after the filing deadline for the 1932 congressional primary—and his opposition for the party primary already was set. In 1932, redistricting in Tennessee shifted most of Congresswoman Eslick's district into a newly created district, where Clarence Wyly Turner, a county judge and a former U.S. Representative, won the Democratic nomination on the same day Willa Eslick won her special election. With Tennessee's one-party system, capturing the Democratic nomination was tantamount to winning the election itself, and Turner went on to serve several terms in the House. Representative Fritz G. Lanham of Texas, chairman of the

Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, had known Willa Eslick socially for years. But in his farewell commemorating her departure, it was her work as a committee colleague that he highlighted: "her outstanding ability, her keen intellect, which have enabled her so faithfully to carry on for her people and for the Nation work of the same efficient character" as her husband. "We part with her with regret . . . because of the service she has rendered and could render to our common country," Lanham added.[13] Aside from not having qualified for nomination and the redistricting issue, however, Eslick seemed disinclined to seek a second term. She retired from public life and later returned to her home state. Willa Eslick died at age 82 on February 18, 1961, in Pulaski, Tennessee.

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Kathryn O'Loughlin McCarthy
1894–1952

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE ★ DEMOCRAT FROM KANSAS
1933–1935

In Republican-controlled, predominantly Protestant, and traditionally oriented northwestern Kansas, Kathryn O'Loughlin McCarthy was an unusual politician: a Democrat, a Catholic, and a single woman. But her political roots, connection with farmers and cattlemen devastated by the Great Depression, and a strong Democratic tide in the 1932 elections helped her win election to the U.S. House of Representatives.

The daughter of John O'Loughlin, a Kansas state representative and cattleman, and Mary E. O'Loughlin, Kathryn Ellen O'Loughlin was born on April 24, 1894, in Hays, Kansas. She grew up on the family ranch and remembered a childhood shaped by farm chores—feeding livestock, milking cows, and familiarizing herself with the latest farm equipment.[1] She graduated from Hays High School in 1913 and, four years later, received a B.S. degree in education from the State Teacher's College in Hays. After she received a University of Chicago LL.D. in 1920, she passed the Kansas and Illinois bar exams.[2] O'Loughlin began positioning herself for a career in elective office. She returned briefly to Kansas and served as a clerk for the Kansas house of representatives' judiciary committee while John O'Loughlin was a member of the legislature. "Sometimes I could hardly sit still at the debates," she recalled. "I wanted to get in there and argue, too."[3] O'Loughlin returned to Chicago, where she participated in legal aid and social welfare work. In 1929, she resettled in Kansas and, a year later, was elected to the state legislature.

In 1932, O'Loughlin defeated eight men for the Democratic nomination in the race for a sprawling 26-county House district that covered the northwestern quarter of Kansas—compelled largely by her desire to seek progressive reform at the national level.[4] Only one Democrat had ever represented the district since its creation in 1885. Republicans, and briefly Populists in the 1890s, dominated the elections. O'Loughlin challenged two-term incumbent Republican Charles I. Sparks, a former state judge. She focused on the devastated agricultural economy of western Kansas and proposed federal relief for farmers and ranchers. She logged more than 30,000 miles and delivered a dozen speeches daily. She stanched a "whisper campaign" against her religion, "wet" position on Prohibition, and status as a single woman. "A large part of the population of Kansas consists of German farmers who are terribly opposed to women in public life," O'Loughlin recalled after the election. "In fact the slogan of my county [Ellis County] in regard to women invading politics is '*Kinder und cookin*'—meaning 'children and cooking.' . . . But I soon discovered that when I proved to the people that I knew what I was talking about, and was better informed than the average man, they gradually dropped their prejudices."[5]

On November 8, 1932, O'Loughlin defeated Sparks with 55 percent of the total vote, thanks in good part to concerns about the Great Depression and Franklin Roosevelt's long coattails in the presidential election. When she took her seat in the 73rd Congress (1933–1935) in January 1933, she became the first Kansan woman and first woman lawyer to serve in Congress. She also changed her name, to Kathryn O'Loughlin McCarthy, when she wed Daniel McCarthy, a newly elected Kansas state senator, whom she met on the campaign trail, and who initially opposed women holding public office. "I want it understood that I am not out of politics," the Congresswoman-elect declared on her wedding day, February 4, 1933. "I consider marriage an asset and not a liability in the political field."[6]

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ELLIS COUNTY (KS) HISTORICAL SOCIETY

From the beginning, Congresswoman Kathryn O'Loughlin McCarthy faced an almost insuperable obstacle to re-election when House leaders rejected her appeal for a seat on the Agriculture Committee and instead assigned her to the Committee on Insular Affairs—in charge of U.S. overseas territories. "Where, pray tell, are the islands of Kansas?" she protested.[7] Outraged, she demanded an assignment more useful to her constituents. Her challenge caught House leaders off guard. Contending with an avalanche of freshman Democrats elected from traditionally Republican districts, they denied her request for an Agriculture seat. The decision disappointed farm constituents, who had hoped to have a stronger voice in federal projects for the state. Instead, McCarthy was reassigned to the Education Committee. She also received posts on the Public Buildings and Grounds and the World War Veterans' Legislation committees.

The repeal of Prohibition was one of the first issues McCarthy confronted. Long-standing Kansan support for temperance conflicted with the needs of the state's cash-strapped wheat and barley farmers—shaping her middling position. The issue was contentious in a state that had produced Carry Nation, a petite grandmotherly figure who had led the militant forefront of the Prohibition movement at the turn of the century. Her "Home Defenders" network of temperance zealots descended on saloons in Wichita, Topeka, and other Kansas towns, smashing them up with canes, bricks, and stones in a series of attacks that became known as "hatchetations." Against this backdrop, McCarthy steered her course. Her home county permitted the production of alcoholic beverages, but not all the counties in her district did. Shortly after her election she pledged to modify the 18th Amendment to allow "wet" states to have liquor if states that wished to prohibit alcohol were still protected. In her largely agricultural district, grain growers insisted that the alcohol market could generate revenue for devastated farming operations. Many Kansans, including some former temperance advocates, agreed the 18th Amendment should be relaxed.[8] When the Cullen Beer Bill, which legalized beer production, advertising, and distribution, overwhelmingly passed the House on March 14, 1933, however, McCarthy joined her six Kansas colleagues to vote against the measure.[9] "You may expect me to be an ardent supporter of this bill; but I think this bill is premature, will not accomplish its purpose, and will not raise the revenue desired," she explained. "It is a discrimination in favor of big business. . . I do not think all the home-brewers in my county could raise the $1,000 license fee."[10] Later in 1933, the 21st Amendment repealed Prohibition altogether.

In Congress, McCarthy generally endorsed New Deal legislation, though she had none of the contacts with the Roosevelt administration that were enjoyed by several women colleagues. She made the best of her seat on the Education Committee, fighting for an emergency grant of $15 million in federal assistance for private, denominational, and trade schools. In particular, she hoped to boost teacher pay and put money into home economics and agriculture instruction courses. "The children of today cannot wait for the passing of the Depression to receive their education," McCarthy told colleagues.[11] By January 1, 1934, more than 2,600 schools nationwide, and more than 300 in Kansas, had been closed because of the Great Depression. Realizing that many Members would object to federal aid for nonpublic schools on the grounds of separation of church and state, McCarthy said, "That is all well and good and must be continued as a permanent policy, but this is temporary emergency legislation, to meet a time of stress."[12]

McCarthy zeroed in on the needs of her farm constituents. She recommended extending experimental Agricultural Department programs to promote better "dry land" farming practices: crop rotation, soil erosion prevention, water conservation, and summer fallowing.[13] In arguing on behalf of low interest rates for direct credits authorized under the 1933 Farm Bill, better known as the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), she blasted bankers and business interests as the root cause of agricultural economic collapse. "If we had not had the high protective-tariff rates which compelled the farmer to buy everything he used in a protected market and to sell everything he produced in a world market, he would not be in the

"A large part of the population of Kansas consists of German farmers who are terribly opposed to women in public life. . . . But I soon discovered that when I proved to the people that I knew what I was talking about, and was better informed than the average man, they gradually dropped their prejudices."

— Kathryn O'Loughlin McCarthy,
Washington Post, January 17, 1934

condition he is in today," she said to applause on the House Floor.[14] McCarthy fervently supported the AAA, which she believed would bring relief to farmers through a combination of federal loans, parity pricing, and quota restrictions on basic farm commodities. In 1934, McCarthy introduced bills setting compulsory caps for wheat production and taxing extra wheat crops on new land that was brought into production. For decades farmers had suffered from a market that had been deflated by overproduction, and regulation seemed to hold out hope for improved profits. Through 1933 McCarthy had argued that frequent meetings with her constituents convinced her that they broadly supported federal intervention in agriculture.[15] But by late 1934 that support had begun to erode as farmers felt AAA programs were bureaucratic and intrusive. By 1936, the Supreme Court had ruled the AAA unconstitutional.

Kansas Governor Alf Landon tapped into that growing resentment during the 1934 campaign season. Landon, a wealthy oilman elected in 1932, led the effort to unseat Kansas's congressional Democrats. He targeted McCarthy as an obedient tool of Washington New Dealers. "I believe the people of Kansas are opposed to the licensing of agriculture to the extent that each man can be told what he is going to plant," Landon said.[16] McCarthy countered that Landon misrepresented her record. "Those misrepresentations will be corrected [in Kansas], when I get on the stump," she predicted on the House Floor, "but when he throws down the gauntlet on my own doorstep, I am going to fight back. Remember my initials are K.O.—and 'Knock Out' McCarthy is on the job."[17]

McCarthy sailed through the Democratic primary unopposed. In the general election she faced Frank Carlson, Landon's handpicked challenger, who had been the governor's 1932 campaign manager and chaired the Kansas Republican Party. Carlson effectively turned the election into a referendum to endorse or to repudiate the New Deal programs.[18] McCarthy defended the federal programs and ran on her record as a friend of farmers. Public opinion, however, had already shifted. In late October, Kansas livestock producers voted against a proposal to limit corn and hog production—one of the first revolts against the AAA legislation. McCarthy's claims that most farmers supported the administration's policies were substantially weakened.[19] In a close campaign, Carlson edged out McCarthy, winning by a margin of 2,796 votes out of more than nearly 123,000 cast, or 51 percent of the vote.

After leaving Congress, McCarthy returned to her law practice in Hays and to attend to the businesses once managed by her father, who passed away in the summer of 1933.[20] In 1937, she led a reform effort to stop the wholesale practice of sterilizing young girls at state correctional facilities.[21] She paid the tuition for dozens of low-income students to attend Fort Hays State University, including several African Americans to whom she also extended free room and board in her home.[22] In 1940 and 1944, McCarthy attended the Democratic National Conventions as a Kansas delegate.[23] On January 16, 1952, she passed away in Hays, Kansas, after an extended illness.

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6 "Weds 'Foe,'" 5 February 1933, *Washington Post*: 2. During the primary O'Loughlin met Daniel McCarthy, a candidate for the Kansas state senate opposed to women holding public office. He introduced himself to O'Loughlin by saying that it was "perfectly ridiculous" for a woman to run as a Democrat in a Republican state. Nevertheless, McCarthy introduced O'Loughlin to local Democratic leaders and endorsed her when she won the primary. Shortly after their simultaneous election victories, he proposed marriage. See Mangum, "Congresswoman McCarthy Says a Word—About Cupid."
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Virginia Ellis Jenckes
1877–1975

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE ★ DEMOCRAT FROM INDIANA
1933–1939

Water, liquor, and communism stirred Virginia E. Jenckes's considerable passions and spurred her into elective politics, where she unseated a 16- year veteran Congressman to become the first Indiana woman to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives. Jenckes's expressions of commitment to creating flood control for her constituents, abolishing Prohibition, and routing communist influences from American society made her one of the more colorful Washington politicians during the New Deal.

Virginia Ellis Somes was born on November 6, 1877, in Terre Haute, Indiana, to James Ellis, a pharmacist, and Mary Oliver Somes. She attended public schools in Terre Haute and took one year of coursework at Coates College.[1] In 1912, Virginia Somes married Ray Greene Jenckes, a Terre Haute businessman 34 years her senior.[2] A year later, Virginia Jenckes gave birth to a daughter, Virginia. The couple operated a 1,300-acre family farm along the banks of the Wabash River in western Indiana. Ray Jenckes died in 1921, leaving his widow to manage the farm and raise their child.

Flooding posed a constant problem in western Indiana. In 1927 a new dike along the Wabash River failed, threatening lives and Jenckes's $15,000 crop. She mobilized local residents and participated in a 3,000-sandbag effort that successfully contained the breach. That experience led her to found and serve as secretary and lobbyist for the Wabash and Maumee Valley Improvement Association, an organization that proposed flood control programs and projects. In 1928, Jenckes achieved a major political triumph when party leaders adopted one of her association's flood control plans into the Democratic National platform.[3] Success emboldened Jenckes, and within several years she had committed herself to running for Congress.

In 1932, the road to Washington was not an easy one. A year earlier, reapportionment had reshuffled Indiana politics, leaving Jenckes the task of ousting two incumbents. The new Indiana district, tucked along much of the western portion of the state that bordered Illinois, included 10 counties and Jenckes's hometown. In the primary, she faced Democrat Courtland C. Gillen, a one-term incumbent from Greencastle. Acting as her own campaign manager, Jenckes developed a simple strategy and platform: abolish Prohibition. "Get rid of Prohibition and you will have a market for your corn," she told farmers.[4] Prohibition had closed Terre Haute's distilleries after 1919 and contributed to a slide in commodities prices that accelerated with the onset of the Great Depression. The message resonated in the presumed dry sections of the Indiana district. She also reminded the voters of her strong record and personal experience with flood control.[5]

In the Democratic primary in May 1932 she unseated Gillen. In the general election, her 19-year-old daughter, Virginia, chauffeured her on a speaking tour that logged 15,000 miles.[6] Jenckes faced Fred Sampson Purnell, an eight-term incumbent, who had represented the northern counties prior to redistricting. Purnell, who voted down a proposal to loosen Prohibition laws in the 72nd Congress (1931–1933), found himself in the political battle of his life as the Democratic Party embraced the repeal of the legislation. Jenckes ultimately prevailed with 54 percent of the vote to Purnell's 46 percent. In Indiana the four GOP incumbents lost and the state's 12-seat House

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Though Jenckes broadly supported New Deal relief programs, her relationship with the Roosevelt administration was frosty. . . . She believed FDR to be too conservative, too patrician, and too willing to subordinate the Democratic Party's interests to his own "selfish ambitions."

delegation went all-Democratic, thanks to presidential candidate Franklin D. Roosevelt's long coattails. Hoping to capitalize on farmers' discontent with the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), Purnell challenged Jenckes again in 1934. But she won by a hair's breadth, polling just 383 more votes than Purnell out of 135,000 cast.

Securing all-important committee assignments was another matter entirely. In 1933, Congresswoman Jenckes failed to persuade Democratic leaders to give her a seat on either the coveted Agriculture Committee or the Rivers and Harbors Committee, which would have given her the opportunity to effect change for her farming constituents through crop relief programs or flood control. Instead, she received assignments on three lower-tier committees: Mines and Mining, Civil Service, and District of Columbia.[7] She kept the latter two assignments throughout her House career but dropped Mines and Mining after the 74th Congress (1935–1937). The District of Columbia Committee assignment brought plenty of work but few rewards, as it did not remotely benefit any of her constituents. Nevertheless, Jenckes devoted herself to giving D.C. voters a greater voice in their government, reducing the workload on city firefighters, and monitoring developments in city schools. In 1937, she became the first American woman appointed as a delegate to the Interparliamentary Union in Paris.[8]

During her first term, Jenckes made good on her promise to seek an end to Prohibition—a task made easier by a compliant Congress and President. One of her first House votes was to support the Cullen Beer Bill—allowing for the production, transportation, and sale of the beverage—which passed by a wide margin in March 1933.[9] She also managed to secure $18 million in funding during the following Congress for a series of flood control projects along the Wabash River Basin.[10]

Jenckes emerged as an advocate for American veterans and workers. In one of her first floor speeches, she urged her colleagues to support a comprehensive "rehabilitation" program for U.S. veterans.[11] A year later, Jenckes voted for the Patman Bill to extend a bonus to World War I veterans. She also encouraged Congress to adopt the Railroad Retirement Act, which nationalized rail workers' pensions, an important step toward creating universal old-age pensions.[12] Having voted for the first AAA to relieve drought and Depression-stricken farmers, Jenckes supported efforts to develop substitute legislation after the Supreme Court had invalidated the original act.[13] Jenckes believed New Deal programs particularly affected women and that it was important that she was in Congress to speak for women's interests. "For the first time in history, there's an electric connection between Congress and the home," Jenckes said.[14]

Though Jenckes broadly supported New Deal relief programs, her relationship with the Roosevelt administration was frosty. She had faith in her convictions but not always the requisite tact of a Washington insider. She believed FDR to be too conservative, too patrician, and too willing to subordinate the Democratic Party's interests to his own "selfish ambitions."[15] Jenckes soon clashed with Harry Hopkins—one of President Roosevelt's most trusted advisers, chief administrator of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and director of the Works Progress (later Projects) Administration—over the disbursement of federal money in her district.[16] While Jenckes embraced federal programs to ease her constituents' economic burdens, she was more hesitant than other New Dealers about reinventing the role of government either in the direction of a planned economy or the creation of the welfare state. In 1934, she expressed concern that small factions of organized labor would use the National Industrial Recovery Administration as a vehicle to dominate certain trades.[17] Despite her efforts to protect the retirements of many different American workers, Jenckes seemed ambivalent about the role government should play in that regard. She voted in 1935 for the Social Security Act, which established unemployment insurance and old-age pensions. As a senior citizen, however, she refused social security payments, noting, "I think when you give dole to people you take away their self respect."[18]

With the implementation of the New Deal relief measures, Jenckes turned her attention to other matters. Her

interest in stemming subversive activities in America dominated her work and made her something of a controversial figure in the nation's capital. As a strong supporter of J. Edgar Hoover's Federal Bureau of Investigation, she often defended the agency's budget requests on the House Floor. She also was an unremitting anticommunist. When many government buildings were erected in the 1930s without provision for display of the American flag, Jenckes suspected a conspiracy and introduced a measure requiring that the Stars and Stripes be flown atop every federal building.[19] Jenckes pursued her anticommunist crusade by using her seat on the District of Columbia Committee to expound on the dangers of communist indoctrination in the public schools. In 1935, she supported an amendment—later dubbed the "red rider"—to a D.C. appropriations bill which outlawed the teaching, advocacy, or mere mention of communism in the capital's public schools.[20] She locked horns with New York Representative Fred J. Sisson, who introduced an amendment to repeal the "red rider." Sisson claimed that Jenckes made her allegations without "a scintilla of evidence."[21] Jenckes would not relent, however, warning that "Washington is the hotbed of international propagandists."[22] The dispute eventually brought Jenckes into conflict with other committee members, including Chairwoman Mary Norton of New Jersey. In May 1937 the House overwhelmingly repealed her amendment.

Jenckes's tumultuous third term and growing resentment over New Deal programs foreshadowed a difficult 1938 re-election campaign. Noble Johnson, a former GOP Indiana Congressman, proved a formidable challenger. Johnson benefited from Jenckes's inability to secure a key committee assignment, as well as public backlash against President Roosevelt's failed "court packing plan." Jenckes ran unopposed in the primary but lost the general election by a 1,755-vote margin. Seven of Indiana's 12 House seats swung to GOP insurgents in 1938. After Jenckes's defeat, *New York Times* editors noted that she had "served with distinction."[23]

Retiring from Congress in early 1939, Jenckes settled in Washington, D.C., where she volunteered extensively for the American Red Cross.[24] She helped five priests escape Hungary during the 1956 uprising, setting up a behind-the-scenes network and funneling communist opposition messages to then-Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson. Late in life she returned to Indiana and eventually resettled in her native Terre Haute. After a long life of public service, Virginia Jenckes died in Terre Haute on January 9, 1975, at the age of 98.

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Isabella S. Greenway
1886–1953

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE ★ DEMOCRAT FROM ARIZONA
1933–1937

Isabella Greenway, a charismatic businesswoman, philanthropist, and politician, served as Arizona's first woman in Congress. Elected to the House during the depths of the Great Depression, Representative Greenway used her experience and extensive political connections to bring economic relief to her strapped state.

Isabella Selmes was born on March 22, 1886, in Boone County, Kentucky, daughter of Tilden Russell Selmes, a lawyer, general counsel for the Northern Pacific Railroad, and sheep rancher, and Martha Macomb Flandrau Selmes. The family lived briefly in North Dakota, where Tilden Selmes established ranching operations. He also befriended Theodore Roosevelt who, from that day forward, took a special interest in the young Isabella. Eventually, Selmes moved his family to St. Paul, Minnesota. After his death in 1895, Martha Selmes moved to New York City with the adolescent Isabella to enroll her in the elite Miss Chapin's School, where she made a lifelong friendship with Roosevelt's niece, Eleanor Roosevelt. In March 1905, Isabella Selmes was a bridesmaid at the marriage of Eleanor and Franklin D. Roosevelt.[1] Weeks later, 19-year-old Isabella married Robert H. Munro Ferguson, a former member of Theodore Roosevelt's military unit from the Spanish-American War, with little notice. They raised two children, Martha and Robert. Ferguson, 19 years Isabella's senior, developed tuberculosis, and the family moved in 1909 to a ranch home in the dry climate of the Burro Mountains near Silver City, New Mexico. Robert Ferguson died in 1922. A year later, Isabella married another former "Rough Rider," John Campbell Greenway, a decorated veteran of World War I, mining engineer, and copper magnate. The Greenways raised one child, John, and with Isabella's two other children, settled in the mining town of Aho, Arizona, which they helped develop alongside their Cornelia surface copper mine. John Greenway died in 1927, and Isabella relocated to Tucson with her children. She established the Arizona Hut, a woodcraft factory that employed convalescent veterans. She later built a successful hotel resort, the Arizona Inn, and owned a cattle ranch and Gilpin Airlines, based in Los Angeles, California.

Greenway was a peculiar blend of Eastern Establishment aristocracy and frontierswoman: cultured and charming, yet rugged and self-reliant. She relished meeting people and was a seemingly inexhaustible campaigner and student of the issues: "I always felt the open door of human contacts was more important than an open book."[2] Greenway also held firm convictions about the wisdom and resiliency of average Americans and believed political leaders needed to be forthright in discussing national issues. "I believe they are not only anxious to know the truth and will welcome it but that they have the courage to face it, whatever it is."[3] Western influences, she once observed, gave her something she called a "liberty of living"—a desire and an opportunity to know the wide spectrum of experiences from emotion and aesthetics to intellectual pursuits. "The West is so much less afraid of the things we may have to do and the changes we may have to make in order to save the values in American life that are worth saving," Greenway remarked, "that sometimes I think this courage of the West to dare new adventures—even if all that are proposed are not all strictly wise adventures—may be our final salvation."[4]

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., MEMORIAL LIBRARY, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Isabella Greenway's political career began during the First World War. In 1918, she chaired the Women's Land Army of New Mexico, which tended to agricultural tasks traditionally performed by men then serving in the military. Her marriage to the widely revered John Greenway opened up a constellation of political connections. As tribute to her husband's memory, state Democratic elders elected Isabella Greenway a Democratic National committeewoman in 1928. Most expected she would accept it as a ceremonial honor. Instead, she treated it as a serious full-time job.[5] That year Greenway campaigned for Al Smith's presidential bid. She did the same for her longtime friend Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932, as the only woman among Roosevelt's state leaders. To recognize Greenway's part in delivering Arizona's delegation to Roosevelt at the 1932 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, party leaders chose her to second FDR's nomination. Greenway was particularly close to Eleanor Roosevelt, whose children knew her as "Aunt Isabella." Once, when Eleanor campaigned in Los Angeles for her husband, Isabella Greenway flew on half an hour's notice to visit her friend for the evening, packing only her toothbrush in her briefcase. The two stayed up late into the night talking politics. "We've done lots of mad things together," Eleanor Roosevelt recalled.[6] Theirs was a genuine friendship that weathered Isabella's eventual political conflicts with Franklin.[7]

When Arizona's Representative At-Large, Lewis W. Douglas, resigned in March 1933 to become Director of the Bureau of the Budget, Greenway ran for his seat. Her platform included support for veterans' benefits and the implementation of a copper tariff to revive Arizona's flagging mining industry. On the same day in August that Arizonans voted 3–1 to repeal Prohibition, Greenway overwhelmingly won the Democratic primary.[8] The nomination was tantamount to election. In the October 3, 1933, special election, Greenway triumphed with 73 percent of the vote over Socialist candidate D.E. Sumpter and GOP opponent, H.B. Wilkinson.[9] She dismissed accusations during and after the campaign that her viability as a candidate depended on her ties to Roosevelt. "A great deal has been said about my being a friend of the Roosevelts," she observed. "I did not ask for votes on the basis of friendship but on the basis I was qualified to do the work. And it is on that basis that I am getting the job done."[10]

Sworn in and seated on January 3, 1934, Greenway was a persuasive and quickly successful advocate for New Deal programs to help her 450,000 constituents, who suffered from an unemployment rate in excess of 25 percent. Greenway was concerned mostly with improving the lives of workers and industrial laborers. Her chief priorities were veterans' relief, the rehabilitation of unemployed copper miners, and the development of the several flood-control projects. "Whatever happens, I must succeed for Arizona," she confided to a friend.[11] Ten days after being elected, she met with Interior Secretary Harold L. Ickes, who also served as director of the Public Works Administration. As she began to make her case for much-needed federal money for her state, Ickes told her: "Mrs. Greenway, my time is very valuable. Can you compress all that Arizona wants onto one page?" She shot back, "Mr. Secretary, Arizona would never forgive me if I could get all it wanted onto one page."[12] She left the meeting with Ickes agreeing to fund three major projects that would employ more than 9,000 Arizonans—including the development of a large irrigation system on the Verde River and the construction of a post office in Phoenix. "I know we're right," Greenway said, "when we weigh projects in terms of human beings first and dollars second."[13] She also went to work on the press, telling the *Washington Post*, "The situation is desperate. Our one industry, copper mining, is closed."[14] She plied her colleagues for information, too. One Capitol observer noted her elevator habits: "She never gets on here without two other Representatives. And you know what they're doing? Answering questions: and she can ask them fast—all about different laws."[15]

During her two terms in Congress, Greenway served on three committees important to her Arizona constituency: Public Lands, Irrigation and Reclamation, and Indian Affairs. Given her statewide district, each assignment gave Congresswoman Greenway a powerful post from which to

"The West is so much less afraid of things we may have to do and the changes we may have to make in order to save the values in the American life that are worth saving, that sometimes I think this courage of the West to dare new adventures — even if all that are proposed are not all strictly wise adventures — may be our final salvation."

—Isabella Greenway
New York Times
April 21, 1935

tend to Arizona's needs.[16] In June 1934 she offered a bill to amend the Cotton Control Act (Bankhead Act), which had established national quotas to regulate cotton production. She also submitted several measures to transfer Veterans' Administration lands to the Interior Department for the benefit of the Yavapai tribe, to prevent soil erosion, and to improve public grazing lands. She also supported a measure to use public relief funds to construct homes for elderly pensioners and to employ residents of the District of Columbia. Greenway introduced legislation to expand Veterans' Administration facilities in Tucson and Whipple, Arizona, and to extend economic assistance to veterans who settled on homesteads. She broadly supported New Deal legislation, though she believed that revenue to pay for those programs should be raised through taxes on individual income rather than property.[17]

Greenway demonstrated her political independence by opposing two significant pieces of Roosevelt's New Deal legislation. She broke with FDR over the Economy Act of 1933, which sought to cut veterans' pensions, rejecting World War I servicemen's call for a $2 billion bonus in benefits. Roosevelt maintained that he needed the money for his economic recovery programs. Greenway wanted to move the bonus bill beyond its "political football status" and sided with veterans, arguing that it would amount to an economic stimulus in its own right. The House passed a grant of additional money for veterans, but the Senate rejected the measure; it eventually passed during Greenway's second term. She also supported the concept of old-age pensions. "Self-reliance is the cornerstone upon which every nation must build, if it is to succeed," Greenway said on the House Floor. "To my mind, self-reliance means the use of human capacity, coupled with natural resources, in such a manner as to insure the liberty of living for all people."[18] But she opposed the provisions of the 1935 Social Security Act, sweeping legislation which eventually passed Congress and instituted unemployment insurance, pensions, and other social welfare programs. Greenway believed the legislation would be impossible to implement; "sustaining employment through artificial channels" required the government to tax businesses, which would further hamper economic recovery. "I do not believe anybody in Congress thinks that this country can continue to carry millions of people on welfare and not eventually run on the rocks," Greenway declared.[19]

On March 22, 1936, on her 50th birthday, Greenway announced her decision to retire from the House. Not only did she wish to leave Washington politics, but despite being considered the front-runner for the Arizona governorship in 1934, she precluded any further public service.[20] She cited the need to spend more time with her family; her son John was a young teenager. Her biographer surmised family responsibilities and sheer exhaustion from congressional travel were decisive factors in her retirement.[21] Greenway expressed pride in having "been allied with the courageous experiments of this administration, many of which I feel will be continued on their merits."[22] Still, some observers perceived that her rift with the White House—first apparent in the veterans' bill—had widened since 1933.[23]

Greenway gave tacit confirmation of the break with President Roosevelt by actively campaigning for the 1940 Republican presidential candidate, Wendell L. Willkie, as chair of the Arizona chapter of Democrats for Willkie. In 1939, Greenway married Harry O. King, a former National Recovery Administration manager for the copper industry. She also went on to chair the American Women's Volunteer Service during World War II, a national group dedicated to providing civil defense training to women. Later, she participated in international cultural exchange programs. Following a long illness, Greenway died in Tucson, on December 18, 1953.

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4 Aikman, "Mrs. Greenway Charts Her Own Course."
5 Bernice Cosulich, "A Congresswoman Out of the West," 22 October 1933, *New York Times*: XX2.
6 "Victory of Mrs. Greenway to Add Sixth Name to 'Feminine Bloc,' 12 August 1933, *Washington Post*: 4; see also, Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt*, Vol. 2 (New York: Viking, 1999): 73.
7 Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt*, Vol. 2: 313–314.
8 See Kristie Miller, *Isabella Greenway: An Enterprising Woman* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2004): 192–194; "Roosevelt's Friend Chosen," 10 August 1933, *Washington Post*: 10.
9 Michael Dubin et al., *U.S. Congressional Elections, 1788–1997* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1998): 498.
10 Hope Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members: Women in the U.S. Congress* (New York: Praeger, 1973): 105.
11 See Kristie Miller, "Greenway, Isabella," *American National Biography* 9 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 552–553. A variant appears in Cosulich, "A Congresswoman Out of the West."
12 Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members*: 104. Ickes's diaries do not record the encounter, nor do any of his biographies. The Miller biography of Greenway touches on other meetings between Greenway and Ickes but not on this particular encounter; see especially, Miller, *Isabella Greenway*: 201.
13 Susan Tolchin, *Women in Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976): 35.
14 "Mrs. Greenway Here, Eager for Job in Congress," 11 October 1933, *Washington Post*: 10.
15 "Mrs. Greenway Tackles Work Enthusiastically."
16 Her Irrigation and Reclamation assignment was, according to one study, a moderately powerful post for the era. Political scientist Charles Stewart ranks it the 11th most attractive committee during a span of 70 years from the Gilded Age to the post–World War II reorganization of Congress. See Charles Stewart III, "Committee Hierarchies in the Modernizing House, 1875–1947," *American Journal of Political Science* 36 (No. 4, November 1992): 835–856. Public Lands ranked in the bottom 10 of about 30 committees in continual existence during that era, but it was uniquely important to Greenway since the federal government owned large tracts of Arizona. Likewise, Indian Affairs was a middling committee on Stewart's scale, but Arizona contained so many Native American tribal reservations that it was an important assignment to Congresswoman Greenway.
17 "Mrs. Greenway Advocates Action on New Deal Bills," 26 January 1935, *Washington Post*: 12.
18 *Congressional Record*, House, 74th Cong., 1st sess. (13 April 1935): 5604–5605.
19 *Congressional Record*, House, 74th Cong., 2nd sess. (30 April 1936): 6480–6481.
20 "Mrs. Roosevelt's Girlhood Chum To Leave Public Life," 24 March 1936, *Christian Science Monitor*: 4.
21 Miller, *Isabella Greenway*: 228–230.
22 "Mrs. Greenway Will Quit House," 23 March 1936, *New York Times*: 21.
23 Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt*, Vol. 2: 225–226.

Marian Williams Clarke
1880–1953

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE ★ REPUBLICAN FROM NEW YORK
1933–1935

Marian Clarke won election to the U.S. House of Representatives less than two months after the death of her husband, Representative John D. Clarke, in an automobile crash. Shortly after being sworn into office, Congresswoman Clarke confided to the *Washington Post*: "I wanted dreadfully to come, of course. I felt the need of some absorbing work."[1] While coping with her own loss, Clarke attended to the needs of individuals and industry in her local district struggling with the effects of the Great Depression.

Marian K. Williams was born on July 29, 1880, in Standing Grove, Pennsylvania, the daughter of Ripp and Florence K. Williams.[2] Her parents moved her and her older brother, Kingsley, to Cheyenne, Wyoming, in 1891, and the Williamses spent their childhood in various states. Marian Williams attended art school at the University of Nebraska and graduated with a B.A. from Colorado College in 1902. As an undergraduate at Colorado College, she enrolled in a public speaking class taught by John Clarke. "At the end of the course he called me to him and said he hated to discourage me but he felt duty bound to tell me I never would be an orator," Marian recalled. "In fact, he explained that he really shouldn't pass me in the course but he would stretch a point and let me by on my written work." Years later she would deliver campaign speeches on his behalf.[3] With her strength as a writer, she worked three years as a reporter for a Colorado Springs newspaper. Marian Williams married Clarke in 1905, and the couple moved to New York City, where John worked for several mining companies before graduating from Brooklyn Law School in 1911. After earning his law degree, John Clarke worked in the mining department of the Carnegie Steel Corporation and for several other mining interests. The Clarkes raised one son, John Duncan. In 1915, they moved to John Clarke's native Delaware County, in upstate New York. He pursued a newfound interest in agriculture and forestry, operating "Arbor Hill," a farm near Dehli, New York. He became president of the New York State Forestry Association and vice president of the New York Conservation Association.[4]

In 1920, John Clarke easily won election as a U.S. Representative from a conservative New York district covering the city of Binghamton and surrounding counties. Except for the 69th Congress (1925–1927), for which he was an unsuccessful candidate, he represented this district from 1921 to 1933. A strong believer in environmental conservation, he cosponsored the Clarke–McNary Reforestation Bill with Oregon Senator Charles L. McNary in 1924, creating a comprehensive national reforestation policy.[5] The bill authorized the President to set aside national forests on military and other federal lands and established a federally funded seedling planting program to assist "the owners of farms in establishing, improving, and in growing and renewing useful timber crops." Marian Clarke played an active role in her husband's congressional career in Washington, D.C. "You see I was always interested in my husband's work and followed his activities very closely," Clarke told the *Washington Post*. "It was a rare day that didn't find me in the gallery all eyes and ears for what was going on."[6] She recalled that her political experience also included her work as a "general factotum" in her husband's office.[7]

On November 5, 1933, while returning home from a wedding along snowy back roads, John Clarke died in a

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head-on auto wreck. Less than a month after her husband's death, Marian Clarke was selected at a meeting of district Republican leaders in Sidney, New York, as the GOP nominee to fill out John Clarke's vacant term.[8] It is not clear whether she sought the nomination actively or whether GOP leaders simply offered it to her. She was a compromise candidate, however, chosen on the 11th ballot.[9] The heavily Republican New York district encompassed a largely agricultural swath of the state and the city of Binghamton near the border with Pennsylvania. Despite the high number of registered GOP voters residing in the district, New York Democrats felt optimistic about the odds of their candidate, John J. Burns, a retired shoe manufacturer and Binghamton city councilman. Burns boasted strong support among businessmen and expected to benefit from a low rural voter turnout in the dead of winter.[10] On December 28, 1933, in a blizzard, constituents—many of them driving to polling places on treacherous roads from their farms—comfortably elected Marian Clarke. Turnout was low, less than 20 percent, but Clarke ran slightly ahead across the entire district and received a large plurality in her Delaware County precincts. With that boost she beat Burns by about 5,000 votes out of approximately 30,000 cast, giving her roughly 60 percent of the total.[11] "It has been a life-saver," she said of the election. "It means that I can go right on with the same interests."[12] Clarke became one of just three Republican women—Edith Nourse Rogers of Massachusetts and Florence Kahn of California were the others—elected to Congress during the first six years of the New Deal. She also held the distinction of being the only woman among the 45 members of the New York congressional delegation.

When Clarke took her seat in the House on January 3, 1934, she received assignments on three minor committees: Civil Service, Claims, and Invalid Pensions.[13] In her first floor speech, Representative Clarke introduced a measure to raise the equipment allowance for rural mail carriers to cover winter and early spring months. In a district with many dirt roads, Clarke insisted such an extension would greatly aid postal carriers forced to navigate icy roads on snowmobiles or muddy springtime lanes by car. Increased allowances also would help offset increased insurance expenses and a new four-cent gas tax. "No one is more aware than I of the necessity for economy at the present time, but it seems to me as though there might be other ways to save this amount that would be more humanitarian than taking it from these men whose lives are already so hard," Clarke said to applause from the floor and gallery.[14] Despite passing the House, the bill languished in committee in the Senate.[15] In March 1934, Clarke introduced a bill to reimburse Army personnel for personal property losses incurred during the infamous 1915 hurricane which struck Texas's Gulf Coast.[16] Having lived for more than a decade in the capital, Clarke also played an active role in several Washington, D.C., women's organizations.

Like her Democratic counterparts, Clarke remained preoccupied with the economic needs of her constituents during the depths of the Great Depression. Since her New York district included more than 22 shoe factories that employed 17,000 workers, Clarke urged her House colleagues to add an amendment to the Tariff Act of 1930 to protect shoe manufacturers from cheaply produced and inferior products imported from foreign countries.[17] "I am not one of those who believe that Congress can or should attempt to legislate prosperity," Clarke told her colleagues in a floor speech. "I think that is the wrong way of looking at the whole problem. I urge that it is not the function of Congress and it is not the intent of the government to lift any group bodily from a particular economic condition through economic means. . . . But I think we are all agreed, Mr. Speaker, to this general proposition: That it is the function of Congress to insure equal opportunity." Clarke argued that without protecting such large employers and preserving an industry tax base, the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration would undercut its efforts to stimulate the economy.[18]

During her short stint as a Representative, Clarke exhibited limited legislative effectiveness due to her relative political inexperience and because Democrats greatly outnumbered Republicans in the House. In 1934, she declined to run for the GOP renomination. The eventual Republican nominee, Bert Lord, a lumber business-

man from Afton, New York, and former state commissioner of motor vehicles, won handily that fall. Upon her retirement from the House, Clarke returned to Arbor Hill. She remained active in GOP politics and served as an alternate to the 1936 Republican National Convention in Cleveland. Tragedy struck Marian Clarke again when her only son died in an auto wreck in 1939. She lived most of the remainder of her life in relative seclusion at Arbor Hill. Clarke died in Cooperstown, New York, on April 8, 1953.

FOR FURTHER READING

Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, "Marian Williams Clarke," http://bioguide.congress.gov

MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION

New York State Historical Association Library (Cooperstown, NY). *Papers:* In the John Davenport Clarke papers, 1921–1933, approximately 2,000 items. Includes correspondence reflecting opinions on political and social issues, photograph albums, and news clippings. Also contains papers of Marian Clarke.

NOTES

1 "Congresswoman Clarke Finds Pleasure in Legislative Job," 20 January 1934, *Washington Post*: 11.
2 Though Marian K. Williams's father's name is nearly illegible in the *1900 Federal Census*, it appears to be "Ripp."
3 "Congresswoman Clarke Finds Pleasure in Legislative Job."
4 "J.D. Clarke Killed in a Motor Crash," 6 November 1933, *New York Times*: 16.
5 David J. Weber, with a foreword by Senator Gaylord A. Nelson, *Outstanding Environmentalists of Congress* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Capitol Historical Society, 2002): 48–49.
6 "Congresswoman Clarke Finds Pleasure in Legislative Job."
7 Susan Tolchin, *Women in Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976): 17; Hope Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members: Women in the U.S. Congress* (New York: Praeger, 1973): 103.
8 "Nominated for Congress," 7 December 1933, *New York Times*: 15.
9 "Democrats Predict Up-State Victory," 17 December 1933, *New York Times*: N1.
10 "Democrats Predict Up-State Victory."
11 "Mrs. Clarke Wins Seat in Congress," 29 December 1933, *New York Times*: 2.
12 Tolchin, *Women in Congress*: 17.
13 Charles Stewart III, "Committee Hierarchies in the Modernizing House, 1875–1947," *American Journal of Political Science* 36 (1992): 845–846. The paper includes rankings of House committees before the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 and makes a connection between committee transfers and the relative attractiveness of committee assignments; Karen Foerstel, *Biographical Dictionary of Congressional Women* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999): 59.
14 *Congressional Record*, House, 73rd Cong., 2nd sess. (26 January 1934): 1421–1422.
15 *Congressional Record*, House, 73rd Cong., 2nd sess. (21 May 1934): 9196–9197.
16 *Congressional Record*, House, 73rd Cong., 2nd sess. (1 June 1934): 10275.
17 Tolchin, *Women in Congress*: 17; Chamberlin, *A Minority of Members*: 103.
18 *Congressional Record*, House, 73rd Cong., 2nd sess. (28 March 1934): 5682–5683.