

Moorhead Woman's Suffrage Walking Tour

The Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County

August 25, 2020



Welcome to the Moorhead Woman's Suffrage Walking tour brought to you by the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County. This tour will take us through some of Moorhead's most beautiful and historic neighborhoods as we learn about local women and men who were involved in the struggle to gain voting rights for American women. The stops are usually only a block or two apart and by the end of it you will have walked just about two miles. Feel free to pause this recording between stops or for breaks.

First, a short introduction. The United States of America was founded as a nation that would be governed of the people, by the people, and for the people. A flier in our museum collection from Fargo Suffragist Clara Dillon Darrow asked "are women not people?" Women did not have voting rights, and by the mid-1800s, women were organizing to correct this. They called it the Woman's Suffrage Movement, suffrage meaning the right to vote. They called themselves Suffragists, though today we tend to remember them as the Suffragettes, a word invented by their enemies and intended to be demeaning. Whether you call them Suffragists or Suffragettes, you have to admire them for changing our country for the better, and some of those American heroines lived right here in our town.

The fight for Woman's Suffrage was waged state by state. Legislators in Wyoming Territory were the first to recognize the voting rights of women in 1869. Over the following decades, Women gained full voting rights in a patchwork of mostly western states, and limited voting rights in others. But the Suffragists were persistent and increasingly impossible to ignore. On May 21, 1919, the House of Representatives approved a proposed 19th Amendment to the Constitution that would make it illegal to restrict voting rights of Americans on the basis of sex. The US Senate approved it two weeks later, and it was off to the state legislatures to vote on. It needed the approval of 36 states to pass. Minnesota ratified the Amendment on September 8, North Dakota ratified it on December 4, and finally, on August 26, 1920, the Amendment became the law of the land.

The Minnesota Woman Suffrage Association had branches in towns and counties throughout the state, organized by legislative district and run by women who held the title of chairmen. Legislative District 49 was centered in Moorhead and we had four or five chairmen at a time. Admittedly, the story of the struggle for Woman's Suffrage in Minnesota is centered in and dominated by St. Paul and Minneapolis, but our Moorhead Suffragists were just across the river from Fargo, which was the center of the lively and active Suffrage fight in North Dakota. This tour relies on a list of names of women and men from our area that are found in the Minnesota Woman Suffrage Association archive at the Minnesota Historical Society, but those records tell us little about what these Suffragists did in their various roles in Moorhead. So on this tour, we will not be focusing on what these people did, but on who these people were, and how they represented different aspects of the Woman's Suffrage Movement.

Time to go to stop number 1: The Comstock House at 506 8th Street South. If you're not there yet, feel free to pause this recording until you get there.

Stop 1: 506 8th St S the Comstock House

Our first stop is the Comstock House, a Minnesota Historical Society site operated in partnership with the Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County. Feel free to walk around, we like having you here. This was the home of Solomon and Sarah Comstock, and their children Ada, Jesse and George. For the first half century of our town's existence, the Comstock family was the most influential family in Moorhead, socially, economically, and politically. It is a common trend across our nation that Suffragists tended to be women of means whose families were community leaders at the top of the social and economic ladder in town, and if you are looking at the front door of the Comstock House, you can see the stately home of the most important Suffrage family in town - as long as you turn around and look at the brown house across 8th Street - Mary and Frank Peterson are the most important family of Moorhead's Woman's Suffrage movement - don't worry, we'll get to them later. The Comstocks, as far as we can tell, did not engage in the Woman's Suffrage Movement, at least not publicly. But we stop here because while the Comstocks may not have talked the talk of Suffrage, they certainly did walk the walk of women's equality.

Sarah Comstock was a teacher before she came to the two year old Wild West town of Moorhead in 1874 and married an ambitious young attorney named Solomon. Solomon rose from county attorney to state representative to US Congressman to the business associate of railroad magnate James J. Hill, the richest man in Minnesota. This gave the family a lot of political and economic influence, and perhaps the most important way they used this influence is they turned Moorhead into a college town. Minnesota State University Moorhead and Concordia College are both here because of the Comstocks, and one of the common themes that you'll see throughout this tour is Suffragists were overwhelmingly educated women at a time when educating women wasn't common. Sarah and Solomon's two daughters and one son received wonderful educations, and oldest daughter Ada became a nationally famous pioneer in the field of women's education. It would be hard to imagine that Ada Comstock, who as president of Radcliffe College helped turn all-male Harvard co-ed, wouldn't want the right to vote. There are buildings named for this family at Minnesota State University Moorhead, Concordia College, University of Minnesota Twin Cities, Smith College and Radcliffe College.

And there's another reason we begin our tour here. In this house, in 1893, the leading women of town formed The Moorhead Woman's Club. Two years later, the Moorhead Women's Club would become one of the 15 charter members of the Minnesota Federation of Women's Clubs - which would eventually grow to 500 chapters with 40,000 members. Woman's Clubs were creative and intellectual outlets for women as well as centers of civic engagement. Each year, a club would choose a topic to study - Moorhead's 1893 topic was Ancient Egypt, the 1906-7 season's topic was Italian Sculpture and Painting in the Sixteenth, Seventeenth, and Eighteenth Centuries, and the group studied Panama and South America in 1913-14. The members wrote essays, recited poems, and performed music on that theme, hosting each other in their homes on a rotating basis. Membership in the Moorhead Women's Club was limited to 25 women plus a list of inactive honorary members, so being a member was an indication that you are a woman of culture from a well-connected family in town. It should not surprise you that many Suffragists were members of these clubs of educated, civic minded, community leaders. That goes for Moorhead or any American town.

Before we leave the Comstock House, we should mention that there was an important local Suffragist in this family. Ruth Roberts Haggart was the daughter of Sarah's sister Jennie and her husband Samuel Roberts. Ruth was an officer in the North Dakota Votes for Women League and she hosted a series of Suffrage Teas and dinner socials in Fargo to get local women interested in the movement.

Our next stop is not far away. Go out the front gate and take a left to walk south along 8th Street. You'll see a new brick building with a black sign that says Comstock Commons - 600 8th St South.

Stop 2: 600 8th St S: Comstock Commons, former site of the Esther Russell House

Comstock Commons is built on top of where Esther Russell used to live. I want to say that Esther Russell is your typical Woman's Suffrage leader, but the word "typical" doesn't seem to apply to an impressive woman like Esther Russell. But then again, the Woman's Suffrage movement regularly attracted impressive people. Esther was one of four chairmen of our branch of the Minnesota Woman Suffrage Association and she must have done a good job because on the organization's list entitled "Prominent Minnesota Suffrage Workers," Esther is one of only 16 people living outside the Twin Cities.

Esther Russell grew up in Marshall, Minnesota, the daughter of a carpenter. She became a teacher before marrying William Russell. William became a prominent Moorhead attorney, and in American society back then, that meant his wife Esther also had the opportunity to be prominent in Moorhead society. She took that opportunity.

Esther was also the head of our local chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, or WCTU. The Temperance Movement was an international movement to get people to stop drinking alcohol, and it was absolutely intertwined with the Woman's Suffrage Movement. America in the 19th century had a drinking problem. Women got fed up with their husbands spending their evenings and money in saloons, where women were not allowed to enter, often coming home violently drunk in an era when it was difficult for women to escape abusive relationships. For their children, their sisters and themselves, many American women became politically active for the first time as Temperance advocates. Through the Temperance Movement, generations of women learned how to organize to get legislation passed. They developed working relationships with legislators, and they started getting more and more annoyed that they were not allowed to vote for these laws they were promoting. And their male allies in the Temperance Movement also knew that if women could vote it would be so much easier to get anti-alcohol laws passed. The Temperance and Woman's Suffrage movements were intertwined a century ago not unlike how the topics of Abortion and Gun Control are today.

But this merger of movements did have a downside. A lot of families, especially in Moorhead, owed their livelihoods to the alcohol industry. Local Saloon-owning families like the Kiefers, Ingersols, Magnussons, and Diemerts shared many traits of the Suffragist families on this tour: they were prominent business leaders, they were active in local politics, they sent daughters to college to become teachers, but you don't see their names on the rolls of the Minnesota Woman Suffrage Association. I don't think we should necessarily take this to mean that Emma Magnuson wanted fewer rights than Esther Russell did, but I can certainly understand if she

wouldn't want to be in the same room as the woman who is trying to make their family's business illegal.

Off to the next stop, which is 906 7th Street South. Keep walking south along 8th Street until you get to the stoplights on 7th Avenue South. Turn left and walk to the end of the block. Across the street should be a two-story cream-colored house with red trim.

Stop 3: 906 7th Ave S the Anna Gates House

While Esther Russell embodied many of the attributes common to American Suffrage fighters, Anna Gates was in many ways an outlier, though both served as Chairmen of District 49's Minnesota Woman's Suffrage Association at the same time.

Anna is the only immigrant on our list of local women involved in the Minnesota Woman's Suffrage Association. She was born Anna Liedahl in Norway. She crossed the ocean to America at the age of nine in 1881. Her family settled near Leonard, North Dakota, about 40 miles southwest of Moorhead.

She moved to Moorhead after meeting and marrying a letter carrier named Elbert Gates - which is another difference between her and Esther Russell: the Gates were working class. Soon after Suffrage was achieved, Anna Gates herself went to work. She became Moorhead's first female police officer. Her official title was Police Matron, and today we would think of her as part cop, part social worker, part city food inspector. Officer Gates was called in to handle cases where the suspects were either women or children. She also organized the city's charity drives to provide food and clothing to impoverished families during the Great Depression.

While Gates served as a chairman in Moorhead, she also did quite a lot of collaboration with the very active grassroots Woman's Suffrage organizations in North Dakota. On October 8, 1914, the *Wahpeton Times* reported that she was working for suffrage while visiting her relatives back home: "Mrs. Anna Gates of Moorhead, Minnesota, who has been doing quite a little quiet work for suffrage among the farm women near Leonard reports a very encouraging prospect for suffrage in that region." She was not a member of the Moorhead Woman's Club, but was instead an officer in the Fargo Progressive Club. As part of that group in 1912, Anna was one of the women in charge of bringing nationally-known Women's rights icon Jane Addams to Fargo.

We'll learn a little more about some Fargo Suffragists at our next stop - turn around and walk back towards 8th Street. Cross over to the west side of 8th at the light and keep walking down 7th Avenue south until you're in front of two large Concordia College Dorms called Bogstad Manor East and Bogstad Manor West.

Stop 4: 618 7th St S: Bogstad Manor East Formerly the Edith Darrow Godfrey House

A century ago, there would have been a hospital where Bogstad Manor West is today, and Bogstad Manor East would have been a row of fine houses lining 8th Street. In one of those houses lived the founder of the hospital, Doctor Daniel C. Darrow and his wife Alice. Right next door to them, just about directly across the street of Esther Russell, lived their daughter Edith Darrow Godfrey, who was a chairman of the Minnesota Woman Suffrage Association.

Edith grew up the daughter of one of Moorhead's most respected families. Her father was a pioneer doctor who moved to Moorhead to join his brother, Fargo physician Dr. E. M. Darrow soon after he graduated medical school in 1884. Edith's mother Alice was one of the founding members of the Moorhead Woman's Club. In 1899, Edith Darrow married a promising young businessman named Joseph V. Godfrey. Joseph V. Godfrey's name is written all over town even today, but you have to look down to see it. He had a concrete business and you'll see his maker's stamp on sidewalks throughout Moorhead's older neighborhoods. We are walking on his sidewalks all through this tour. Joseph and Edith had two children - a boy and a girl. But in January of 1911, Joseph got a flu that turned into pneumonia. He died at the age of 36, leaving Edith a young widow with a ten year old son and a two year old daughter. Joseph's obituary called him "one of the best known and best liked citizens of Moorhead."

Edith Darrow Godfrey came from one of our region's most prominent suffrage families. Her aunt in Fargo was Clara Dillon Darrow. Clara Darrow was one of the earliest and strongest voices for Woman's Suffrage in North Dakota, a woman who gave suffrage speeches to prairie homesteaders and was the founding president of the North Dakota Votes for Women League in 1912. Clara's daughters Mary Darrow Weibel and Elizabeth Darrow O'Neil were also active in North Dakota's suffrage movement, and so was their little brother Daniel. When Edith's husband passed away, Cousin Mary, Aunt Clara, and her parents were all with her at his bedside.

Our next stop is not far away. As you walk west toward the river down 7th Avenue South take a right on the first sidewalk you see. You'll walk past the parking lot of Bogstad Manor West and on the other side of the black gate you'll be on 7th Street South. We're looking for a white house with blue trim: 515 7th Street South.

Stop 5: 515 7th St S The Bessie Lewis House

Here we have the house of Minnesota Woman Suffrage Chairman Bessie Lewis. She served as chairman at the same time as her friend and neighbor Edith Darrow Godfrey. Bessie's husband Thomas Lewis was one of the pall bearers at Joseph V. Godfrey's funeral. Tom Lewis sold wholesale groceries. Bessie was a teacher. Census records indicate that she may have taken some time off of teaching to raise her three children, but by 1920 both she and her youngest daughter Flora, a recent graduate of Moorhead Normal School, were both working as teachers. Being a teacher was a common profession for Moorhead's Suffragists, perhaps not surprising since the primary purpose of Moorhead Normal School was training teachers. That school is now called Minnesota State University Moorhead, and it still trains a lot of teachers.

Bessie was also an accomplished embroiderer. She won two first prize ribbons at the Minnesota State Fair for her embroidery.

On September 8th, 1919, the Minnesota Legislature voted on a proposed 19th Amendment to the Constitution that would make it illegal to restrict an American Citizen's right to vote based on their sex. Bessie and Thomas Lewis had a big party at their house that day, but not because Minnesota ratified the amendment. That day also happened to be their 25th wedding anniversary, and about 20 of their friends and neighbors threw them a surprise party.

To reach our next stop, keep walking to the end of the block and take a right on 5th Avenue South. When you reach 8th Street, the large brown and stucco house on your right will be 721 5th Avenue South.

Stop 6: 721 5th Ave S
The Mary B. and Frank H. Peterson House

You've seen this house before when you were standing at the entrance of the Comstock House. This used to be the home of Mary B. Peterson and her husband, Minnesota State Senator Frank H. Peterson. The house is now split into apartments and the building's entrance has changed from the Peterson's front door facing 8th Street to their side door on 5th Avenue. Mary Peterson was one of the four district chairmen of the Minnesota Woman Suffrage Association and a frequent donor to the cause. She was one of the founding members of the Moorhead Woman's Club in 1893. And her husband Frank was a leading Progressive in the Minnesota State Senate.

Most of this tour has been talking about how regular people in a prairie town played a small role in the larger fight for voting rights, but this house is the exception. In 1922, after voting rights were won, the National Woman Suffrage Association published an official six-volume history of how it all happened. The chapter written by the Minnesota Suffragists singles out Senator Frank H. Peterson as being one of the most important legislators working on behalf of Woman's Suffrage - the most important being Otter Tail County's Ole Segang, whose nickname at in St. Paul was "The Napoleon of Woman's Suffrage."

Senator Peterson's work for suffrage was related to his life's calling of getting people to stop drinking alcohol. It is likely that Senator Peterson worked hard to give women the right to vote because he believed it was the right thing to do, but politicians like Peterson also hoped that women would add votes to the Temperance cause.

The jury is out over whether the Temperance cause helped Woman's Suffrage or hindered it. To use modern political jargon, it brought out the base but it also energized the opposition. Fearing women voters would bring about Prohibition, the liquor industry fought tooth and nail to prevent women from gaining the right to vote. Senator Peterson saw Woman's Suffrage bills come before the Minnesota legislature five times between 1909 and 1917, and each time the Suffragists lost by only four or fewer votes in the senate. Each time the opposition to the bills was led by senators connected to the liquor industry. But in January of 1919, the passage of the 18th Amendment to the United States Constitution made alcohol illegal throughout the whole country and brought about national Prohibition. As soon as Woman's Suffrage was uncoupled from the alcohol debate and could be considered on its own merit, the Minnesota Legislature had a profound change of heart. Minnesota approved the proposed 19th Amendment that would end voting discrimination against women by a margin of 100 to 28 in the House and 49 to 7 in the Senate.

For our next stop, turn west toward the river and take a right on 7th Street South. Walk north two blocks and the next stop will be on the right side of the road: 310 7th St S

Stop 7: 310 7th St S
The Jenny Briggs House

This was the home of Jenny and Francis Briggs. Jenny was one of five Chairmen of our branch of the Minnesota Woman Suffrage Association, serving with Anna Gates, Edith Darrow Godfrey, Bessie Lewis and May Burnham, who you will meet next. Jenny's husband Francis was a physician. This family wasn't in town for too many years, but they were important years. They were here in 1920 when the 19th Amendment finally achieved Voting Rights for Women, and they were here for the world-changing event that went a long way to making the 19th Amendment possible - I'm talking about World War I.

Americans have forgotten just how important and life-changing World War One was to our ancestors. To those who lived through it, WWI was a defining moment of a generation, the biggest challenge our nation faced since the Civil War fifty years before. The leading families of each American community were expected to step up and lead their town's war effort on the Home Front. And as we have seen so many times already, Woman Suffrage families were Moorhead's community leaders, and they stepped up.

In this home, Dr. Francis Briggs served on the county draft board until he took a dose of his own prescription and became a Captain in the US Army. While her husband was away serving in an Army Hospital in New Jersey, Jenny volunteered for the most important Home Front organization of the war: the Red Cross. The Red Cross organized 20 million American volunteers to help them build wartime hospitals and stock those hospitals with everything they needed from bandages to nurses. The strength of the Red Cross was due its ability to employ the energy and enthusiasm of American women and by being one of the few organizations that offered leadership positions to women. Volunteers knit soldiers sweaters, socks, stocking caps, and bandages. Clay County organized at least 35 chapters of the Red Cross. Jenny Briggs and her fellow Suffrage Chairmen Edith Darrow Godfrey and Bessie Lewis were all members of the First Congregational Church's Red Cross Auxiliary. Bessie Lewis' daughter Flora was the president of the 200 member Red Cross branch at the Moorhead Normal School.

American women served in countless other ways. Moorhead Suffrage chairman Esther Russell was also chairman of the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defense for Clay County and led the Food Administration's efforts to help families preserve and conserve food at home. Anna Gates had two sons who saw heavy fighting in the war. Her son Dewey was decorated for bravery for rescuing a wounded soldier from No Man's Land and was later wounded himself. And while our Suffragists may have turned their attention toward war work, they also shamed President Woodrow Wilson for fighting for democracy in Europe while ignoring democracy at home. In 1917, Mary Darrow Weible, cousin of Moorhead's Edith Darrow Godfrey, joined fellow Suffragists to picket in front of the White House.

When the war was won, Americans looked back at the leading roles women played and the sacrifices they endured for their nation. When they asked for the vote, how could they be denied? The final passage of the 19th Amendment was the culmination of decades of work by Suffragists and the final victory was thanks to many reasons, but the fact that the amendment was sent out to the states six months after the guns fell silent and three weeks before the Treaty of Versailles was signed suggests World War I had something to do with convincing the average (male) voter that it was wrong to deny women the vote. And it wasn't just Americans. Woman Suffragists in United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, Russia, Austria, and Hungary all won their voting rights at the end of World War I.

Our next stop is the Moorhead Public Library at 118 5th St S. If you go directly across the street from the Briggs House to the brick house across 7th, you'll see a stamp for Joseph V Godfrey in the sidewalk. The Library is two blocks west and two blocks north of here.

Stop 8: 118 5th St S The Moorhead Public Library

Moorhead, Fargo and many other towns in our country owe the founding of their public library to their local Woman's Club. Sarah Comstock's 1901 presidential address to the Moorhead Woman's Club called for the creation of a club library, but the members' ambition soon grew to

creating a town public library. Two years later, In 1903, Moorhead attorney George Perley wrote a letter to the club calling their attention to how industrialist Andrew Carnaegie, one of the richest people in history, had recently begun a program of donating money to build public libraries. The Moorhead Woman's Club went to work. They got a grant from Carnegie for \$12,000 to build the building. They got the city of Moorhead to agree to take on the added responsibility of operating a library. They raised money to buy the city lot to build the library - the original lot was where Regal's appliance store is today on Main Avenue and 6th Street. And once the building was built, they filled it with books. The Moorhead Public Library opened to the public in 1906.

When the Woman's Suffrage Amendment passed, Ethel McCubrey was a librarian here. She lived with her father, Grovenor McCubrey, who was the clerk of court for Clay County and would later become our state representative in St. Paul. Grovenor McCubrey was a member of the Minnesota Woman's Suffrage Association and a member of the Men's League for Woman Suffrage in Minnesota.

Our area did a good job of electing suffrage supporting politicians from both sides of the aisle. Our State Senator Frank H. Peterson, whose house you visited on this tour, was considered a Progressive Republican. The major rival party here at that time was the Nonpartisan League, which officially endorsed Woman's Suffrage as part of their platform. Our State Representative Solomon P. Anderson of the NPL was a member of the Minnesota Woman Suffrage Association. His predecessor, the future U.S. Congressman Knud Wefald, was also a Suffrage supporter. Today, the wife of Knud's grandson, Susan Wefald of Bismarck, is the co-chair of the North Dakota Woman's Suffrage Centennial Committee.

The Minnesota Woman Suffrage Association lists two other local men as members. Both were Norwegian bachelor farmers - August Narveson and Emil Lambert. The 1916 Clay County Illustrated magazine described Lambert as "one of the progressive farmers of Moorhead township who has always been too busy to find a wife." The state suffrage association has Lambert on a list of 11 people statewide who offered to distribute Suffrage literature.

The next stop is just a block to the west on the north end of a large new brick commercial building. 115 4th Street South, the current site of Third Drop Coffee.

Stop 9: 115 4th St S Formerly Burhnam Boarding House

The current site of Third Drop Coffee used to be the Burnham Boarding House, home to Minnesota Suffrage Association Chairman Mae Burhnam and her mother Elsie. Mae likely would've been a toddler when her civil engineer father Ozro and her mother Elsie brought her to Moorhead in the early 1880s. Ozro's brother Frank Burnham and his wife Hattie were prominent early residents of our town. Mae's Aunt Hattie was a founding member of the Moorhead Woman's Club and her Uncle Frank J. Burnham was a prominent attorney and the president of the First National Bank.

Mae's mother Elsie had three children but only Mae survived. Then, when Mae was about 10 or 11, her father died. After Ozro's death, to make ends meet, Elsie Burnham ran a boarding house.

Many American women, especially widowed or otherwise single women, were able to provide for their families by running a boarding house. Elsie Burnham would cook, clean, and do the laundry for her boarders. City directories indicate that there were perhaps four rooms - one for Elsie herself, one for her daughter Mae who worked as a grade school teacher, one for a longtime boarder named Lena Johnson, and the other rooms were usually men who worked as laborers and moved often. Most boarding houses provided each lodger with a bedroom and the house would also have common spaces like a kitchen, dining room and maybe a sitting room. After Elsie died, Mae took over her mother's boarding house.

The Burnham Boarding House is long gone, but it is fitting that in its place is another family business that passed down through generations of women. What used to be Moxie Java was recently renamed Third Drop Coffee as a way to celebrate the third generation of women in the family to run this business. And if you look around this block you will see so many businesses owned in whole or in part by women - Riverzen Art Studio, Joni Salon and Spa, Rustica Eatery and Tavern, Prairie Fiber Arts, across the street you might see kids playing in the back of Inspire Innovation Lab, and just a couple doors down from Third Drop Coffee, a century after people like Mae Burnham helped women gain the right to vote, we have the local office of Amy Klobachar, one of Minnesota's two women US Senators.

It's a bit of a long trek to the next stop. Turn around and cross back to the east side of 8th Street. You'll probably want to cross at the 8th and Main intersection, and then make your way to 204 9th St S.

Stop 10: 204 9th St S The Marguerita Garrity House

Marguerita Garrity was one of the Chairmen of our branch of the Minnesota Woman Suffrage Association. She was born Marguerita Evans and grew up on a farm outside Ottumwa, Iowa. After graduating from her rural school, she studied Domestic Sciences first at Iowa State University in Ames and then Columbia University in New York City. While there, according to family memory, Marguerita marched for Woman's Suffrage in Washington, D.C.

After graduating, "Rita" took a job teaching in Moorhead Public Schools. While dining at the Curran Boarding House she came to know a young attorney named James A. Garrity. On May 31, 1917, Marguerita and James were married back home in Iowa. The Garritys were young and ambitious but they had to try harder than most to rise through the ranks of Moorhead's finest families - the reason for this is they were Catholic in a town where the majority of the population were Scandinavian Lutherans and the social elite had roots in Protestant New England. It's a testament to how far we've come in the last 100 years that today, we find the idea of discrimination against Catholics to be absurd, but it was real back then. And the Garritys were successful. The family would eventually move to a big beautiful white house across the street from the Comstocks and two doors down from the Petersons on 8th Street, Marguerita's husband would become Judge James Garrity, her son would also become Judge James Garrity.

We already mentioned that the leading families of each American community were expected to be leaders in the war effort, and it goes the other way around, too. If you wanted to be seen as a community leader, you should be leading the war effort. Marguerita was chosen to be the head of Clay County's Hospital Supplies Committee of the Red Cross, an extremely important post. And her husband James was very busy with home front activities, leading the Knights of

Columbus' Liberty Loan drive and giving patriotic speeches at theaters, picnics, or wherever people might need a jolt of war fever.

Marguerita Evans Garrity served as Suffrage chairman at the same time as Anna Gates, Esther Russell and Ann Kossick. She likely struck up a friendship with fellow Catholic Ann Kossick, and soon they were family. In 1919, Anne Kossick married Marguerita's brother and moved to the farm in Iowa. The 1920 census shows that two of Anne's sisters, Helen and Clara Kossick, were living here in the Garrity home as boarders.

Anne Kossick Evans proves that Suffragists as individuals defy stereotypes. The Kossicks were a large German Catholic immigrant railroad family, and they were NOT Temperance advocates. Her brother Leo Kossick gained local fame as an amateur boxer and later ran pool halls, taverns, and bowling alleys. Her brother Alex was a bartender at the Blackhawk Café until he opened Kossick's Liquors, and Anna's Iowa farmer husband, Marguerita Garrity's brother, was no Dry either. And while I'm not sure if Marguerita was as alcohol-friendly as her name implies, we know her husband liked liquor. As County Attorney, James Garrity was the most important figure in legally ending Clay County's 22 year long experiment with Prohibition.

One final stop. If you're facing the front door of the Garrity House, turn to your right and walk south down 9th Street. On the other side of the parking lot of the Townsite Center, which used to be the old Moorhead High School, you'll see a big blue two-story house. We are going to a big yellow house just on the other side of that. You can follow the sidewalk around the block or you can take a shortcut through the parking lot to 421 9th St S.

Stop 11: 421 9th St S The Sharp House

If any family could challenge the Comstocks for the title of Moorhead's most respected founding family, it would be their good friends James and Philadelphia Sharp, who lived in this house. James Sharp, like Solomon Comstock, was also here for Moorhead's rough, Wild West birth. He rose to become Justice of the Peace and the founder of our school system. That large building behind you that is now Sharp View Apartments used to be a school named for the Sharp family. James and Philadelphia Sharp's children became prominent leaders of our town's second generation. Their daughter Philadelphia Sharp Carpenter inherited her parents house, and in this house, in 1930, a meeting was held to establish a local chapter of the League of Women Voters.

The League of Women Voters is the direct descendant of America's Woman's Suffrage organizations. The League was born in 1920 because, after generations of struggle and organizing, the National Woman Suffrage Association had no reason for being anymore. They won the vote! So in their victory, they disbanded, and reformed as a new organization devoted to voter education they called the League of Women Voters. Just like before, local chapters formed throughout the country. The chapter of the League formed in this house in 1930 was not Moorhead's first chapter - we had one right away in 1920. Our first chairman was Lucy Sheffield, a music teacher whose father was a railroad laborer. Other officers included Marie Thompson (a young daughter of a farming family who was a WWI Red Cross leader), Nora Dickerson (whose husband was the new president of Moorhead Normal School) and Edna Stadum (wife of a Glyndon banker).

Today, the League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley, headquartered in Fargo-Moorhead, serves voters on both sides of the river. This nonpartisan group holds local candidate debates, they have a lunch-time lecture series where policy leaders or scholars talk about important issues of the day, and they encourage people to vote and be active participants in our democracy. Membership is open to both women and men, and the work of the League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley benefits every one of us in the community. If this sounds like something you like, check them out.

Well, that's our last stop. The Comstock House where we began this walk is just a block ahead and a block to the right. I'd like to thank you for coming along on this walk to remember some people who worked to wake up our nation to the self-evident truth that all of us are created equal. Don't take for granted what they fought so hard to give us...your country needs active and informed citizens. You have a duty, and a right, to Vote.