

Women's Suffrage Explored in New Madison County Historical Museum Online Exhibit

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EDWARDSVILLE - A new exhibit, Women's Suffrage in Madison County, has just been added to the Madison County Historical Museum's catalog of online exhibits

available at <https://madcohistory.org/>. Assistant Curator, Mary Z. Rose, under the direction of Curator Jennifer Van Bibber, has assembled another interesting and educational exhibit for local residents and students of history.

In Illinois, women were given the right to vote in select races in 1913. On election day, they were given a separate ballot, sometimes called the “little ballot” which was placed in a separate collection box. Newspapers sometimes reported “the women’s vote.” On August 18, 1920, the 19th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution was passed, granting women the full right to vote. The “little ballot” was retired and, since then, Illinois women have been given the same ballot as men.

There were many reasons for denying women the right to vote in the years prior to 1920, none of them reasonable by today’s standards, and some humorous. For example, there was an argument that no decent woman would be seen at the polls, so only uneducated, unsavory women would vote.

Rose captures the unreasonable arguments against women’s suffrage and the courage of Madison County women who organized to rally for voting rights. Her research and creativity using images from the MCHS collections, articles from Madison County newspapers from the time and other sources have made another excellent exhibit available to Madison County residents and others interesting in learning more about women’s suffrage.

Although closed to the public due to COVID-19, the staff of both the museum and archival library are available to help patrons with research projects. Telephone inquiries can be made Wed-Fri 9-4 and Sun 1-4 at 618-656-7569. Enquiries can also be made by e-mail to jlparkin@co.madison.il.us. Unfortunately, the Madison County Historical Museum is remains closed for renovation. For information about the Madison County Historical Society, call 618-656-1294.