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FIFTY YEARS AGO.

November 11, 1869-November 11, 1919.

(W 84254)
 Canham 7/12
 1919

It may seem like a rather strange statement to make though it is a truthful one, that the women of Wyoming have had but one Statewide Convention at which was to be an endorsement of condemnation of woman's suffrage. This one assembly of the women from all over the State was during the time that the Constitutional Convention was having its sessions in 1889 in Cheyenne when and where a proposed Consitution was being drafted for submission to Congress for its adoption for our Statehood. At this time a woman's state meeting was held in Cheyenne, at which a resolution was adopted asking, ne demanding, that the proposed Convention have a clause in it granting to wpmen the right of suffrage, for whatever Territorial Legislative rights may have been given to women for voting it was nesecary to have this right appear in the proposed Constitution. It seems most happy that for this meeting this evening that the date of November eleventh has been chosen, when we are honored with the presence of ~~the women of the East~~ ^{of the West} ~~political~~ ^{now} workers for the freedom we have so long enjoyed to whom the women of Wyoming extend the most cordial welcome. The eleventh of November, 1919 has a peculiar significance to those who are assembled here tonight.

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 3 1/2

Fifty years ago ^{last} tonight, November 11, 1869, (presumably at this exact hour, at least) after the evening meal, sitting before an ill smelling kerosene lamp, a man carefully and thoughtfully adjusted a fresh steel pen into a much worn and inkstained penholder, when with lips drawn into a thin straight line of determination, he bent forward dipping the pen into the bottle of ink and then commenced to write a document, a document which was destined indeed to become a Modern Magna Charta. The place was Cheyenne, the man was the Honorable William H. Bright of South Pass City, Territory of Wyoming, the written document was the draft of a bill to be introduced in the first Territorial Legislature of the recently born Commonwealth called Wyoming. The content of this document is of vital interest to us ^{from the afternoon} (of this evening) and for all time for it has attracted more interest and comment

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W. H. Bright
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 Dec. 1869

than any other one article of Civil affairs unless it be that of the
Constitution of the United States or the ancient Magna Charta of King John
in the year 1215 when ^{his} the barons with clanking swords at Runnymede demanded

a constitutional ^{recognition} ~~right~~ that secured personal ^{liberty} rights and civil liberty. ^{eighty years ago}
And thus 80 years ago ^{last human for} the first time in history there now was a document containing the germ of

life that was seen to be born into the world bringing with it real freedom
and equality of the ballot for the women in this great stretch of land
frontier in every fiber, then as now called Wyoming. ^{This was the bill which was introduced into the U.S. Congress}

This bill constructed on the evening fifty years ago tonight, after
fair weather in the Legislative Council, or Senate, and a stormy stormy
voyage in the House of Representatives in our first Territorial Legislature
became a law on the tenth of December 1869, the bill as enacted remaining
upon Wyoming's Statute book unchanged for twentyone years of territorial
days, receiving only form changes when incorporated in our State Consti-
tution. This Modern Magna Charta as originally drafted by Mr. Bright, fifty
years ago, after passing the gauntlet of ridicule and doubt became a law
only to be changed in one particular, i.e. the age at which women might vote
(and) which was placed at eighteen years was changed to twenty-one years. The
sacred document read as follows:-

An Act to Grant to the Women of Wyoming Territory the Right
of Suffrage and to Hold Office.

Be it enacted by the Council and the House of Represent-
tatives of the Territory of Wyoming:

Sec. 1. That every women of the age of eighteen years, re-
siding in this Territory, may, at any election to be holden under
the laws thereof, cast her vote. And her right to the elective
franchise and to hold office shall be the same under the elective
laws of the territory, as these of electors.

Sec. 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and
after its passage.

Early in the morning of November twelfth (1869) after Mr. Bright

This was the first time that the women of Wyoming were given the right to vote.

The purpose of this bill in work towards women's suffrage.

Sam Park

(fifty years ago) Tomorrow

who had been honored with the Speakership of the Council had called the Legislature to order and had had the Journal of the previous day read and approved, he called to the Speaker's chair Rev. T. W. Poole, and, then from the floor gave notice that "on Monday or some subsequent day, he would introduce a bill for Woman's Rights". There was no comment made. There was no commotion created.

Two weeks after this open challenge for suffrage equality, Mr. Bright (on November twenty-seventh,) in a quiet and self-poised manner, without ostentation, oratory or previous agitation, introduced his bill the content of which involved a question of rights, big with mighty consequences, to be known for all time to come as Council Bill #70 of the Territory of Wyoming, ~~the content being a bill for~~ There was no "tremendous applause from the gallery". There was no gallery. There was no "applauding of gloved hands" for there were no feminine hands in that Council Chamber. The bill born into the Legislature with out birth announcement or heralded with flowers and congratulations, was reverently placed by Mr. Bright on the Speaker's desk, there to die or to become a law.

There is no record that this Council challenged the act which if to become a law would disturb anciently established voting principles, nor was there any serious opposition in the Council to the bill, a bill written in such simple, comprehensive style, presented in such a modest and yet determined way, for Colonel Bright, as he was called, was a quiet though forceful lawmaker.

6-4
(During the morning of November thirtieth,) three days after the introduction of the measure, the "bill was (read for the third time and) put upon its final passage", without debate or forensic fanaticism. The bill passed the Council by a safe majority for Mr. Speaker, six members voting for the bill, two against the measure, (and one member absent.) "So passed the bill", as recorded in the Council Journal. Of the nine members of this Upper House of our first territorial Legislature (no one now lives, the

motives which actuated those to endorse the bill, or which prompted them to

* Quotations are each taken from Council's 6th House

Journal. Number 70
has been called by all
all have given the trail of one day
no one now lives, (the

object to the measure have not become an item of history, with the exception of Speaker Bright.)

But the path of the bill in the House of Representatives to which the bill had gone on the afternoon of its successful passage (in the morning of November thirtieth) had many obstacles to encounter, the most difficult to overcome being cutting satire and amusing ridicule always a dangerous form of argumentation to refute. In this lower branch of the Legislature the hydra-headed monster of intense bitterness to the bill unmasked itself showing a predetermined intent to throttle the bill before it came to final passage. The opposition was organized, commanded and operated by ^a Mr. Ben Sheeks a member of the House, coming from South Pass City the same typical Western mining camp from which Mr. Bright had been sent to the Legislature. Bill #70 from the Council was read on the afternoon and "referred to a committee of the whole house and made a special order for 7 P.M." that evening. When the evening hour had arrived it became very ^{widely} evident that Mr. Sheeks had not been idle, for the House reconsidered its action of the afternoon to vote on the bill at this evening session, referring the bill to a special committee. Ben Sheeks was marking time! The Legislature then adjourned for the day.

Late in the afternoon of (the forty-fourth day of the session, December 5th, Bill # 70 was again taken up for consideration. At once Mr. Sheeks ^{was} on his feet moving "to postpone the consideration of the bill indefinitely. Lost" Action, however was postponed until the evening session when the bill was made, again, "the special order for 7 P.M." With the coming of the evening came also Mr. Sheeks, marshalling his forces for a final and effective blow. The supporters of the bill also had not been idle. In this evening session the House resolved itself into a committee of the whole for the consideration of Bill # 70. After some time spent in consideration of the bill, the committee arose and reported through their chairman that "the committee had considered Council Bill # 70 under consideration and reported same back to the House". It was then moved that the report be accepted.

"Mr. Sheeks then moved to adjourn. Lost".

"Moved to reconsider the vote on the reception of the report of the committee of the whole relative to Council Bill # 70. Lost".

"Mr. Sheeks moved again to adjourn. Lost".

Strong

"Mr. Sheeks moved to adjourn. Lost".

"At 7.55 on motion the House adjourned *for the day*"

Women 740 years

"Late in the afternoon of December 6th bill # 70 "was taken up". when Mr. Sheeks moved "to take a recess until 7 P.M. Lost". My this time "7.P.M. had become a ~~majestic~~ magic hour! It was then moved "that consideration of the bill be postponed until July 4th, 1870," a year when the Legislature would not be in session and on a day ^{be} that would ~~not~~ in any year a holiday. "Motion lost." "Mr. Sheeks then moved to postpone the bill until Saturday next. Lost" Mr. Carrans then arose and moved to insert in section 2 of the bill the words "in three years or if sooner discharged", making the bill to read that the law would be in effect and force three years or sooner if discharged, being simply a matter of horse play and an act of confusion. At this juncture Mr. Sheeks with another amendment gained the floor and moved that the bill read in place of "women", -"all colored women and squaws", there by preventing if the bill became a law white women from voting. Mr. Sheeks also offered an *other* amendment, (the first one that seemed reasonable, that the word twenty-one be substituted for eighteen years for voting age of women. But) these two amendments were lost, showing that "r. Sheeks was losing ground and was no longer in the saddle. *That then was a turn in the road* Then came a proposed amendment to strike out the word woman and substitute "ladies". This also was quickly tabled.

7/4

At this point, and it was a dangerous one, in the passage of the bill, those who favored the bill moved that the rules be suspended and that the bill be put on its passage. The final vote stood seven for Bill # 70, four against, Mr. Sheeks remaining true to his convictions voted against the bill. Even after the bill had been passed with a safe majority Mr. Wilson moved a reconsideration of the action on the bill, the motion promptly being voted down. The "Woman's Right Bill", as it was called, was now ready for the signature of

Governor John A. Campbell, a Republican, the entire membership of both Houses being Democratic. This first legislature lasted for 49 days and it was on the forty-ninth day of the session which adjourned at midnight, December tenth, 1869 that at 8.30 o'clock P.M. Governor Campbell affixed his signature to the bill ~~thus~~ making it a law, effective at once. Thus the women of the Territory of Wyoming had given to them, without their asking, the distinction of being the first women in the world ^{to have} the right of unlimited suffrage, being toasted that evening ^{evening} by the men as "Lovely Ladies, once our Superiors, now our Equals".

signed Bill # 70

Governor Campbell, because he believed that the right of woman to vote and hold office in Wyoming was a rational and logical sequence to some of the laws which had ^{just} been passed by this first "legislature, i.e. giving to the widow the guardianship of her minor children; giving the women the right to acquire and possess property; giving equal compensation to both sexes where equal qualifications to teach were the same".

Thus we have a somewhat technical account of "How Suffrage Came to the Women of Wyoming Territory".

Frequent and persistent inquiries have been made during the past fifty years that women have had the right to vote in Wyoming as to the exact reason why Hon. William H. Bright so valiently championed the cause of women suffrage.

In the economic world we are always look for by-products sometimes finding them quite as valuable as the original production, the byproduct being in the nature of a ^{newly} developed product on the side. I believe that suffrage came to Wyoming as a by-product of the Civil War.

Mr. Bright was a Colonel in the Southern army, a Democrat by birth and inclination, a Virginian of the true type, (a man whose parents were not in a condition to give him an education and although in later years he ~~was educated~~ he wrote for the press and was unusually informed he once said of himself, "I have never been to school a day in my life, and where I learned to read and write I do not know." After the war Mr. Bright, with many

other southern young men, for Mr. Bright was only 35 years of age when he served in the Wyoming legislature, drifted to the great and untried West, to the land of the Rocky Mountains and the long stretches of level prairie. The South was still suffering from the pried of reconstruction, industries were at a standstill, factories and cottonfields had been destroyed. With the impatience of youth these young men could not wait for the rebuilding of the South and migrated where opportunity seemed to reach out a beckoning hand. To the newly created territory of Wyoming came many of these able and well educated young men, with them William H. Bright and his wife going directly to South Pass City in the central part of the territory. In this new "Ghost City" which in 1869 boasted of 6000 or more of inhabitants of many races, colors and creeds, the Bright family in their small log cabin had many friends, no one more choice and intimate than Mrs. Esther Morris, who with her husband and three sons had also come to the great West for opportunity. Many were the serious talks around the fireplace of this tiny cabin and in the light of the sputtering candles various articles were written for Eastern publication, all of them flavored with a spirit of democracy for both sexes, each seeking as a man in the desert for water, for some solution of the question of women voting and having a hand in governmental affairs.

I have a personal letter in my possession addressed to me a few years ago by Mrs. Bright from her widowed home in the East, in which she stated to ~~me at my urgent request~~ *in a conference with the Master mind of E. W. Burns* why Mr. Bright endorsed and worked for woman's suffrage. His devotion to this cause was primarily from the fact that the negro *by the courage to carry out action his conviction* had recently been emancipated, believing if the blackman could vote in his ignorance and illiteracy how much more intelligent and safe would be the ballot in the hands of women as capable as his mother, wife and Mrs. Morris. In this remote mining camp of South Pass City, hundreds of miles removed from a railroad surrounded by the crafty redman, the highway robber and the howling wild animals, these two congenial families discussed and discussed the limited rights of women in civil affairs, Mrs. Morris usually being the brilliant leader of the conversation. *The suspicion from the*

Of Esther Morris there has been much said in the last fifty years. She has rightfully been called "The Mother of Woman's Suffrage in Wyoming". A pioneer, a frontiers woman, a mother of three sons all of whom have occupied with credit to the mother and themselves position of importance and trust, Mrs. Morris had the breath of freedom and democracy and equality in her nostrils long before she journeyed to an unknown and untried western frontier. When by stage she reached South Pass City situated on the fringe of civilization ^{in the heart of the Rocky Mts} she made this breath a living actuality, early beginning her campaign for true democracy. Hol, Bright easily and quickly caught her spirit bringing to Cheyenne in October 1869 his own ideas now crystalized from his association with Mrs. Morris.

Mrs. Morris had an original style and out of the common order of conversational speech. Her son once said, that her abundant store of genuine wit carried her through many a trying ~~timexcx~~ situation; she had courage to do what would have been easier to avoid; she was dynamic, the dead level of living had no attraction for her; she scorned the static position adopted by the average woman; she lost no time with polished rhetoric; she talked in plain Anglo-Saxon-so easy of understanding. ^(out of the ordinary) ~~heroic~~ in size, masculine in mind ~~she~~ Esther Morris possessed more than an ordinary love for flowers, for children, and for those who were less fortunately situated than she was; her charities were unostentatious but numerous. She was a born reformer possessing an indomitable energy and a remarkable mental activity. (Not only was Mrs. Morris optimistic but she was always cheerful and happy, radiating her spirit of hope on all with whom she came in contact.) A pioneer in many fields, in thought as well as in material things, she believed in those things she advocated.

The first woman to occupy a public office in Wyoming was Esther Morris being appointed a Justice of Peace (by the Commissioner of Sweetwater County on) February 14, ¹⁸⁷⁰ ~~1869~~, South Pass City (at that time ^{was} the county seat of the county). At this time Mrs. Morris was 57 years of age, and on the occasion of her first ~~appearance~~ court day Judge Morris wore a calico gown, a worsted breakfast shawl, green ribbons in her hair and a green neck ~~tie~~ tie. Mrs. Morris was the first woman in the world to hold a position of the Justice of the Peace. Judge Morris' first case to ^{come} before her involved the

first bar put a tennis racket. John I am back you as your wife also
- morning -
kn

Beach & was brought before his
attorney, his attorney was
sent to the court house
P. 104 other was may have mentioned
interest. & and saw the John Brown Co. of
husband - his business has the temple, the

When Mr. Sheeks was in the Wyoming Legislature he was a bachelor, an ambitious politician, educated and trained in the law and a born leader. While unsuccessful in his attempts to defeat suffrage in the first legislature Mr. Sheeks came to the second legislature in 1871 determined to accomplish what he had failed in in 1869, his leadership and organization coming perilously near being successful. But this is another page of interesting history. When in the first legislature Mr. Sheeks is credited with saying, - "Women never knows what she wants and ^{is} never satisfied until she got it."

* Former Farmer Joseph M. Barry to the end

I am fortunate in being able to bring to you tonight a message just received from Mrs. John A. Campbell, widow of our first Governor. Mrs. Campbell with her daughter lives in Washington D.C. and ^{York have} has frequently visited Cheyenne where ~~she was when~~ Governor Campbell made his home in our Capital City. The other message is from Judge Ben Sheeks also of Washington, but in this case from the State bearing the name of our first President.

October 27, 1919

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"the spirit of justice to women and their intelligence influence" Governor Campbell to sign the bill. It was that exactly and nothing else. x x x x Governor Campbell carefully considered and weighed the importance of the measure and with a full conviction of its justice and possible good for all future time gave it his approval. It was the deed of an intensely upright and enlightened judgment. His veto message ^E when the repeal was attempted, states explicitly the principles by which he was guided and which positively refute any other reasons which those attacking the law have ~~been~~ since brought forward.

I am glad to say this to the women of Wyoming ~~and their work~~ in their heyday of victory for the cause, a result which to me clearly ^{Utah's Cal} ~~indicates that~~ Governor Campbell's action in the matter.

So I clasp hands with you across the distance which separates us, and joined by ~~join with~~ my daughter thank you for the opportunity which had been given me for greetings and good wishes.

Very sincerely,
(Mrs. J.A.) Isabella W. Campbell

Montesano, Washinton. October 14th, 1919

x x x x x Wise as I thought myself fifty years ago I am willing to admit that I have learned some things since.

I have advocated and voted for woman's suffrage, and have no doubt of the wisdom and justice of my later action, whatever the good women of Wyoming may think of my former conduct.)

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I have had the honor of being a personal friend of Mrs. Esther Morr.
I had a great reverence and admiration for her sterling character, for her sympathy for womankind, for her breadth of learning, her logical way of reasoning and her work for true democracy. Mrs. Morris not only lived in South Pass City but in Laramie, and also in Cheyenne where I was privileged to know her.

In August 1915 I made a special ~~private~~ pilgrimage to old South Pass City ~~now~~ ^{nowhere} an almost deserted ~~town~~ ^{remnant} of tumbled down houses and rotten timbers. This city now as in 1869 is far from any railroad but can easily be reached by automobile. Going to the spot where had once stood ^{Mr. Morris'} her office of justice, which now is so ~~tumbled down~~ ^{demolished} the shape of the original construction can not be traced, I stood on the ground on which the building had stood and reverently bowed my head, silently thanking a Divine power for endowing a woman with the understanding of democracy and who had the courage to advocate woman's suffrage and who had the ability to bring her dreams to a successful fruition.
May the women of Wyoming, the women of the United States, ^{genuine} the women of the world some day erect a lasting monument on ~~this~~ ^{that} consecrated spot in memory of this pioneer enlightened woman, a stone of rough unpolished granite on the side of which are ~~inscribed~~ ^{carved in} these words;

This Stone marks the Cradle of Liberty

Rocked by the Mother of Woman's Suffrage

in Wyoming.

Esther Morris.

There will be no need to state when ^{she} she was born, for it was in ^{this} world, there is no need to state when she died for Esther Morris can ~~never~~ never dies, she is with us here to-night.

Nov. 11, 1919

Cathedral Hall, Laramie, Wyoming

Mr. and Mrs. Chapman
were Lieutenants at a
dinner, the visitors came
to see the new Robert D
Cary to see a special

session of the Wyoming State