

Birmingham LWV Observes 25th Anniversary

Will Celebrate Birthday at Luncheon Friday



Patches on a 1908 wedding gown worn by League member Mrs. Peter E. Loomis represent the League's attitude toward the State constitution which they believe needs a general revision. Mrs. Charles Blunt is pictured placing the patches which represent numerous amendments to the state document. Movement for revisions began in 1948 by the League and further efforts will probably be made toward that end this year. Reapportionment, another phase of the League's campaign, has been achieved in part.

This year of 1957 is very special for the Birmingham League of Women Voters because it marks the quarter-century anniversary of this organization's founding.

Members will celebrate the occasion tomorrow when they gather for their annual meeting at Devon Gables, just as they did for their first annual meeting in 1932.

Special invitations have been sent to the first president of the Birmingham League, Mrs. Frank W. Wawley, now in Boston, and to other past presidents, Mrs. Angus McLay, Mrs. Clyde Paton, Mrs. Furbes Hascall, Mrs. F. P. Smith, Mrs. Malcolm Welty, Mrs. John Ormond, Mrs. Eric Hyde, Mrs. Ralph Yonker, Mrs. Howard Liverance, Mrs. F. G. Garrison, Mrs. Graham Shinnick, Mrs. Brooks Marshall and Mrs. Peter Loomis.

MRS. JOHN RUMSEY, retiring LWV president, will preside at the celebration which starts at 10 a.m. with coffee. Annual meeting convenes at 10:30 and includes election of officers and adoption of a current agenda. After 1 p.m. luncheon, Mrs. Berriem Ketchum will emcee a review of local league achievements over the past 25 years. Portions of Edward R. Murrow's "You Were There" sound track will augment the program.

LWV is a national non-partisan organization whose purpose is to "promote informed and active participation of citizens in government." The league grew out of the 1920 suffrage movement when women gained the right to vote, and is open to all women citizens of voting age. Original league purpose was threefold: encouraging and teaching women to vote; informing electorate; and working for needed legislation. In general its early interests were child welfare and world peace.

Mrs. Florence Harrison of Birmingham, league organizer and personal friend of Dorothy Roosevelt, took an active role, along with Mrs. Roosevelt, in getting the local group started in the Spring of 1932.

LOCAL LEAGUE founders were overwhelmed by intricacies of government, and to become better informed about governmental procedure, formed a civics study class. In later years other committees were constituted to study living costs, education, women in industry, and government efficiency.

One of the first league activities, and one which it still sponsors, is a meeting to which candidates are invited to present their views. First candidates' meeting in the fall

of 1932 was successful beyond the local league's wildest dreams. Since then two of the most outstanding were the spectacular 1952 and 1956 Torchlight Parades and Rallies.

The league received an American Heritage award for the 1952 Torchlight Parade, Rally and birthday party for young people who had attained their majority. The Heritage award is presented to an organization which has done the most to get out voters in communities under 25,000 population.

THROUGH the years LWV added other public services. Bulletins containing answers to questionnaires sent out to each candidate are printed and distributed free. The bulletins also have an impartial analysis of election issues. In 1953 a County Fair was held to focus attention on that branch of government.

One example, in the field of voter registration for school elections, will illustrate the league's service to the community. During the '20s there were instances in which school bond elections were decided by importation of outsiders who could not be challenged because there were no registration lists.

The league began a study of this situation in 1938 and a year later passed a resolution urging registration for school elections. The school board, however, tabled the resolution.

NEW TACTICS were needed so the league asked State superintendent of schools for local school reclassification from a graded fractional to chief class district. This 13 1/2 district must have 10,000 population or more to qualify so the city manager sent a letter to State officials stating the city area alone contained 11,000.

Redistricting would mean compulsory voter registration, regular publication of board proceedings and board member increase of from five to seven.

With a 1930 census of under 10,000 and a year to go before another Federal census, League members went to utility companies and city water department for statistics of population served locally. Mrs. Stanley Spiegel, League Education committee chairman, invited local PTA and AATW members to a meeting where league findings were presented. As a result Mrs. Spiegel and 20 interested citizens asked the school board for redistricting.

Intelligence consists of more than the mental filing of the academic side of education, the reading and classroom discussion of what is in textbooks. An intelligent person is more than a sort of human Uhu machine. *(Continued on page 11)*

AT A SPECIAL meeting a week later the board approved voter registrations and asked the league and PTA to effect such registration. League's original objective was attained and in addition Birmingham became a third class school district in 1943.

LWV has held informative meetings on such subjects as Dunbarton Oaks, United Nations, Marshall Plan, inflation, and most recently the Near East situation. World Trade is another national issue on which the League has expended prodigious energy. The league and The Birmingham Eccentric gained nation-wide recognition for putting out a world trade edition showing not only how such trade affected our nation but our community as well.

Years later Mrs. Winston Kellogg with help of other Oakland county leagues made an Oakland county trade survey which involved numerous interviews with men in a variety of businesses. Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission recognized Mrs. Kellogg's fine efforts with a congratulatory letter.

CURRENT PROJECT is a know-your-town survey, championed by Mrs. Ives Hammy with aid of 60 LWV members in education, recreation, library, streets and utilities, health, sanitation and welfare, protection, police, fire, civil defense, general city government and finance, general characteristics and history of the city with political organizations and elections, housing, planning and zoning.

In early years LWV financing was by assessment of members for unpaid bills not covered by dues. Then for several years musical teas produced funds to engage prominent speakers. As the league's service program increased, it found generous support from yearly finance drives.

Although LWV urges members to become active in the political party of their choice, the league is, entirely non-partisan.

MEMBERS ACTIVE in their party include Mrs. B. R. Jones, Birmingham Democratic club secretary; Mrs. Brooks Marshall, finance chairman and Mrs. Howard Liverance, vice chairman of the Women's Division of Oakland County Republican organization; and Mrs. Robert L. Stacey, Republican State Central committee member. Others serve as party precinct delegates, or as delegates to county and state party conventions.

League members currently in local elective offices are: Mrs. Howard Willett, Birmingham city commissioner; Mrs. Peter Loomis, board of education member and former city planning commission chairman; Mrs. William H. Jackson, recreation committee chairman; and Mrs. Oliver Rodgers, library board.

If members, or husbands of members take public office, those members can not serve on the LWV board of directors. Currently there are 370 members active in study committees and league community services.



Original members of the LWV of Birmingham reminisce on past League activities at a meeting recently at the home of Mrs. J. Hall Rosevelt, (right) honorary life member of the League, whose initiative brought the first LWV group here into existence. Other charter members are: Mrs. Angus McLay, who was also the League's second president; Mrs. Charles Shain; and Mrs. Joseph Hadjisky.



Mrs. John B. Rumsey, retiring LWV president, in 1952 headed the League's voter service committee which sponsored a "School for Political Effectiveness" which was presented in Feb., 1952 to stimulate people to work for the party of their choice. Here Mrs. Rumsey talks over the school program with (left) Willis Brewer, at that time Oakland county Democratic chairman and (right) Jack Semann who was Oakland county Republican in 1952.



Donald Leonard, Republican candidate for governor in the 1956 primary, speaks at a Torch Light Rally sponsored by the League of Women Voters last June, as other candidates wait their turn. Over 1,000 persons became more familiar with candidates and issues as a result of the Rally.

Drumming up interest in the League-sponsored County Government Fair are LWV members Mrs. Richard C. Van Dusen and Mrs. Jane Lord. The fair, held in Sept., 1953, was presented in cooperation with county officials and other Birmingham civic groups in order to familiarize the electorate with the workings of county government and county officials' duties.



This old-fashioned buggy, driven by owner Jerome Geisler of Wing Lake, was a big hit in the Torch Light Parade which the LWV sponsored to familiarize voters with candidates. Mayor and Mrs. James C. Allen are passengers. The League's 1952 Rally drew such favorable comment that a repeat performance was demanded. Now the League plans a Rally before the primaries in the Presidential election year. The Rally is held early so more people will register and so they might work for the candidates which they approve.



LWV members Mrs. William Hammond (left) and Mrs. Henry Jackson, voters' service committee members prepare LWV voters' guides for distribution prior to the recent city and general spring elections. The voters' guide, which is given free to the public before every election contains non-partisan information about candidates and issues and represents the major service to the community by the league.



Mrs. Phillip E. Cartwright, LWV voter service committee member, shook hands with Gov. G. Mennen Williams when League members journeyed to Lansing to see State government in action and to meet their local representatives.