Biographical Database of NAWSA Suffragists, 1890-1920

Biography of Mary Godat Bellamy, 1861 - 1955

By William Bellamy, independent historian, October 23, 2018

Mary (Marie) Godat was born in Richwoods Missouri on Friday 13, 1861, the youngest of seven girls. Mary arrived in Laramie at the age of 12 in 1873 with her mother, Catherine. She graduated from Laramie High School and taught for several years after her graduation. In 1886, she married Charles Bellamy and raised 2 sons, Benjamin and Fulton. As an aside, Charles was an engineer and surveyor, naming the lakes in the Snowy Range, including Lake Marie after his wife. Charles was also the first registered engineer in Wyoming and so the first in the United States.

During Mary’s 94 years, she participated in and contributed to several suffrage and women’s rights activities. She recognized that being involved in civic and political organizations and activities was necessary to advance social needs which included women’s right to vote, to manage land, to hold office, and provide services to children and women throughout Wyoming and the nation. As such, in 1896 she became a charter member of the Cheyenne Woman’s Club and in 1898 she assisted with the organization of the Laramie Woman’s Club. In 1902 she was elected as the first woman Superintendent of Schools for Albany County, and in 1910 she was elected as the first woman to the Wyoming State Legislature. Mary continued her political activities as a delegate to both the state and national democratic conventions in 1915 and was a member of the national committee that notified President Woodrow Wilson of his second nomination. Five years later the 19th amendment was ratified. Mary was quoted in a later interview, “A wonderful victory. Indeed”. She was proud to have had a small part in the campaign which led to the adoption of the amendment, which included being a Wyoming delegate to the National Suffrage Convention in Washington in 1918.

One of her friends, providing mutual support, was Carrie Chapman Catt; both women received honorary degrees of Doctor of Laws from the University of Wyoming (Catt in 1921 and Bellamy in 1952). An additional acquaintance was Julia Ward Howe, meeting in 1910 at a tea party in Boston. It amused Mary when Mrs. Howe requested that they sit together so that she could “talk with a woman who actually had voted”.

Some of Mary’s recalled accomplishments included a long list of memberships and more importantly participation in organization such as woman’s clubs, American Legion Auxiliary, Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, and Presbyterian Church. Her political and public service included service as school superintendent, democratic delegate, suffrage delegate and state legislator. Accomplishments included establishing the boy’s Industrial School, segregation of men and boys at the state prison, segregated woman penal facilities, providing the right for widows to administer their late husband’s estate, and adding the department of Home Economics and supporting the College of Agriculture at the University of Wyoming. Her recognition that active participation in organizations and politics provided the base and support necessary to accomplish her goals for the rights of women, children, and the citizens of Wyoming.

Sources

"Mrs. Mary Bellamy To Receive High Honor,” Laramie Daily Boomerang, June 1952.

"Mary G Bellamy-The first 90 years," Laramie Daily Boomerang reporter’s notes, 1952.


