

History Of Women's Fight For Rights Traced By Judge

Women who made history in the past were recalled here last week by a woman who is making history in the present. Judge Kathryn J. Lawlor, first woman ever to be named to a Circuit Court Judgeship in Maryland.

The tall, attractive Chevy Chase attorney, speaking before the Annapolis Branch American Association of University Women, traced the fight women launched in the mid-19th century to prove, as the Women's Declaration of Sentiments promulgated at the first women's congress in Seneca Falls, N. Y., expressed it, that "all men and women are created equal."

Her historic account covered an era which began with the women of Nanucket Island, who governed that swilling center when their men were at sea, down to modern times when women have been appointed as a secretary of labor, leader of the U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals, as a director of the mint, and ambassadors.

"We have 15 women in the House of Representatives and one in the Senate, and we have four women delegates in Maryland and one in the State Senate," she said.

"We think we've made great strides, but they are pitifully small. We've lost the fervor they had, and I don't think it's time.

"We've got something here that's inopportune," she added, pointing to the blackboard where proposed legislation in which AAUW is interested was listed.

The former Maryland delegate put a few pins in the idea that the leaders in the women suffragette movement were not family women. "We always think of them as spinsters with nothing to do but raise a ruckus," she observed.

Only one of the first who fought for the right to vote—Susan B. Anthony—remained single, and that was by choice, Judge Lawlor pointed out.

In the beginning, she said, the suffragette movement was linked with the abolitionist movement.

She told of Lucretia Mott, a descendant of the "Great Woman" of the Nanucket Colony, whose husband, James Mott, was sympathetic toward her cause and who presided at the women's congress at Seneca Falls, N. Y., because women knew nothing of parliamentary procedure.

She described Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who worked with Lucretia Mott in planning the meeting. The daughter of a judge, Elizabeth Stanton as a girl was impressed by the fact that women clients almost always left her father in tears, a fact her father explained was due to his inability to aid women under the existing law.

At the Seneca Falls meeting, which drew 65 women and four or five men, the women published a list of grievances, including their contention that "if married, in the eyes of the law, she (a woman) is civilly dead."

They also stressed the lack of property rights, together with the belief that a woman is an irresponsible creature, who "can commit crimes with immunity providing she does it in the presence of her husband."

It was Elizabeth Cady Stanton, over the horrified protests of Lucretia Mott, who introduced the plank that it was the duty of women to secure "their sacred right" of franchise. Judge Lawlor said

the proposal, as Lucretia Mott had predicted, threw the meeting in to an uproar.

Subsequently women who had supported it withdrew their names, feeling it was not nice for a woman to vote.

To Elizabeth Stanton also goes the credit of the bloomer. Judge Lawlor said. This dress originally consisted of long trousers over which was worn a dress of about the length worn today. Elizabeth persuaded her friend, Amelia Bloomer, to wear them, and the garb received the latter's name.

One of the principal opponents of women's rights was the clergy, the AAUW Branch was told. A talk by Lucy Stone—famous among other things because she insisted on keeping her maiden name after she married Henry Blackwell—was once announced in the scornful words of a minister, "A hen will undertake to crow like a cock" at town hall.

Another clergyman once sounded his prayer after a talk by another woman: "Good Lord, lay what this woman has said aside. Forget it."

Judge Lawlor told of the role Susan B. Anthony played in testing the right to vote under the 14th Amendment, a move which led to her arrest on charges of violating the law by attempting to vote when she was not eligible.

Susan Anthony went to Wyoming, the first territory to grant women the right to vote. "I guess they didn't see many women and they were willing to give them anything they asked," Judge Lawlor remarked humorously. She also got the state of Colorado to amend its law.

Another figure Judge Lawlor included in her talk was Carrie Chapman Catt, only woman of the five active in the suffragette movement who lived to see the vote achieved.

As late as 1952, however, Judge Lawlor said, women in Honduras had yet to achieve the right to vote. And in some counties in Maryland today, women cannot serve on a jury.

Judge Lawlor was introduced by Mrs. T. Leonard Mikulec, status of women chairman who was in charge of the program.

Lady Governor

And speaking of judges, someone advanced the thought that wouldn't it be nice if Maryland's first lady circuit court judge were to become Maryland's first lady governor? It would appear he was talking about Montgomery County's popular and attractive Judge Kathryn J. Lawlor.

Judge Lawlor, too, is well-situated for the next fifteen years. At the present time what is Montgomery County's gain is Maryland's loss.