

Brief Bibliography

For Mrs. Ellicott's work in the General Federation of Women's Clubs see the *History of the Maryland Federation of Women's Clubs* compiled and edited by Mrs. Harry L. Harcum et. al., Vol. I, 1941. For her early activities in Baltimore with Mary Garrett, Carey Thomas, Julia Rogers, etc. the best account is Edith Finch's *Carey Thomas of Bryn Mawr*, 1947. Articles in the *Baltimore Sun* 1900-1914 are very useful.

The *Minutes* of the Maryland Suffrage Association, 1904-1910, the *Journals* of both Houses of the Maryland Legislature, 1900-1910, *The History of Woman Suffrage*, edited by Ida Husted Harper et. al., Vol. 6, 1969, and Mal Hee Son Wallace's "The Woman Suffrage Movement in Maryland from 1870-1920," 1962, (unpublished) are very valuable sources.

Margie Lockett in *Maryland Women*, Vol. III (1942), has a brief account of Mrs. Ellicott's activities.

LAVINIA MARGARET ENGLE, 1892- Volunteer and Political Leader

NANCY REVELLE JOHNSON

Lavinia Margaret Engle's career exemplified the political evolution of many women who successfully made the transition from involvement with volunteer groups to political action and government service. Through her work with the National American Woman's Suffrage Association and the League of Women Voters, she gained an awareness of social and political problems, acquired political expertise, and developed organizational skills. Her work with volunteer organizations provided training for her service in the Maryland Legislature and the federal Social Security Administration.

Lavinia Engle was born May 23, 1892, in Montgomery County, the daughter of Lavinia Hauke and James Melvin Engle. Educated at Antioch College, she graduated in 1912 and returned to Washington. After a two year stay at home, she went to work for the National American Woman's Suffrage Association. Her interest in the woman's suffrage movement was strongly influenced by the example of her Quaker mother, who was an early crusader for woman's suffrage.

Miss Engle chose to affiliate with NAWSA, the suffrage organization that pushed for the integration of women into the existing political system. The aims and methods of the more militant Women's Party were repugnant to her. Justice, logic, and persuasion were the weapons she preferred. Her affiliation with NAWSA revealed a pragmatic streak in Miss Engle's nature that was characteristic of her approach to political problems throughout her long career.

As field organizer and later field secretary for NAWSA, Miss Engle campaigned in sixteen states for the suffrage cause. Prior to World War I, she worked primarily in the Southern states, helping to build up local organizations and assisting in legislative campaigns to obtain suffrage amendments to state constitutions. She appeared before a number of the Southern state legislatures in support of the suffrage cause.

Campaigning for woman's suffrage in that era was not without its difficulties for Miss Engle. It meant riding on mule back up a dry creek bed in West Virginia to plead successfully for a legislator's support for a suffrage amendment to the state's constitution and staying in a Cowboy's Inn in Texas, where indecision as to where to put up for the night was resolved when she and Miss Minnie Ferber, with whom she was traveling, were told, "You'd better light. Only one there is." It meant stopping a train in Texas to persuade certain legislators who were leaving the state capital to attend a horse show to return and vote for the suffrage amendment. It meant parading down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington and Fifth Avenue in New York City, confronted by hostile crowds. It meant campaigning from the backs of cars and on street corners in New York City, where dealing with hecklers was only part of the day's work. NAWSA was one of the first big organizations to take to the streets in order to take its message to the people. Campaigning for woman's suffrage had its hazards, but it was not without excitement.

World War I came, and many of the women who were working for suffrage turned their attention to the war effort. Miss Engle served as organizer and speaker for the Liberty Loan Committee. When Dr. Anna Howard Shaw suggested that the YMCA send a Staff Field Hospital, staffed by women, overseas, the idea was accepted. Miss Engle, because of her organizational experience, was selected to help with the organization of the Hospital. She went with the unit to Verdun and spent a year at the front.

Miss Engle returned at the end of the War and took up the cause of suffrage again. After the War, she worked primarily in the East, in New Jersey and New York. The ratification of the 19th Amendment posed a problem for NAWSA. The leaders, recognizing that the main objectives of the organization had been accomplished, were concerned that efforts should be continued to eliminate from the statute books discriminatory laws against women. The leaders also felt that much work remained to be done to educate women to fulfill their responsibilities as citizens. A committee of three, therefore, recommended the establishment of a national organization for the purpose of study and education. NAWSA was then dissolved and replaced by the League of Women Voters, a non partisan organization, designed to educate women to their responsibilities as citizens. Miss Engle became executive director of the Maryland League of Women Voters.

As executive director of the Maryland League from 1921 to 1936, Miss Engle was responsible for the organization of the League in the state. She helped define the area of study and legislative goals of the organization in

its formative years. The most immediate political concern of the Maryland League was to assure that the right of women to vote would be enforced and that women would indeed register and vote. The League was especially concerned with encouraging women to register and vote in the early 1920's. A post mortem on registration was held to check up on the members. Not only did the League work to encourage its members to register and vote, but it kept check on election officials to assure that women were not hindered in exercising their right to vote. In October 1924, Miss Engle charged that in Baltimore City women were embarrassed in the registrar's office when trying to register to vote.

In 1928, Miss Engle undertook to assess the situation of how women stood as voters after eight years experience. Writing in the *Maryland Club Woman*, she declared that the 1928 campaign was the first campaign where women had voted in sufficiently large numbers to make them a major factor in a campaign. She was encouraged by a growing appreciation on the part of party leaders for the work of women who had been developed as leaders by their work among women's groups and by a growing number of women being elected to office on their own merits. She predicted that women would become part of the party machinery.

Legislatively, the Maryland League, during Miss Engle's tenure as executive director, demonstrated concern with legislation affecting women and children. The League, in that period, gave its support to the establishment of a state department of infant and maternal hygiene, a Juvenile Court Act, a law providing double compensation for minors injured when illegally employed, the establishment of a Commission on Almshouses, and the reorganization of the Board of State Aid to Charities. The League was especially active in supporting the repeal of laws detrimental to the status of women, and Miss Engle's previous experience in lobbying state legislators for the suffrage cause proved useful to her as she once again engaged in lobbying.

The League also became involved in the study of international relations. When the National League of Women Voters helped sponsor a Pan-American Conference of Women in Baltimore in 1922, Miss Engle helped organize the Conference. As a result of her work with the Conference, she, with Carrie Chapman Catt and Mrs. Maud Wood Park, was awarded an honorary membership in the Sorority of the Women of the Republic of Salvador. The League also studied the educational system of the state, and demonstrated interest in the method of appointments to the Board of Regents for the University of Maryland. It urged the appointment of a woman to the Board, but to no avail. Miss Engle, herself, was strongly supported by prominent League members for appointment to the Board. Miss Engle's ability to analyze problems and her political acumen were an asset to the League in its study of social problems. She was given credit by the *Evening Sun* in 1932 for being responsible for many pieces of social legislation in the state.

Miss Engle's work with the Maryland League provided her with background in a number of areas, and her ability and the knowledge she gained through her League work, in addition to the contacts she had made, made her a natural for appointment to various commissions. She received appointments to the Committee on the Reorganization of State Administration Departments and to the State Committee on Higher Education. As executive director of the Maryland League, she had spoken to numerous groups encouraging women to become involved in politics. In 1930, she took the plunge into the political arena when she ran on the Democratic ticket for the House of Delegates from Montgomery County.

In campaigning for the House of Delegates, Miss Engle cited her work for educational and social legislation while working with the Maryland League and her concern for local problems such as rural and suburban development. She was assisted in campaigning by a large group of Democratic women who wanted to see a woman in the House of Delegates. Successful in her campaign, Miss Engle, as a member of the House of Delegates, continued her interest in legislation affecting women and children. She worked for the passage of the Marriage bill, which required that five days had to elapse after the issuance of a marriage license before the marriage could be performed. Her most notable contribution in her one term in the House of Delegates was in her effort on behalf of the campaign to enact social insurance legislation. She was credited by legislators with snatching the compulsory unemployment insurance bill from defeat in 1933. Her speech attacking Bethlehem Steel, the chief opponent of the bill, swayed some legislators who had opposed the bill, and the bill was passed. A House Resolution was then passed congratulating Miss Engle for her contribution to the general welfare. Her speech for the compulsory unemployment insurance bill and her work for social insurance legislation brought her national attention. She was invited to speak on "Unemployment Insurance" before the International Conference of Women in Chicago in July 1933, and in November 1934, she was invited by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to participate in the White House Conference on Economic Security.

While a member of the House of Delegates, Miss Engle became increasingly involved in the activities of the Democratic Party. A supporter of Governor Albert C. Ritchie, she served as delegate at large to the 1932 National Democratic Convention in Chicago, where she supported the favorite son candidacy of Governor Ritchie. The Convention, however, was a disillusioning experience for her. Terming the Convention a farce, she publicly objected to the system which made the nomination of a candidate "a game of wits between a few political leaders," and arranged a meeting of women delegates to both the Democratic and Republican Conventions at League headquarters to discuss the matter.

Her disenchantment with the Convention method of selecting a candidate did not deter her from continuing to participate in the political arena. Encouraged by Governor Ritchie, she agreed to head the Speakers Bureau of

the Women's Division of the Roosevelt Campaign in 1932. In December 1933, she became the first woman to serve on the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners. She was appointed to that position in spite of opposition. John E. Oxley, a Rockville attorney, unsuccessfully challenged her appointment, and that of Dr. George L. Edmunds, on the grounds that both had been members of the Legislature when an act was passed increasing the salaries of the county commissioners. Miss Engle, who had arranged to accept pay on a part time basis as director of the Maryland League of Women Voters, charged that the challenge was made because she was a woman. She served her appointed term as commissioner but failed to be re-elected.

Miss Engle resigned as director of the Maryland League in June 1936 to accept appointment by President Roosevelt as educational representative of the Social Security Board. She had become acquainted with Mrs. Roosevelt while serving as Chairman of the Speakers' Bureau of the Women's Division of the Roosevelt campaign in 1932 and through the Consumers' League Board, and it was understood that she had the backing of Mrs. Roosevelt for the appointment. Also, she had gained national prominence because of her work in Maryland on behalf of social insurance legislation. Her organizational experiences gained from her work with NAWSA and the Maryland League further qualified her for the position. She resigned her position as director of the League to accept the position, but remained on the League Board and continued to play an active role in the League.

As educational representative for the Social Security Board, she toured the country, speaking at colleges to persuade students to become involved in the Social Security program through study and internships. And she spoke to women's organizations to explain to women how the act affected them and their families. She later became Chief of Field Operation in the Washington headquarters, and in that position, she sketched the plan for regional organization consisting of regional and district offices. Miss Engle remained with the Social Security Board until her retirement in 1966.

In spite of the demands of her position in the Social Security Administration, Miss Engle continued her interest in the area of social problems in Maryland. Through her association with the League, she helped to arrange interstate conferences in 1936 and 1937 dealing with the problems of migratory children. The formation of a special committee on migratory child labor resulted from the work of these conferences. Miss Engle also served as Chairman of the Maryland Conference on Social Welfare. After her retirement from the Social Security Board, she took a special interest in the problems of the aging and nursing home regulations. She continues many of her interests today at her home in Silver Spring.

Miss Engle's career spanned a fifty-year period in American history (1914-1966) that saw many changes in the status of women. She played a significant role in the demand of women for suffrage, and once the vote was obtained, she dedicated much of her life to working to see that women exercised their citizenship responsibly. Keenly interested in legislation affecting

women and children, she was responsible through her position as executive director of the Maryland League for the initiation and passage of much social legislation. An idealist, she was capable of using very practical political methods to bring about social change. Her own life was an example to other women emerging from their cocoons of domesticity, as she led Maryland women to involve themselves in efforts to improve not only the position of women and children but of all people.

Brief Bibliography

The Baltimore newspapers provide the best material on Miss Engle's career. The Baltimore *Sun* and *The Evening Sun* give accounts of her activity as director of the League, and as legislator. In addition, a number of personal interviews were found in these newspapers and the *Washington Post*. Secondary sources that contain brief references to Miss Engle's work in the suffrage movement are: Lois W. Banner, *Women in Modern America: A Brief History* (1974); Martin Gruberg, *Women in American Politics* (1968); and Ida Husted Harper, ed., *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 6, 1900-1920 (1969). Brief biographical sketches of Miss Engle can be found in Margie Lockett, *Maryland Women*, Vols. I (1931) and III (1942). The *Maryland Club Woman* (December 1928 and October 1931) contain articles by Miss Engle.

SARAH A. COLLINS FERNANDIS, 1863-1951

First Negro Social Worker

PHYLLIS HATHAWAY

Mrs. Sarah Collins Fernandis was the first Black female hired in Maryland as a social worker for a public welfare agency. She was born in Port Deposit, Cecil County, Maryland, on March 8, 1863. Her undergraduate work was completed at Hampton Institute in Virginia in June 1882. After graduation, she taught in public schools in Virginia, North Carolina and Florida.

In September 1900, she was employed by the Baltimore City Department of Education as an elementary school teacher. She taught at schools located at Saratoga and Mount Streets and Fremont and King Streets. In 1903, she married John C. Fernandis. Because of a law which stipulated that women could not teach in public schools after marriage, she resigned and moved to Washington, D.C. where she established the first neighborhood settlement house for Negroes in the United States. She remained at the settlement house until she made application and was accepted at New York University for training in social work.

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