

In Commemoration of the Suffrage Centennial ...

Plainville Women Leading the Way

100 Years of Local Women
in Politics and Government



Part 2

WOMEN VOTE

Connecticut Suffrage Centennial

A Virtual Exhibit by Rosemary Morante

Plainville Historical Society

August 2020

Women of the Plainville Board of Education 1950's-Present

In this next part of our virtual exhibit, we will take a look at the many Plainville women who have served on the Board of Education from the 1950's through 2020.

Unless otherwise noted, all images on the following pages are either from an Annual Report of the town or an official Town Council photo taken by the town/BOE.

Two Women Are Elected to Board of Education in the 1950's



As noted earlier, Helen Loy had served on the Board. She was elected in 1953 and in 1956, she was elected as the first woman Chairperson of the Plainville Board of Education.



Ruth Menousek served on the Board of Education 1955-1961.

1961: Sophia Browne Elected to the Board of Education

First elected in 1961, Sophia Naaman Browne served several terms and was elected as Chairperson during these years. We believe that Sophia Browne may have been the first African-American woman to chair a Board of Education in Connecticut. She was instrumental in forming Plainville's participation in Project Concern which has evolved into the Open Choice program in which we still participate.

Sophia was very dedicated to our town. Her legacy is one of true community spirit and service. In addition to the Board of Education, she was involved in Girl Scouts, NAACP, Human Relations Council, Redeemer's A.M.E. Zion Church, and the founding of Tunxis Community College.



Image: Believed to be from the New Britain Herald. All Herald images are used courtesy of the New Britain Herald.



BOARD OF EDUCATION

Seated, left to right: Mr. Hiltbold, Mr. Majsak, Mrs. Browne.
Standing, left to right: Mr. Venturi, Mr. Hoerle, Mr. Caparrelli.

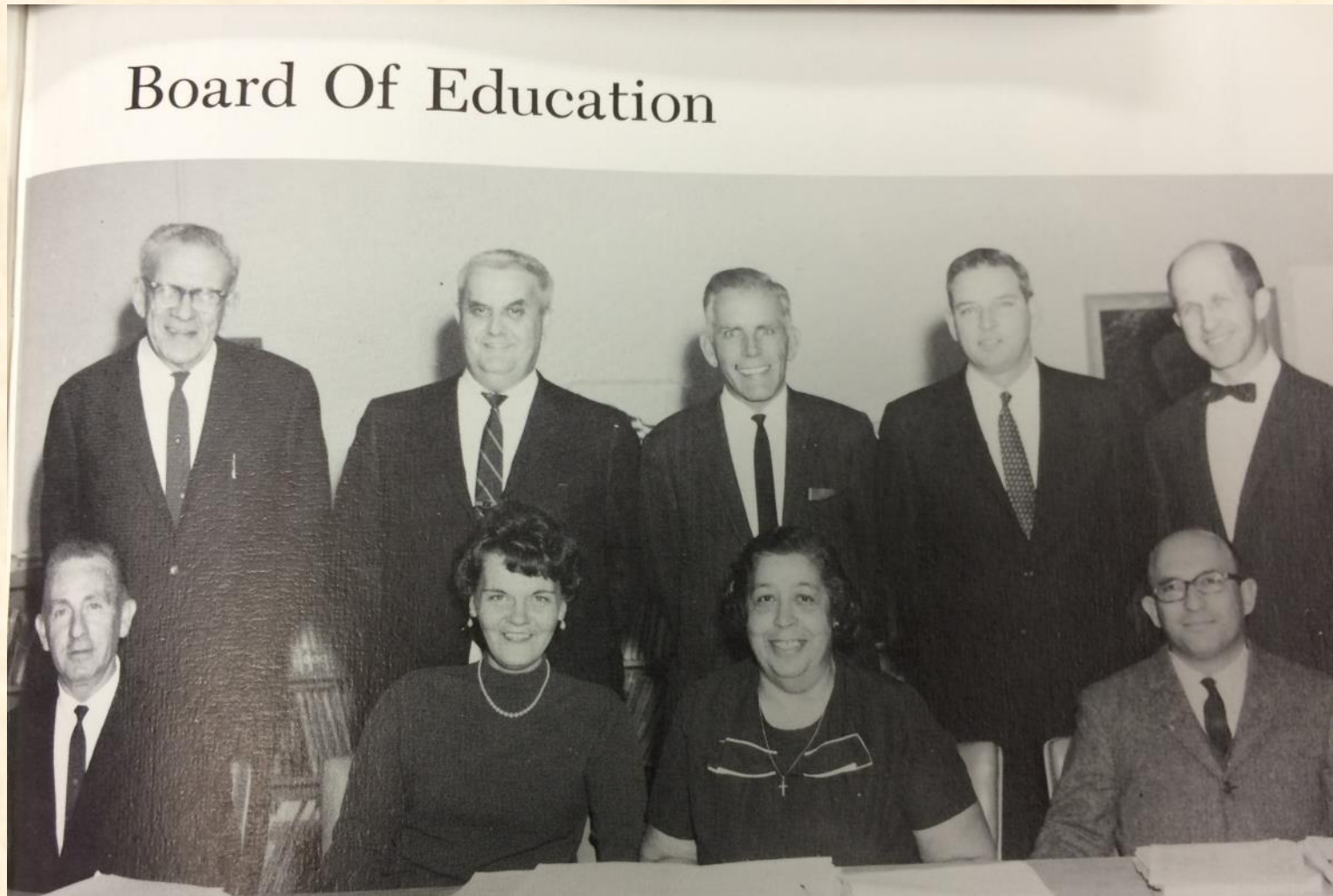
This photo was taken during Sophia Browne's first term.



Sophia Naaman Browne (center front) is here with Plainville High classmates in 1928. They were the first class to graduate from PHS.

Image: Plainville Historical Society files.

1963: Joan Deegan Elected to the Board of Education



Joan Deegan joined Sophia Browne on the Board in 1963. They were the only two women for a number of years. This photo was taken in 1968 while Sophia Browne chaired the Board of Education. Joan Deegan also went on to become a Chairperson of the Board of Education.

The 1970's



Board of Education. Seated, l-r Gary Boukus, Chairman Eugene Millerick, Charles Venturi. Standing, l-r Joan Herrgesell, Joan Deegan, Thomas Ferguson, Sharon Gagliardi, Paul Phaneuf. Absent, Marvin Saltzman.

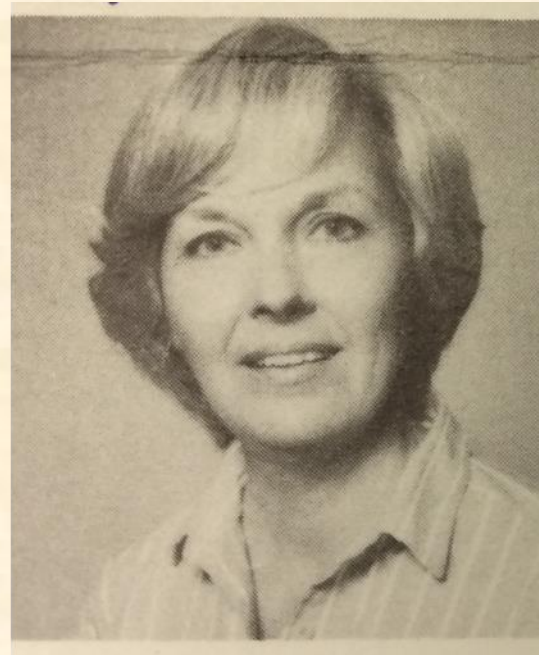
Two women who joined the Board of Education in the 1970's were Joan Herrgesell and Sharon Gagliardi.

The 1980's



Three new women became board members during this decade, Marliss "Missy" Pavano (standing third from left) and Margaret Aiudi (standing fifth from left). Irene "Bunny" Furman is seated on the left in the front row.

The 1990's



Carrie Burns (left) and Marilyn Warnat (right) became Board of Education members in the 1990's.

The 21st Century Begins



The new century saw the election of more women to the Board and the occurrence of Boards where women constituted the majority of membership. During the early years of the 21st century, new women members included Becky Tyrrell (seated second from left), Barbara Willard (seated fourth from left), Sue McCarthy (standing first from left), and Lorrie Goldsmith (standing fourth from left). Yvette Sanabria was also elected during this time.

2009-2019 (Photo 1)



New Board of Education women included Cheryl Provost (standing on the right) and Tabitha Wazorko Manafort (seated on the right).

2009-2019 (Photo 2)



More new Board of Education women included Lisa Buckley and Deb Hardy (standing first and second from left), and Charlotte Koskoff (standing on right). Seated on left is Andrea Saunders.

2009-2019 (Photo 3)



Still more new Board of Education women included (standing left to right) Laurie Peterson, Crystal St. Lawrence, and Nicole Palmieri. New members seated are Kathy Wells (second from left) and Lori Consalvo (fourth from left). In recent years, women have represented large majorities on the Board.

The Current Board of Education



Rebecca Martinez (seated second from right) was elected in 2019 as the newest woman member of the Board of Education.

Five Women Have Chaired the Board of Education Since the 1970's



Bunny Furman



Missy Pavano



Andrea Saunders



Deb Hardy



Becky Tyrrell

Becky Tyrrell has served almost 20 years on the Board of Education. She is currently serving a fourth term as Chairperson.

Women of the Board of Library Trustees 1950's-Present

The Board of Library Trustees is the third elected body of government in Plainville. As seen earlier, quite a number of our early women office holders were on the Library Board. They have been followed by many more women who have served our town in this capacity.

As noted on the next page Pat Fongemie currently chairs the Library Board of Trustees. This means that all three of Plainville's elected bodies are now chaired by a woman.

Women of the Library Board: 1950's—Present

Evelyn Searles

Julia Moroney

Phoeboe Dick

Doris Disney

Peg Hoerle

Gloria Ryskind *

Marilyn Petit

Dorothea Thayer

Agnes Riera

Charlotte Koskoff

Barbara Petit

Kathie Lickwar*

Joan Ostertag

Sue Dumais

Marilyn Sevigny

Pat Fongemie * (current)

Julia Underwood (current)

Nancy O'Toole

Rebecca Ireland (current)

* Served or is serving as Chairperson

Women in Other Local Offices: Registrars of Voters 1950's-Present *and* Judge of Probate

We have a Democratic and a Republican Registrar of Voters. These are elected positions with 4-year terms. The Registrars have many responsibilities regarding voter registration and elections.

A number of Registrars served for many years and were really some of the "legendary" women of both the Democratic and Republican parties.

Judge of Probate was and still is an elected position. Although our probate district is now a multi-town district, Plainville had its own probate court for many years.

Women Registrars of Voters: 1950's—Present

Hazel Cassidy

Irene Sataline

Ida Hull

Violet Kane Nichols

Millie D'Antonio

Betty Corliss

Jean Lombardo

Beth Gasparini (current)

Susan Abram (current)

Two Stories from the History of Our Registrars ...



Millie D'Antonio was a longtime Republican Registrar. Her daughter Beth Gasparini is the current Republican Registrar of Voters. We believe they are our only mother and daughter to both serve in the same elected office.



Hazel Cassidy (D)



Ida Hull (R)

Hazel Cassidy and Ida Hull served together as Registrars. They also shared a special bond as Gold Star Mothers who had lost sons in World War II.

Images: From Annual Reports of the town.

1994: Heidi Famiglietti is the First Plainville Woman to be Elected Judge of Probate

In 1994, Plainville elected our first woman as Judge of Probate. A UCONN graduate, Heidi Famiglietti had worked in the local probate court for a number of years.

She brought experience and compassion to the position. As Heidi noted in an interview, she truly enjoyed helping people and making a difference.

Heidi Famiglietti was re-elected multiple times. She served the people of Plainville as Judge of Probate for a total of 16 years.



Image: Ad published in the New Britain Herald. All Herald images are used courtesy of the New Britain Herald.

Plainville Women in State Government

A total of five women have been elected as State Representative from Plainville. In fact, for over half of the past 50 years, we have been represented by a woman. One of those women also went on to be elected to statewide office.

In this last part of the virtual exhibit on **Plainville Women Leading the Way**, we will highlight our five women State Representatives:

Clara Pratt

Gertrude Koskoff

Nora Powers

Pauline Kezer

Betty Boukus

1950: Clara Pratt Elected State Representative

At the mid-point of the 20th century, Clara Pratt was elected as our first Plainville woman to be State Representative.

Clara had been and would continue to be very active in the Republican Party on both a local and state level. We believe that she may have been the first woman to chair one of the political party town committees.

In addition to politics, Clara was active with the visiting nurses and served on the Board of Directors of the association.

In the legislature, Clara Pratt served on the Elections, Public Safety, and Public Health Committees.



Image: Plainville Historical Society files.

State Representative Clara Pratt



In other words, he makes a flexible ring that has an work-contacting surface of tially the diameter as the o be held by the collet.

—Photo by Salomone
Mrs. Clara Pratt, extreme right in above photograph, confers with leaders of a Republican "Lodge For Governor" motorcade which toured this vicinity October 20. She is a candidate for the General Assembly.

Image: Believed to be from The Plainville News or New Britain Herald. All Herald images are used courtesy of the New Britain Herald.

CLARA PRATT
SHARES YOUR STAKE IN PLAINVILLE'S FUTURE

Clara and Sam Pratt (center) Carol (Pratt) and George Brown (rear)
Barbara, Richard and Linwood Brown (front)

**Pull the Second Lever for
personal representation**

ACTION Speaks Louder than **WORDS!**

This Ad Paid For By Republicans for Clara Pratt

Image: Ad published in The Plainville News.

1952: Gertrude Koskoff Elected State Representative

In 1952, Gertrude Koskoff was elected to the first of her three terms in the state legislature. Representative Koskoff was at the vanguard of policies in the areas of civil rights and criminal justice.

She sponsored key bills in these areas. This included legislation on adult probation and a law to begin the inclusion of special parking for disabled persons. Representative Koskoff also worked to expand what was then New Britain Teachers College.

After her time in the General Assembly, Gertrude Koskoff remained active. She was a member of the Connecticut Parole Board first appointed by Governor Dempsey in the 1960's and then reappointed by Governors Meskill, Grasso, and O'Neill.



State Representative Gertrude Koskoff, as she seconded the nomination of John Lodge for Governor at the 1954 Republican State Convention.

Image: From an Annual Report. Town of Plainville.



Image: Plainville USA 100 Year. Book published by the 1969 Centennial Committee.

State Representative Gertrude Koskoff



The campaign brochure shown here highlights the many areas in which State Representative Koskoff worked for legislation.

Image: Plainville Historical Society files.

1958: Nora Powers Elected State Representative

Nora Powers was a four-term State Representative. Prior to her 1958 election, she had been very active in Democratic Party politics and also served as Registrar of Voters.

In the legislature, Nora was on the Transportation Committee which included work on the site selection for a DMV office in the area. She was also instrumental in the installation of what became known as "Nora's Light," the traffic light for which she advocated at the corner of Washington Street (Route 177) and Broad Street.

Nora was involved in many activities beyond politics including the American Legion and New Britain General Hospital auxiliary.



Mrs. Nora Powers, first Democratic woman elected to the Legislature from Plainville, studies a final count of the Tuesday vote.

Image: Believed to be from The Plainville News.

State Representative Nora Powers



**RE-ELECT
NORA
POWERS**
For State
Representative

AN EXPERIENCED, FULL TIME LEGISLATOR
FOR TRANSPORTATION OR INFORMATION **Call SH 7-2891**
VOTE DEMOCRATIC
PULL THE TOP LEVER
PAID POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT

Image: Ad published in The Plainville News.



Image: The Plainville News.

1978: Pauline Kezer Elected State Representative

Pauline Kezer represented Plainville for four terms as our State Representative. Prior to her election, Pauline had already been very active through involvement in Girl Scouts and YWCA. She also chaired the town's Inland Wetlands Commission.

In the state legislature, Pauline Kezer served on the Finance Committee and was also Assistant Majority Leader. She also sponsored or co-sponsored over one hundred bills including those for legislation on pay equity, domestic violence, and insurance for breast cancer.



Pauline Kezer on the Plainville Inlands Wetland Commission.

Image: From an Annual Report of the town.

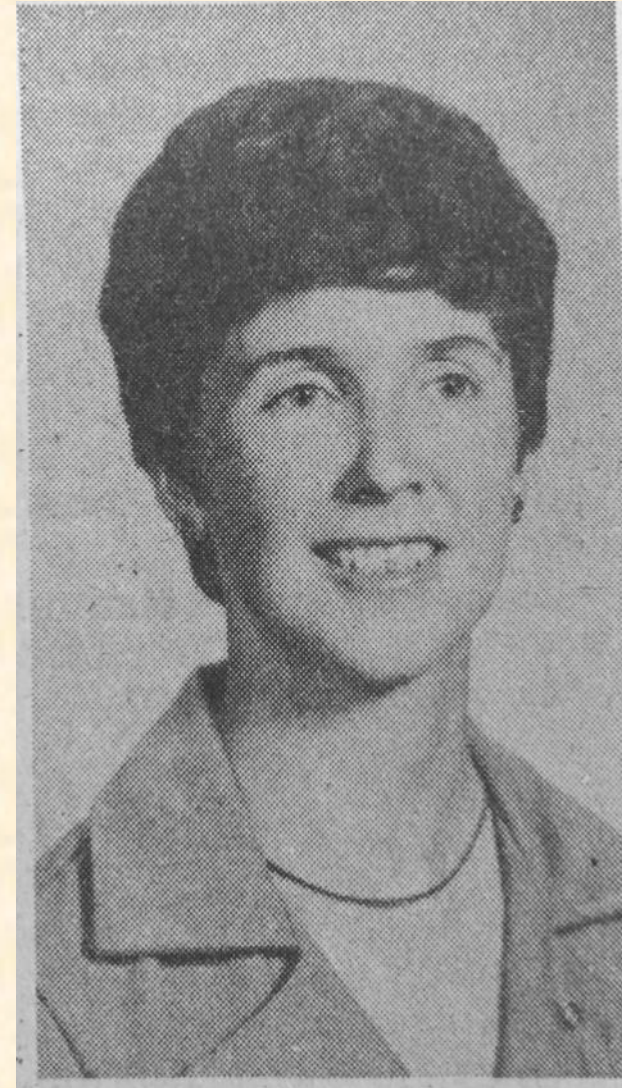


Image: New Britain Herald. All images from the Herald used courtesy of the New Britain Herald.

State Representative Pauline Kezer



Joyous Kezer family

HERALD PHOTO — GAUDIO

11-8-80

State Rep. Pauline Kezer is surrounded by her family during a celebration at the Herald following her election win yesterday. Behind her husband, Ken, is daughter Pam. Daughters Cindy, left, and

Anne, flank their mother. Mrs. Kezer won a handy victory, defeating Democratic challenger J. Richard Burke in the 22nd Assembly District, all of Plainville and a portion of New Britain.

State Representative Pauline Kezer and her family celebrate her first re-election victory in 1980.

Image: New Britain Herald. All Herald images are used courtesy of the New Britain Herald.

1990: Pauline Kezer Wins Secretary of State

In 1990, our State Representative Pauline Kezer ran for Connecticut Secretary of State and won. This made her one of only two persons from the Town of Plainville ever elected to statewide office. (The other was Governor John Trumbull.)

Nov 7 1990 'Picking up votes one at a time' was the key to success, Kezer says

By Marlene Karp
HERALD REPORTER

PLAINVILLE — Pauline Kezer, of 10 River Edge Court, was elated today after defeating Secretary of the State Julie Tashjian. The win makes her the first Republican in 30 years to hold the office.

This was the second time in eight years that the two met in

wasn't decided until late last night.

"I left Plainville headquarters ahead by 3,000 votes and on the radio (on the way to the Sheraton) I heard it was a dead heat," she said.

It wasn't until 11:30 that they knew the results of the underticket. "Eighty-two percent of the vote was in, I knew I had a lead of 53 to 47 percent and I

knew the edge was mine," she said.

"It was a great win. It was really exciting," she said.

Mrs. Kezer said that her campaign four years ago helped to prepare a more targeted campaign for this race.

The former state representative said she "tested the wat-

SEE KEZER, PAGE 11



Image: New Britain Herald. All images from the Herald are used courtesy of the New Britain Herald.

Image: Political ad published in the Herald. All images from the Herald used courtesy of the New Britain Herald.

Secretary of State Pauline Kezer

During Pauline Kezer's term as Secretary of State, the state piloted electronic voting machines in preparation for a major transition to newer technology. Secretary of State Kezer was also active on a national level. She was elected as Vice-Chairperson of the National Secretary of States Association.

Pauline Kezer has been a Harvard fellow in the Institute of Politics. She has also been an Adjunct Professor at CCSU.

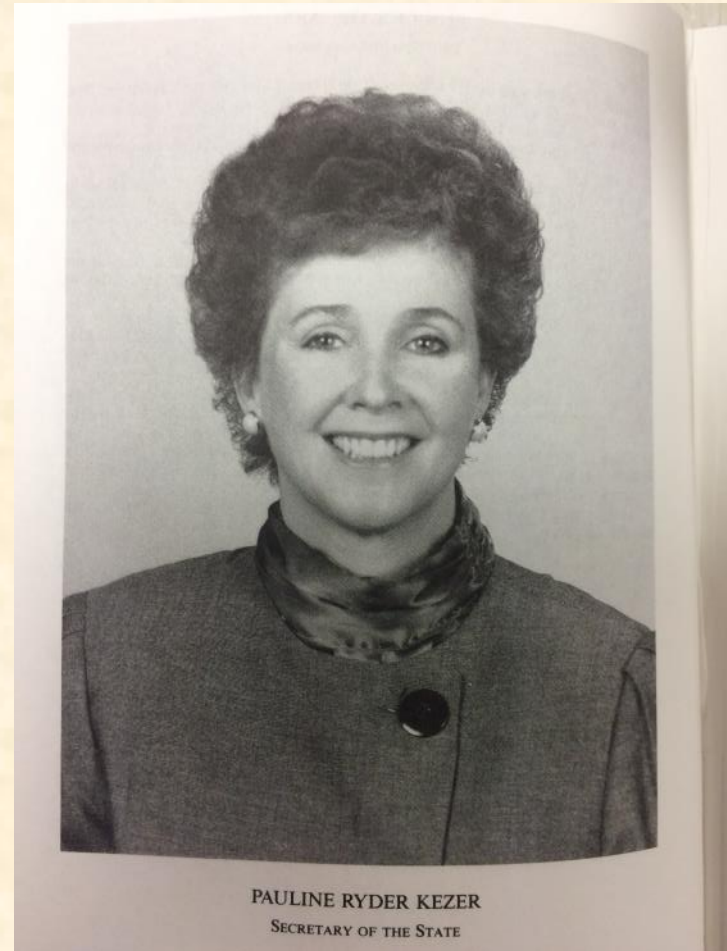


Image: Connecticut Register and Manual.

1994: Betty Boukus Elected State Representative

In 1994, Betty Boukus was elected to the first of eleven terms as State Representative. Her twenty-two years made Betty our longest serving State Representative.

Betty served on Finance and Public Safety Committees. She co-chaired the important Bonding Subcommittee. Betty was a strong and indefatigable advocate for many state and local projects. She was honored by firefighters for her support of training facilities. On the local level, Betty was instrumental in securing funding for schools, public library, senior center, and parks.

In addition to legislative service, Betty was active in the community. She was Corresponding Secretary for the Plainville Historical Society (and was very helpful in securing funds for the Historic Center elevator).



Images: R. Morante

State Representative Betty Boukus



Images: R. Morante

In Conclusion ...

We end with a photo appropriate to the moment. It shows Betty Boukus speaking at a Women's History Month event at the State Capitol. Betty is next to the statue of our state heroine Prudence Crandall who, despite opposition, ran a school for African-American girls in the 1830's. Betty had spearheaded state efforts, including "Pennies for Prudence" fundraising, to have a statue of our state heroine at the Capitol.

In her later years, Prudence Crandall was also a strong voice in the struggle for women's right to vote.

As we conclude our commemoration of the 19th Amendment and the 100 years since, let's give a final salute to all the women who worked for equal rights and to all the women, from Plainville and beyond, who have entered active government service from 1920 to the present day.



Image: R. Morante

Thank you to ...

The New Britain Herald

Town Clerk Carol Skultety and Staff

Joan Calistro, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent of Schools

Plainville Public Library