



## October 1920: A Celebration of Women's Suffrage

Jennifer Sharp, Archivist, Hartford History Center, Hartford Public Library

On September 14, 2020, the anniversary of Connecticut's ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, the Hartford History Center at Hartford Public Library (HHC) launched an online exhibition celebrating the centennial of women's suffrage.

In the early 1900s, voter registration in Hartford, Connecticut was only held in March and October of even numbered years. A few hundred people would apply during each registration period. In August 1920, with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, women were eligible to vote for the first time in the upcoming Presidential election. That October, thousands of Hartford women, whether single, married, or widowed; black or white; Jewish or Christian; housewives, stenographers, or undertakers; native born or foreign born, queued up at City Hall to register to exercise their newly acquired right. **October 1920** is an introduction to some of these women and their stories.

The focus of the project is the History Center's collection of Hartford's voter registration cards. HHC Archivist Jennifer Sharp and Research Specialist Maureen Heher consulted local newspapers, city directories, and census records to form a more complete picture of the women's lives. Community members, and other local history organizations, contributed photographs as well.

Hartford's women voters in 1920 took the right to vote very seriously, taking advantage of opportunities to both practice with the voting machines, and to learn about the candidates and issues. To encourage participation in 2020 and beyond, links are included in this article to local voting information.

Initially envisioned as a physical exhibit, the pandemic forced a change in plans, and also hampered the ability to fully digitize the registration cards prior to the launch. The exhibit is being promoted to local patrons through the distribution of bookmarks with each of the Library's curbside checkouts. The scanned registration cards are being uploaded to the Connecticut Digital Archive ([ctdigitalarchive.org](http://ctdigitalarchive.org)).

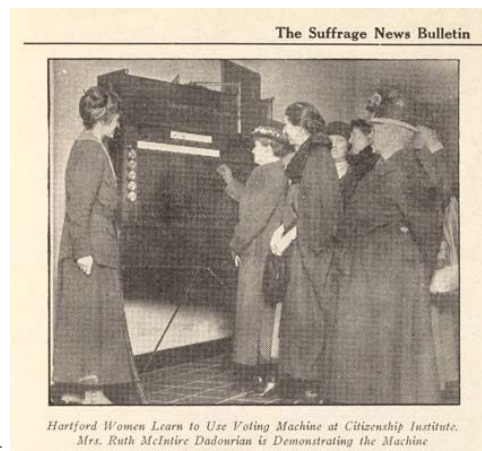
Link to **October 1920**: <http://bit.ly/oct1920>

1) Voter registration card for Mary A. Johnson. Mary and her husband, Sidney, opened the first Black funeral home in Connecticut.

A scanned image of a voter registration card from October 11, 1920. The card is filled out with handwritten information in cursive. The date is stamped as 'OCT 11 1920' in the top left corner. The registrant is Mary A. Johnson, residing at 74 Russell St. in Danbury, CT. Her occupation is listed as 'Undertaker'. The card also includes fields for 'Date of Birth', 'Age', 'By whom employed', 'Date of Naturalization', and 'Reason for Tax Exemption', which are mostly blank or partially filled.

2) Suffrage News Bulletin photo of women learning to use the voting machine. The suffrage bulletins are available on the Connecticut Digital Archive (<https://ctdigitalarchive.org/islandora/object/50002%3A7541>)

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## The Society of Georgia Archivists held its **51st Annual Meeting** on November 11-13,

2020 - its first-ever all-virtual conference - with the theme "Building Partnerships and Dismantling Barriers." Our keynote speaker was Dorothy Berry, Digital Collections Program Manager at Harvard's Houghton Library, whose talk was titled, "My Soul Looks Back in Wonder: Remembering Black History in the Archives."

In spite of all the changes and challenges presented by this year, the conference was the best-attended of any meeting in the Society's history, boasting 206 registrants, 200 attendees, 58 presenters, 26 presentations, and seven vendors. SGA was proud to be able to offer free registration to members and presenters, and \$35 registration to non-members.

Our two pre-conference workshops were similarly well-attended, hitting capacity in both virtual events. On November 5, 2020, Magda Pecsénye, creator of the Tilmor Process, presented "Manage Your Team to Greater Efficiency and Engagement with the Tilmor Process," and on November 6, Shaundra Walker, Interim Director of the University Library, Georgia College, presented the workshop, "Critical Race Theory and the Archive."

All meetings were held via Zoom, and the conference planning committees opted to have two day-long tracks to minimize the number of links attendees would need to manage. We chose not to employ a managed content platform, choosing instead to provide the links to registered attendees via the [annual meeting program](#) and daily email blasts. This decision allowed overhead costs for running the meeting to be kept to a minimum.

The planning committees additionally kept a Slack workspace with multiple channels open for the duration of the conference. This space was used not only to troubleshoot technology issues, but also to provide an informal chat environment for attendees to connect with one another and with vendors. The

SGA Executive Board also maintained a channel to address questions about our duties, share opportunities for committee work, and to encourage members to run for office.

Our vendors, too, had an important role to play in the conference. Depending upon their chosen level of sponsorship, vendors were able to give presentations during conference breaks, and were thanked by facilitators at the start of each session. Some sponsors contributed either virtual or physical giveaways for our attendee swag bags and raffle prizes.

In all, we are pleased with the conference's success and happy to answer questions from other state and regional organizations planning a similar shift to an online conference. Feel free to [contact us](#) anytime.

## PLASC Monthly Meetings

Did you know that our meetings are open to all PLASC members? We meet every second Wednesday of the month at 3pm EST (unless otherwise noted). Meetings are announced via the PLASC listserv prior to the meeting day, with instructions on how to join the call. Unable to join in? Previous meeting notes can be viewed through our [microsite](#).

## We want to hear from you!

Be featured in our next newsletter! Do you have any special collections you'd like to highlight? A newly processed collection, new acquisitions, or library programs that you would like to share or announce? If you've recently read a great book or article that archivists and librarians might find interesting, why not do a review of it? Submissions on topics of interest to the public library archivists and librarian community are welcome.

Format for submissions: All articles and items submitted for consideration should be delivered via email attachment to [PubLibArchives@gmail.com](mailto:PubLibArchives@gmail.com). Be sure to include the author's name, repository name, location, and contact information at the end of your article. Please attach any images separately as JPG or PDF files and include a caption for each image in the article document file.

Submissions will be reviewed and edited by our newsletter editor, Patricia Delara. The deadline for the Spring/Summer issue will be announced in the coming months. We will send out another call for submissions soon!



The Public Library Archives and Special Collections Section of the Society of American Archivists serves to encourage advocacy for and education about archival, manuscript, local history, genealogy, and other historic and special collections within public libraries of all sizes. To learn more about PLASC, or to get involved, please visit our [website](#).

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