

# DESERT DUST

*Carlin Historical Society - Carlin, Nevada*



COURTESY OF THE SPECIAL COLLECTIONS DEPARTMENT, UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO LIBRARIES.

## Carlin's Suffrage Movement

WRITTEN BY ELLA B. TRUJILLO

*ABOVE: Rural Nevada required a grassroots approach to the campaign for the vote. Suffragists Anne Martin and Mabel Vernon traveled the desert to speak to people about giving women the right to vote in Nevada.*

---

Today the political leanings of a small town like Carlin don't seem very significant but at one time our town's importance in state politics was nothing to scoff at. Hopefully, many Carlin women recently visited the Court House to vote (or put a ballot in the mail). This simple act wasn't possible until 1914 and Carlin played a role in giving women the right to vote in Nevada.

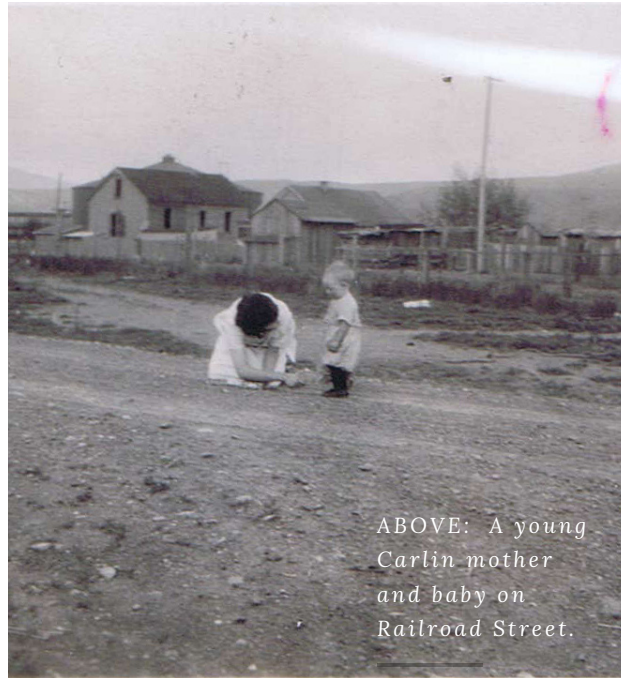
As early as 1870, Laura de Force Gordon visited Carlin to speak on behalf of suffrage for women. She was the first woman to run a daily newspaper in the United States and the second female lawyer to be admitted to practice law in California.

But the suffrage movement didn't really build up steam until the early 1910s. In 1912, the women of Elko County gathered to form a suffrage society in Elko County. Mrs. Thomas McKenna was chosen to represent the new organization in Carlin. Margaret McKenna was born in Massachusetts in 1871. Her husband, Thomas, was a railroad employee and he and Margaret had 8 children. The youngest at the time was less than a year old.

Carlin became a necessary stop for all speakers "on the circuit" for women's suffrage. Mrs. Alice Park stopped in Carlin on her way home from the International Women Suffrage Congress in Hungary and gave a speech, amongst other lecturers. In 1914, one of the most ardent representatives of the Nevada Suffrage Society, Miss Mabel Vernon, spoke in Carlin. The *Elko Independent* reported two meetings were held in Carlin. The first was "an open-air meeting at which Miss Vernon addressed 200 people who despite the noise of many passing trains, listened attentively for more than an hour."

The other meeting was held for the express purpose of organizing a branch of the Nevada Equal Franchise Society in Carlin. The women of Carlin elected one Mrs. Margaret Webb as President, Mrs. Jacob Fisher as Vice-President, and Mrs. Jessie Woodruff as secretary. Not much is known about Mrs. Webb or Mrs. Fisher but Jessie Woodruff's husband was an engineer for the railroad and her oldest son was a switchman. She was born in Ophir, Nevada in 1864 before Nevada even became a state. She married her husband at 19 years of age and had eight children. She died in 1957.

In the end, the suffragists of Nevada were successful. In the Fall of 1914, the State of Nevada gave women the right to vote. In Carlin, 104 voted in favor of granting women the right to vote and 87 voted against it. It wasn't until 1920 that the United States passed the 19th Amendment allowing women to vote in national elections.



ABOVE: A young Carlin mother and baby on Railroad Street.

## News and Gossip

The Carlin Historical Society was recently granted a \$190,000 grant to complete an architectural study of the historic school house (Carlin Museum building). The grant will also be used to create architectural plans for the reconstruction of the building's original bell tower.

A grant of \$93,000 was also awarded to begin the restoration of the Old Church on Main Street.



**Monthly Meeting - 3rd Tuesday  
of each month at 5:30 p.m.**

**The Carlin Museum is open on Thursday and Saturday from 9 to 11 a.m.  
You can also make an appointment to view  
the Museum by calling 775-754-2287.**

**[www.carlinhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.carlinhistoricalsociety.com)**