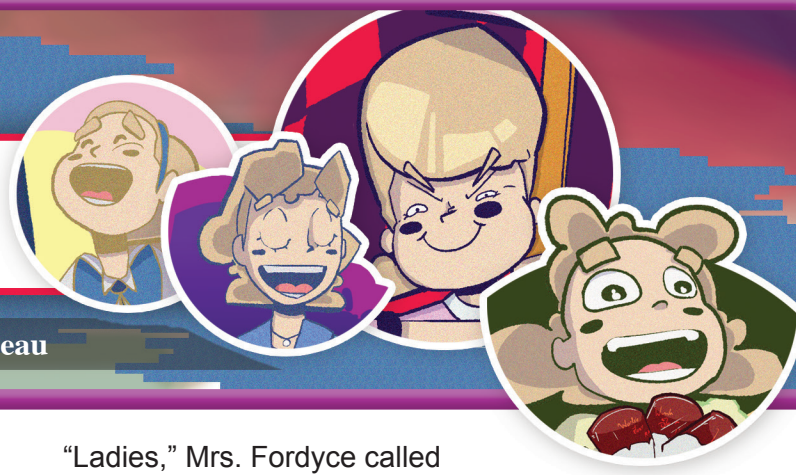


# Generations of Missouri

Written by Carolyn Mueller | Illustrated by Philip Goudeau



## Suffragettes Chapter Five

Ruth, age 27 & Dorothy, age 5 months | 1919

The carriage ride from St. Louis to the capital of Missouri, Jefferson City, was long and chilly. Ruth's baby, Dorothy, had slept most of the way, but Ruth's arms ached from cradling her. Ruth was accompanying Mrs. Christine Orrick Fordyce and the ladies of the St. Louis Equal Suffrage League to petition the Missouri State Legislature to ratify what would be the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution, giving women the right to vote. Mary, her mother, was watching the other children so that Ruth could join the League's outing.

Ruth worked hard to maintain her home and family. She felt she was as a solid citizen of the United States. So, it irked her that she had no say in which leaders represented her in government.

While her husband had been overseas, fighting in the Great War, Ruth had been attending meetings of the St. Louis Equal Suffrage League and had volunteered to accompany the group on this pilgrimage. Even though Dorothy wouldn't remember this event, Ruth was proud that she was present. Witnessing history was a long-standing family tradition.

The women departed the carriages and lined up on the sidewalk pulling cloth masks over their mouths and noses to protect themselves and others from the ongoing flu pandemic.

Ruth felt excited. It felt like the nearly fifty-year effort to give women the right to vote was picking up steam. The pandemic and war had offered distractions. But with peace in Europe and an easing of the pandemic, the suffragists had a new lease on their cause.

"Ladies," Mrs. Fordyce called out, gathering the group around her. "We will march into the legislature as a united front."

They walked up the steps and entered the echoing rotunda of the building. Dorothy cooed softly and opened her sleepy eyes.

Ruth's heart hammered as they entered the building. Men surrounded them with expressionless severe faces. But the small band of women stuck together, buoyed by their mission.

An authoritative man stepped forward and called upon Mrs. Fordyce to speak. She did so with bravery and confidence.

"Fifty years ago, my grandmother came before the Missouri legislature and asked for the enfranchisement of women; twenty-five years ago, my mother came to make the same request; today, I am asking for the ballot for women. Are you going to make it necessary for my daughter to appear in her turn?"

The words gave Ruth goose pimples on her arms. Cradling Dorothy, she imagined her daughter standing before these serious men pleading their case again. She hoped this would not be so.

A few months later, on a hot, humid July 4th, Ruth, her husband, Dorothy, and the other children sat on the porch staring at the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* with awe and pride. A bold headline read, MISSOURI SENATE RATIFIES PROPOSED 19TH AMENDMENT TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION GIVING WOMEN THE RIGHT TO VOTE.



## NEWSPAPER CONNECTIONS

**Search for articles about voting rights in your local newspaper. Do you feel the stories are fair and balanced? Why or why not?**