

RANDOM RECOLLECTIONS OF THE SEVENTY FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF  
THE FIRST WOMAN'S RIGHTS CONVENTION 1923

After seventy years my memories of the celebration are pretty hazy. Here is what I do remember:

The celebratory meetings were held in the First Presbyterian Church. A number of young women and younger girls of the village were asked to be pages or runners. I think Lee Delevan and Margaret Clarke Loomis (Merriam) were pages. I seem to remember them dressed in white dresses with purple ribbons draped across them. Their purpose was to take messages from the pulpit where the main speakers were seated to various individuals seated in the audience or vice versa. The runners were to do anything else required. I do not remember being asked to do anything, but at least I was there! Other runners were Barbara Follette (Koch), Agnes Lester (Wade), and my older sister Maud Davis (Bird). There were probably others, but my memory does not call them to mind.

I recall two of the main participants very distinctly-- Alice Paul and Mrs. August Belmont. Miss Paul was a striking looking woman. It seemed to me she was tall, with dark brown hair and snapping eyes to match. She seemed totally serious, and most imposing. I am sorry that I was more interested at the time in my role as runner than in absorbing the proceedings. I did sense that the meeting was highly important and recall that Miss Paul's remarks elicited much applause. I think Mrs. Belmont presided at least for some of the meetings. She too was a striking looking woman, very erect in bearing.

The morning following Miss Paul's speech found the runners selling newspapers to the delegates as they breakfasted in the dining room of the Hotel Gould. I seem to remember that both the Post Standard and the Democrat & Chronicle bore head lines of Miss Paul's speech. Fortunately that can be verified.

The other event of the celebration was the large and elaborate lawn party given by Dr. William Follette who was then Village President. It was held on the lawn by Van Cleef lake (and there was much more lawn then), adjacent to Trinity Church. The central feature of the reception was a pageant. Because I had a minor part in it, I never did see or know what the whole pageant was about or how it appeared to the guests. An experienced producer--a woman from New York City came beforehand to train the participants. Most of us recruited to be in the pageant were not used to interpretive dancing so many rehearsals were necessary. I still have the feeling that we tried the patience of the lady from New York. My part along with four or five others was to be grain gatherers. We tried our best to leap about gracefully, clad in our yard of cheesecloth dyed a hideous brown. I remember having no clear idea of what it was all about. I just hoped I didn't disgrace myself. Those

who were in that segment of the pageant were as I recall:  
My older sister, Maud, Betty Rolfe (her father had a garage  
on Cayuga St. next to the State Bank where the Municipal  
parking lot now is) Barbara Follette and her sister Marjorie.  
Barbara later married Henry Koch and they lived on the corner  
of Cayuga and So. Park Sts. where her father, Dr. Follette  
had his home and office.

Those who were in other segments of the pageant were,  
if memory serves me, Agnes Lester (Mrs. Harry Wade), Lee  
Delevan, and Margaret Loomis (Merriam). I think Hope and  
Dody Moran were also among those who had parts. I recall  
envying them because they had much more glamorous costumes  
and dances, and no doubt were much more pleasing to the eye.  
I am sure there were many more in the extravaganza, but  
because we rehearsed in small groups I never had any idea  
of the complete pageant or of all who participated. I am  
glad to report that the weather cooperated.

I am sorry I don't have any clearer memories of what  
was a very important time in the Woman's Movement and  
again a time when Seneca Falls was front and center.  
As a young girl barely thirteen it was a time that offered  
a break in the boredom of a long summer and not much more.  
Today's teenager would have had it all on tape or a video.  
How fortunate!

Elizabeth Davis Howland

12/30/93