

Jane McCallum: Heritage Neighborhood's Suffragette

By Charles Brian Owen

"We asked for the vote as a right denied. We never said that women would improve the world, though in our hearts we believed it."

The above quote was penned by a former resident of our neighborhood as she looked back on the years she spent struggling for the right of women to vote. She was a woman of great political accomplishment who still found time to be a devoted wife and mother to five children. Her name was Jane McCallum and she lived at 613 West 32nd Street.

She was born Jane LeGette Yelvington, on December 30, 1878, in LaVernia, Texas, a small town forty miles east of San Antonio. Educated in the public schools of Wilson County and Zealey's Female College in Mississippi, she was to marry Arthur Newell McCallum, the LaVernia school superintendent, in 1896. In 1903, after living in Kenedy and Seguin, the McCallums moved to Austin where Arthur began his tenure as school superintendent which was to last until 1942. Though known as a stern disciplinarian, he was popular and McCallum High School is named in his honor.

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The first seventeen years of Jane McCallum's married life were spent primarily raising her family and enjoying an active social life. The McCallum House on West 32nd Street was designed by Jane and built in 1907, the same year she gave birth to her fifth and last child. In 1912, she enrolled at the University of Texas and joined Alpha Delta Pi sorority.

It was in 1914 that her life took a turn that was to give her a place in Texas history. She joined the Austin Woman Suffrage Association, was elected president the following year, and began her life in politics. Her work and the work of many others came to fruition in early 1920 with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, granting women the right to vote.

After the passage of this amendment, Jane McCallum went on to work for and lead organizations on matters such as prison reform, education, prohibition, child labor laws, and other concerns. In 1923 Jane became executive secretary of the Women's Joint Legislative Council which was nicknamed "The Petticoat Lobby." This group became one of the most influential lobbies in the state's history. In 1927 she was



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