

NARRATIVE TEXTS

Jane Y. McCallum, Suffragist, Politician, and Author, 1877-1957

Deeply committed to winning the vote for women, Jane McCallum organized rallies, wrote newspaper columns, made speeches, distributed literature, lobbied legislators, and directed campaigns. Yet she insisted on making time for her family—she cooked dinner for them each evening, attended school functions, sewed curtains for the boys' room,¹ sharing the dilemma of today's working mothers who juggle multiple responsibilities.

Originally from La Vernia, Jane settled in Austin with her husband and children. Here she grew interested in women's suffrage and prohibition. By 1915 she held leadership roles in city and state suffrage associations, using her organizational skills to manage publicity.

During World War I, suffragists raised funds and volunteered on the home front. At war's end they pressed for the vote with renewed vigor. In March 1918 the Texas legislature approved a bill allowing women to vote in primary elections. The next year the U.S. Congress passed a women's suffrage amendment extending the vote to *all* elections. Jane personally lobbied state legislators to ratify this measure, and in June 1919 Texas became the ninth state and first Southern state to do so.

During the 1920s Jane headed the Petticoat Lobby, a coalition of women's groups pressing for laws to benefit women and children. Nearly all of their legislative agenda was enacted: school funding, prison reform, maternal/infant health care, restrictions on child labor, stricter prohibition laws.

The Petticoat Lobby supported the campaign of Dan Moody for governor. When he won, he appointed Jane McCallum as Texas Secretary of State. She served from 1927 to 1933. While in office, she discovered the original Texas Declaration of Independence hidden in a vault. In later years Jane continued to write and participate politically, with support from her loyal family. She penned a weekly newspaper column, profiled the sculptor Elisabet Ney, and published a book of biographical essays, *Women Pioneers*.



Quotations

Jane McCallum and a Texas senator are reported to have had the following exchange in a corridor of the legislature:

Senator: You ought to get married.

McCallum: But I am married.

Senator: Then you ought to be having children.

McCallum: I have five. How many do you suggest I have?

Senator: Then you should be home taking care of them.

McCallum: They're in school, and their grandmother is there.

Senator: Then you should be home darning stockings!²

Photo

Betty Jane McCallum, Austin; image from the Texas Woman's University, Denton.

Endnotes

¹ Sources for biographical information in this article are Anne Fears Crawford and Crystal Sasse Ragsdale, *Women in Texas: Their Lives, Their Experiences, Their Accomplishments* (Austin: State House Press, 1992), pp. 231-43; Mary Beth Rogers, Sherry A. Smith, and Janelle D. Scott, *We Can Fly: Stories of Katherine Stinson and Other Gutsy Texas Women* (Austin: Texas Foundation for Women's Resources, 1983), pp. 99-111; and Roberta S. Duncan, "McCallum, Jane Legette Yelvington," Handbook of Texas Online, <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/MM/fmc7.html> (March 31, 2005).

² Quoted in Ruthe Winegarten, *Texas Women: A Pictorial History from Indians to Astronauts* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1986), p. 116.