## Women blazed a 150 year old trail to ensure voting rights for women

That it required 150 years to happen seems outrageous today. But that is how it was. And the news of it from Washington by way of the Associated Press seems somehow understated, but that is the way of the AP.

It was, according to the preserved teletype copy, 10:07 a.m. on Aug. 26, 1920. That was a Thursday. The machinegun chatter and clatter of the teletype printer made the announcement one letter, one word at a time, into newspaper officers across the country.

"The proclamation announcing officially that the suffrage amendment to the constitution had been ratified was signed today by Secretary Colby of the State Department." Breaking news, as they like to say today.

That was Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby, recently named by President Wilson and the ratification was of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, the law that with the stroke of the Secretary's pen opened the polls to 27 million eligible American women who had waited a lifetime and their mother's lifetime and their

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grandmother's lifetime for this moment. It was now the law of the land.

Women could vote. And, ironically, it was a decision made by men because it was only they who could vote for or against the amendment. Tennessee had, in the previous week, become the 36th state to say yes, reaching the required majority.

We Hoosiers had made our decision, or rather the men in the Indiana General Assembly had decided back in January, said "yes" to the question first posed in a formal way 72 years earlier at a meeting in Seneca Falls, N.Y. Three hundred had come to the July 1848, gathering summoned by Elizabeth Stanton and Lucretia Mott and Susan B. Anthony. From that, from thousands of such gatherings and marches and demonstrations and protests — and yes, some arrests along the way – had come the logical conclusion: No one shall be denied the right to vote in American because of their gender, their sex.

And over in Wayne County, along the National Road, just off Interstate 70 Ed Breen's column is sponsored by: First Farmer's Bank & Trust—see their ad., below.

A MOMENT Ed Breen



and a few miles west of Richmond, is the cradle of such thinking and determination for Hoosier women.

The year was 1851, the town is Dublin, a village of 700 today, and the person was a 23-year-old Amanda Way.

It was then and there and by her that one of the very early statewide efforts to correct the record was put in motion. Amanda Way was a Quaker school teacher. On Oct. 5, 1851, she and her friends had a meeting. Roberta Heiman of the Evansville Courier & Press tells us more about them:

"They were church ladies, schoolteachers, librarians; some were wives and daughters of the wealthiest men in town; some were the first female doctors and lawyers in Indiana. Unlikely rebels who knew they risked what one southern Indiana newspaper reporter described as 'certain ostracism based on horror of any progressive principle."

"They were not the militant suffragists who staged public protests and picketed at the White House. Hoosier suffragists practiced what was called 'petticoat diplomacy.' They circulated petitions, set up booths at county fairs, made speeches on auto tours through small towns. In Evansville and Fort Wayne, they invited the public to suffrage teas. In Indianapolis, they hired a hot air balloon and dropped pamphlets over the state capital. Several filed lawsuits claiming a right to vote, but they always lost in Indiana courts.

"In 1854, they filed their

first petition asking the Indiana State Legislature for voting rights, then repeated the appeal for 66 years while lawmakers turned a deaf ear. In the end, Indiana was the last state in the Midwest and the 26th state in the nation to ratify the 19th Amendment, on Jan. 26, 1920.

A dozen years later, in November, 1932, Virginia Jenckes of Terre Haute became the first Hoosier woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

And on Wednesday, exactly 100 years and eight and a half hours after that first news bulletin, it will be so marked in Marion. The General Francis Marion Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Marion Public Library and Museum will present a "Celebration of Women's Equality Day." It will be at 6:30 p.m. on the north side of the Grant County Courthouse square

Said Ruthann Sumpter, Marion DAR Regent, as she sought county commissioner approval for the ceremony, "It's a special day and needs to be recognized as a special day."

