

Making History

Carrie Clyde Holly was elected to the Colorado State Legislature as a representative from Pueblo County in November of 1894, just one year after women in Colorado achieved the right to vote through an amendment to the Colorado Constitution.

She was inaugurated in January, 1895 and then became the first woman in the United States to propose legislation, argue for it in the formal setting of a legislature, and then see it become law.

Two other women were elected that same year. They represented Arapahoe County:
Clara Cressingham
Frances Klock

Sources:

- * House Journal of the General Assembly of the State of Colorado
- * Pueblo *Chieftain* Archives
- * Ancestry.com

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Help

Share with us information you have about Carrie Clyde Holly and Colorado Women's Suffrage.

Spread the word. It is time to honor Colorado and the United States' first woman legislator.

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On behalf of the Women's Suffrage Centennial Southern Colorado

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Carrie Clyde Holly

First U.S. State Legislator

Pueblo County



**Elected
November 6, 1894**



Early Life

Carrie Clyde Holt was born in New York in July, 1856 to William and Maria Holt. She grew up in Stamford, Connecticut in a household wealthy enough to have a live-in servant.

Women's Suffrage in Colorado

When Carrie Clyde Holt was in her early 20s, still living on the east coast, women in Colorado were working to achieve suffrage in the newly formed state. A huge campaign in 1877 brought national suffragists like Susan B. Anthony west. Although the 1877 campaign failed, women continued to work for the right to vote and, in 1893, they were successful. On November 7, 1893, the voters decided: "That every female person shall be entitled to vote at all elections, in the same manner and all respects as male persons are, or shall be entitled to vote by the constitution and the laws of this state, and the same qualifications as to age, citizenship, and time of residence in the state, county, city, ward and precinct and all other qualifications required by law to entitle male persons to vote shall be required to entitle female persons to vote."

First Years in Pueblo County

Carrie Clyde Holt had married Judge Charles F. Holly, and had moved to Pueblo before the revolutionary year of 1893. They lived on a ranch in Vineland with their two daughters, Helen and Emily. Holly served on the School Board for district 47, a post she continued to hold even after her election to the legislature.

The Campaign of 1894

Carrie Clyde Holly ran for Colorado state legislator as a representative from Pueblo County on the Republican ticket. Other women in Pueblo ran for various offices but in 1894, Holly was the only woman elected in Pueblo County. The campaign involved Holly speaking at various campaign events. She spoke at many different political meetings, advocating for measures of interest to the Republican party of her day, including rights and legal protections for women. She was elected on November 6, 1894.

Legislation

"I have noticed among the warmest friends of equal suffrage a feeling of uneasiness as to the advisability of electing a woman to office. They seem to think the women would legislate themselves a large collection of bonnets or some equally foolish measure." If Holly was right when she said this, those people would be quickly disabused of that notion. As soon as she arrived in Denver and assumed office in January of 1895, she proposed a law that would raise the age of consent to 21.

The purpose of the age of consent law was to protect girls from being forced or conned into prostitution. There was some resistance to her bill and by the time it was passed, the age had been decreased to 18.

Nevertheless, it passed and it became known across the nation as the Holly bill and was held up as a standard of the protections for women.

Holly proposed 14 bills, including the remarkable H.B. No. 423, which was tabled due to "lack of time." Does this seem to you like a precursor to the Equal Rights Amendment?

"A bill for an act to grant and extend to female citizens of this State all the civil rights, privileges and immunities which are now, or may hereafter be granted or extended to the male citizens; and to repeal all laws or parts of laws inconsistent with this act."

Later Career

During and after her service as legislator, Holly would continue to serve on the school board. She also worked as an attorney in Pueblo, Colorado, both in criminal and in civil trials. She continued to speak at political clubs across Pueblo.

Leaving Pueblo

When women in the nation got the vote in 1920, Holly was living in Colorado Springs with her two adult daughters. Shortly afterward, she moved with her daughter Emily to Oregon and then to Washington where she passed away on July 13, 1943.



Suffrage Flag