

The Winning of Nevada

By Miss Anne Martin,
President of the Nevada Equal Franchise Society

Suffragist November 7, 1914

Our majority is now over two thousand and still growing. There is every likelihood of a three thousand majority. On behalf of the Nevada Equal Franchise Society let me again express our appreciation of all the Congressional Union did for our campaign in sending us Miss Mabel Vernon as an organizer from March until after election.

Every suffrage campaign is necessarily shaped by characteristics within the state, physical, sociological, moral, and industrial.

There are in Nevada certain unusual conditions as regards its geography, its distribution of population, its electorate and its industries that produced peculiar difficulties and necessitated a special type of work to reach and educate the voters.

Nevada has a population of only 80,000 people on an area of over 110,000 square miles, a territory one quarter larger than Great Britain with its more than 40,000,000 inhabitants. Of these 80,000 people, 40,000 are men over 21 years of age, of whom only 20,000 remained in the state long enough to vote at the last general election. Twenty thousand voters, scattered over an area of 110,000 square miles, gave an average of one voter to every five square miles to be sought out and educated.

It is true that some of these voters are massed together in the towns, but, with one exception, in towns of less than 1,000 votes.

Nevada has therefore the lowest urban and the most scattered rural population in the United States. Nevada has also the highest proportionate male population, the lowest proportionate population of women, and the largest "floating" or transient vote in the whole country. This large floating vote is due to mining, railway and irrigational construction, and other transitory occupations.

The difficulty of reaching and educating this vote for suffrage, distributed over the greatest proportionate area in the United States, a vote which is constantly changing, passing in and then out of the state, was met in the following ways:

1. By press work. Nevada's forty-five newspapers, chiefly rural weeklies, were supplied every week with a special bulletin of news, comment and argument from suffrage headquarters.
2. Every editor, over one hundred school districts, and three hundred representative names from our sixteen counties received the *Woman's Journal* every week.
3. A suffrage essay contest was conducted by the College Equal Suffrage League in the schools of the state.

4. Every voter in the state, according to the county registration lists of 1912, was circularized by the county organizations, and again by state headquarters, with different kinds of suffrage literature. This comprehensive piece of work by no means insured the education of every voter in the 1914 election; a prominent Nevada sociologist estimated the voting population as 50 per cent transient, which makes the 1912 registration lists 50 per cent wrong as regards the 1914 lists. The new voters in the 1914 election were circularized from the primary registration lists available after September.
5. Our last, and next to the state-wide circulation of our vote, the most important educative factor in our campaign was personal contact with the voter. We accomplished this by means of canvasses and street meetings in the towns, and by seeking out the rural voters by train, automobile, state, and even on horseback, "prospecting for votes" among the miners in our vast mountains, and the farmers in our remote valleys. To reach less than one hundred votes at Austin, the county seat of Lander County, required a journey of two days over the desert in a motor narrow-gauge railroad, costing on an average more than ten cents a mile. In most cases it required several days' journey away from the railroad to seek out the scattered vote in the outlying precincts of our northern and southern counties.

Nevada is rightfully classified as a "doubtful" state as regards its Republican and Democratic character. Election figures for the last ten years show that Nevada has always gone Democratic when powerful Democratic leaders were seeking re-election, and Republican by as many votes as it went Democratic, when a powerful leader like the late Senator Nixon was successfully seeking election to the United States Senate in 1904 and 1910. The Democrats, the Progressives and the Socialists of Nevada have endorsed equal suffrage, and many individual leaders of the Republican Party support it. In the election of 1912, 20,115 votes were cast, of which 7,986 were Democratic, 5,620 Progressive, 3,313 Socialist, and 3,196 Republican.

Besides the endorsement of every party in the state but the Republican, equal suffrage was endorsed by every labor union which has voted on the subject, and by a state-wide conference of labor representing 6,000 members.

While the chief opposition from the usual vested and evil interests was active chiefly in Reno and Washoe County, the center of population, the sentiment of the street meetings in Reno conducted by Miss Mabel Vernon, the able Congressional Union organizer working for the Nevada campaign, was strongly pro-suffrage. These crowds were made up of men, principally, from all walks of life, and all parts of the state.

The State Suffrage Society had only fourteen paid members and no county organizations in 1912, and now has over 1,000 paid members, a large additional enrollment, suffrage organizations or committees in every county, and an advisory board containing the names of United States Senators Francis G. Newlands and Key Pittman, Congressman Roberts, Governor Oddie and Lieutenant-Governor Ross, the late President Stubbs of the State University and Bishop Robinson, besides judges, editors, bankers, and other business and professional men, who are leaders, from every county.

In less than ten years of suffrage work the Nevada Equal Franchise Society has secured a larger percentage of Nevada's 18,000 women as paid members than are enrolled members of all suffrage association in the state of New York, with its splendid suffrage background and its powerful workers.

The campaign in Nevada was won largely because we were enabled to reach the fifteen thousand or more country votes. Winning the western campaigns is laying a certain foundation for carrying the national amendment in a very short time.



CAMPAIGNING IN NEVADA

Miss Anne Martin, Nevada State President, and Miss Mabel Vernon, Congressional Union Organizer,
Waiting to Speak to the Voters in a Nevada Hay Field, Shortly Before Election