

Suzanne H. Schrems. *Across the Political Spectrum: Oklahoma Women in Politics in the Early Twentieth Century, 1900-1930*. (Lincoln, Nebraska: Writers Club Press, 2001), pp 192. \$16.95 ISBN 0-595-21223-9 paperback

Until recently, most books on political women in the United States took a national perspective, suggested women played only a peripheral role in politics until 1920 (when they won the right to vote on a national basis), and traced the progress of women in politics from a liberal—if not a leftist—perspective.

In contrast, Schrem's focus is early Oklahoma women political actors. While her discussions of Kate Barnard and Alice Robertson are briefer than those in Linda William Reese's *Women of Oklahoma: 1890-1920*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997, this book provides profiles on many more Oklahoma women political pioneers.

And although the title suggests a start date of 1900, Schrem actually weaves in earlier influences including the Grange and the populist ideology. A superficial review would suggest there was a flurry of women's involvement regarding whether to include woman suffrage in Oklahoma's original Constitution followed by seven years of inactivity. Actually, national groups supporting woman suffrage were organizing in the Oklahoma territories decades before citizens gathered to write the Oklahoma Constitution. Schrem also reveals how experiences in their early years helped shape the views and values of political activists like Barnard, Richardson and others.

But the book's greatest strength is the author's inclusion of perspectives from the right as well as from the left. As Oklahoma was settled, a great number of women's clubs were formed to provide

opportunities for self-improvement. Over time, the mission of these organizations expanded to include studying and advocating political views. In addition to a discussion of political organizing by Socialist and Communist organizers, Schrem presents the political concerns and actions of conservative women's groups in Oklahoma including the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Women's Auxiliary of the American Legion, and even the Women of the Ku Klux Klan. Readers gain a greater understanding of the hopes, fears, values and expectations that motivated both Democrat and Republican, as well as pro- and anti-woman suffrage women activists in Oklahoma.

In *A Room at a Time* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), Jo Freeman identifies three types of women political activists: feminists, reformers and party women. Schrem includes all three types in this book. There are good descriptions of early participation by Oklahoma women in national political party conventions. And it is clear that the public careers of both Barnard and Robertson suffered because they defined themselves exclusively as reformers.

I have just two minor complaints about this book. It ended too soon. I wanted to learn about more early pioneers and I wished Schrem had carried her research into modern times. And, in spite of good endnotes, the book suffers from the lack of an index and bibliography. Still, I'm very pleased to add this book to my library. This fascinating look back at our state's early years offers important insights into the development of Oklahoma's political culture.

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