

# #SODAKSUFFRAGE ACTIVITY PAGE

## Oh, the Drama!

Written by Liz Almlie, Pierre, 2020.  
historysouthdakota.wordpress.com

### Historical Background

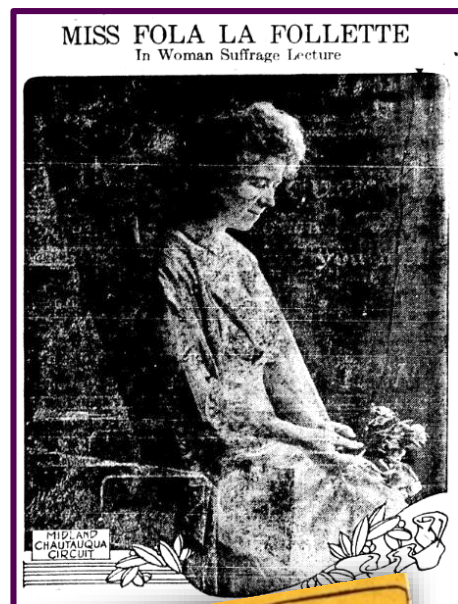
Plays and pageants were popular forms of entertainment in the days when towns of all sizes had opera houses and auditoriums for traveling and amateur performances. Suffragists in South Dakota used dramatic performance to share their message. Drama could give audiences a personal, emotional connection to this political issue.

In 1910, Fola LaFollette came to South Dakota from Wisconsin to help the campaign for a state suffrage amendments. A trained actor, LaFollette did dramatic readings of the English (UK) play "How the Vote Was Won" that had recently been re-published by a Chicago company.

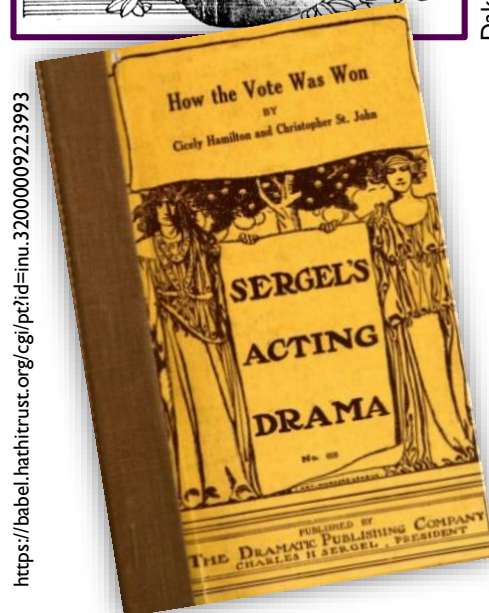
In October 1916, the suffrage club in Sisseton sponsored an evening's entertainment at the town's Opera House with the performance of two plays "Back of the Ballot" and "How the Vote was Won." That same month in Mitchell, Mary Baird Bryan of Nebraska spoke for suffrage at the city hall auditorium to a large audience. After Bryan's speech, twelve girls entered the auditorium to give her flowers. The girls wore white dresses with yellow ribbons to represent the suffrage states, but one was also draped in black. The black drape was removed during the pageant to represent the hope of South Dakota passing its suffrage amendment that year.

In 1917, Beulah Lyon of Vermillion wrote a play called "Her Hat in the Ring" about suffrage for her students at the University of South Dakota to perform.

After the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, suffragists in Mitchell arranged a suffrage jubilee in East Side park to celebrate. The jubilee included a children's pageant "depicting the fight for suffrage" with thirty-six girls representing the ratifying states.



Dakota Farmer's Leader (Canton SD), June 19, 1914.



### Your Turn!

Research, write, and perform a skit to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. You can create the drama about suffrage movement history, a particular suffragist(s), voting rights, and/or engagement with the political process.

You can write a dramatic monologue, a symbolic pageant or tableau, a one-woman/one-man show, or a group play. You can do a scripted performance, a non-verbal pantomime, a puppet show, a musical... whatever appeals to your skills and available resources. Will you use sets, costumes, or other props?