

PATHFINDER

NOVEMBER 26, 1938: p. 18

WOMEN IN THE NEWS

Congresswomen



Jeanette Rankin

In 1916, the first Congresswoman was elected. She was Miss Jeanette Rankin, a Republican from Montana. On her first day in the House, war was declared; she voted against it. The next Congress had no women.

Since then, more than a score of women have held the title of senator or representative, many of them by appointment to posts made vacant by their husbands' death. Only one woman, however, has been elected to the U. S. Senate. She is Mrs. Hattie W. Caraway, a Democrat, first appointed in 1931 to fill Senator Thaddeus Caraway's place, and re-elected two weeks ago for the second time.

Last week, as election tumult died away, the nation found itself with its first Republican woman senator. She was Miss Gladys Pyle, 48 years old, who was formerly secretary of state for South Dakota and also the first woman ever elected to the state's legislature. But Miss Pyle will never sit in the Senate. She was only elected to fill the late Senator Peter Norbeck's unexpired term, which ends January 3.

Actually, the new Congress will have fewer women. The last session had five representatives and one senator. The next will have only four representatives and a senator. Three of the representatives are veterans: Mrs. Mary T. Norton, New Jersey Democrat, and Mrs. Edith Nourse Rogers, Massachusetts Republican, who have served since 1925; and Mrs. Caroline O'Day, New York Democrat and friend of Mrs. Roosevelt, first elected in 1934.

The new woman representative is 38-year-old Jessie Sumner, Illinois Republican lawyer, who had never been in politics until last year. Then, in a snappy campaign, she defeated two men to become the state's first woman county judge. She went to Smith College, the University of Chicago and Columbia University, and was the first woman to specialize in law at Oxford University, in England.

Ousted females of the last Congress were two Democrats, Mrs. Virginia Jenckes of Indiana and Mrs. Nan Honeyman of Oregon, both representatives.