

League of Women Voters—South Bend

1950s and 1960s

First, a little local background by listing some of the milestones in our community during these two decades:

- In 1950, the City Natatorium became fully integrated, after being racially segregated for 28 years.
- In 1952, WSBT-TV first signed on the air.
- In 1953, St. Joseph High School opened.
- In 1956, the Indiana Toll Road opened.
- By 1960, South Bend's population had swelled to 132,445.
- In 1962, the IUSB campus opened with 1,500 students.
- In 1963, the Studebaker plant closed and produced its last car that December. (My mother worked there both before and after I was born as secretary to Nick Garbasz in the Design Dept.)
- In 1965, urban renewal began in downtown South Bend, resulting in the demolition of its oldest buildings.
- In 1966, Holy Cross College opened.

Now here is a list of the South Bend League presidents, according to articles published in the South Bend Tribune:

1950	Alice Carter
1951	Mrs. Harry May
1952-54	Mrs. Elmer Navarre
1955-56	Mrs. John Wynn
1957-58	Mrs. John Cackley
1959	Mrs. Ira Carpenter
1961-62	Mrs. George Brown
1963	Mrs. Harry Nielsen
1965	Mrs. Charles Manion

From 1966-1969 there were no known presidents or league activities on record. The lack of League activities during the late 1960s remains a mystery. Was the lapse in leadership due to events surrounding the Vietnam War or civil rights movement? Was it due to more women entering the workforce? Was it caused by a cultural shift or was it caused by some local event? If you have any information or insights about this time period in our local League history, please let us know!

There was an article in the newspaper on Dec. 1969 that announced the South Bend League was restarting. Prior to this restart, the local league held their monthly meetings in the homes of members. Then in 1969, they started meeting in the public library downtown, which is still the case today.

There were a few slogans used during this time period:

In 1951 it was: **“Make a Note—Be Sure to Vote”**

In 1964 it was: **“Your Vote Makes a Difference,”** which was in response to a study on the national level that found 20 million American women, who were eligible to vote, did not vote in the 1960 general election. A local slogan was: **“Each One Reach One,”** meaning every woman should encourage another woman to vote, which was a voting campaign that was supported by then South Bend Mayor Lloyd Allen and Mishawaka Mayor Maggie Prickett.

The last known League activity to be documented in the 60s was concerning a study of childcare facilities in St. Joe County in 1966.

Prior to the dormant period in the late 60s, the local League appeared to be very busy in the 1950s and early 60s, according to all the newspaper articles about their activities. They were much more involved in local government than we are today. We speculate this may have been due to less women in the workplace with more time to devote to League activities.

Here are some of the issues the South Bend League of Women Voters addressed during this time period, according to articles found in the South Bend Tribune:

- A study of city public works—particularly police and fire departments
- An extensive two-year study on city trash pick-up, followed by a recommendation for city collection (there was no city pick-up at the time)
- A foreign policy workshop with speakers from Studebaker, Notre Dame, YWCA, and United Council of Church Women.
- A study on Congress and the budget
- A study on city government
- A study about city recreational resources and parks
- A study on Home Rule
- A discussion about a city charter issue
- A meeting about the Constitution
- A film viewing about city planning
- A discussion on freedom of speech and the press
- A speech given by the head of the PTA
- A lecture on UN Social Work
- Speeches by the nominees for South Bend Mayor: George Schock and John Scott.

- Speakers on the Election Primary
- A speech by the Superintendent of Mishawka Schools, Dr. Young.
- A tour of the city slums to keep informed on the issue of slum clearance.
- A new housing ordinance before the Common Council that set up minimum standards for residences was being studied
- A study of schools and taxes in Indiana.
- A study of water resources and river basin planning, in collaboration with the Niles and LaPorte Leagues
- Providing assistance and instructing voters on how to use the voting machines in the county courthouse
- A civil rights discussion at Notre Dame with nuns that had been to Selma

By Tami Springer