



# Alexandria Times

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## Out of the Attic

### Alexandria's first woman registered voter

*Alexandria Times, March 21, 2019*

While commemorating the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote, we take the time to recognize Dolly Peyton Shepperson, the first woman to register to vote in Alexandria. Shepperson not only voted, but eventually ran for public office in Alexandria.

Born in Alexandria in 1880, Shepperson was a noted newspaper woman who started as a social correspondent for the Washington Post in 1905. She was married to Washington Post correspondent Charles M. Shepperson. The two lived at 907 Prince St.

On Aug. 30, 1920, Shepperson paid her head tax of \$1.50 to the city treasury and registered as a voter the next day. An Alexandria Gazette article dated Aug. 31, 1920 claimed, "Although not an advocate of woman suffrage (Shepperson) says that she thinks it is the duty of all women ... to pay their taxes and vote and thereby take an interest in affairs of the country."

Of course, Shepperson wasn't the only woman in Alexandria eager to register to vote. Indeed, the article noted that at least 1,000 women were expected to vote in the presidential election later that year. The political impact of the 19th Amendment was significant enough for the article to claim that "well-known politicians say that for a time at least they will be unable to make any prognostication on how the vote will run in Alexandria."

Ten years later, Shepperson was a candidate for city council. The March 31, 1930 Washington Evening Star noted that there were two women candidates for council, Dolly P. Shepperson and Naomi Craver of the town of Potomac, which had just been annexed by Alexandria.

Four years later, she was the only female candidate running for nomination in the Democratic primary. Shepperson was well-known in Alexandria circles, as she and her family often appeared in society papers in the 1920s and 30s, especially the Evening Star.

Her obituary after her passing in 1970 listed her as a member of Christ Episcopal Church, the Alexandria Business and Professional Women's Club, which later bore her name, United Daughters of the Confederacy, the American Newspaper Women's Club and the American Legion Auxiliary to Post 24. She was survived by two daughters and two grandsons and is buried at Ivy Hill Cemetery with her husband.

*"Out of the Attic" is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as "Marking Time" and explored Alexandria's history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into "Out of the Attic" and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.*

*These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by staff of the Office of Historic Alexandria.*