



# Sailing to Suffrage



Five years before the passage of the 19th Amendment, a statewide referendum put suffrage for women in New Jersey in the hands of its voters. In preparation for the October 1915 vote, suffrage leaders created a symbol intended to ignite support: the suffrage torch.

According to author and genealogist Maureen K. Wlodarczyk's story about the Suffrage Torch featured in her book *Jersey! Then...Again*, the torch journeyed around the state with stops to show support for suffrage.

Wlodarczyk noted that on August 7, 1915, "the suffrage torch, accompanied by members of the New York contingent of the WPU, departed New York on the tugboat Holbrook and headed across the Hudson River. At the same time, representatives of the New Jersey WPU left Jersey City on the tug A.W. Smith, set to meet their New York sisters in the middle of the Hudson precisely at noon. The torch handoff on the Hudson completed, the New Jersey delegation tug returned to the Pennsylvania Railroad pier after which a series of ceremonies and outdoor meetings were scheduled."

Only 42% of the 300,000-plus New Jersey men who voted in the special election said yes to suffrage. The fight would continue for years to come.

A full version of the story can be found in the book *Jersey! Then...Again* by Maureen K. Wlodarczyk, available at [www.past-forward.com](http://www.past-forward.com).

Photograph shows suffragist Mina C. Van Winkle of Newark, New Jersey, holding a torch at front of tug boat. Photo credit: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [reproduction number, e.g., LC-B2-1234]

**T**hroughout 2020, this space will feature glimpses of the important and varied contributions made by New Jersey residents to the suffrage movement. From the ratification of U.S. Constitution to the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920, the Garden State was a key player in the fight for gender-based voting equality.

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