

**NSDAR Literature and Drama Competition**  
**Rise, and Shine Your Light on the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment**

**Daisy Allen Story: *Militant D.A.R. Leader***  
***by Susan Olsen, NYCC Chapter, February 14, 2020***

For well over a decade, leaders of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution were pressured to reveal their position on the Suffragist movement. Finally in 1915, at the close of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Continental Congress, a declaration was made by the President General, Daisy Allen Story.

**January 7, 1910 – New York City**

“I don’t know why any woman wants to be a suffragette when she can join the Daughters of the American Revolution and run for President General,” Mrs. Donald McLean said from her favorite spot, the dais at Sherry’s, New York’s most famous restaurant. A hearty laugh came from her companion, Mrs. Matthew Scott, the newly elected President General of the organization. When she introduced her successor, Mrs. McLean smiled across the sea of women gathered to celebrate the wedding anniversary of George and Martha Washington. “Our dear Mrs. Scott,” she said: “Perfect happiness reigns. As far as I know, there has never been an incoming and outgoing President General who were on speaking terms before.” (“Calls”).

Daisy Allen Story wasn’t surprised when she read the comments of Mrs. McLean. She knew they were directed at her, the leader of the “Anti-Administration Party.” Emily Ritchie McLean and her followers tried to keep Daisy from rising among the ranks. But she was the New York State Regent who had fought hard to win the contest to become President General. Politics was in her blood after all—Daisy was the granddaughter of Stephen Allen, the first elected mayor of New York. Daisy would be ready for the next election.

## **The 1909 Campaign for President General: The Insurgents vs. the Administration**

Across the nation, women's clubs were growing in size and strength. As women began to unite for causes and speak in a collective voice newspapers reported their activities. Stories transitioned from accounts of luncheons and floral arrangements to detailed descriptions of organizational politics and battles for power and control.

When the Daughters of the American Revolution arrived in Washington to choose their 8<sup>th</sup> President General, the election was already national news. Dramatic headlines appeared in major publications: "Lull in D.A.R. Storm," "Fight is Begun By Daughters," "Battle for Presidency of D.A.R. Fairly On," "Daughters Arrive in a Warlike Mood," For days journalists tantalized their readers to follow the brewing conflict taking place among some of the nation's most respected society matrons.

As the delegates gathered for the 1909 Continental Congress, battle lines were drawn when Mrs. James Schoolcraft Sherman, wife of the Vice President of the United States, invited Daisy Allen Story, the candidate of the "Insurgents," to participate in the receiving line at a tea she was hosting at the Willard Hotel to welcome the Daughters to Washington. Leaders of the "Administration Party," Mrs. Donald McLean and President General Candidate Mrs. William Scott, declined invitations to Mrs. Sherman's tea. Mrs. McLean looked for a way to trump the attention given to the Insurgents. She asked President Taft and his wife to host an alternative gathering for the Daughters at the White House. The temptation to meet the Commander in Chief did not prevent 600 D.A.R. delegates from attending Mrs. Sherman's tea. A headline declared: "Reception gives Mrs. Story Lead in D.A.R. Race—She Shines at a Party Given by Mrs. Sherman While Rivals Stay Away." ("Reception").

When the Continental Congress opened, tensions flared after the presiding President General, Mrs. Donald McLean, refused to give Daisy Allen Story the opportunity to give her report as the New York Regent. The break from protocol did not go without notice as the “Insurgents” gave Mrs. Story a thundering ovation. Despite her highly publicized efforts to bring change to the organization Daisy lost the 1909 election to Mrs. William Scott of Illinois by eight votes. (“Mrs. Scott”).

In the wake of the controversial election, editorials appeared questioning whether or not women were “fit to vote.” (“Faith”). Similar squabbles within the ranks of women’s clubs were reported across the country emphasizing the concern the male dominated press had regarding the involvement of women in politics.

### **The 1911 Campaign for President General: The Reason for Opposition is Revealed**

A year later, Daisy Allen Story’s supporters urged her to seek the President General’s office by staging a campaign to remove Mrs. Scott. “Suffrage Scare in D.A.R. Ranks” appeared in the *Boston Globe* on December 26, 1910, detailing the fear members of the Administration Party had that the organization would take a stance in the Suffragist movement. The paper reported:

*A well-developed suffrage scare has made its appearance in the ranks of the Daughters of the American Revolution and has added to the feverish excitement of the coming election which is some months off. The unfurling of the “votes for women” banner threatens to add bitterness to the struggle for the presidency general at the biennial election in April.*

Concerns were voiced by members of the Administration Party that Mrs. Story was an “ardent worker” for Women’s Suffrage. The article went on to state:

*Many of the daughters who are in sympathy with the movement for woman’s political rights are opposed to having the society as an organization go on record on matters*

*which have no relation to the aims of its founders. Others assert that they would vote for no officer who was a worker for woman suffrage lest her views should influence her in her conduct of the society's affairs.*

Daisy's rumored support of the suffrage movement made her the underdog in her quest to unseat Mrs. Scott. Attempts were made to diffuse her reputation as a political activist. An article published in the *Atlanta Constitution* described her as follows:

*Mrs. William Cumming Story is a woman of remarkable executive ability: she is non-partisan, thoroughly cognizant of parliamentary law, she is one of the truest, most sincere women, just and gracious in every way; her strong personality and charm of manner are recognized and felt by all who know her—she is a womanly woman and a very likeable one. ("Mrs. William Cumming Story").*

Accompanying the promotional piece was a picture of Daisy Allen Story in a light colored floor length dress, trimmed in lace standing in an elegant pose with her hair piled on the top of her head in the modest style of the time. Despite the efforts to promote Mrs. Story as a "non-partisan candidate" Mrs. Scott won by well over 100 votes. She served a second term as President General and the D.A.R. remained quiet on the issue of women's voting rights.

### **The 1913 Campaign for President General: Third Time's a Charm**

Daisy Allen Story continued to speak to the press, launching a third campaign to head the D.A.R. *Veritas*, a women's magazine printed in New York, ran a feature on Mrs. Story where she stated that she lost the previous elections because she was slandered by the opposition. Married at age 19, Daisy Allen suffered through a highly publicized divorce. Her first husband, Edward Price, was accused of intemperate and violent behavior. The details of their tempestuous romance were shared in great detail, readers of the *New York Times* learned of how Mr. Price was horse whipped by Daisy's cousin after he pawned his young wife's jewelry and wedding presents to "obtain money for his extravagances." ("Not Romance").

To clear the air, Mrs. Story produced her divorce decree as evidence that she was the one who initiated the dissolving of her marriage to Edward Price. A copy of her marriage certificate to William Cumming Story along with the birth certificate of her first son were also made public, confirming that the child was born 20 months after her second marriage. (“Mrs. Story Hits at Foes”).

When the 22<sup>nd</sup> Continental Congress convened on April 15, 1913, President Woodrow Wilson welcomed the delegates. It was his first public address following his inauguration. He spoke of the need of the members of the D.A.R. to fulfill their duty asking them “to apply the principles of their Revolutionary ancestors to modern problems.” (“Greeted”). Three candidates were nominated for the office of President General that year: Mrs. William Story of New York, Mrs. Charles Bryan of Memphis, and Mrs. John Miller Horton of Buffalo. It was on the third round of casting ballots (after Mrs. Bryan withdrew) that Daisy Allen Story received a sufficient majority to be declared the winner. When she was escorted to the platform Daisy was greeted by her long term rival, Mrs. Matthew Scott who was “pale and trembling.” Mrs. Story made a “plea for harmony,” urging the factions of the organization to come together and bring peace to the D.A.R. (“Mrs. Story, Anti Leader”).

### **The President General Election of 1915: The Colors of Suffrage**

It was two years later, at the close of the 1915 Continental Congress, when the “Colors of Suffrage” were finally raised. The *New York Times* reported that although there was no introduction of the yellow pennant at the closing session, large bouquets of snapdragons, tied in the suffrage colors of yellow, purple and white, were carried by both the successful and unsuccessful candidates for officers of the society. Daisy Allen Story was voted in for another term as President General. The press revealed she was an active member of the Congressional

Union for Women Suffrage but had kept her participation in the movement a secret. Before the delegates left the hall, Helena Hill Weed, a leader in the suffrage cause and member of the D.A.R., delivered an invitation to all those present to attend a reception hosted by the Congressional Union for Women. The President General endorsed the event where attendees were welcomed by Lucy Burns, a founder of the National Women's Party. Afterwards, Mrs. Story and other officers of the Daughters of the American Revolution confessed to being members of the Congressional Union, but stated that "until today they had refrained from embarrassing the society in any way by openly espousing the cause." ("Colors").

### **Militant Leader**

Daisy Allen Story, the first President General of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution to openly support the suffragist movement, died from heart failure on July 15, 1932 at the age of 75. Obituaries appeared in the same newspapers that labeled her an "Insurgent," chronicling her campaigns for President General. In bold type beside her photograph she was labeled "Militant D.A.R. Leader" and "Foe of Pacifism and all Radical Groups." She was lauded for serving as the President General when America entered World War I and her "determined opposition to pacifism." As the leader of the D.A.R. she was credited for organizing many patriotic demonstrations and assembling groups of women to help with the war effort. During the course of her life she was active in many women's and patriotic organizations including the National Patriotic Builders of America, the National Federation of Women's Clubs, and the National Emergency Relief Society. One of the causes she lent her name to was the "Made in the U.S.A. Movement," promoting the purchase of goods manufactured in America prior to the Great Depression. Daisy Allen Story campaigned to save Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. Often criticized for her strong opinions and public commitment

to her conservative beliefs, her response to opposition was “eternal vigilance is the price of freedom.”

Although frail and in declining health, Daisy Allen Story attended her final Continental Congress on Patriots Day—April 19, 1932. She was a formidable character, with the determination to rise to a position of leadership, shine a light on a national issue, and provide a powerful national organization with a collective voice to influence the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America.

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