

WATERLOO – CEDAR FALLS

League of Women Voters of Waterloo was organized in late summer 1941 as the 14th local League in the state. Interest in formation of this League was sparked by the city YWCA's Public Affairs Committee. Mrs. Earle A. Munger, the first president, had been a Leaguer in Duluth and Fergus Falls, Minnesota. She was impressed with Grinnell League's part in the International Affairs Institute at Grinnell College in June 1941 which she and another member of the Waterloo YWCA Public Affairs Committee attended.

The new League's development was aided by visits of state board members and by sending delegates to area and state meetings. It had scarcely gotten under way when the disaster of Pearl Harbor struck. Our records of the early years are missing and other information is scanty. Membership had reached 35 by 1944 when state League convention was held in Waterloo (Other state conventions met here in 1949 and 1965).

After the war, Waterloo League made a conscious effort to broaden its membership base. Evening meetings were added for the benefit of employed women or others who could more conveniently attend then, and a special effort was made to add Negro members. A few Cedar Falls women were members in the fifties, and their numbers had grown to significant proportions by the early sixties. The name change to Waterloo – Cedar Falls was officially made in 1964.

League's fundamental interest in getting out an informed vote has been implemented in many ways: from political directories, registration assistance, candidates' meetings and questionnaires, radio and TV announcements and programs, booths at Dairy Cattle Congress, to poll reporting. A 1952 voter education effort won a special award from the American Heritage Foundation in connection with its national non-partisan Register-and-Vote competition, which had more than fifteen thousand entries. In addition to two weeks of demonstrating the use of the voting machine at City Hall, and a half hour radio program, Waterloo League held a "School for Political Effectiveness", with some 150 women representing sixty organizations attending the five sessions and receiving 2700 "political primers" to distribute. In 1968, along with the other usual Voter Service projects, a voter education carnival was held for Head Start mothers. National League's new film "Voting is People Power" was purchased and shown to many interested groups.

Waterloo – Cedar Falls League has frequently cooperated with other organizations in the interests of good government. It has co-sponsored projects, and has issued invitations to lectures, public meetings, or all-day workshops it has held. For many years copies of League publications have been furnished to the local city libraries and to junior and senior high schools.

Go-see trips have added an extra dimension to local information gathering. League's observer program has also provided first-hand impressions. For a number of years, this League tried to promote the assignment of a qualified special officer in the police department to work with juveniles - - an objective that has only recently been implemented in Waterloo. Services rendered children in Waterloo was a related study. Equality of opportunity in education, employment and housing have been more recent local concerns.

League early learned that it's never enough to support an issue till a law is passed - - There are always pertinent appropriations, administration, and enforcement to be watched. League's work (like woman's) is never done.