

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

"Carroll's Navy Female Yeoman of World War I"

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By Jay Graybeal

Last week's column presented profiles of six local women who served in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps during World War I. Seven other local women served in the U.S. Navy as yeoman, a rank equivalent to an office secretary or clerk. Unlike the Army which could only commission women, the Navy could have enlisted female personnel. The enlistment of women released sailors for more hazardous overseas duty.

Four local women were assigned to the Navy Department's Personnel Office in Washington, D.C. where they processed records on the more than 500,000 sailors then serving on active duty. Ella Mary Rebecca Doster, born in Carroll County but then living in Baltimore, became a landsman for yeoman on August 19, 1918. She served until December 1 when she was placed on inactive status.

Caroline Webb Hewitt of Sykesville entered service on a landsman for yeoman on July 5, 1918. She earned promotion to yeoman third class on November 1 and served until July 31, 1919 when she was placed on inactive status. The following two yeoman were also released under the same order.

Belva Agnes Lynn of Middleburg, the first local woman to join the Navy, enlisted as a yeoman third class on June 24, 1918. She received promotion to second class rank on New Year's Day 1919 and to yeoman first class on April 1, 1919.

The fourth woman, Derma Marie Yeiser of Westminster, became a yeoman third class on July 17, 1917. She earned promotion to second class rank on January 1, 1918 and to first class rank on July 1, 1918. Caroline May Sappington of Keymar also served at the Navy Department in Washington. She enlisted as a yeoman first class on April 25, 1918. Her placement on inactive status on November 27, 1918, only two weeks after the Armistice, suggests that she worked in an office that handled wartime work.

The two remaining local women also worked out of state. Nelle May Lynn of Middleburg, a younger sister of Belva, enlisted on June 26, 1917. She was assigned duty at the Navy Enrollment Office in Washington D.C. While there she received promotion to yeoman second class on October 1, 1917 and to first class rank on July 1, 1918. She was transferred to the Washington Navy Yard on September 30, 1918 and placed on inactive status on February 3, 1919. Her older brother Harry A. Lynn served overseas with the Co. A, 112th Machine Gun Battalion.

Mary Grace Schweigart of Westminster enlisted in Philadelphia and became a yeoman second class on August 26, 1918. She was assigned duty with the 4th Naval District, headquartered in Philadelphia. This district included the coastline from Barnegat, N.J. to the southern boundary of Maryland. Mary's brother John L. Schweigart, who later became a well known local musician, served in the 72nd Infantry Regiment. Mary married Herman C. Moore; she died in 1973 and is buried in Krider's Cemetery.

Little is known about these women except what was published in Maryland in the World War, 1917-1919 (1933). The writer would like to hear from anyone having information, photographs, or artifacts related to their services in World War I.

Photo Caption: [No Photo]