

Dedication of the Virginia Minor Bust

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of Shirley Breeze of the Ferguson-Florissant Branch, Mary Mosley, member of AAUW Columbia Branch, MO NOW, and the MO Women's Network, \$10,000 was raised for a sculpture and bronze casting of Virginia Minor. The Speaker of the Missouri House traditionally chooses the individuals whose busts will be placed in the capitol, but last year Speaker Tim Jones allowed the public to nominate and vote for individuals to be included. Virginia Minor, along with three men, garnered enough votes to be honored.

Since the busts are privately funded, the Network launched a grassroots appeal to mobilize 1,000 women to donate \$10 each to fund creation and placement of Virginia Minor's bust, which was created by Cynthia Hitschler of Eureka, Missouri. "We know that there are thousands of women in Missouri who are thrilled to see another woman in the Hall of Famous Missourians," Shirley said. "We are confident that women from all areas of the state will come forward to donate and do their part to raise the funds for placement of this bust."

Virginia Minor is important because she fought to get women the right to vote. In 1872, she tried to register to vote and was turned away. She sued under the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, which grants "privileges and immunities" and guarantees equal protection of the law to all citizens. Her lawsuit, *Minor v. Happersett*, went all the way to the Supreme Court, where she lost. Nearly 50 years later, with passage of the 19th Amendment, women won the right to vote; but not until 1971, nearly 100 years later, did the Supreme Court finally acknowledge that women were covered by the 14th Amendment. Virginia Minor subsequently studied law and kept working for women's suffrage until her death in 1894. She joined eight other women and 35 men in the Hall of Famous Missourians in the third floor rotunda of the Missouri State Capitol in Jefferson City.

The dedication and unveiling of the bust in the state capitol building in Jefferson City was held at 9 AM on September 10, 2014, in the House chamber. Ballwin-Chesterfield member Pat Shores arranged for a bus to take area celebrants to the dedication. Rev. Rebecca Turner offered the prayer to Mother God at the beginning of the dedication, and MO NOW President Jamie Tomek led the pledge of allegiance. Shirley Breeze and Mary Mosley spoke, as did MO Speaker of the House Tim Jones. Speaking at the press conference following the dedication were AAUW MO President Diane B. Ludwig (past St. Louis Branch president), other presidents of state women's organizations, and Ms. Hitschler. – *This article appeared IN THE October issue of the St. Louis Branch newsletter. The entire issue may be accessed on the Branch Locator page.*

Virginia Louisa Minor and Sculptor Cynthia Hitschler (Photo by Gina Jerome)



Historical Re-enactor Barbara Kay as Virginia Minor



Shirley Breeze speaking at the ceremony