

Museum Notes

by Kristen Parrott, curator
for the week of April 8 – April 14, 2018

The City of Viroqua has a new mayor, and for the first time ever, the mayor is a woman, Karen Mischel. The majority of women in the U.S. have had full voting rights for almost 100 years, so it does seem strange that this is a “first”. Viroqua’s previous mayor, Larry Fanta, was the city’s longest-serving mayor, being in office for 20 years. Viroqua was originally a village, and as such it was served by a series of village presidents from 1866 to 1885. In 1885 the village became a city, and the office of village president became the office of mayor.

Other Vernon County communities have already been served by female mayors or village presidents. Maxine Shird became the first woman to serve as village president of La Farge in July of 1978, stepping in to fill the vacancy when the former president resigned. She was then re-elected to the position in 1980. A few years before Maxine became village president, she was elected as the first woman to serve on the La Farge Village Board.

As we prepare to celebrate the 100th anniversary of women’s suffrage, we are gathering stories like these. Let the museum know if you have any other stories of political firsts for women in Vernon County.