

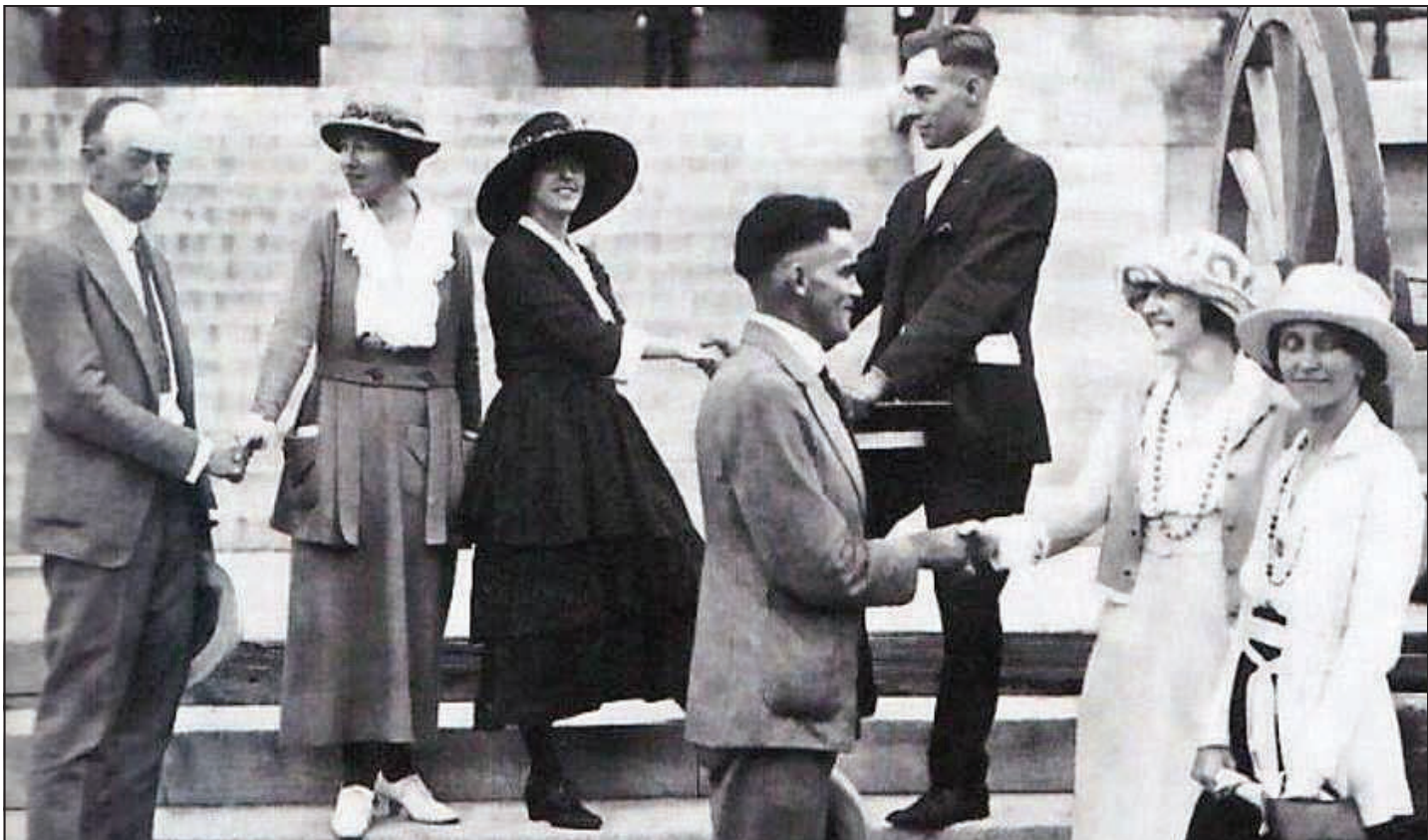
Gibson County's Turner - deserves recognition

BY DON ENSS

Citizens of Gibson County, the state of Tennessee, and the United States should acknowledge and honor the role of Rep. Banks P. Turner, Gibson County's native son, when he cast three crucial votes on August 18, 1920. Those votes cast in the legislature's special session affected the outcome of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, which ended the long struggle of women across our state and nation to win the right to vote.

This year as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the ratification, let's give him the long overdue credit he deserves. His role was overshadowed by Harry Burn, a representative from Niota in East Tennessee, who voted for the Amendment and gave as one of his reasons a letter he had received from his mother urging him to vote for it. I am glad he did, but here is the rest of story.

After months of campaigning by both sides – Suffragists and Anti-suffragists, it came down to one day – August 18, 1920. Rep. Joe Hanover, an Independent from Memphis, served as the floor leader and fought valiantly to keep the pro-suffrage



HISTORIC PHOTO – Members of the National Woman's Party thanking legislators outside the state capitol after Tennessee became the 36th and final state to ratify the 19th Amendment in August 1920. Rep. Banks Turner of Yorkville is on the far left.

votes together. He knew going into session that day, he was two votes short. Seth Walker, the Speaker of the House, believed that he had the votes to defeat the Amendment. To

provide cover for those who might be on the fence and did not want to anger their constituents by voting for or against it, he gave them a way out. He introduced a motion to table the state Senate's resolution, which had ratified the Amendment 25-4 and send it to the House.

The roll call of representatives began, and Harry Burn was No. 7. He voted to table the Senate's resolution. This is critical because if the motion to table succeeded, there would be no vote on the Amendment. Any decision on the Amendment would have been delayed to regular session in January 1921, after the presidential election.

The roll call continued with members in the gallery and probably on the legislative floor checking off names of representatives on their tally sheets as they registered their decision with the clerk. The clerk called Turner and he responded "Pass." Suddenly, everyone in the legislature was caught in the



Banks Turner

moment – a sense something historic was about to happen. The remaining representatives' names were called, and the vote stood 48 for tabling,

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**The 19th Amendment
gave women the right to vote.**
*Passed by Congress June 4, 1919
Ratified Aug. 18, 1920*



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