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# Woman was well-known for her work in education

*Winthrop graduate wrote several books and was an avid suffragette*

Kate Vixon Wofford was a standout in two fields: rural education and women's suffrage. She grew up on a farm in Laurens County, but instead of attending the local school, she, a brother and sister traveled four miles each way to a school in the town of Laurens.

An older sister, Azile, was the first of five Wofford daughters to attend Winthrop. The next year Kate arrived and later three more sisters came to Winthrop college. All had splendid records but Kate was the only one to rise to national prominence in her field. Kate Wofford was valedictorian of the class of 1916 at Winthrop and was also editor of the *Tatler*, the school's yearbook.

After graduation Kate taught one year and then accepted a position in the office of Sen. Ben Tillman in Washington. World War I was being waged. Wofford volunteered and served until the end of the war as a second-class yeoman in the navy offices in Washington. Women's branches of the armed forces collapsed when the war ended. Kate managed to find a position in the Atlanta Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA).

In the fall of 1920, Wofford returned to Laurens County to teach business courses at Laurens High School. The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution had been ratified in January of 1920. Wofford, like many of her Winthrop classmates, was an avid suffragette. D.B. Johnson, Win-

## NEARBY HISTORY

Louise Pettus



throp's president, had wholeheartedly supported the suffrage movement and secured many of the movement's leaders to speak at Winthrop.

In 1923, while teaching in Cary, N.C., Kate Wofford ran for the office of Laurens County Superintendent of Education, defeating three male opponents. After thanking the 2,971 people who cast their vote for her, she assured them that "I shall never stint myself of time nor energy in giving every child in the county its own best chance." She added, "I shall never forget with my entrance into a political office that I shall represent in a peculiar way all the women who shall run for office in years to come." She was the first woman in South Carolina to hold the office of county superintendent of schools. She served until 1930.

In 1926, Kate Wofford was elected president of the S.C. Teacher's Association. She was the first woman to be elected to that position.

She decided she needed more education and in 1930 left South Carolina to earn degrees in education: an M.A. from Cornell University and a Ph.D. from Columbia University in New York City. She was a professor of education at N.Y. State College for Teachers in Buffalo, N.Y., until 1947 when she joined the faculty of the University of Florida as chairwoman of the elementary education department.

By the time Kate Wofford got to Florida, she had published several books on education and, as an ac-

tive National Education Association member, had served as editor of the NEA yearbooks in 1934, 1939 and 1941.

In 1947, she was given an award from Kappa Delta Pi for the best professional writing of the year. Her book, "Teaching in Small Schools," received international acclaim. The U.S. War Department had the book translated into Japanese and it became part of the education training program for postwar Japanese teachers.

Kate Wofford was in demand at various institutions and served as a visiting professor at the University of Minnesota and the University of Chicago. She became an international consultant to the Turkish Ministry of Education in 1951.

Kate Wofford died in 1954 but was not forgotten by her alma mater. In 1967, one of two new eight-story dormitories was named for her (the other was named Richardson). Wofford, which houses 400 students, is the only dormitory on the Winthrop campus named for an alumna.

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