

# Eleanor, Adelaide and Caroline

by Lynne Belluscio

The Historical Society's recent bus tour started at Eleanor Roosevelt's home, Valkill, in Hyde Park, New York.

The orientation film reacquainted us with the life of this very remarkable woman. As we toured Valkill, I mentioned to our group that Mrs. Roosevelt had visited LeRoy in 1934. The First Lady had been in Buffalo on October 24th and Adelaide Woodward, who was the Vice Chair of the Genesee County Democratic Party (and Donald Woodward's wife), sent a car to Buffalo to bring Mrs. Roosevelt to LeRoy.



Adelaide Woodward

The motorcade was escorted by New York State Police and the Secret Service. They arrived half an hour late. Adelaide's house was decorated with red, white and blue bunting. A group of ladies, including Mr. Spry, wife of the superintendent of schools, Mrs.

Schuyler Wells, Mrs. Rogerson, Mrs. Stuart Johnson and Mrs. Edward Perkins, wife of the editor of the *LeRoy Gazette*, were gathered inside the Woodward home. It was reported that three thousand people were in the front yard.

The First Lady was greeted by music from the LeRoy High School band and the American Legion Drum Corps. On the lawn was a Democratic donkey with a "Rally Day" blanket. Eleanor was presented a bouquet of roses by little Eileen McDermott. Accompanying the First Lady, was Caroline O'Day who was running for Congress. She was a remarkable lady in her own right.

Caroline O'Day had been convinced by her husband to become involved with women's suffrage and the pacifist movement. His sudden death in 1916, did not sway her from continuing with social issues. She joined forces with Eleanor Roosevelt, Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman and the four women, known as the "Valkill Four" wrote and edited a monthly publication, *The Women's Democratic News*. She was involved with the League of Women Voters and a wide variety of social reform organizations.

In her bid for election in 1934 she became involved with a state network of Democratic women which utilized prominent women

such as Amelia Earhart and Eleanor Roosevelt to canvass New York's voters. The group became known as the "Flying Squadron."

O'Day was successful in her bid for election to Congress as a Representative at large in 1934 and served four terms in Washington. She advocated for progressive causes, including child labor protection, employment opportunities for the disabled,



Eleanor Roosevelt



Caroline O'Day

immigration rights and anti-lynching legislation.

In 1939, Caroline O'Day was at the side of the famous African American singer, Marian Anderson when she sang at the Lincoln Memorial after being banned by the Daughters of the American Revolution to sing in Constitution Hall. Caroline O'Day and Eleanor Roosevelt would remain involved in politics until O'Day's death in 1943.

Eleanor Roosevelt did not stay long in LeRoy. She had to be in Rochester for a reception and dinner, but as she was leaving, she said she would enjoy coming back to spend more time. As far as anyone knows, she never did.

