



Who is Phoebe Ensminger Burn and how does she fit into the story? Well, Phoebe “Febb” Burn is the mother of Harry Burn. Febb was not a passive woman. She held a degree from U. S. Grant University, now Tennessee Wesleyan University, unusual for women of her day. She read three newspapers each day, enjoyed magazines, novels and classic books and was a supporter of suffrage for many years, following those she called “the militants” and other leaders of the women’s movement. Febb was a strong influence on her children’s lives and in the state. On the morning of August 18, 1920, Harry Burn received a letter from his mother. She wrote about the happenings and the following:

Hurray and vote for Suffrage and don't keep them in doubt. I noticed Chandlers' speech, it was very bitter. I've been waiting to see how you stood but have not seen anything yet.... Don't forget to be a good boy and help Mrs. Catt with her "Rats." Is she the one that put rat in ratification, Ha! No more from mama this time. With lots of love, Mama."

When the “antis” made a move to kill the bill by calling for a vote on the amendment itself, Burn faced a moral dilemma, remain faithful to his “anti” constituents and vote against the amendment in light of his upcoming re-election campaign or remain faithful to the wishes of his mother.

Harry Burn invoked the fury of his red rose-carrying peers while avoiding fury of his mother, which could very well have been the more daunting of the two. Had Phoebe “Febb” Burn not wrote the letter and the timing of it’s arrival, the decades long battle for women’s rights and the suffrage movement may have continued even longer.

August 18, 1920

**Who is Harry Burn?
Better yet, who is Phoebe Ensminger Burn?**

Harry Burn, a young Republican lawmaker from Niota (McMinn County), in the southern valley of East Tennessee changed his “Nay” vote to an “Aye” during a critical final ballot. His change in vote decided the fate on ratification of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution. It not only passed voting rights in Tennessee, but also the one vote meant Tennessee was the final state needed to ratify the U. S. Constitution.

Rep. Harry Burn had been siding with the “No” crowd on the previous votes with voting deadlocked at 48-48. He even sported the red rose of the “Antis” on his label. During the final vote, when his name was called, Harry Burn quickly said “Aye” to the surprise of everyone in the House Chamber. The Antis groaned in disgust while The Suffs grew more excited as the roll call proceeded. The final tally was 49 to 47. Harry Burn had broken the deadlock.

It was a victory for the yellow rose-clad suffragists (the "Suffs") in the "War of the Roses" as opponents of suffrage (the "Antis") wore red roses.

The yellow rose became a symbol of hope for the suffragettes.



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The 'antis' countered with the red rose.

Gold and white have always been traditional American suffrage colors. Purple was added by Alice Paul's National Woman's Party. Following this color scheme, pro-suffrage groups chose the yellow rose as a symbol of their movement. The anti-suffrage factions chose the red rose as it represented more traditional beauty and could be used as an opposing symbolic flower.

It's only government, right? Your vote won't make a difference so why bother, right? Wrong! But, how could your vote matter you ask ...

- In 1726 one vote chose English over German to be the language used in America.
- In 1845 Texas was approved to join the United States by one vote.
- Adolph Hitler was chosen to lead the German Nazi Party by one vote.
- In 1939 the Massachusetts governor's race was decided by one vote.
- In 1941 the Selective Service System was saved by one vote just weeks before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.
- Tennessean President Andrew Johnson was impeached but stayed in office because of one vote.
- President Rutherford B. Hayes became President by one vote in the Electoral College.
- Charles B. Smith was elected to Congress in New York State by one vote.

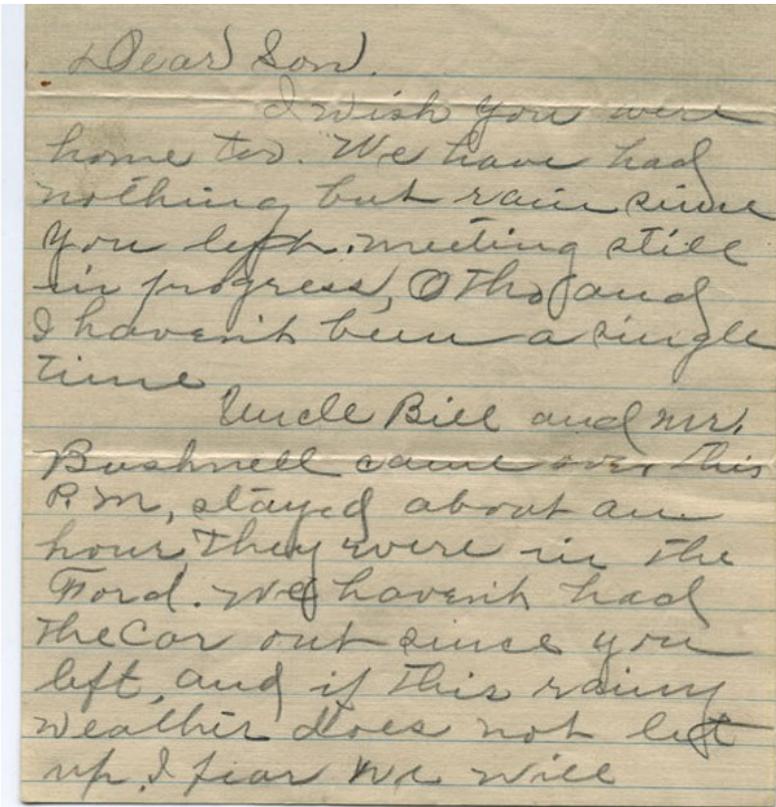
One vote in the Tennessee House by a little known Republican statesman who was only 24 years old saw the ratification nationwide of the 19th amendment for the rights of women to vote.

One vote from one person changed American History!



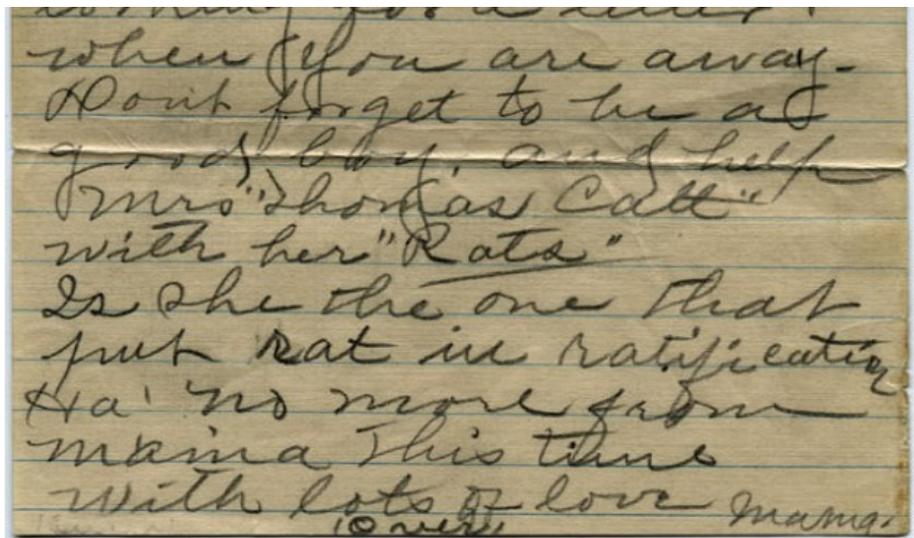
"My mother was a college woman, a student of national and international affairs who took an interest in all public issues. She could not vote. Yet the tenant farmers on our farm, some of whom were illiterate, could vote."

— Harry Burn, Tennessee State Representative, 1920



Dear Son,
I wish you were home too. We have had nothing but rain since you left. meeting still in progress, O Tho and I haven't been a single time
Uncle Bill and Mrs. Bushnell came over this P.M., stayed about an hour they were in the Ford. We haven't had the car out since you left, and if this rainy weather does not lift up, I fear we will

Febb E. Burn to Harry T. Burn, August 17, 1920, p. 1
Harry T. Burn Papers, C. M. McClung Historical Collection



when you are away. Don't forget to be a good boy, and help Mrs. "Shoegas" Catt with her "Rats". Is she the one that put rat in ratification. Ha! no more from mama this time with lots of love mama

Febb E. Burn to Harry T. Burn, August 17, 1920, p. 6
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