**First Woman to Vote in America Lived in Laramie**

Louisa Swain was the first woman to vote in a general election in the United States. She voted on Sept. 6, 1870, in Laramie.

Born Louisa Gardner in Norfolk, Va., in 1801, she was the daughter of a sea captain who was lost at sea while she was a child. She and her mother moved to Charleston, S. C., where her mother died. Orphaned, Louisa went to Baltimore to live with an uncle, Ephraim Gardner. While in Baltimore, she met and, in 1821, married Stephen Swain who operated a chair factory. When their fourth child was six weeks old, Stephen Swain sold the chair factory and the family moved, first to Zanesville, Ohio, and later to Indiana. Soon after their son Alfred and his young family moved to the new town of Laramie, Wyoming, in 1869, the Swains joined them.

On Sept. 6, 1870, Louisa Swain rose early, put on her apron, shawl and bonnet, and walked downtown with a tin pail in order to purchase yeast from a merchant. She walked by the polling place and concluded she would vote while she was there. The polling place had not yet officially opened, but election officials asked her to come in and cast her ballot. She was described by a Laramie newspaper as "a gentle white-haired housewife, Quakerish in appearance." (Laramie Daily Sentinel, September 7, 1870). She was 69 years old when she cast the first ballot by any woman in the United States in a general election.

Soon after the election, Stephen and Louisa Swain left Laramie and returned to Maryland to live near a daughter. Stephen died Oct. 6, 1872, in Maryland. Louisa died Jan. 25, 1880, in Lutherville, Maryland. Her body was buried in the Friends Burying Ground, Harford Road, Lutherville. A statue in her honor, by sculptor John Baker, was dedicated in front of the Women's History House, Laramie, Wyoming, in 2005.