

Michigan Every Day **By Patrick Sullivan and Carole Eberly**

Nov. 12, 1912
Liquor sellers derail women's suffrage

On this day in November that included a presidential election and a state amendment to give women the right to vote, it appeared the suffrage amendment would pass with a solid majority. Still, it was a big election that brought record turnout, partly because of a three-way race for president that saw Democrat Woodrow Wilson defeat Republican incumbent William Taft and Theodore Roosevelt who ran on his splinter Bull Moose Party ticket. But across the state, it appeared that a majority of voters came out in favor of a woman's right to vote. Days after the election, the tally of those in favor of the amendment led by well over 10,000 votes. The following week however, in counties throughout the state, liquor interests began making appeals to boards of canvassers. On Nov. 12, 1912, they called for returns in counties across the state to be thrown out because of faulty ballots. In some cases, the suffrage amendment was only partially printed on ballots. In other cases, it appeared alongside another issue on a ballot. In Detroit, there were irregularities reported in precincts across the city. Pro-suffrage leaders expressed alarm that votes in favor of the amendment had mysteriously disappeared. *The Detroit News Tribune* chronicled the dispute over the vote count and reported that it was "the saloon men" who were fighting against the amendment at every turn. The newspaper did not delve into what motivated the liquor distributors and tavern keepers to fight so vehemently against the women's vote, but readers at the time understood the issue very well. They knew that many woman voters would align with the temperance movement to outlaw alcohol in the United States. It took 10 more days before "all" of the votes were tallied. The final count put those against the suffrage amendment ahead by 723 votes in an election that saw approximately 435,000 Michiganders cast ballots.

Two weeks later, the State Association of Farmers' Clubs passed a resolution calling for statewide prohibition of alcohol because of what saloon-keepers had allegedly done to thwart the women's vote. Voters in Michigan gave women the right to vote in state elections in 1918 and the women's suffrage was guaranteed nationwide when the 19th amendment to the Constitution was enacted in 1920.