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## When Suffragettes Rallied in Hyattsville

In 1913, hundreds of activists transformed Magruder Park into a motorized political rally.

By [Michael Theis](#) | [Email the author](#) | September 25, 2012

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Suffragists rally in Magruder Park on July 31, 1913 before heading down the Capitol Hill to present a petition to congressional leaders calling for a constitutional amendment granting women the right to vote. Credit Library of Congress

Did you know Hyattsville was once the staging ground for a massive, motorized rally for women's suffrage that was covered by *The New York Times*?

Way back in July 1913, a little more than 99 years ago, hundreds of activists from the National American Woman Suffrage Association poured into what is only described as "the baseball park at Hyattsville" (likely what is now known as [Magruder Park](#)) for a 10 a.m. rally followed by a motorized procession of 500 people and 60 cars to Congress. Once on Capitol Hill, the activists delivered a petition bearing 75,000 signatures in support of a federal women's suffrage bill to congressional leaders.

[The New York Times reported](#) at the time that "the whole town was decorated, the suffrage yellow predominating...the women carrying the petitions had traveled from their various states mostly by automobile, holding rallies along the way, and had been converging upon the rendezvous for days. Every state was represented."

According to the program, women from a Hyattsville Episcopal congregation sold refreshments and the crowd was entertained by a concert band from

Laurel. Hyattsville Mayor Harry Shepherd also addressed the crowd and gave the activists the key to the city.

At the time of the rally, the women's vote was still seven years away from being a nationwide, constitutionally guaranteed right.

A number of states, particularly west of the Mississippi River, had granted women full voting rights by this time. Another dozen or so offered women limited voting rights in either local or primary elections.

But Maryland, like several other eastern seaboard states, did not permit women to vote in elections at any level until the Nineteenth Amendment became law 1920. Even then, Maryland did not ratify the amendment for another 21 years.

According to *The New York Times*, those opposed to women's suffrage criticized the motorcade as a "cheap advertising or an attempt to cloak defeat under the guise of jubilation for which they have no cause."

Among those opposed to women's suffrage, locally, were the management behind the Chevy Chase Country Club, which welched on a suffragette party reservation. [According to a Times report from July 17, 1913](#), "the famous Washington Club has refused to allow the women...to hold a dinner there on July 31, as had been previously arranged."

The image, and the accompanying program of events, also show what has and has not changed about transportation in the Hyattsville area.

For instance, gone are the days when you could take a train from Baltimore to Hyattsville for \$1.68.

But a 35-minute travel time on the electric trolley from downtown Washington to Hyattsville? That's roughly the same amount of time it takes to travel from Archives-Navy Memorial and West Hyattsville today.

But I doubt you'd be able to find a livery team to take you to your house for 10 cents.

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2

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**Mark G**

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11:47 am on Tuesday, September 25, 2012

Well according to METRO's published timetables, the Trip from West Hyattsville to Archives is 17 minutes- half of the time on the 1913 streetcar (though if I recall, the streetcar ran more frequently).



**Michael Theis**

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12:17 pm on Tuesday, September 25, 2012

Interesting. I think WMATA may be a bit optimistic there. Google, when I was researching for this article, said that journey will take 30 minutes, but they may be factoring in waiting on the platform times.



**Lou Grant**

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11:34 pm on Thursday, September 27, 2012

It never ceases to amaze me at the number of spelling and grammatical mistakes I see in print and online newspapers everyday, and this article of The Patch is no exception.

Michael, the Suffragettes were heading to CAPITOL HILL, not Capital Hill. Although the word "capital" has many meanings, using it to describe the area in D.C. near "The Capitol," is not one of them.



**Michael Theis**

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1:01 am on Friday, September 28, 2012

I bet you're real fun at parties. Thanks for pointing that out. The typo has been fixed.