

### ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY DECEMBER 4



**On December 4, 1957, Helen Holt was sworn in as secretary of state, the first woman to hold the position.**

**CSO: SS.8.2, SS.8.25, ELA.8.1**

**Investigate the Document:** (*Charleston Gazette* December 5, 1957; Cecil Underwood Collection)

1. The secretary of state belongs to *what* branch of government?
2. Which West Virginia governor is Helen Holt addressing in her letter? What unique distinctions does *this* governor's terms in office have?
3. Helen Holt served in the lower house of the West Virginia Legislature from 1955-1957. What is the lower house of the West Virginia Legislature known as?

**Think Critically:** Identify (2) chief responsibilities of the secretary of state. Why is it important to recognize and explore women's history? Why is women's history sometimes overlooked? What challenges remain for women today? How can understanding history help us to overcome them?



WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
CHARLESTON

MRS. RUSH D. HOLT  
WESTON

Dear Hovah and Cecil,

As a friend who has watched your accomplishments since your Salem College days, I am truly delighted to extend my sincerest congratulations upon your magnificent victory on November 6. I know that Rush would be as proud of you as I am.

It is my belief that you have the opportunity to become West Virginia's most outstanding Governor, and you may be assured of my continued enthusiastic and wholehearted support.

I am really happy for the two of you -- and delighted to know that you will soon number four! Please do stop when you are in the Lewisburg area.

Sincerely,

*Relen*

P.S. Truman Wright at the Greenbrier wanted me to be sure to tell you that he is, and always has been, a Republican. Apparently he received a "letter to a Democrat". He said that he was going to write to extend you the usual courtesies at the Hotel ----- in fact, he called to ask if I thought it would be all right to do it right away!

I'm sorry that I missed talking with you, but I don't blame you for disconnecting your phone. Perhaps that is why so many persons called to "congratulate" me since Tuesday!



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SHOPPING  
DAYS UNTIL  
CHRISTMAS

# The Charleston Gazette

The State Newspaper

Charleston, W. Va., Thursday Morning, December 5, 1957

38 Pages—2 Sections—Five Cents



## RESIGNS COLLEGE OFFICE

# Mrs. Holt Takes Secretary Post

Mrs. Helen F. Holt of Lewisburg was sworn in yesterday as secretary of state—becoming the first woman in West Virginia history to hold a high statewide office.

She succeeds D. Pitt O'Brien, who died last Friday of a heart ailment after serving as secretary or assistant to his father since the early 1930s.

The pretty Greenbrier Woman's College professor quickly settled all doubts as to her future plans. Within minutes after the swearing-in at 5:17 p. m., she said she'll run for re-election next year.

The term to which Mrs. Holt was named by Gov. Underwood will run only until the general election next November.

She is the widow of Rush D. Holt of Weston, who was the youngest person ever elected to the U. S. Senate. It was while he was serving his lone term in Congress that he met and married her.

HOLT, a longtime Democrat, bolted the party in 1950 to run on the Republican ticket for Congress in the Third District. He was unsuccessful, as he was when he sought the governorship in 1952 also as a Republican.

Mrs. Holt came into statewide focus while touring the state with her husband in 1952, and she filled out his unexpired term in the House of Delegates from 1955 to 1957. Holt served several

terms in the Legislature.

The new secretary of state did not seek re-election to the House of Delegates last year, choosing instead to run for delegate to the Republican National Convention. She led the ticket for delegate-at-large, and it was her popularity then that turned many Republicans in her direction after O'Brien died.

Mrs. Holt is looked upon as a person who can strengthen the Republican party's chances in the primary and general election next year.

Her appointment as secretary of state cuts the Democratic majority on the powerful Board of Public Works from 5-2 to 4-3. O'Brien was a Democrat, and she, like Underwood, a Republican.

IN MARCH 1955 Mrs. Holt went to the Lewisburg girls school as science instructor. A native of Cridley, Ill., she holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Northwestern University.

President Judge James B. Riley of the State Supreme Court administered the oath of office to Mrs. Holt before about 50 spectators. The man who appointed her was Gov. Underwood. (Please Turn to Page 10 Col. 6)

## Mrs. Holt Takes

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ed her was not among those present.

He was in New York City on an industrial development trip, where he planned to confer yesterday with industrialists and investment bankers about the possibilities of obtaining new plants for West Virginia.

Mrs. Holt, wearing a black and white checked suit and red velvet hat, posed for photographers with her 9-year-old son, Rush Jr.

She was driven to Charleston in a state police car to be sworn in. She planned to return home last night, saying it would take a day or two at least to wind up her teaching duties. She plans to resign from the Greenbrier faculty.

When newsmen asked Mrs. Holt her age, an item of interest omitted from the biological sketch handed out by the Governor's office earlier, she smiled and replied:

"I'm older than the Governor."

Underwood is 35, the youngest Governor West Virginia ever has had.

