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PLANNING DEPARTMENT

NOMINATION FORM  
HALF MILE OF HISTORY

**Section A: Nomination Information**

Name of Nominated person, place or event: Elizabeth Herndon Potter

The nominee is being honored for outstanding contributions in the area(s) of (please check all that apply):

<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment/Media	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Philanthropy
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government/Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts and Culture	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry <i>women's suffrage</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Science
<input type="checkbox"/> Aviation	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention/Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/> Sports
<input type="checkbox"/> Business/Corporate Leadership	<input type="checkbox"/> Law	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community Service	<input type="checkbox"/> Medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Oil/Gas	

**Section B: Nominator's Information**

Name of person making nomination: Vicki Betts

Address: 2310 Sparrow Circle

City: Tyler State: TX Zip: 75701

Daytime telephone: 903 566-7344 Email: vbetts@gower.net

Relationship to nominated individual: Researcher

Nominated Individual's year of birth: 1871 Nominated Individual's year of death: 1966

**Section C: Narrative**

The narrative section of the application is the most important. It is the primary source of information judges use to make their selection of new inductees. The two-page narrative submittal must utilize size 12 Times New Roman font and be double spaced. Please include a recommended 25-30 word marker caption at the end of the narrative. Any additional material will be referred to only for verification of accuracy of the nomination. No submitted materials will be returned.

The narrative section must contain an explanation of the nominee's enduring contribution that make this person/place/event worthy of the honor. Please describe the impact the nominee has had on the community, county, region, nation and/or world. For Individuals, please include any honors earned by the nominee as well as a list of organizations in which the nominee has been involved. Also, please indicate their educational background as well as the length of time the individual has lived in Smith County. Inclusion of photos is preferred but optional. Do not send original photos. All submitted materials will become property of the City of Tyler and its Historical Preservation Board.

Please submit nominations to:  
City of Tyler Historical Preservation Board  
Attention: Half Mile of History  
P.O. Box 2039  
Tyler, Texas 75710

## Elizabeth Herndon Potter

Elizabeth Herndon, the daughter of Congressman William S. Herndon and Mary Louise McKellar Herndon, was born in Tyler, Texas, on January 19, 1871. She attended Elmira College and Mrs. Sylvester Reed's School in New York, and married John Edwin Potter, Jr., of Philadelphia, on June 3, 1891. After the birth of her daughter, Dorothy, in 1894, Elizabeth and her husband divorced. She continued her education at Philadelphia School of Cookery, Boston Cooking School, and the Chautauqua in New York where she obtained a diploma to teach nutrition. She also took a course of lectures at the National Food Congress by 1899, and subsequently lectured on childhood nutrition.

By 1900 Elizabeth Herndon Potter had returned to Tyler, joining the First Literary Club. As a member of the Tyler Federation of Women Clubs, her attention soon turned to Tyler Public Library, which at that point was a small subscription library housed at the Tyler Electric Company on the northwest corner of the square. In 1903, Mrs. Potter became the president of the first board of trustees of the library, and was "indefatigable in her labors" in pushing the city of Tyler toward supporting a free library. She went back to Simmons College in Boston, and to the Chautauqua in New York, to study library science, not to become a librarian but to better qualify her to serve on the library board. She was still president of the trustees when the board obtained funding from Andrew Carnegie for the first building, and when the plans were designed. Chris Albertson, former director, has called her the "mother of Tyler Public Library."

By 1913, Mrs. Potter was involved with woman's suffrage movement. She, her mother and her sisters helped organize the Smith County Equal Suffrage League that year, and Mrs. Potter contributed an equal franchise column to the *Tyler Courier-Times*. In 1915 she spoke for the cause in Austin, and lobbied the legislators in session. She arranged for woman's suffrage

speakers to come to Tyler, contributed her own funds to promotion, and was chosen chairman of District 7 suffrage work. She continued to rise in the organization, becoming first vice president of the Texas Branch of the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage, then third vice president of the Texas Equal Suffrage Association. In 1917, while continuing as an officer in the local group, she served also as Congressional chairman for the state, lobbying the Texas delegation in Washington in favor of a federal woman's suffrage amendment. Once Texas women were given the right to vote in Democratic primaries, she was chosen to join the 1918 executive committee of the Smith County Democratic Party and was elected chairman of Ward 3, reportedly the first woman of the state to achieve those posts. Elizabeth Herndon Potter was the most significant state and federal level suffragette from Smith County.

In her later years, Mrs. Potter aided in the development of the current YMCA. She sold her valuable homesite near downtown to the YMCA for \$100,000, in 1957, then at once donated \$50,000 back for the building fund. On September 6, 1959, the YMCA was dedicated to Elizabeth Potter and Walter Fair.

In 1963, Mrs. Potter also donated stocks worth \$220,000 to the East Texas Boy Scout Foundation, to create a trust fund from which the income would go to the support of Boy Scout camps in East Texas.

She died on March 16, 1966, and is buried at Oakwood Cemetery, Tyler, Texas, recognized for her work for a free public library in Tyler and for the right of women to vote, as well as for her philanthropy toward the YMCA and the Boy Scouts of America.

Suggested wording:

Elizabeth Herndon Potter (1871-1966), suffragette, first president of the Tyler Public Library Board, benefactor of the YMCA and Boy Scouts



**MRS. E. H. POTTER, TYLER, TEXAS**