

DENVER CITY COUNCIL



Proclamation No. 24-0356 Honoring Sadie Likens as Denver's First Police Matron

WHEREAS, Sarah Jane Morehouse was born in Trenton, Ohio on July 14, 1840 and was the youngest of six children. Sadie married David Isiah Washburn in 1859, the following year they had a son named Fred. During the Civil War, David enlisted as a private in the Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry and died serving his country. A year later her son died of pneumonia, Sadie found herself a widow and a grieving mother by the age of twenty-two; and

WHEREAS, Sadie married her second husband, William Wallace Likens on August 17, 1869 and they had four children - Ada Belle, Reuel, Velma, and Clarence. In August of 1881 the family moved to Colorado. William suffered from several ethical lapses that resulted in him losing his legal license and forcing him to serve in prison. He later abandoned Sadie and her children in Denver; and

WHEREAS, in 1881, Sadie was hired in the newly created job as the Denver Police Matron. This position was very demanding and required her to be available at all times. Her duties included overseeing female prisoners, lost children, and interviewing potential witnesses. Sadie also provided them with medical and spiritual support. As Denver's population grew her workload increased exponentially, Sadie proved to be very capable in her new role. Officials were so pleased with her performance they appointed her daughter Ada Bell to serve as Assistant Matron; and

WHEREAS, serving as Denver's first Police Matron, Sadie discovered her true calling in life, caring for people in our society that were vulnerable, especially poor and abused women. After leaving the police department she continued to serve the community by working for the State Home and Industrial School for Girls, the Florence Crittenton Social Agency, and the County Hospital; and

WHEREAS, Sadie was an active member of the Denver Orphan's Home, Daughters of the American Revolution, the Colonial Dames of America, and Trinity Methodist Church. She was a founding member of the Denver's Women's Club; and

WHEREAS, Sadie's strong interest in helping veterans led to her founding and serving in auxiliary groups that aided Civil War and Spanish-American War Veterans. She was an honorary member of the Shiloh Veterans and National Association of Civil War Prisoners. She later volunteered with the American Legion to provide aid to World War I Veterans; and

WHEREAS, on July 30, 1920, Sadie Likens died at the home of her daughter in Denver. Her legacy is profound. She suffered tragedy in life and responded with kindness and generosity while demonstrating a clear ability to affect change. She was a trailblazer who opened government positions to women in Colorado.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER:

Section 1. That the Council of the City and County of Denver recognizes and honors Sadie's contributions and dedication to the citizens of Denver.

Section 2. That the Clerk of the City and County of Denver shall affix the seal of the City and County of Denver to this proclamation and that a copy be transmitted to Sadie Likens family.

PASSED BY THE COUNCIL March 26, 2024

PRESIDENT

