

A Different Point of View

THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MUSEUM ACT OF 2003

After years of working to secure a permanent site for the Museum, the dream is well on its way to becoming reality. On November 21st, the United States Senate unanimously passed Senate Bill 1741, The National Women's History Museum Act of 2003. The effort was led by Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), chair of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee and member of NWHM's Honorary Board of Directors. The legislation moved very quickly. Senator Collins introduced S. 1741 on October 16, 2003, and it was unanimously approved by the Governmental Affairs Committee on October 22. Twenty senators agreed to cosponsor the bill along with its author Senator Susan Collins. Senators Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Richard Durbin (D-IL), also NWHM Honorary Board members, assisted in lining up Senate supporters.

The National Women's History Museum Act of 2003 directs the General Services Administration to enter into an agreement enabling NWHM to establish a permanent site for exhibitions in a building owned by the federal government. During passage of the bill, Senator Collins and Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), who also serves on the NWHM Honorary Board of Directors, shared accounts of women from their states who have played historic roles that have gone unrecognized. Senator Collins noted the importance of having a place to learn of women's accomplishments. She explained that when she was a senior in high school, she met Maine Senator Margaret Chase Smith. Stating that "I realize that that was the first step in a journey that led me to run for her seat 25 years later." Both these women senators appreciate that positive role models help girls see exactly what they can achieve.

The NWHM proposed site is located on America's main street - Pennsylvania Avenue, just blocks from the White House and a short walk from the Smithsonian Museums on the National Mall in Washington, DC. This area is designated as the prime location for museums in the Memorials and Museums Master Plan developed by the National Capital Planning Commission. This prominent location will appropriately recognize the value of the contributions that women have made to the country's development.

The building NWHM would occupy is a three story glass enclosed retail shopping mall in an area known as the Federal Triangle. The government took over possession of the building when private commercial developers went bankrupt. It has been vacant since 1992. By taking over this space, the Museum would be able to put the unoccupied building to use for exhibitions and educational programming. S. 1741 awaits passage in the House of Representatives.



Artist's rendering of the proposed NWHM site.

ENTERPRISING WOMEN RECEPTION

On November 3rd the National Women's History Museum hosted its annual Advisory Board meeting. This year's meeting coincided with the Washington, DC stop for the traveling exhibition *Enterprising Women: 250 Years of American Business*. The National Museum of Women in the Arts served as a venue for the meeting as well as a reception for the exhibition. The meeting was attended by many representatives of organizations in the NWHM's National Coalition. NWHM President Susan Jollie presented each organization with a notebook detailing the aspects of membership in the National Coalition, including assisting the NWHM in its efforts to secure a permanent building site. Topics discussed at the meeting included the NWHM's upcoming exhibition *Partners in Winning the War: Women in World War II* and Senate Bill 1741, which could result in a permanent site for the Museum.

The meeting was immediately followed by a reception for the exhibition. Edith Mayo, curator of *Enterprising Women*, led a guided tour. Ms. Mayo has worked with the NWHM extensively in the past, including curating the online exhibition *Motherhood, Social Service, and Political Reform: Political Culture and Imagery of the Woman Suffrage Movement*. She is curator emeritus of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, where she curated the famous First Ladies exhibition and *Parlor to Politics*, an exhibition on women's roles in social reform.

Enterprising Women continues to travel across the country. Installations are scheduled for Los Angeles and Detroit. For more information on the exhibition, including scheduled stops, visit the website, www.enterprisingwomenexhibit.org.

HOLIDAY FEASTING



As the year draws to a close, for many people, a season of good meals and good company begins. These dinners have long been associated with toiling over a hot stove making a huge meal for friends and family. Traditionally women have been responsible for preparing the meals. Often all of this work involves a shortcut or two, and at the end of the meal, the inevitable leftovers. The following three women influenced American culture through shortcuts and leftovers.

In 1953 Betty Cronin, a bacteriologist at Swanson, had to answer the leftover question on a much larger scale than many people could ever imagine. When confronted with over 500,000 pounds of surplus turkey, Swanson had Cronin develop the techniques needed to freeze food so that it could be reheated at home and enjoyed with significantly less effort than most meals required at that time. The result? The TV Dinner.

For those who don't have to use up 250 tons of turkey, saving the leftovers in plastic containers is a convenient way to store everything in the refrigerator. One of the most famous plastic container brands is Tupperware, but without the efforts of Brownie Wise, the Vice President of Marketing, the famous containers might never have caught on with Americans. Wise was the inventor of the Tupperware Party, a revolutionary "home party" technique for sales. In 1954 Wise was the first woman to appear on the cover of Business Week.

As for the shortcuts, for those without enough time to bake a pie, many turn to Mrs. Smith's. Few people realize, though that there really was a Mrs. Smith whose homemade pies started the commercial bakery. Amanda Smith, of Pottstown, Pennsylvania, was a homemaker and mother who went into business with her son. Mrs. Smith would make the pies in her kitchen, and her son would sell them. At first they only sold pie by the slice at the local YMCA, but eventually they were selling whole pies to restaurants and grocery stores.

CELEBRATE THESE WOMEN BORN IN AUTUMN

In 1916 **Dr. Ethel Andrus** (9/21/1884) became the first woman to serve as a high school principal in California. After retiring from education, she founded the National Retired Teacher Association in 1947. As a retired teacher she understood that retired teachers needed health insurance. She also wanted to promote her idea of "productive aging" for retired people. After hearing from many retirees who were interested in her programs, but were not teachers, she decided to expand her organization. In 1958, Andrus founded the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) which grew out of the NRTA. Andrus founded and edited the AARP's signature publication, Modern Maturity. Dr. Andrus passed away in 1967.

One of the most famous females of the American Revolution is Molly Pitcher, a wife of an artillery soldier, who earned her nickname during the Battle of Monmouth in June 1778. To relieve the thirsty soldiers, she brought pitcher after pitcher of water onto the battlefield. When her husband collapsed during the battle, she took his post and served as a gunner for the remainder of the battle. While records of eighteenth century women are often hard to find, researchers believe that **Mary Ludwig Hays McCauley** (10/13/1754) was most likely the woman behind this Revolutionary War hero. After the war she returned to Pennsylvania and was awarded a pension for her work during the Revolution, one of only three women to do so. She died in 1832. In 1916 a life-size statue of her was placed next to her gravesite in Carlisle, PA.

Dorothy Dandridge (11/9/1923) is best known for her Oscar nominated performance as the title character in *Carmen Jones*. As Carmen Jones, Dandridge was able to show her considerable talents for singing, dancing, and acting. Despite her Oscar nomination in 1955, there were few quality roles for African-American actresses at that time and she was limited in her choice of parts. Dandridge died in 1965.



Detail of a promotional poster for *Carmen Jones* from *American Women: Selections from the National Portrait Gallery*

Margaret Mead (12/16/1901) was arguably the most famous anthropologist of her time. Her book *Coming of Age in Samoa*, which was based on fieldwork she conducted in the 1920s in the South Pacific, was a best seller. Much of her professional life was based out of New York's American Museum of Natural History. Mead used her overseas fieldwork as a way of studying modern American life. She had served as the president of various professional organizations, including the American Anthropological Association and received 28 honorary doctorates. After her death in 1978 she was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.



Detail of a photograph of Margaret Mead, courtesy The Library of Congress.

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crowds at the mall?



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Log on through nwhm.org and
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support NWHM efforts.

Museum Merchandise is still
available through www.nwhm.org.
The museum store has tee shirts,
totes, teddy bears, and much more.



All proceeds
from the
museum store
support NWHM
efforts.

Did you know?

Margaret Mead made her research available to the general public by publishing in both scientific journals and popular magazines, such as Redbook.

TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALLGAME

In September NWHM President Susan Jollie was invited to represent the NWHM at the final game of the third season of Tee Ball on the South Lawn. According to the White House Tee Ball has been played on the White House lawn since May of 2001 as a way to foster a spirit of teamwork and service for America's youth, and to help generate interest in America's pastime.

The September 7th game featured two coed teams. The focus of the day was on women in sports. Linda Cohen of ESPN and Jennie Finch of the USA Women's Softball team served as announcers for the game. The First Base Coach was Dolores Dolly Brumfield White, who is the president of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (A-APGBL) Players Association. Also present was former A-AGPBL pitcher Gloria Cordes (now Gloria Cordes Elliot). Ms. Cordes Elliot was an All Star 1952-54.

While it is wonderful to see coed little league teams now, the members of the A-AGPBL are living proof that women have been succeeding in athletics for generations. Women's sports, however, often need a catalyst to get widespread attention. In the case of women's baseball, it was World War II. When the war effort threatened to destroy the game due to players leaving to serve in the war All-American Girls were given a chance to play the game.

Unlike the ballplayers they were replacing, the All-American Girls were expected to follow rules of conduct that included never wearing slacks or shorts in public, that lipstick must always be on, and that players could not change residence without the permission of the chaperone. Proving the femininity of the new female athletes was a top priority for League founder Philip Wrigley, who also owned the Chicago Cubs. Wrigley arranged for Helena Rubinstein's Beauty Salon to meet with players during spring training. Until 1945 players were also expected to follow the instructions of the League's Charm School, including what to pack into their official beauty kits and to not use a loud voice. A variety of factors played a role in the League's demise, among them the advent of televised Major League Baseball games. The A-AGPBL folded in 1954.

Did you know?

The All-American Girls Professional Baseball League was active from 1943 to 1954. The movie *A League of Their Own* is a fictionalized account of one of the teams in the league.



I am sure you will agree that the news on our building site is exciting. But it may be hard for many of our members to visualize what the museum will look like. The key consideration is the location, and we could not have done any better than a Pennsylvania Avenue address next to the other national museums that are visited by millions of people each year.

The space is currently configured for use as a retail center, not for exhibitions and educational programs. But the structure is a sleek and modern design of metal and glass construction -- and yes, the arched glass ceiling is an architectural element that we think is ironically fitting!

I can clearly envision how we will be able to work within the confines of this space to develop a state-of-the-art museum with exciting themes that will be of interest to everyone. NWHM will be able to use its space to tell a comprehensive story of the country's development and the central role women played in this growth. It is possible to see through women's eyes how we as a people lived and made our homes and communities better, and to learn from the struggle for political and social freedom and opportunity.

While this news is extremely exciting, it is important to keep an eye towards the practical considerations as well. Even if the Senate bill is enacted into law, it does not simply 'give' the Museum a new home. We will be responsible for the hiring of architects, engineers, and other professionals to redesign the space and develop the content of the exhibitions to make NWHM a must-see destination for the millions of Americans who visit the nation's capital to discover their heritage.

Despite our success in getting this far, there is still a long road ahead of the NWHM. But at least now we're officially on our way.

Warmest regards,



Susan B. Jollie
President

National Women's History Museum

PO Box 1296
Annandale, VA 22003

Tel.: 703-813-6209
Fax: 703-813-6210

www.nwhm.org
info@nwhm.org

President:
Susan B. Jollie
Administrator:
Laura Rogers
Curator:
Brigid Laurie



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NATIONAL COALITION UPDATE

The National Coalition continues to grow - 23 organizations have joined to date. The most recent organizations to join this Coalition are the Association of Junior Leagues International (AJLI) and National Association for Female Executives (NAFE).

AJLI is dedicated to promoting volunteerism, developing the potential of women, and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. There are almost 300 Junior League chapters across four countries. The first Junior League for the Promotion of Settlement Movements was founded in 1901 by Mary Harriman, a 19 year-old debutante in New York City. The second Junior League formed in 1907, creating the precedent for expansion.

NAFE is the largest women's professional association and the largest women business owners organization in the U.S. NAFE strives to empower its members to achieve career success and financial security.

Recently, a section listing the members of the National Coalition was added to www.nwhm.org. To learn more about the NWHM National Coalition or for information about how a national organization can become a member of the Coalition, please contact Susan B. Jollie, President, or Becky L. Schergens, National Advisor, at the headquarters office, 703-813-6209 or at info@nwhm.org.

NEW SELF-GUIDED TOUR AVAILABLE ONLINE

The NWHM website, www.nwhm.org has unveiled its second virtual tour of women's history sites in the greater Washington, DC area. The tour, *The Good Old Days?* focuses on how women lived their day to day lives in the past. Highlights of the tour include a colonial era Virginia farm and a Massachusetts house that has been reconstructed to show how ways of life changed over the course of two centuries.

By experiencing the "good old days" for even a short period of time, visitors will leave with a greater appreciation of "women's work" and modern conveniences.



Detail of an advertisement for a 19th century washing machine and wringer, courtesy The Library of Congress.

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