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National
Women's
History
Museum

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Volume IX, Issue IV

A Different Point of View

Celebrating Our Past
Inspiring Our Future

Volume IX, Issue IV

So does a woman make history? Obviously, Marie Curie didn't win two Nobel Prizes by throwing tantrums in the lab. True, after her husband's death French tabloids pilloried her for having an affair with a married collaborator. But she isn't remembered today because she was "bad" but because she was "very, very good" at what she did. So why doesn't high achievement in science qualify a woman as "well-behaved"? Could it be because some people still assume women aren't supposed to stand out in a crowd?



The "well-behaved women" quote works because it plays into longstanding stereotypes about the invisibility and the innate decorum of the female sex. Many people think women are less visible in history than men because their bodies impel them to nurture. Their job is to bind the wounds, stir the soup, and bear the children of those whose mission it is to fight wars, rule nations, and define the cosmos. Not all those who make this argument consider women unimportant-on the contrary, the often revere the contributions of women as wives, mothers, and caregivers-or at least they say so. But they also assume that domestic roles haven't changed much over the centuries, and that women who perform them have no history. A New Hampshire pastor captured this notion when he wrote in his commonplace book in 1650,

"Woman's the center & lines are men." If women occupy the fixed center of life, and if history is seen as a linear progression of public events, a changing panorama of wars and kingdoms, then only those who through outrageous behavior, divine intervention, or sheer genius step into the stream of public consequence have a history.

-Taken from Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History, by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, The Slogan, pgs. Xii-xxii



NWHM CyberExhibit "Woman Suffrage" won the top award from Surfing the Net with Kids, a weekly column that reviews educational websites for children. The column is written by Barbara J. Feldman, a Syndicated Columnist. The article reviewing NWHM appeared

online and in several national newspapers, including The Boston Globe.

From the time it was first formally proposed in 1848, gaining the right to vote took the women's movement 72 years of struggle to achieve. This exhibit examines the development of a distinct female political culture and imagery that evolved to promote voting rights for women.

-Taken from NWHM CyberExhibit "Motherhood, Social Service, and Political Reform: Political Culture and Imagery of American Woman Suffrage", <http://www.nwhm.org/exhibits/intro.html>

A Home on the Mall - A Golden Opportunity!

As NWHM Charter Members know, NWHM has pursued a building site to call home for the last five years. Legislation identifying a site one block off the National Mall passed the U. S. Senate twice on unanimous consent. Then the House of Representatives failed to take up the bill.

Recently, the Smithsonian Institution (SI) published a two-step request for bids on its Arts and Industries Building (AIB), a magnificent 1879 Victorian building. AIB is located next door to the Castle in the middle of the National Mall. It was the first SI museum and is referred to as the "Mother of Smithsonian." As the saying goes, "It doesn't get any better than this!"

Since the response date for the first step is January 7, 2008, NWHM had to act quickly to put together a premier architect, developer and real estate team. Within days our first "draft" choice in each category had agreed to join with us.

Challenges

NWHM will respond with a submission describing our vision for a women's history museum in the building. This historic building will have many restrictions. For example, nothing can be changed on the exterior of the building and many of the interior walls must remain. Nonetheless, our architects have done extensive study on the building already (prior to this bidding process) and are convinced that it can be made into a world-class museum.

Yet, the largest challenge is the amount of money needed for such a project. Our team determined that a "back-of-the-envelope" estimate to fully renovate this site could be more than \$300 million. While that sounds like an astronomical number, it appears to be the going price for a Mall Museum. The African-American Museum, in its planning stages to build a new site on the last remaining lot on the Mall, is estimating a similar cost per square foot.

It is not assured NWHM will win the bid for the Arts and Industries Building. However, NWHM will make every effort to succeed. Support from NWHM Charter Members is critical.

A Treasure



NWHM Staff, Advisors, & Board members visit the Arts and Industries Building.



AIB is on the "Ten Most Treasured Buildings" listed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Above the main entrance into the AIB are three female figures, the icon for Columbia stands over the seated icons representing Science and Industry. NWHM is unaware of another building on the Mall with female statuary. As one Member of Congress told us, "Then you won't have to redecorate the exterior."

Washington, DC is a city of symbols -- women's contributions to the building of our Nation are grossly under-recognized. They should be honored in the heart of our capital on the National Mall. Women deserve no less.

Rarely do any of us have an opportunity to change the mindset of future generations. Before us is such a chance. Let's hold tight to our dream and make it happen!

Erna Levi Cahn
Carol Super Gold

Being recognized for the good we've done in our lifetime is a thought that all of us share at one time or another. But how often do any of us have a chance to leave a legacy that will touch the lives of millions year after year - long after we are gone?

The National Women's History Museum (NWHM) is offering a good opportunity to those special individuals who share our mission, our dream, and our goal of acquiring a building ON the National Mall in Washington, DC! Our aim is for it to become a museum that will honor and recognize women's many accomplishments and contributions throughout the ages.

There are many ways to make a gift today that will ensure that the Museum gets its building and that the good work of the NWHM continues well into the future. The gift options vary - and they often provide you with significant tax savings even before your passing.

CASH

A tax-deductible gift of cash may be your easiest and most beneficial option and right NOW would definitely help the Museum the most!

BEQUESTS

One of the simplest ways to make a donation to the NWHM is to name the Museum as a beneficiary in your Will or Trust. If you already have a Will, a simple provision (codicil) can be added very easily. This allows you to perpetuate your personal dedication to our organization. Bequests serve as lasting legacies and will be recognized by the NWHM in perpetuity - especially once we have our building.

OTHER:

**APPRECIATED SECURITIES
 INDIVIDUAL RETIREMENT ACCOUNTS
 GIFTS OF PROPERTY**



Elna Hillard Grahn named NWHM in her will.

The National Women's History Museum **really needs your support** to ensure that children now, and in generations to come, will know of the great part that women played in America's history - something that few people truly know today.

Please consider remembering the National Women's History Museum when determining your Planned Giving options. For more information on planned giving, go to <http://www.nwhm.org/plannedgiving/plannedgiving.htm>.

Erna Levi Cahn: An Example of Synergized Giving

Following her mother's wishes, Carol Super Gold, made a sizeable gift to the National Women's History Museum in honor of her mother, Erna Cahn -- and Carol's company, Time Warner, Inc. has matched the contribution.



In this way NWHM realizes a two-fold benefit: dollars, as well as an introduction to a major international corporation.

Erna Cahn, mother of long-time NWHM member Carol Super, passed away on October 5. Mrs. Cahn deeply believed in supporting worthy causes and always put aside a portion of her income, however small, for them.

She was born in the tiny German town of Heigerloch in 1908. She came to the U.S. as a young woman, fortuitously escaping the Nazi Holocaust, which claimed her father, sister, niece and many other family members.

In memory of her sister, who had been a trained classical pianist in Germany, Erna taught herself to play the piano and treated friends and family to wonderful waltzes and show tunes. Playing the piano was a great source of joy and comfort to her and she continued to play and entertain people even after a stroke made it difficult to use one of her hands.

Erna Cahn was a truly extraordinary woman who brought happiness into the many lives she touched. She was a caring, smart, spiritual woman, who lived a most healthy, independent and vigorous life that we could all aspire to.

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____ today towards the expenses for this qualification phase for this building as well as to support on-going NWHM programs.

Below I state my pledge towards this building that I will be able to pay over the next 5-7 years. I also understand that this pledge is designed to show intent of level of support to help NWHM meet the requirements of the RFQ phase and is not legally binding:

I, _____ do hereby pledge to the National Women's History Museum (NWHM) the amount of \$ _____ that I can elect to be paid out over the next 5-7 years.

Completing our Nation's Story

National visibility is essential for the awareness of women's history to become a central part of our national heritage. Few statues, national parks, or historic sites commemorate women's lives or recognize their contributions to the past. And many of the female figures are of icons, not of women who lived.

Of the 210 statues in the United States Capitol, only nine are of female leaders. Less than five percent of the 2,400 national historic landmarks chronicle women's achievement and according to a survey of 18 history textbooks, only 3% was dedicated to women and their achievements. Few museum exhibitions are devoted to women. There are less than a handful currently on the National Mall.

NWHM Board Member recognized by American University

American University recently recognized NWHM Board member Ann E W Stone with an award for her Leadership in Education. Ann has served as a guest lecturer for American University's Washington Semester Program for over two decades. She generally speaks on topics ranging from Direct Response Marketing to Women in Politics although she admits that regardless of the topic she always tries to sneak a little women's history into every talk. "The students really enjoy and are energized by learning some things that the textbooks still don't tell them about women's history. It reminds me why the work of NWHM is so important!" Ann added.



The First Successful Preservation and Funding Effort

In 1854 Southern women demonstrate their networking and funding ability when the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association begins. It is headed by Ann Pamela Cunningham, who organized hundreds of women in 30 states to raise money for restoration of George Washington's plantation home, which is in danger of destruction. The women's project is the nation's first successful preservation effort, and it provides a model for similar endeavors later undertaken by men. The Ladies' Association will become the nation's oldest such organization; it continues to manage Mount Vernon at the end of the 20th century.

-Taken from *Milestones: A Chronology of American Women's History*, by Doris Weatherford.

NWHM RECEIVES LEAD GIFT OF \$500,000 FOR ITS BUILDING CAMPAIGN

The gift of \$100,000 in cash and a pledge for \$100,000/year for the next four years was received from a donor who wishes to remain anonymous.

This gift demonstrates tremendous support for NWHM's mission and the trust that NWHM will succeed in securing a permanent home.

NWHM GREATLY APPRECIATES THIS CONTRIBUTION.

Letter from our President

So many of our dreams at first seem impossible, then they seem improbable, and then, when we summon the will, they soon become inevitable.
 -Christopher Reeve

We have been deeply touched by the many expressions of support from NWHM members since announcing our efforts for the Arts and Industries Building on the National Mall. This project is pushing us to our limits -- and yet, in the few moments of silence, I hear the voices of my grandmother's persistence and my mother's encouragement. These women helped provide the bedrock for my life, as mothers have done for thousands of years. For the most part, they are the unsung heroes.

From cleaning the streets to feeding the hungry, women's organizations have woven our communities into a national fabric. Women legislators are often the ones who introduce bills providing healthcare for uninsured children or time off from work to care for family members. Nor is this new: Social Security was implemented by

Labor Secretary Frances Perkins, for example, while food stamp legislation was the brainchild of Congresswoman Lenor Sullivan. That such leaders are in danger of being forgotten is a crime against history.

Whether it's as schoolteachers or nurses, scientists or corporate presidents, women carry many threads that have been passed to them from earlier generations. Women's many contributions deserve the highest praise! The National Mall is a fitting place.

Sincerely,

Joan Wages
 President

Membership Updates

If your name is misspelled or you receive multiple copies of the newsletter, please contact us at: 205 South Whiting Street, Suite 254, Alexandria, Virginia 22304. You can also email us at staff@nwhm.org. Please type "Membership Update" in the subject line.