



## A NEW SITE AS HOME FOR WOMEN'S HISTORY

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As longtime members know, NWHM has pursued space for a women's history museum for many years, so we are aware of every nook and cranny in the heart of our nation's capital. We are very fortunate that a new site opened so quickly after the previous one was removed from the market. As one might imagine, property on or near the National Mall is rare.

Our good luck is that a vacant lot at 12th Street and Independence SW - adjacent to the National Mall - became available in June. We pounced on it. The prominence of this site meets our longtime goal to honor women's many contributions in a location deserving of American women's history.

In May 2008, the door closed on pursuing Smithsonian's Arts and Industries Building when they decided to not move forward. NWHM was greatly disappointed - not only because of the money we had invested in responding to Smithsonian's request but because we also knew that no other prestigious space was available. We were in touch with city and federal entities - no other building or lot was on the market at that time.

Then, in mid-June, the National Health Museum announced that it was moving its intended museum to Atlanta, GA. Their decision freed up land at 12th Street and Independence that they had been pursuing. We acted immediately to get legislation introduced, using the same language as the Health Museum and only changing the name of the organization that would be allowed to purchase the lot. Committees in the House and Senate were familiar with their language, so we acted to benefit from their earlier review.

The targeted site is directly across from several Smithsonian Museums.

The bill provides that an appraiser will determine the fair market value of the lot, and NWHM will have three years to raise the money to purchase it and take possession. Construction on the Museum must begin within five years.

On July 17, 2008, Representative Carolyn Maloney introduced HR 6548 with original cosponsors Representatives Rosa DeLauro, Marcy Kaptur, Eleanor Holmes Norton, and Deborah Pryce.

On September 22, 2008, Senator Susan Collins introduced the Senate companion, S 3528, with original cosponsors Senators Barbara Boxer, Maria Cantwell, Hillary



Clinton, Elizabeth Dole, Mary Landrieu, Blanche Lincoln, Claire McCaskill, Barack Obama, Mark Pryor, Olympia Snowe, and George Voinovich.

After two attempts for existing buildings, the new site gives NWHM the opportunity to design our own building designed around our program and to make it "green."

One of the biggest challenges facing museums is to build so that it can be sustained at minimum costs. An energy efficient building will be a gift to the Museum's future generations. And this lot will accommodate a 300,000 sq. ft. building - twice as large as the two previous sites we have considered.

All in all, we believe that this site offers us the best of all worlds. It has taken us a while to come upon it, but as the saying goes, "All good things come to those who wait." With the continuing support of NWHM's Charter Members, our goal is within grasp.

**I do not know the word 'quit.' Either I never did, or I have abolished it.**

**- Susan Butcher, Iditarod winner, 1988**

### RIGHT HERE. RIGHT NOW.



In August, NWHM launched its *Right Here. Right Now.* campaign to get legislation passed. A very small window is open before Congress is scheduled to adjourn for the November elections. We have found the right site and in this historic year of women breaking down barriers, the time is right for Congress to honor the women of this nation.

With television and radio interviews, newspaper articles, internet bloggers buzzing, and with other organizations lobbying on Capitol Hill for us, the momentum is picking up. Congress is getting the word.

In addition, several thousand petitions urging Congress to act immediately have been returned and delivered to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. Hundreds of letters to Members of Congress have been sent. Many more Members of Congress are aware of and support our legislation.

NWHM's bill, HR 6548, awaits consideration in the House Subcommittee on Public Buildings. We are pleased that the Subcommittee Chair, Eleanor Holmes Norton, is an original cosponsor on the bill. But time is limited and the Subcommittee's schedule is packed for September. They may not have the time to work it in. (This Subcommittee also handles FEMA issues associated with hurricane relief . . . speaking of being busy.)

The huge outpouring of support places us in the best position ever - we are very close to reaching our goal of securing a home for women's history.

NWHM is deeply indebted to House bill sponsor Representative Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) and Senate sponsor Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), as well as to the bill's cosponsors (see above). They support our vision and share our belief that it is time for women's history to be brought out into the light of day.

While Congress has a scheduled departure date, their timing always remains flexible and there is even talk of them coming back for a lame duck session after the election. So, there is a chance Congress could take up our bill sometime this fall, and their hearing is never so acute as it is at election time.

**Take every opportunity during the next weeks to urge Members of Congress to support HR 6548 and its Senate companion, S 3528, providing a place to honor women.**

# EARTH'S CARETAKERS

The environment will be a hot political issue in this year's elections: increasing numbers of voters agree that oil cannot fuel the world; that the planet's temperature is rising; and that Mother Earth extracts consequences for bad behavior.



Isabelle Bird Bishop

As Kermit the Frog says, "It's not easy being green." For eons, though, women have accepted not-easy roles: it isn't easy to carry and bear babies; it isn't easy to rear them to have a modicum of good sense; it isn't easy to preserve an environment that provides them with fresh air, clean water, and healthy food. But from prehistory onwards, women have taken the lead in protecting their children and future generations by nurturing the natural world.

Archeologists and anthropologists increasingly acknowledge the importance of female roles in prehistory. In general terms, the human male hunted and killed, while it was the female who likely developed techniques that preserved resources for long-term use. It was apt to be she who first formed clay containers for carrying and storing; it almost certainly was she who developed the sewing skills that allowed fur-less humans to survive in frozen tundra; it probably was she who perused prairies for plants, discerning which were poisonous and which were healthful - and saved the seed for the next cycle. It was the gatherer (female), not the hunter (male), who planted the literal seeds for a secure future.

Although environmentalism is a new academic field, millions of uneducated women have been practicing its principles for millennia. As early as 1831, for instance, before women had been admitted to any college anywhere in the world, Almira Lincoln of western New York State published *Familiar Lectures on Botany*. With no television or other distractions, people read in this era - and the book and its revisions sold an amazing 275,000 copies. Her husband followed her (and their three children from three marriages) while she taught and lectured on the wonders of the plant world.

Other women did field research in more remote places. Although it was her husband, Louis Agassiz, who became famous, Elizabeth Cary Agassiz published her first book on what was then called "natural history" in 1859. She followed it up with additional books, one of which was based on travels in remote Brazilian jungles. Nor was she particularly unusual, as a number of other nineteenth-century women published similar books. Many, including those by male authors, were illustrated by nearly anonymous women. In an era prior to photography, they patiently copied the details of flora and fauna that were new to Europeans and Americans.



Ellen Swallow Richards

Laura Judd Fish chronicled Hawaii's unique environment from her 1828 arrival; a half-century later Isabella Bird offered more observations in *Six Months in the Sandwich Islands*, as Hawaii was called. Bird, in fact, wrote on several pre-industrial environments, including Japan, then a secretive kingdom that rarely admitted westerners. As Isabella Bird Bishop, she drew unwanted attention in the 1870s, when Britain's Royal Geographic Society debated whether or not women could be geographers.

In the same era, Ellen Swallow Richards was developing early environmental systems at the new Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She was its first woman to complete doctoral work, but MIT refused to award that degree to a woman - even though it employed her (sometimes without pay) for the rest of her life. Among other accomplishments, Richards' work set standards in air and water pollution. She designed sanitary kitchens for institutional cooking, researched toxins in common household furnishings, and invented clean plumbing and heating systems. Chicago's Dr. Alice Hamilton followed Richards as an expert on industrial toxicology, and decades prior to other scientists, she issued warnings about nicotine.

Not all who support the environment have scientific expertise, of course, and fiction writers probably did an equal amount of good for the cause. By capturing the reader's imagination, they often can bring reality home to readers in a way that documented data cannot. Sarah Orne Jewett, for example, wrote of Maine in such a way that it would be difficult for its citizens to sanction clear-cutting of their forests. Willa Cather did the same for Midwestern prairies, while her California friend Mary Austin acquainted readers with the secrets of fragile deserts.

Important as these individuals were, greater influence emerged with the establishment of women's organizations, with their environmentalist goals. It is hard to believe today, but there were almost no organized women's groups until after the Civil War, and the first "clubwomen" were controversial. The 1890 formation of the General Federation of Women's Clubs not only was a feminist milestone, but also a boon for the nation's environment. Among the GFWC's first aims was to educate its own members on the negative effects of the feathered hats that they wore. Several species of birds revived from near-extinction after women stopped buying feathers.

Even though most women could not vote in 1907, the GFWC was the leading lobbyist group in that year's passage of the monumental *Pure Food & Drug Act*. Many GFWC affiliates set local environmental goals, especially the installation of city water and sewer systems and the creation of parks and playgrounds. Florida's GFWC branch almost single-handedly preserved the Everglades from developers. The women bought the first several thousand acres to prevent Miami businessmen from draining the vast swamp, and women went on to successfully lobby for its preservation as a national park in 1948.



Rachel Carson

World War II had a vast effect on the environment: massive destruction of forests and the pollution of water and land with huge amounts of explosives, petroleum, and heavy metals. The war also had a negative effect on Rachel Carson: her first book had the bad fortune to be published just weeks prior to Pearl Harbor and was almost completely ignored. While supporting her family with a bureaucratic job, she then spent years researching *Silent Spring* (1963). She correctly feared that the multi-billion dollar chemical and agricultural industries would ridicule her thesis that birds increasingly were silent because of pesticides. Their attempts to discredit her, however, met with little success. Her appeal to ban DDT and other dangerous chemicals was grounded in firm scientific data; it accurately predicted disaster if habits did not change, and the public forced that change.

Unheralded women throughout the nation led similar fights from the 1970s onwards, accepting the slings and arrows hurled by powerful interests. Although usually outspent and up against PR firms and land-use attorneys, such fighters increasingly are prevailing against the odds.

Article by Doris Weatherford, NWHM Vice President of Program, Author -- <http://members.authorsguild.net/weatherford>

## SPOTLIGHT ON NWHM BOARD MEMBER DORIS WEATHERFORD



Doris Weatherford is a leading women's historian. She published her first book, *Foreign and Female: Immigrant Women in America: 1840-1930*, in 1986. Her second book, *American Women and World War II*, came out in 1990; it has been translated into Japanese. Then followed *American Women's History: An A-Z* (1994), and *Milestones: A Chronology of American Women's History* (1997). Geraldine Ferraro wrote the Introduction for her next book, *A History of the American Suffragist Movement* (1998), issued in connection with the 150th anniversary of the first women's rights convention.

Ms. Weatherford is listed in various editions of the *World Who's Who of Women*, *Who's Who in America*, and *Contemporary Authors*. A member of the Authors Guild, her most important honors are from the International Association of School Librarians and the National Order of Women Legislators.

She says, "My mind dwells in the past much of the time, but the current election brings me back to today - and often, the sad realization that many citizens have little historical understanding on which to base their votes. Because they don't see the footprints of earlier women, female candidates for office are handicapped. Now more than ever, it is imperative that we have a museum offering the complex history of half of the nation."

**Never limit yourself because of others' limited imagination; never limit others because of your own limited imagination.**

**- Mae Jemison,  
first African American female in space**

**Women are the real architects of society.**

**- Harriet Beecher Stowe**

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Thousands of petitions are flowing into our office, and we are thrilled!

This outpouring confirms the passion of NWHM Charter Members for ensuring that women are recognized and honored. We are immensely grateful for the support. Some Members have taken it into their own hands by drawing up their own petitions and getting them signed, and other organizations are taking our campaign to Capitol Hill. If you haven't yet signed and returned yours, it is not too late - please sign and send it back as soon as you can. A groundswell is growing!

The more we think about and focus on this vacant lot, the more excited we become. The road from a *room* of her own to a *home* of her own has not been an easy one, and so it's all the more important that the location and the building reflect this accomplishment. Our proposed site is adjacent to the National Mall, which places women in the heart of our nation's capital - her rightful place.

The building design will reflect women as central to the fabric of our nation - and being "green" is part of that. Women always have been environmentalists, and we plan a building that will be ecologically friendly and energy efficient. We won't decide on an architect until Congress passes the legislation, but the possibilities make our hearts soar!

We recently came across the root of the word "museum" - "muse." There are nine muses in Greek mythology, with Clio as the muse of history. These female figures inspired a highly sophisticated civilization in the ancient world by encouraging

reasoning, intellectual exploration, and the arts. Early museums were in places connected with the muses and with their poetry, dance and music. My favorite discovery is that Clio was known as "the glorious one" and the "Proclaimer."

Let us *proclaim* that there finally will be a museum (NWHM) in the nation's capital that recognizes the many *glorious* (and some not so glorious) women in our past. Clio and the other muses have inspired many, but world history has far too many such women: we couldn't possibly cover all of them. NWHM will focus on those in America, venturing into other countries when needed to set the context for our national story.

The recognition of history - everyone's history -- is central to a civilized society. Thank you for joining us in proclaiming that the time for a "museum of her own" is *Right Here, Right Now*.



Clio Standing in The Car of History, Statuary Hall, U.S. Capitol

Musingly,

*Joan Waynes*

## YOUNG AND BRAVE: GIRLS CHANGING HISTORY



Ruby Bridges

Most of us would find it difficult, if not impossible, to name one girl who helped change the course of history. Because girls do not know of historic examples, they too often use notorious celebrities for their personal inspiration and ambitions.

The National Women's History Museum joined Girls Learn International in launching its latest CyberExhibit entitled "*Young and Brave: Girls Changing History*." The exhibit focuses on 30 American girls who demonstrated bravery and courage in our nation's history and are ideal role models for today's girls. A lesson plan for educators is also included. The exhibit is available on NWHM's website, [www.nwhm.org](http://www.nwhm.org).

**embarked on treacherous journeys, invented life-altering products, and set groundbreaking precedents.** The young women profiled in the exhibit are athletes, inventors, artists, and revolutionaries, but they all have one thing in common - they are strong role models for young girls to learn about, look up to, and be inspired by. They are indeed "Young and Brave."

Most of us do not know Ruby Bridges, who became the face of school integration at age six. Nor have girls heard of Alexandra Nechita, who by age 10, commanded thousands of dollars for her paintings and was hailed as the "Petite Picasso".



Alexandra Nechita

**Countless young women have**

Girls and boys may have heard of the extraordinary feats of Helen Keller, but never heard of Laura Bridgman, who defied all expectations by learning to communicate despite being deaf and blind. She was internationally known by her teen years--a half a century prior to Helen Keller.

And it's almost a sure bet that neither the average girl (or boy or man or woman) knows that straw hats found their way to Americans courtesy of Betsey Metcalf, a twelve-year-old girl. She transformed New England's economy - as did teenage Eliza Pinckney in colonial Carolina.



Laura Bridgman

The exhibit was researched by teenage members of Girls Learn International, Inc. and curated by NWHM Board Member and Historian Doris Weatherford. It includes comments by most of the young researchers on the personal impact of learning about these historical girls. The National Women's History Museum joins Girls Learn in the hope that the young women in this exhibit will provide role models for generations to come.

## NWHM CHOSEN FOR COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN



Combined Federal Campaign  
NWHM #43306

The Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) is the world's largest and most successful annual workplace charity campaign, with more than 300 CFC campaigns throughout the country and internationally to help to raise millions of dollars each year. Pledges made by Federal civilian, postal and military donors during the campaign season (September 1st to December 15th) support eligible non-profit organizations that provide

health and human service benefits throughout the world.

**For federal employees: please designate The National Women's History Museum, #43306, in your pledge.**

*Your Gift Will Make A Difference!*

### HELP US HIT THE GROUND RUNNING

We must be ready to hit the ground running. Your tax-deductible donation today would be a tremendous help towards our efforts for a permanent home and to help keep our on-going programs moving forward.

Enclosed is my check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ today toward helping NWHM with your efforts.

I prefer to charge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ on my:

Mastercard  VISA  American Express

Account #: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please Print Name Clearly Here: \_\_\_\_\_

*Your gift is tax-deductible in accordance with the law.*

NLSB

Clip this out and return it in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope along with your donation today. THANK YOU!

## Another Amazing Women Reclaimed From History

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Kathy Sander, a longtime supporter and past Board Member of NWHM has a new book out entitled *Mary Elizabeth Garrett: Society and Philanthropy in the Gilded Age*. The publisher describes, "Mary Elizabeth Garrett was one of the most influential philanthropists and women activists of the Gilded Age. With Mary's legacy all but forgotten, Kathleen Waters Sander recounts in impressive detail the life and times of this remarkable woman, through the turbulent years of the Civil War to the early twentieth century. At once a captivating biography of Garrett and an epic account of the rise of commerce, railroading, and women's rights, Sander's work re-examines the great social and political movements of the age."

"Suffragist, friend of charitable causes, and champion of women's education, Mary Elizabeth Garrett both improved the status of women and ushered in modern standards of American medicine and philanthropy. Sander's thoughtful and informed study of this pioneering philanthropist is the first to recognize Garrett and her monumental contributions to equality in America."

To order, go to <http://www.press.jhu.edu/>.

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## CELEBRATE THESE WOMEN BORN IN THE FALL



**Mae C. Jemison (October 17, 1956)** of Chicago became the first black woman to travel to outer space on September 12, 1992. Before joining NASA, she earned a degree in chemical engineering from Stanford and an MD from Cornell. Aboard the Endeavor, Jemison served as a Science Mission Specialist in a joint operation between US and Japan. The laboratory held round-the-clock experiments that have added to fundamental knowledge about the behavior of crystals and fluids, as well as human exposure to weightlessness.

Society. Her reputation grew so quickly that more than 5,000 people crowded New York's Cooper Institute for her first appearance in that city. Averaging a speech every other day, she would peak at \$20,000 annual earnings - an amazing amount in that era.

For more about Dickinson, please go to [www.nwhm.org](http://www.nwhm.org) and view the exhibit, "Young and Brave: Girls Changing History."



**Belva Lockwood (October 24, 1830)** won the right for female lawyers to practice before the Supreme Court. In addition to being the first woman to argue before that court, she also ran for president in 1884 and 1888 as the nominee of the Equal Rights Party. She was also a founder of Washington's first suffrage group, the Universal Franchise Association. At age 76, she won a \$5 million dollar case for the eastern Cherokee.

For more about Lockwood, please go to [www.nwhm.org](http://www.nwhm.org) and view the exhibit, "Women Who Ran For President."



**Fannie Lou Hamer** was born in rural Mississippi on **October 6, 1917**. Forty-seven years earlier, the 15th amendment had given African-Americans the right to vote. In 1920, the 19th amendment granted suffrage to American women. Yet, it wasn't until 1962, when she was 45, that she learned that she had a right to vote. From that day, Hamer became a leader in the struggle for civil rights.

She had married Perry Hamer in 1944, and the couple worked in the fields of Mississippi landowner B.D. Marlowe. Because she was the only worker who could read and write, she also was the plantation timekeeper.

In 1962, she had surgery to remove a small uterine tumor and later discovered that the surgeon had performed a hysterectomy without her consent. Enraged, Hamer attended a meeting with civil rights activists and was inspired to register voters.

Eighteen courageous African Americans marched to the Indianola County Courthouse, but were refused the right to register when they failed an unreasonable literacy test. On their way home, the group's bus was stopped by the police and fined \$100 for the "crime" of driving a bus of the "wrong color." That night, Hamer was forced off the Marlowe plantation and was shot at 17 times.

Hamer drew international attention at the 1964 Democratic National Convention when she called for racially integrated state delegations, and her testimony to Congress was a major factor in the passage of the *1965 Civil Right Act*. Under that and other laws, a great deal of progress was made prior to her 1977 death.



**Anna Dickinson** was the first woman to speak to Congress - and among those who packed the House to hear her was President Abraham Lincoln.

Born on **October 28, 1842** to Philadelphia Quaker parents who were active in the anti-slavery movement, she published an essay in William Lloyd Garrison's famed newspaper, *The Liberator*, at age 13. She still was a teenager when 800 people bought tickets for her first speech, "The Rights and Wrongs of Women."

At 19, she set out on a lecture tour sponsored by the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery

To read full biographies of these and other amazing women, log on to [www.nwhm.org](http://www.nwhm.org) and click on Biographies, under the Educational Resources tab.