

NWHM TARGETS A POSSIBLE BUILDING SITE

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The National Women's History Museum has identified a potential site for its permanent museum in Washington, DC! This site is in downtown Washington, near the National Mall on America's most famous street, Pennsylvania Avenue. Currently, this site is owned by the General Services Administration (GSA). The NWHM has made an unsolicited offer to the GSA to enter into a long-term lease agreement for the building. Meetings with GSA and the District of Columbia are ongoing.

One of the Museum's greatest assets in the effort to secure this site is the tremendous Congressional support received to date. While the Museum will not receive financial support from the government, Congressional support for the NWHM's efforts will greatly aid in the acquisition of a permanent site since disposition of federal property is ultimately subject to Congressional direction.

For the past several years the NWHM has been informing Representatives and Senators about the Museum's mission and the need for an appropriate space. Recently, all fourteen women currently serving in the U.S. Senate sent a letter to GSA in support of the NWHM's efforts to secure the identified site. In the House of Representatives, the leaders of the bipartisan Women's Caucus wrote other women members asking them to join the Honorary Board of Directors. In their letter, they wrote: "This is an exciting opportunity to lend your support to a new and vital institution that, as it matures, will become a major landmark on the American scene, and we hope you will join us."

This personal, non-partisan appeal was met with great success. The Museum now has the full support of **100% of the women in Congress!** Although the initial focus was to meet with women serving in office, many men were subsequently approached to join the Honorary Board and many have opted to do so. Currently, there are more than 160 Members of Congress serving on the Honorary Board and the list is still growing.

The NWHM gratefully acknowledges the personal interest of the following members of Congress who are in key leadership positions and who have supported us in our efforts to secure the building site: Senators Barbara Mikulski and Susan Collins; Representatives Don Young, James Oberstar, Steven LaTourette, Eleanor Holmes Norton, Jim Moran, Tom Davis, Louise Slaughter, Shelley Moore Capito, Deborah Pryce, and Sue Myrick, among others.

For a complete list of the National Women's History Museum's Honorary Board of Directors, please visit the Museum's website, www.nwhm.org. Watch your mailboxes... there will be updates on the building site throughout the upcoming year!

WILMA VAUGHT HONORED BY WOMEN'S HISTORY PROJECT

Brigadier General Wilma Vaught, USAF (ret.), a board member of the National Women's History Museum, was honored by the National Women's History Project in a ceremony on March 27. The National Women's History Project theme for Women's History Month 2003 was "Women Pioneering the Future." General Vaught was selected for her contributions to breaking down barriers for women in the military and for her role as the founder of the Women In Military Service For America Memorial (WIMSA).



Brig. Gen. Wilma Vaught, USAF, (ret)
courtesy: University of Illinois Alumni Association

Over the last two years, WIMSA and NWHM have worked together in a mutually beneficial collaboration. While WIMSA is chartered to recognize women's contributions in the uniformed military service, this is not the complete story of how women have contributed to the military. The NWHM, with its broader mission, has mounted exhibitions that complement the permanent displays at WIMSA. First the highly successful *Clandestine Women: The Untold Stories of Women in Espionage* explored the ways in which women aided American causes through covert operations. Currently the NWHM is in the beginning stages of planning the next collaborative effort with WIMSA. This exhibition will focus on civilian women's efforts in America during World War II.

General Vaught was the driving force behind establishing WIMSA, located at Arlington National Cemetery. As president of the WIMSA Foundation, she continues to actively promote the history of women serving the U.S. in all branches of the military.

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NWHM
National Women's History Museum

NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MUSEUM

A Different Point of View

BRIG. GEN. VAUGHT (CONTINUED)

After graduating from the University of Illinois in 1957, General Vaught enlisted in the Air Force. She also holds an MBA from the University of Alabama. She was the first Air Force woman to graduate from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. Some of her many accomplishments include becoming the first woman to achieve the rank of Brigadier General in the field of Comptroller and being the first woman to command a unit that received the Joint Meritorious Unit Award. At the time of her retirement, she was one of only three female generals in the Air Force.

The other honorees of this year's ceremony were Rebecca Adamson, Rachel Carson, Linda Chavez-Thompson (who serves on the NWHM Advisory Board), Mae C. Jemison, Yuri Kochiyama, Tania Leñon, Robin Roberts, Harilyn Rousso, Margaret Chase Smith, and Rebecca Walker.

For more information on Brigadier General Vaught or WIMSA, please visit their website, www.womensmemorial.org. WIMSA is open to the public every day but December 25.

Membership Improvements Are Underway!!

The NWHM has recently switched to a new in-house membership database system. This assures better quality control. However, updating and correcting members' information will take a little time. If your name is misspelled or you receive multiple copies of the newsletter, please contact us and provide the following: your name, address, and the incorrect information. Please send this to

Membership Update
PO Box 1296
Annandale, VA 22003

or email it to info@nwhm.org. Please type Membership Update in the subject line. Thank you!

CELEBRATE THESE WOMEN BORN IN SPRING

The famous cookbook author **Fannie Farmer** (3/23/1857) enrolled in the Boston-Cooking School and graduated in 1889. Her teacher, Mary J. Lincoln, was the publisher of the *Boston-Cooking School Cook-Book*. After graduation, Farmer stayed on at the school, working her way up to Director in 1894. In 1896, Farmer revised and reissued Lincoln's cookbook. In this reissued cookbook, Farmer made her greatest contribution to the culinary world: she became the first person to standardize measurements in recipes. This book was later retitled the *Fannie Farmer Cookbook*. In 1902 she left the school to found one of her own, Miss Farmer's School of Cookery. Farmer passed away in 1915, although her school remained open through 1944.

Dorothea Dix (4/4/1808) is known as one of the most influential social reformers of the nineteenth century. In 1841 Dix, then a teacher, volunteered to teach a Sunday school class to the women in the East Cambridge Jail in Massachusetts. When she entered the jail to teach, she was appalled at the conditions the inmates were forced to endure. At the time, mentally ill people were viewed as incurable and generally unaware of their surroundings. As a result, they were often housed in filthy conditions without heat. After witnessing the deplorable state of the East Cambridge Jail, Dix began visiting and documenting the conditions in jails and almshouses. She took detailed notes and presented her data to the Massachusetts legislature. This led to the expansion of the Worcester State Hospital. After completing her work in



Massachusetts, she took her crusade to every state east of the Mississippi River. She founded several hospitals and schools for those with mental illness as well as specialized schools for nurses. Her reforms were put into practice in Europe as well. In 1887, she passed away in a hospital she had founded.

Detail of a painting of Dix, from *American Women: Selections from the National Portrait Gallery*

In 1929, **Dorothy Eustis** (5/30/1886) founded The Seeing Eye and revolutionized life for the visually impaired. In 1921 the Philadelphia native moved to Switzerland and opened a dog kennel for the selective breeding of German Shepherds. In 1927, she wrote "The Seeing Eye," an article about a German school that trained dogs to help blind veterans. As a result, Morris Frank, who was blind, contacted Eustis. In 1928, Frank traveled to Switzerland to receive and learn how to work with a specially trained dog, Buddy. In 1929, the Eustises returned to the US and established The Seeing Eye, a school to train dogs in Nashville, Frank's hometown. The school permanently moved to New Jersey in 1932. Dorothy Eustis passed away in New York in 1946. By then, The Seeing Eye had provided over 1300 blind individuals with Seeing Eye dogs.

The author and abolitionist **Harriet Beecher Stowe** (6/14/1811) wrote on many subjects ranging from homemaking to religion in addition to her fictional works. Her best known work, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, was originally published as a serial in an abolitionist newspaper in 1851-52. In 1852, it was issued as a two volume book and translated into over sixty languages. After she and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* became known worldwide, she used her influence to encourage women to organize petitions and lectures in an effort to abolish slavery. The Stowe family spent their winters in Florida where Harriet helped establish schools for African-American children. In 1873, the Stoves moved to Hartford, Connecticut. Harriet Beecher Stowe died in 1896. Her Hartford home is open to the public for tours.



Courtesy the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division

Did you know?

One of Harriet Beecher Stowe's neighbors in Hartford was Mark Twain.



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All
proceeds
support
NWHM
efforts.

PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE

The National Women's History Museum is carrying a tradition of women in the museum field of which many people are not aware. Women have made many contributions to museums, and not just to women's museums as many might assume. Historic preservation, as it is known in the US today, was initiated by a woman in 150 years ago.

One of the most famous and most visited historic houses in the nation is Mount Vernon, the Virginia home of President George Washington. This plantation was in disarray and poor condition when it was purchased by The Mount Vernon Ladies Association (MVLA). The MVLA, the oldest historic preservation organization in America, was founded by Ann Pamela Cunningham in 1853. Cunningham learned of the terrible condition of the estate from her mother, who had sailed by the plantation. Cunningham, who had been considered an invalid after a riding accident at age 17, decided to take up the cause.

This sort of effort was unprecedented. Through a network of women across the nation, the MVLA was able to raise funds through a grassroots campaign. In 1860, the MVLA had paid for the estate and received the keys to Mount Vernon from John Augustine Washington III. Despite the impediments of the impending Civil War, the MVLA was able to save Mount Vernon for future generations.

Did you know?

Cunningham's original letter to garner support for her efforts was addressed to "The Women of America" and signed simply as "A Southern Matron."

*Yes! I want to continue supporting the
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Annandale, VA 22003

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The National Women's History Museum
is a 501 (c) (3) organization. Your contribution is tax-deductible in
accordance with the law.

NL Spring 2003

Letter from our President



It never fails to amaze me when I'm confronted with the question "What will you put in your museum?"

In recent years, much of history has taken on a pop culture aspect. The small amount of women's history that is currently known and studied has also followed that path. Media emphasis has been placed on women who were first within the nation's current collective memory. Even now, the many stories on Annika Sorenstam playing in a PGA event do not reference Babe Didrikson Zaharias, who played in PGA events as early as 1938.

But people seem to have forgotten the many accomplishments that predate individual knowledge and personal experience. There are centuries of history to reflect upon and be inspired by. The first woman to serve in the House of Representatives, Jeannette Rankin, began serving the state of Montana in 1917 - before women won the right to vote in federal elections. Victoria Woodhull, the first woman to run for President of the United States did so in 1872. Queen Isabella of Spain financed Columbus's voyage to the New World. Some consider *Tale of the Genji* to be the world's first novel - it was written by the Japanese poet/novelist Lady Murasaki Shikibu. In 721 Princess Libousa founded the city of Prague. The first known woman surgeon - who was also nurse, doctor and hospital founder - was the Roman St. Fabiola. She practiced in the 4th century.

For centuries women have been active in their communities through business, politics, the arts, science, medicine, and many other fields. For the most part, women's traditional roles have not been included in the study of history, despite the influence those activities had on the development of culture and societies.

What most people don't realize about women's history is the length and breadth of that history. What will we put in the museum? The same things that go into any history museum - an accurate reflection of a rich and diverse past.

Warmest regards,

Susan B. Jollie, President

The National Women's History Museum has received a grant from **The San Diego Foundation's Isabella Fund** at the recommendation of Jinx Ecke. The grant is being used for educational outreach, such as publications and exhibitions.

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



UPDATE ON THE NWHM NATIONAL COALITION

The National Coalition continues to grow! Our newest members include the American Society of Public Administration - Section on Women in Public Administration, National Federation of Black Women Business Owners, Native American Women's Business Council, and the League of Women Voters.

The League of Women Voters was founded in 1920, a mere six months before women won the right to vote. When its founder, Carrie Chapman Catt, first conceptualized the organization, she saw it as a way to include women in the decision making process. Catt and the League of Women Voters saw voting as only a step towards the independence of women. Participating in the greater society and positively affecting the nation through new laws was another critical aspect. Many laws that influenced the current standards of American life came about as a result of the League's grassroots efforts. The League's actions played a major part in the regulating of child labor and the minimum wage. Since the 1930s the League has been active in environmental concerns, starting with advocating the project that became the Tennessee Valley Authority. Later, the League was a key supporter of the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act. Perhaps the best known of the League's recent campaigns was the passage of the National Voter Registration Act, also known as the "Motor Voter." The League continues to be active on both the national level as well as in their local communities.

HELEN KELLER HONORED ON THE ALABAMA STATE QUARTER

Helen Keller has become the first woman to be honored in the state commemorative quarters program by the US Mint. Previous female images on these coins have been symbols, such as the Statue of Liberty. Alabama chose to represent their state and the "Spirit of Courage" with an image of Helen Keller. Keller was born in the small town of Tuscumbia, Alabama in 1880. She lost both her sight and hearing at a young age. Alabama's quarter is also the first U.S. coin to feature braille.



Anne Sullivan ("The Miracle Worker") became Keller's governess in 1887. Despite losing the senses normally used to learn to communicate, Keller was able to learn to do so. Sullivan taught Keller the raised and manual alphabet as well as braille. Keller also learned to speak. Sullivan died in 1936. She had remained with Keller for nearly half a century. After graduating from Radcliffe College cum laude in 1904, Keller dedicated her life to helping the blind and deaf-blind. She also wrote and lectured on the need for medical resources to prevent these conditions. Keller passed away in 1968.

**Helen Keller's Birthplace, Ivy Green, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1954.
It is open to the public.**