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National
Women's
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Museum

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Celebrating Our Past
Inspiring Our Future

Summer 2006

CELEBRATE THESE WOMEN BORN IN SUMMER



Emma M. Gillett (7/30/1852) became interested in practicing law after working ten years as a teacher. Pioneering lawyer Belva Lockwood allowed Gillett to study pension law as an apprentice at her offices until Gillett was accepted to Howard

Law School. Upon graduation, Gillett practiced Real Estate and Pension Law. President James A. Garfield appointed her as the first female notary public in the U.S. in 1881. In 1890 she became the seventh woman to join the Supreme Court bar. To help other women, Gillett created a club to help young women further their education. Gillett and a colleague opened the first law school in the world founded by women in 1898 - the Washington College of Law.

As head of *The Washington Post*, **Katharine Graham** (6/16/1917) was one of the most powerful women in America. Graham's husband was the publisher of *The Washington Post*, and after his death in 1963, Graham became its president. Between 1969 and 1979 she was also pub-

lisher of the newspaper. Under Graham's leadership, *The Washington Post* became famous for its coverage of the Vietnam War and the Nixon presidency, first by publishing the "Pentagon Papers," top secret documents addressing the Vietnam War, and second by publishing Woodward and Bernstein's investigation of the Watergate scandal. Graham and *The Washington Post* are sometimes credited with bringing down the Nixon presidency. From 1973 to 1991, Graham served as CEO and board chairperson of the Washington Post Company, a major corporate conglomerate that owns companies like Newsweek, *The Gazette* Newspaper, television stations in several major cities, and Kaplan, Inc. She remained the chair of the Executive Committee until her death in 2001.

Medical researcher and health educator **Mathilde Krim**, Ph.D. (7/9/1926) was born in Como, Italy, and moved to the United States in 1959. In 1981, after the first cases of AIDS were discovered, Krim shifted her research from cytogenetics and cancer-causing viruses to AIDS. She recognized the possible impact of AIDS and worked to educate the public about its cause and transmission. In 1983, Krim founded the AIDS Medical Foundation, which later became the American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR), and

from 1990-2004 she served as the Chairperson of the Board. Krim holds 13 doctorates honoris causa and in 2000 received the Presidential Medal of Freedom for the work she has contributed to AIDS prevention, awareness, and research.

Puerto Rico native **Antonia C. Novello** (8/24/1924) was the first woman and the first Hispanic U.S. Surgeon General. A painful chronic colon condition led her to pursue a medical degree and then a career in medicine. Between 1970 and 1990, she worked at several hospitals, operated a private practice, and worked at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). From 1990 to 1993, she served as Surgeon General under President George H.W. Bush. While Surgeon General, she focused on issues relating to the health of children, women, and minorities, as well as on the dangers of smoking, underage drinking, and AIDS. Since 1993, Novello worked for UNICEF and the John Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health. In 1999, she became Commissioner of Health for New York.



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A Different Point of View

NWHM Hosts Three New Cyber Exhibits

The National Women's History Museum proudly announces the launch of three new cyber-exhibits on the NWHM website (www.nwhm.org). As NWHM continues to function as a museum without walls, the Internet serves as a great vehicle for delivering "virtual" exhibits to the public. The newest exhibits cover a range of women's history topics, including the woman suffrage movement with an emphasis on the movement's leaders, women's involvement in the labor force between 1800 and 1945, and women's varied roles abroad and at home during World War II. These exhibits can be accessed by going to the homepage (www.nwhm.org) and clicking on the "Cyber Museum" heading near the top of the page. A drop down menu will appear with the names of each exhibit. Click on the name of the exhibit you want to view.



The cyber-exhibit "Rights for Women: The Suffrage Movement and Its Leaders" explores the history of the woman suffrage movement. Contrary to popular perception, women were not "given" the vote in 1920. This Constitutional amendment was the culmination of a mass movement, which lasted for over 70 years and involved millions of women. "Rights for Women" chronicles the movements from its origins in 1848 when supporters held the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. For the first fifty years, suffragists, including Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, worked on educating the public and lobbying Congress to pass a suffrage amendment to the Constitution. In the twentieth century, the suffrage movement became a well-organized, mass political movement. A moderate organization, the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), continued lobbying state governments and the federal government to enfranchise women. A more militant organization, the National Woman's Party, undertook direct political action, including picketing the White House. After Congressional passage, women campaigned state-by-state to achieve the required ratification of the amendment by thirty-six states. On August 24, 1920, Tennessee became the 36th state to ratify the 19th amendment when the youngest member in the Tennessee legislature, Harry Burn, voted in favor of women's suffrage at the urging of his mother. Two days later, the amendment officially passed. In addition to chronicling this history, "Rights for Women" includes biographies of suffrage leaders, including philosophers, organizers, financiers, and lobbyists. Through its narrative, photographs, and historical documents, "Rights for Women" demonstrates that the woman suffrage movement was a large-scale, well-organized political and social movement, successful in peacefully winning the largest extension of democratic rights in our nation's history. The exhibit is based on a temporary exhibit NWHM produced in 1998.

"Women in Industry" examines the kinds of work that women performed between 1800 and 1945 and how their experiences differed depending on their race, ethnicity, social class, and geographical location. Between 1800 and 1880, women in rural areas from all social classes participated in agricultural labor and labor at home, such as weaving, cooking, and sewing. In urban areas, many unmarried women worked in factories and mills and married women sewed textiles to sell from home and laundered clothing. In all locations, lower-class women worked as domestic servants and middle-class women worked as teachers and some, particularly during the Civil War, worked as office clerks in cities. From 1880 to 1930, the major occupations for women remained the same, with most working on farms, in domestic service, and in factories, with an increased number of middle-class women doing clerical, office, and professional work. During this time period, women in all social classes joined and formed labor unions and went on strikes for better working conditions and wages. During the Depression in the 1930s, in order to supplement or replace their husbands' income, more women entered the workforce in traditionally female jobs as domestic servants, waitresses, seamstresses, and teachers. New Deal legislation of the 1930s helped raise women's wages and allowed widowed or single mothers to receive Social Security payments. During the 1930s and 1940s, women continued to organize into labor groups, lobbying for better working conditions and wages. During World War II, many new job opportunities opened up to women as they filled spots vacated by men fighting overseas.



Navajo women weaving



The third exhibit, "Partners in Winning the War: American Women in World War II," examines women's varied roles and significant contributions during World War II through photographs, advertisements, posters and brochures of the era. The exhibit shows how women helped the war effort through their service as members of the military, government office workers, Red Cross medical personnel, scientists, factory and shipyard workers (including the iconic Rosie the Riveter), and volunteers who planted Victory Gardens, boosted troop morale, participated in rationing and scrap metal drives, raised money for the war effort, and kept their families together. The exhibit also includes several short biographies of important women of the era, such as government spy and Distinguished Service Cross recipient Virginia Hall, scientist Dr. Chien-Shiung Wu who was selected to work on the government's Manhattan Project, Congresswoman Frances P. Bolton who authored legislation creating the Cadet Nurse Corps to train nursing students, Congresswoman Edin Nourse Rogers who sponsored and helped draft the 1944 GI Bill of Rights giving

Story continued
on the inside

Traveling Women Book Review

Women's history is not often found in public records or history books but can be found through reading women's journals and letters. Scholars are examining women's writing as a means to find out what women's lives were like in different time periods. A recent example of this research can be found in the recently published book *Traveling Women: Narrative Visions of Early America* (University of Ohio Press, June 2006). Author Susan Clair Imbarro, an associate professor of English at Minnesota State University Moorhead, uses letters and twenty-five of the approximately fifty existing women's travel narratives from the time period 1700 to 1830 to reveal women's experiences as travelers. The writing vividly demonstrates that women were not passive players in the expansion of American society but were actively involved in traveling for both relocation and for leisure. In one passage Imbarro wrote: "In each account, these travelers do not question whether they as women should be traveling, but matter-of-factly describe the conditions... Travel challenges women, but they faced rugged roads and crowded taverns with determination and resourcefulness." (page 87)

Travel narratives served several purposes. For most it was not only a way to record one's actions and thoughts for oneself but also for friends and family to read at the journey's end or to be circulated among others wishing to travel to better inform them of the kinds of conditions to expect and the best places to stay. The women's narratives that were intended for an audience sometimes reflected the literary style of the popular novels of the day, with events dramatically told and the writer portrayed as the heroine. Other narratives meant solely for recording purposes were much more concise, and only included facts like the mileage for that day and the condition of the weather, roads, and accommodations.

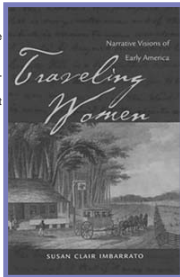
Most people during the eighteenth century traveled for practical reasons, such as for trade and relocation, which also influenced what was recorded in the narratives. Many of the women in the eighteenth century whose narratives Imbarro examined were traveling with or to join husbands or other family members for relocation to a new home. A few were traveling with female friends or servants in order to find a husband once they arrived in the male-dominated frontier towns. The narrative might have been intended for the loved ones from whom the writer was now separated or to serve as a guide for family or friends who would follow.

Before the early nineteenth century, most wealthy people traveled in Europe, particularly young men whose education typically included a one to five year European Grand Tour. However in the early 1800s, more wealthy Americans started traveling for leisure in America too. These travel writers did not focus as much on the availability of shelters or the difficulty of the roads, as did earlier writers, but instead focused on the quality of the accommodations and the beauty of the landscape. For example, the women's narratives from the early nineteenth century that Imbarro examined included information on the best time of day to visit Niagara Falls, where to find other fashionable travelers, and where to find the most picturesque scenery. These narratives, if intended for an audience, were not to provide the reader with survival tips but rather guidance on how to best enjoy the trip.

The women's narratives and letters from both time periods often not only described their surroundings and the events of the day but also provided insight into the social dynamics and interactions of the people they encountered. Compared to men, Imbarro found that the women tended to provide more detail about the clothing and dialect of the locals they encountered as well as commentary on the religion or cultural background of other travelers they met. (Several women mentioned encounters with slaves and Native Americans but with no real social commentary on the plight of either group of people.) Additionally, women's strong sense of home, both what it was and how it could be reconstructed, led them to draw comparisons to their home more frequently when describing new surroundings.

One of the more humorous problems many of the women recorded regarding the traveling itself was their experience at the taverns, which often operated as inns. As coaches generally stopped every ten miles or so to let the horses and travelers refresh, there was a distinct tavern culture to accommodate these stops all along main travel routes. Taverns were in many ways centers of rural communities because they were where newspapers and mail were delivered and so were where people gathered to hear news and partake of food, drinks and entertainment. Many women travelers who had to stay the night at a tavern, particularly those from middle to upper class families (which most were as it was costly to travel long distances) found reasons to complain with their accommodations. Some did not approve of the boisterous noise of merry-makers, others were alarmed by the common practice of sharing a bed with a stranger due to lack of space and heat in the tavern, and others were disgusted if they were given filthy, bug-infested sheets to sleep in (taverns without a good water source nearby could not afford to clean the sheets regularly). The women wrote about their coping methods for these problems and many noted that at the end of a long day of traveling in an uncomfortable coach or wagon on bumpy roads, through snow storms or while being attacked by mosquitoes, they could sleep under nearly any conditions. Women also noted the clothing and cultural origin of and popular phrases used by local people or other travelers they encountered at taverns. They used their narratives to voice their disdain or interest with what they encountered and/or to entertain friends and family with whom they planned on sharing their travel diary.

For amusing anecdotes from the women's original travel narratives and to better understand the traveling culture and how women coped with the many obstacles of the journey, *Traveling Women: Narrative Visions of Early America* is a good and informative read and provides the reader with a better understanding of women's role as settler and leisured traveler in eighteenth and early nineteenth century America.



Letter from our President



It was a first, and unfortunately, a last. The first episode of the network television program *Commander in Chief* gave some lessons on women's history into the plot. Of course, there have been documentary

programs that dealt with the struggle for women's voting rights or HBO's made-for-TV movie *Iron Jawed Angels*. But the breakthrough was that entertainment programming was used as a medium to educate viewers and particularly young people like the fictional President's teenage daughter - about how and why women have come to enjoy opportunities that they may now take for granted.

A lot of people were excited about a TV program that depicted a woman competently handling the challenges of leading the country. Popular culture too often depicts women's roles in a demeaning or limited fashion. One of actress Geena Davis' goals in producing *Commander in Chief* was to counter this trend because as a mother of daughters she appreciated the need to provide them with positive role models.

While this TV program was canceled after one season, the National Women's History Museum is still going strong after 10 years. We are dedicated to providing positive role models using real women as examples that inspire universal respect for American women's abilities and resourcefulness. We too want to use channels of communication that appeal to the broadest audience, educating even those who may not think that they have much to learn from history. There is nothing any of us can do to control network programming decisions. But you can continue to support NWHM and our ongoing work.

Best regards,

Susan B. Jollie
President

"Members Only" Page on Web Site

Visit the new "Members Only" section of the NWHM Web site (www.nwhm.org) to gain inside information on the legislative efforts of NWHM before it is posted on the regular news section of the website and to access archived newsletters and view images from past events and exhibitions. There is a purple box on the homepage that says New "Members Only" Section - click on it to enter the page. The page is password sensitive. If you are a member and do not know the password, e-mail staff@nwhm.org or call 703-813-6209.

NWHM Hosts Three New Cyber Exhibits Cont...

returning World War II veterans the opportunity to go to college, obtain job training, and receive low-interest loans to buy houses, and Mary McLeod Bethune who promoted better job opportunities for women of color when she worked as a consultant to the U.S. government. Through the images and text of the exhibit, viewers can gain a better appreciation for the sacrifices and hard work of women across the nation during World War II. The on-line exhibit is a close reproduction of a temporary exhibit also called "Partners" that NWHM offered during 2004-05 to provide the missing half of American history to complement the inauguration of the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C.

A new cyber exhibit featuring women's involvement in education as both students and as educators is under construction and scheduled to come on-line in September.

NWHM Supporters Enjoy Musical "Little Women" and Reception

Supporters of the National Women's History Museum attended a reception and a performance of the musical "Little Women" at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. on Thursday, July 13th, 2006. Susan H. Schulman directs the Broadway musical, which features pop singer Maureen McGovern as Marmee, the March sisters' mother. The musical is based on Louisa May Alcott's 1868 classic novel *Little Women*.

LITTLE
WOMEN



Set during the Civil War, the musical "Little Women" tells the story of the four March sisters, Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy and how, with their mother, they were able to create happiness through each other's company during a bleak period of time in the nation and in their family while their father was away serving as an army chaplain. The main character Jo spent her teenage years reading books and writing plays, short stories, and novels in the pursuit of becoming a published author. Jo rejected a marriage proposal and moved away from her family in Concord, MA, to New York City, to pursue her writing dream. She wrote sensational fictional stories that were steadily rejected by magazine publishers. After the death of her favorite sister Beth, Jo returned home to Concord where she was inspired to write the true story of the March sisters' adventures growing up. By remaining true to her heart and dream, Jo became a published writer and finds a compatible suitor. Despite the fact that the story of *Little Women* is almost a century-and-a-half old, its strong female characters and message to stay true to your dreams remain inspiring for women today. The musical brought this message vividly to life through entertaining dialogue and powerful songs. Two songs were of particular enjoyment to attendees: a duet by Jo and Beth titled "Some Things Are Meant to Be," and a solo by Marmee titled "Days of Plenty."



Before attending the performance at the Kennedy Center, NWHM supporters attended a reception at the 600 Restaurant in the Watergate complex, where they mingled with NWHM board members and staff and enjoyed refreshments.



Membership Updates

If your name is misspelled or you receive multiple copies of the newsletter, please contact us at: P.O. Box 1296, Annandale, VA 22003. Or you can e-mail us at staff@nwhm.org. Please type *Membership Update* in the subject line.