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National
Women's
History
Museum

NWHM

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Celebrating Our Past
Inspiring Our Future

Volume IX, Issue III

NWHM to Launch Exhibit on Women in Journalism

NWHM is proud to announce our upcoming online exhibit, **Women with a Deadline: Female Printers, Publishers, and Journalists from the Colonial Period to World War I**. *Women with a Deadline* follows the history of women in print journalism from Elizabeth Glover, who brought the first printing press to North America in 1638, through the turn of the 20th century, highlighting key figures and pioneers in the industry.

Images, primary documents, and quotations supplement the exhibit narrative as it demonstrates how women's participation in journalism mirrors the evolution of women's roles in American society. This



Mary Katherine Goddard
at her printing press

exhibit, curated by NWHM interns Tamar Rabinowitz and Stephanie Edwartoski, and supervised by NWHM Board Member Doris Weatherford, will launch in September.

The exhibit will include women such as Revolution-era printer Mary Katherine Goddard, the first person to print the Declaration of Independence with the signers' names. It will also examine the intersection of the abolitionist and women's rights movements in the 19th century. Jane Swisshelm was attacked for writing editorials opposing slavery, and Mary Ann Shadd was the first black female newspaper publisher.

Women led the growth of investigative journalism in the second half of the 19th century. Ida M. Tarbell famously reported on the unfair business practices of Standard Oil. Nellie Bly exposed the mistreatment of the mentally ill at the Blackwell Asylum in New York. These are just a few of the fascinating women you will meet in the new Cyber Exhibit.

NWHM National Coalition member the National Federation of Press Women (NFPW) is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year,



Muckraking journalist
Ida M. Tarbell
Image from the
Library of Congress

and NWHM is pleased to partner with NFPW on this exciting project. *Women with a Deadline* will be formally unveiled at the NFPW Annual Conference in the fall.

Many thanks to Ms. Weatherford, Ms. Rabinowitz, Ms. Edwartoski, and to NFPW for their contributions to this project. Be sure to visit NWHM's CyberMuseum at www.nwhm.org in September to view the new exhibit!

Don't Forget Your Chronicle!

Don't forget to create a Chronicle for a special woman in your life! Women contribute to the shaping of our nation every day. Preserve your life story or that of someone you know. Visit www.nwhm.org and click on *Chronicle of American Women!*

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A Different Point of View

Summer Brings Changes to NWHM

The summer of 2007 brought numerous changes for the National Women's History Museum. The Board of Directors elected a new slate of officers at its annual meeting in July:

Joan Wages - President

Ann Stone - Senior Vice President
Linda Denny - Vice President of Marketing
Doris Weatherford - Vice President of Program
Kathleen Sander, Ph.D. - Vice President of Fundraising
Johanna Hardy - Secretary
Ann Stone - Treasurer

These officers represent a range of expertise, including historians (women's history, of course!), successful businesswomen, and fundraising and marketing experts. Bipartisan in their political affiliations, these women are dedicated and committed to fulfilling NWHM's mission.

In addition, NWHM moved its offices. Our two prior locations were on the ground floor, but we've now moved up! The move reminded us of our first project - to lobby Congress and raise the money to move the Suffrage Statue from the basement of the U.S. Capitol up to the Rotunda and into the light.

See inside for an update on NWHM's efforts to secure a permanent building site!



Joan
Wages



Ann
Stone



Linda
Denny



Doris
Weatherford



Johanna
Hardy



Kathleen
Sander, Ph.D.

NWHM Makes a Splash at WBENC Conference

Recently, NWHM Board Members Kathy Sander and Ann Stone traveled to Los Angeles to take part in the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) National Conference in celebration of that organization's first decade. WBENC offers the nation's premier certification for women-owned businesses, which opens doors to contracts for their products and services with America's corporations and government entities. (Visit the WBENC website to learn more - www.wbenc.org.)



Why was NWHM there? Two reasons: first, to celebrate NWHM Board Member Linda Denny being named WBENC's President. Second, to highlight the efforts of the Museum by presenting segments throughout the conference entitled "Moments in History" that featured stories of women business pioneers and others who paved the way for today's women entrepreneurs. NWHM researched and wrote these tributes.

To say that these "Moments" were well received would be an understatement! The NWHM booth at the conference's Business Fair was inundated with attendees clamoring for information about our efforts. We offered our signature buttons with the motto "Well Behaved Women Rarely Make History" to all who visited the booth. The buttons quickly became the "must-have" fashion accessory for the conference!

This experience was uplifting and informative for us as well. The importance of NWHM was reinforced as we spoke with hundreds of Business Fair participants, many of them women business owners. They were excited to learn about the hard work and sacrifices of their predecessors. Many of the 2,500 participants stopped by to tell us that they know their children's lives will be better because of our work. Thank you to Linda Denny and to NWHM Charter Members for helping us to make this possible!



L to R: Kathy Sander, Linda Denny, Ann Stone

The Flag and Female Fame

Labor Day, which marks the annual transition from summer to fall, is the last of the hot-weather holidays associated with the American flag. First is Memorial Day, originally a Civil War remembrance at the end of May. Next comes Flag Day on June 14, and then of course Independence Day on July 4.

Although seamstress Betsy Ross is forever associated with Old Glory in the American consciousness, the famous story may never have happened. Bom Elizabeth Griscorn in 1752, she was a businesswoman throughout her long life, running a thriving upholstery business in downtown Philadelphia, then the nation's largest city.

Her name changed to Ross when she wed at 21, and that name has adhered to her historical reputation ever though it was the



The Original Star-Spangled Banner
Image from the Smithsonian

Declaration of Independence, Ross's husband died in an accidental gunpowder explosion. According to long-accepted lore, George Washington commissioned the widow to make an American flag a few months later, in June 1776; she supposedly got the job because her late husband's uncle knew Washington.

Her place in American history rests solely on the flag-making episode, yet it is possible that this event never occurred. That there was no contemporaneous record is not too surprising. The revolution, of course, was treason against the established government, and it would be understandable if Washington and Ross had conspired secretly. What is surprising, however, is that if the transaction actually happened, there was no substantiation of it after the American victory.

Washington was diligent about honoring women. He acknowledged many women who contributed to the war, even taking time during the crisis year of 1776 to thank African-American Phillis Wheatley for her poem on independence. Clearly, he was not reluctant to applaud women, and the omission of Ross from his records is the strongest evidence that Ross's services, if any, were not considered significant by those who lived through the war.

In fact, American military units used various flags, and presumably most were made by women. Ross may have been one of these flag makers: there is a record of payment to her for "ship's colours, etc." in May 1777, but the payment was from the State of Pennsylvania, not from Washington or Congress. Nor was there any mention of

Ross in June 1777, when Congress adopted a flag of "thirteen stripes in alternate red and white...and thirteen stars, white in a field of blue." Moreover, Washington, while encamped in Massachusetts the previous year, had recorded "we hoisted the Union Flag" on January 4, 1776, six months before the presumed meeting in Philadelphia with Ross.

Most telling of all is that the first written account of the tale did not occur until nearly a century later, when Ross's grandson presented this family lore to a local historical society in 1870. By then, no one was alive who could confirm or deny it, and encouraged by the cult of femininity during the Victorian Age, the story took root in popular culture. Harper's printed it in 1873, and within a decade, it was appearing in school books as fact.

Like other female historical figures, Betsy Ross is remembered for something she may not have done at all, rather than for her actual accomplishments. She bore seven children by two husbands, was widowed twice, ran a profitable enterprise, and invested in land. When she died at age 85 she left a valuable estate and a successful business - run by a daughter.

The woman who should be most associated with the American flag is someone whose name almost no one knows: Mary Pickersgill. During the War of 1812, the defiant commander of Fort M'Henry in Baltimore decided that he wanted a flag so big that the British will have no trouble seeing it. He sought out the city's well-established manufacturer of ship insignia, 36-year-old widow Mary Pickersgill. Like many other entrepreneurs, Pickersgill had inherited her knowledge of this field from her mother, flag maker Rebecca Young.



Mary Pickersgill
Image from the Smithsonian

With help from her daughter and two nieces, Pickersgill wove 1,200 square feet of wool into a seamless flag and then presented the military with a bill that read: "One American Ensign From First Rate Bunting, \$405.90." The flag was so enormous that it could not fit into her home-based business; Pickersgill borrowed the floor of a local brewery to lay it out.

After many long days and nights, the flag was finished in August 1813 - and in September, British guns bombarded Baltimore. The flag was a prime target, and while watching the battle rage, Francis Scott Key wrote the poem that became The Star Spangled Banner. Despite the "rockets" red glare, the bombs bursting in air," Pickersgill's high-quality work continued to wave. It survived the battle, and was so singular in its strength that almost two hundred years later, it still covers a three-story Smithsonian wall.

Article by Doris Weatherford, NWHM Vice President of Program,
author - <http://members.aunthorsguild.net/dweatherford>

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.

In Appreciation

We extend our deepest gratitude to Susan B. Jollie, who served as NWHM President during the challenging time of leading NWHM site acquisition efforts. She has also been key in expanding NWHM educational outreach through mounting such exhibits as "Partners in Winning the War: American Women in WWII" and the expansion of online exhibits through the NWHM CyberMuseum. NWHM sincerely appreciates her contributions.

In addition to the NWHM Officers, the following also serve on the NWHM Board of Directors:

Susan B. Jollie, Esq.
Law Office of Susan B. Jollie
Judith Kaplan
The Judith and Warren Kaplan Women's History Collection
Alma Morales Rojas
President and CEO of MANA - A National Latina Organization
Barbara Semado
National Director of Communications, Holland and Knight
Wilma L. Vaught, Brigadier General USAF (Ret.)
President, Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.

Thank you to the following U.S. Senators who cosponsored the National Women's History Museum Act of 2007:

Daniel Akaka (D-HI)	Mary Landrieu (D-LA)
Bob Bennett (R-UT)	Bianche Lincoln (D-AR)
Barbara Boxer (D-CA)	Claire McCaskill (D-MO)
Maria Cantwell (D-WA)	Barbara Mikulski (D-MD)
Hillary Clinton (D-NY)	Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)
Norm Coleman (R-MN)	Patty Murray (D-WA)
Dick Durbin (D-IL)	Olympia Snowe (R-ME)
Elizabeth Dole (R-NC)	Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)
Amy Klobuchar (D-MN)	George Voinovich (R-OH)

If you wish to be on this list, be sure to write them and urge their support of S. 1841!

Throughout history, women have come together to change society for the better - whether by sewing a flag that could be seen while the bombs were "bursting in air" or by performing cutting-edge nuclear research. NWHM supporters are bound together by the aspiration to honor the women who came before us and to ensure that our many traditional and non-traditional roles are acknowledged.

I joined this effort when I learned that Congress would not move a statue of women into the Capitol Rotunda. Not being a woman's history major, I only knew one of the three women in the statue - Susan B. Anthony, whose image had been on a coin. We succeeded in getting that statue moved into the Rotunda, where Anthony still stands, along with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott - the three founders of the woman suffrage movement. That was 10 years ago! Each day since, I have learned more about the amazing accomplishments of women and the dignity, courage, and determination so many have exhibited when odds were against them.

NWHM Building Site Action

Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) introduced legislation, S. 1841, directing the General Services Administration (GSA) to negotiate with NWHM for a long-term lease on the Old Post Office (OPO) Annex Pavilion. This glass building, adjacent to the OPO and located on America's Main Street, Pennsylvania Avenue, has been vacant for over 12 years. The bill was introduced with 18 cosponsors, a bipartisan group that included both men and women. The Museum extends its appreciation to these Senators for their foresight to honor women's contributions to our nation.

We hope this year's bill number is a good omen because 1841 is the year that women were first awarded university degrees in this country. A new bill number is assigned with each biennial Congress, but the language is similar to that of our previous bill, S. 501. If you recall, S. 501, also sponsored by Senator Collins, passed the Senate with unanimous consent but ran into obstacles when it was referred to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. This year, NWHM leadership is determined to get the bill passed in both houses of Congress.

While many members of Congress have supported NWHM's building site legislation, we have also received questions about our back-up strategy. Consequently, the Board decided that it's good to know our options and has begun surveying additional potential sites on or close to the National Mall.

Letter from our President

Gerds Lerner, considered the "mother" of women's history, said in her book, *The Creation of Patriarchy*: "Where there is no precedent, one cannot imagine alternatives to existing conditions...The denial to women of their history...has undermined the individual woman's sense of self-worth." Imagine the difference between a young boy growing up knowing his history (and that it's the accepted version) versus a young girl not knowing hers. Her foundation from which to build an image of herself and other women is missing. Our effort at NWHM is to reclaim the many treasures to be found in women's history. Women have a phenomenal history - one that all Americans deserve to know.

With your continued support, NWHM will succeed in making women's history part of our mainstream culture.

Sincerely,

Joan Wages
President