



National
Women's
History
Museum

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Volume 5, Issue 4
Winter 2004

A Different Point of View

Celebrating Our Past
Inspiring Our Future

Winter

CELEBRATE THESE WOMEN BORN IN WINTER

The first female superintendent of a major city school system, **Ella Flagg Young** (1/15/1845), taught herself to read and write at age nine, then continued her education formally until high school when she dropped out due to a lack of encouragement from her parents and a lack of intellectual challenge. At 15 she enrolled in a teacher training school, graduating with practical experience.

Young began teaching in a Chicago ghetto school, progressing to become a principal in the largest Chicago school. In 1887 she became assistant superintendent. She left her work to achieve her Ph.D., and returned to teaching. Dr. Young became superintendent in 1909, during tumultuously divided school system. In 1910 she was elected President of the National Education Association, being the first woman to do so. Ella Flagg Young died in October 1918.

Bessie Coleman (1/26/1892), or "Brave Bessie," is the first licensed African-American pilot. Bessie attended college in Oklahoma, but had to quit because of financial difficulties. She moved to Chicago and worked as a manicurist and successfully operated a chili parlor.

Bessie's dream was to learn to fly. When no American school would accept

African Americans, she traveled to France to attend Fédération Aéronautique Internationale, where she became the first licensed black pilot in the world.

Flying army surplus aircraft left over from WWI, she earned her nickname "Brave Bessie" by performing daredevil stunts. While doing air shows she gave lectures urging young black students to become pilots. Bessie once refused to perform in Waxahachie, Texas, until black students were allowed to use the same entrance as white students.

Ms. Coleman died in 1924 in an accident. She is buried in Lincoln Cemetery in Chicago.

Queen of Paper Bags, **Margaret Knight** (2/14/1838) did not invent paper bags; she invented a machine that automatically folded and glued box-bottomed paper bags that are still being used today. A man who was working in the machine shop where the prototype was being built stole her design and filed for a patent, claiming that women couldn't know anything about mechanical devices. Ms. Knight filed a patent interference lawsuit and won the patent in 1870.

Ms. Knight received the first of 26 patents at the age of 30. When she was 12 she

invented a stop-action device that prevented injuries to workers in textile mills. The inventor died in 1914. Her original box-making machine is in the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C.

The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine enrolled its first class in October of 1893, due to a large financial gift from **Mary Elizabeth Garrett** (3/5/1854), philanthropist. Ms. Garrett transformed American medical education by giving the funds with rigid stipulations. These stipulations included women being admitted to the school on equal terms as men, that the Medical School be exclusively a graduate school, and that requirements for admission specify that applicants have a bachelor's degree and proof of completing relevant courses. Ms. Garrett was successful only after six years of negotiations with the medical faculty, which unanimously approved the terms of admission in February of 1893.

After this long-sought achievement, Ms. Garrett became involved in the suffragist movement, providing business and educational opportunities for women. She was one of the founders of the Woman's Industrial Exchange in Baltimore. Ms. Garrett died of leukemia in 1915.

A New Exhibition Honoring Women's Service During WWII

The dedication ceremony for the World War II Veterans Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, DC will be held, May 29, 2004. The **National Women's History Museum (NWHM)** is mounting an exhibition that honors the women who served America. **Partners in Winning the War - Women in World War II** will open in May of 2004.

As part of the Manhattan Project, secretly building the atomic bomb, **Maria Goeppert Mayer** led a team that successfully extracted uranium-235.

NWHM is partnering with the Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation to tell the story of the women who served and who sacrificed to protect our country while so much of the mile population was deployed. Some NWHM charter members remember flying test-planes, working with machinery that was not fitted properly for women, growing victory gardens to supplement the food supply, and doing without new clothes, food and other items due to rationing. Without women filling the newly created roles the armed forces would not have been able to fulfill their missions, nor would the country be so strong when the men returned. The roles that women stepped into during those years were pivotal to America's workforce, changing perceptions and offering opportunities that had previously not existed for women. To tell this story NWHM is working with the Women's Bureau at the Department of Labor, and many of the NWHM Coalition organizations.

Federal funds were used to provide childcare to women working in World War II defense plants under the Lanham Act. Funding was discontinued after the war as part of the anti-roman reaction in the blue-collar workforce.

Partners is part of a broad array of events scheduled throughout Washington, DC to commemorate the World War II generation. The American Battle Monuments Commission is hosting the dedication. The Washington, DC Convention and Tourism Corporation and the DC Heritage Tourism Coalition are co-organizing and producing "America Celebrates the Greatest Generation" which consists of World War II themed events and exhibits that will last the entire summer.

Women Senators Take the Senate Floor to Support NWHM

On November 21, 2003, the United States Senate passed S. 1741, the National Women's History Museum Act of 2003. There were no objections and the bill passed by unanimous consent. Senators Susan Collins and Lisa Murkowski exchanged remarks illustrating the important historic contributions of women from their states-Maine and Alaska.



Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski told the history of Alaskan women. November 21, 2003.

Senator Murkowski noted that Alaska had "a history . . . of pioneering women . . . such as Kate Carmack . . . an Athabaskan woman who married an American trader. She is actually credited with discovering the first gold in Bonanza Creek, which started the Alaska gold rush in 1896. As the story is told, when Kate first discovered the gold, it was frozen in the mud. Kate and her husband did not have the grub stake . . . Kate's resourcefulness as a skin sewer and her skill as an outdoorsman earned enough cash for the family to pull together that grub stake to hit "pay dirt" when the ground thawed the next spring.

Senator Collins related how "Senator Margaret Chase Smith . . . served as Senator from Maine the entire time I was growing up. She served in the Senate from 1949 to 1972. I realize how fortunate I was to have as a role model this courageous, smart, and brave woman . . . I remember well my very first meeting with Senator Smith. I was a senior in high school. I was in

Washington for a special program, and she spent nearly 2 hours talking with me. She talked about national defense, her service on the Armed Services Committee and, most of all, about her decision to speak out against the excesses of Joseph McCarthy. That was an extraordinarily brave thing to do, and it was typical of Senator Smith, who had a courageous and independent spirit. Although I didn't realize it at the time, when I look back at her meeting with me, I realize that that was the first step in a journey that led me to run for her seat 25 years later. I am so proud to hold the seat once held by the legendary Senator Margaret Chase Smith.



Maine Senator Susan Collins led the effort to enact S.1741. November 21, 2003.

Senator Collins went on to relate how her personal experience with positive female role models led her to support NWHM. "Women such as those the Senator from Alaska has spoken of and whom I have talked about today are the reason we are as proud to sponsor a bill that, at no cost to the taxpayers, directs that the Old Post Office Annex be made available to house the National Women's History Museum. We need a place for our country to honor the contributions of women, particularly for young girls who are coming to Washington to be able to go to this museum and learn about some of the remarkable women who have changed American history, about whom the Senator from Alaska and I have talked today. Women's history needs a place in our capital and in our collective American history."

The colloquy between Senators Collins and Murkowski discusses the lives of a number of women from their states and can be found at www.thomas.loc.gov.

Twenty five National Organizations Declare Support for Museum Site

Twenty-five national women's professional and service organizations have joined the NWHM's National Coalition during 2003. Representing a reach of over 8 million members throughout the country, the Coalition is committed to supporting the NWHM mission and the acquisition of a permanent Museum site near the Mall in Washington, DC.

Susan B. Jolie, NWHM president, formally introduced Coalition representatives at its Advisory Board meeting in November 2003. She hailed the creation and support of the Coalition in stating:

"Historically, women's organizations have banded together to effect change and progress at all levels of American life. We are privileged to have these outstanding national organizations support our mission and our efforts to acquire a site in Washington, DC. We share a vision that the legacy of women's achievements and contributions will inspire generations of men and women alike." Since the meeting in November, Coalition members have demonstrated their involvement in contacting key Congressional members in the House of Representatives to support S. 1741. Passed unanimously by the Senate on November 21, 2003, S.1741 designates the Pavilion Annex next to the Old Post Office building on Pennsylvania Avenue as an ideal site for the women's history museum.

Since the November meeting, the NWHM has welcomed two new organizations into Coalition ranks:

MANA - A National Latina Organization
The American College of Nurse-Midwives



Another important aspect of the Coalition's mission is establishing new communication channels to increase the NWHM and the organizations' visibility with various constituencies, their members and the public. To begin the process, the NWHM has devoted a section to the National Coalition on its Web site, www.nwhm.org. The section lists the member organizations, contact information and a brief statement of their mission. Work is now in progress to provide links to the member Web sites in spring of 2004. A Different Point of View has provided Coalition updates in its past four issues as well.

A complete listing of the NWHM Coalition members is featured on page 4 and at www.nwhm.org, click on the National Coalition Section.

For more information about how national organizations can become involved, please contact the NWHM office at info@nwhm.org, attention: Becky Schergens.

GOOD OLD DAYS?

In celebration of **National Women's History Month, March 2004**, the National Women's History Museum announces *The Good Old Days?*, a self-guided tour of the history of women's lifestyles. The sites mentioned in the tour, including several homes that are open for tours, give examples of the difficulties of "women's work" even for prominent or wealthy women. For an itinerary for *The Good Old Days?* please visit our Web site in March, 2004.

Mary McLeod Bethune's carriage house, part of *The Good Old Days?* self-guided tour.

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If your name is misspelled (including mistakes in capitalization or punctuation) or you receive multiple copies of the newsletter, please contact us at the address below. Please provide the following: name, address, and the incorrect information.

Membership Update

P O Box 1296
Annandale, VA 22003

Or email staff@nwhm.org. Please put Membership Update in the subject line.

NWHM National Coalition Member Roster As of February 2, 2004

- American Association of University Women
- American College of Nurse-Midwives
- American Society of Public Administration - Section for Women in Public Administration
- Association of Junior Leagues International
- Business and Professional Women/USA
- Delta Kappa Gamma Society International
- General Federation of Women's Clubs
- Hadassah - The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.
- League of Women Voters
- MANA, A National Latina Organization
- National Association for Female Executives
- National Association of Women Business Owners
- National Congress of Black Women
- National Council of Negro Women
- National Education Association
- National Federation of Black Women Business Owners
- National Foundation of Women Legislators, Inc.
- National Society Daughters of the American Revolution
- National Woman's Party
- Native American Women's Business Council
- OWL
- Women in Aerospace
- Women in Defense
- Women In Military Service For America Memorial Foundation
- Women Presidents' Organization.

Continued from page 1

A schedule of related events was recently listed in the Washington Post with the **Partners** exhibition at the top of the list.

Jennette Pickering Rankin, the first woman elected to Congress, voted against American entry into World War II saying, "...I can't go to war and I refuse to send anyone else."

In addition to the exhibition, NWHM will host the **Partners Open House** on Sunday, May 30th in the afternoon. A special part of the Open House will be the Partner Recognition and Awards Ceremony, to which all NWHM charter members are cordially invited.

The exhibition will be located at Women In Military Service For America Memorial at Arlington Cemetery, running from May to September of 2004. There is no admission fee. NWHM is pursuing corporate funding that would enable the museum to underwrite the costs of the exhibition and Open House and extend the reach of its message as a permanent virtual exhibit on the CyberMuseum, as an educational poster that could be distributed to schools, and by presenting vintage films and documentaries that make the era come alive. The Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor, Northrup Grumman Corporation, and Women in Defense have pledged financial support. NWHM is seeking support and suggestions on funding from its members.

Letter from our President



The exhibition *Partners in Winning the War: Women in World War II* is a tremendous opportunity to fulfill part of NWHM's ongoing mission: telling of women's significant contributions to America. The official dedication to the World War II Memorial planned by the American Battle Monuments Commission includes the dedication ceremony, a number of entertainment programs, veteran reunions, recording oral histories of veterans, display of military equipment, and a memorial service at the National Cathedral. Hundreds of thousands of women and men of the World War II generation and their families will come to Washington, D.C. for events dominating the media's attention for the Memorial Day weekend. And with two tents devoted to nostalgic big band and swing music, we feared that the most likely image of women's wartime roles would be the USO dance. The subliminal message in popular culture would be that women stayed safe at home enjoying themselves.

But World War II was not fun for women: Total mobilization meant that everyone made sacrifices. It is not commonly understood that women played a central role in winning the war. Some strides are being made to acknowledge that role, notably The Ford Motor Company's media campaign paying tribute to the iconic "Rosie the Riveter" and the six million women who joined the ranks of the defense production workers. But that is only part of the story. Women entered military and government service nationwide over one million "Government Girls" came to Washington, D.C. Women kept vital infrastructure services-- transportation, postal, communications, agriculture, hospitals, and distribution systems-- running smoothly. It was a heroic effort worthy of recognition.

NWHM is collaborating with several organizations with a legacy of World War II involvement to mount an exhibition and recognition ceremony acknowledging the women of World War II. We are grateful to Women In Military Service For America Memorial Foundation for providing a venue and staff support. The Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor, which played a major role in World War II mobilization efforts under the direction of Frances Perkins, the first woman Cabinet Secretary, made an early commitment of financial and archival staff support. Members of the NWHM Coalition of Women's Organizations are lending their historic perspectives and artifacts. Northrup Grumman Corporation became our first major corporate donor and we are hopeful that others will support the effort. Our budget is minuscule in comparison to the official events, but I believe that **Partners** has the potential to make a substantial and lasting contribution to Americans' appreciation of their history.

Warmest regards,

Susan B. Jolie
Susan B. Jolie
President