

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

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Women's History

by Linda Gordon

In the last three decades, the field of women's history has begun to transform the way the overall history of the United States has been told. The women's liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s simultaneously highlighted the neglect of women's experience in the writing of history and stimulated hundreds of educated women to study women's history.

This period of extraordinary productivity--literally hundreds of books on women in history have been published since the 1970s--was actually the second wave of historical writing about women. In 1853, for example, Sarah J. Hale published a *Women's Record; or, Sketches of All Distinguished Women, from "the Beginning" till A.D. 1850!* By the early 20th century, a few scholarly studies, such as Lucy Maynard Salmon's *Domestic Service* (1897) and Edith Abbott's masterful *Women in Industry* (1909) had been published.

But then a tragedy followed. As the women's movement declined after the final victory of the woman suffrage amendment and as a wave of political conservatism stigmatized "feminism" and women's aspirations to professional achievement, women were excluded from academic positions and discouraged from seeking advanced training. In the late 19th century, nearly one-third of American women earning college degrees went on to do graduate work, and in the 1890s eight times as

many women earned Ph.D.s as had in the entire history of the United States. After about 1920 there was a backlash, and the number of women Ph.D.s and professionals actually declined. A long silence ensued in which women's history was virtually forgotten. A few stalwarts such as Mary Beard (*Woman As Force in History*, 1946) and Eleanor Flexner (*Century of Struggle* [1959], a history of the women's rights movement) published in the wilderness, but through the 1960s history courses in high schools, colleges, and graduate schools did not mention women.

Just as the civil rights movement starting in the 1950s produced a blossoming of African-American history (followed by the history of other peoples of color), so the women's movements of the 1960s and 1970s produced a garden of women's history. Most of the historians who first published in this second wave of women's history had no formal training in the field. The two scholars commonly considered the founders of this wave are Gerda Lerner, who published *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina*, a history of the abolitionist and early feminist leaders, in 1967, and Anne Firor Scott, who published *The American Woman: Who Was She?*, an overview, in 1971. They were soon followed by a host of others, and women's history became an acknowledged and respected field.

History Facts of Women in the US

Oct 23, 1910 - Blanche Stuart Scott is the first woman pilot to make a public flight

1926: Bessie Coleman, the first black woman aviator, dies in a plane crash.

1927: Figure skater Sonja Henie wins her first world amateur championship. She will win the next nine world amateur championships and gold medals at the Olympics in

1928, 1932, and 1936.

Oct 8, 1993 - Toni Morrison becomes the first African-American woman and the first African-American, to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.

For more information visit <http://www.greatwomen.org/>

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Special points of interest:

- <http://www.greatwomen.org/>.
- <http://www.wasp-wwii.org/>
- <http://womensmemorial.org/>
- <http://www.websn.com/Pride/Pride/sounds.htm>
- <http://www.nwhp.org/>



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Challenging the System

Two Army Women Fight for Equality

Written by: Judith Bellafaire, Ph.D., Curator

In conjunction with the Dedication of the Women in Military Service for America Memorial in October 1997, Army veterans Sarah Keys Evans and Dovey Johnson Roundtree presented a special gift to Brigadier General Wilma Vaught, President of the Women's Memorial Foundation. In a handsome frame rest documents and photographs which tell how, in 1952, two military women challenged segregation law. Three years later, their challenge resulted in a key civil rights decision in which the Interstate Commerce Commission struck down the "separate but equal" doctrine in interstate public bus transportation.

Background

On July 26, 1948, President Truman issued Executive Order No. 9981, mandating an end to racial discrimination and segregation in the armed forces. To facilitate the order, the Truman Administration formed an executive committee headed by Charles O. Fahy, to prepare and submit a plan for desegregating the services. Almost two years elapsed, however, before the Fahy Committee submitted its final report. In the interim, the services followed established policy regarding recruiting, training and assigning black personnel. In January 1950, the Fahy Committee submitted its report, and the Army issued a new directive entitled, "Utilization of Negro Manpower in the Army." This directive announced the elimination of quotas, segregated units, and segregated facilities. The Women's Army Corps (WAC) conformed with the Army directive by revising its administrative policies

and assignment procedures. By the middle of that year, WAC training and field units, as well as billeting and messing facilities, were integrated.

LAWS IMPACT NATIONAL GUARD

In July 1956, Congress enacted passage of Public Law 845, authorizing female officers in the National Guard. New York Air Guard Captain Norma Parsons joined the 106th Tactical Hospital, becoming the National Guard's first female member. The Army Guard's first woman soldier was First Lieutenant Sylvia Marie St. Charles Law, who received her commission in January of 1957. By the end of 1957 the Air Guard had 42 female nurses. The Army Guard, however, had only 11 nurses working in its 468 authorized positions. By 1960, only 56 women were included in a total Army Guard force of 401,765 personnel.

In October 1961, then President John Kennedy mobilized 44,371 Army Guard members in response to the Berlin crisis. Included in this mobilization were 17 women nurses - the first time Guard women had been mobilized. The Air Guard mobilized 21,067 people, but there is no record indicating how many were women. Throughout the 1960s almost all of the jobs open to military women were in the medical field, and only to officers. But the status of Guard women began to change.

"Women Change America" 2005 Theme

The 2005, Women's History Month theme, "Women Change America," honors and recognizes the role of American women in transforming culture, history and politics as leaders, writers, scientists, educators, politicians, artists, historians, and informed citizens.

"Women Change America" also celebrates the myriad ways in which the spirit, courage, and contributions of American women have added to the vitality, richness, and diversity of American life. In 2005, all previous Women's History Week and Month Honorees will be recognized and celebrated as we explore how "Women Change America." Here are a few of the honorees listed below;

Abigail Adams (1744-1818)

Women Rights Advocate

As a self-educated woman, Adams held well-informed strong political beliefs. In over two thousand letters written to her husband John, to family and friends, and to government officials, she articulately expressed her ideas on the American Revolution, the new nation, the American family, foreign courts, and war. Well respected, her opinions were influential in government affairs before, during, and after her husband's term as president.

Mary Anderson (1872-1964)

Labor Activist

Anderson's keen negotiating skills and labor activism, especially on behalf of working women, won her an appointment in 1920 as the first director of the Women's Bureau in the U.S. Department

of Labor. During her 24 years there, she played a major role in winning federal minimum wage and maximum hour laws for women. After retiring in 1944, Anderson continued to advocate on behalf of working women.

Ella Baker (1903-1986)

Political Activist

Baker worked steadily for 50 years to gain civil and voting rights for blacks. As Field Secretary and later Director of Branches for the NAACP, from 1938-1946, she traveled extensively in the segregated South, often at great peril. Baker helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1958, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1960, and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in 1964.

Note: A list of all the women who have been honored for National Women's History Week and National Women's History Month can be found through this link; <http://www.nwhp.org/>

The National Women's History Project would like to thank Jennifer Kennedy, Christie Rubio, and Margaret Zierdt for their work in researching, writing, and editing the paragraphs on the 145 former National Women's History Week/Month Honorees.

Highlights for This Month in US Women's History

***March 8** - A day internationally recognized as International Women's Day - it's origins tracing back to protests US and Europe to honor and fight for the political rights for working women

***March 20, 1852** - Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, "Uncle Tom's Cabin", is published and becomes America's first book to sell over 1 million copies

***Mar 30, 1888** - The National Council of Women of the US is organized by Susan B. Anthony, Clara Barton, Lucy Stone, Julia Ward Howe, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton

***March 17, 1910** - Camp Fire Girls is established as the first American interracial, non-sectarian organization for girls

***March 12, 1912** - Juliette Gordon Low assembled 18 girls together in Savannah, Georgia, for the first-ever Girl Scout meeting

***March 4, 1917** - Jeannette Rankin of Montana is sworn in as the first

***March 6, 1934** - Eleanor Roosevelt becomes the first, First lady to travel by air to a foreign country

***March 2, 1973** - Women begin pilot training for the US Navy

***March 1, 1978** - Women's History Week is first observed in Sonoma, California

***March 21, 1986** - Debi Thomas becomes first African American woman to win gold medal in a world skating competition

***March 23, 1917** - Virginia Woolf establishes the Hogarth Press with her husband, Leonard Woolf.

***March 1, 1987** - Congressional resolution naming Women's History Month is passed

***Mar 31, 1776** - Abigail Adams writes to husband John who is helping to frame the Declaration of Independence: "Remember the ladies..."



First Female Adjutant General of the National Guard

Major General, Martha T. Rainville is the adjutant general of the State of Vermont. She is the first woman in the 360-year history of the National Guard to serve as a State adjutant general. As adjutant general, she serves as the Inspector General and Quartermaster General of the 4,600 members of the Vermont Army and Air National Guard. As the head of the State Military Department, General Rainville manages five divisions within that Department. They include the Executive and Administrative; Property and Installations; Budget Accounting; Air Maintenance and Veterans Affairs Department. As the head of these Departments she manages a state appropriation of \$2.4 million and a federal budget of \$82 million.



General Rainville is a 1979 graduate of the University of Mississippi and a 1979 Distinguished Graduate of the USAF Officer Basic Military Training Program at Lockland Air Force Base, Texas. Her military career has primarily been in the Aircraft

Maintenance Field with F-101, F-106, T-33, F-15, A-10 and F-16 aircraft.

Today, women comprise about 10 percent of the Guard - more than 35,000 soldiers. They serve all over the world, whenever and wherever needed.

Hawaiian Reformation

Until the rise of Queen Kaahumanu, women in Hawaiian culture were bound by the ancient kapu system that cast them as second class citizens. While a chieftain's lineage gave her unquestioned social and political influence, she was invisible and powerless when it came to the gods and the Hawaiian religion. Women were unable to take part in sacred rituals or formally worship and therefore could not be recognized as leaders. It took a strong-willed and determined woman to overthrow ancient customs and outdated rituals of the Hawaiian patriarchal society. Looking back at Queen Kaahumanu we are reminded of the heights of women's potential. She is an example of what is possible in our culture and around the world. Queen Kaahumanu made great strides in women's rights as the favorite wife to Kamehameha the Great during the early 1800's. Her father had been an avid supporter and counselor of Kamehameha and it was believed that his daughter would have the same understanding of the political sphere. Kaahumanu was allowed to sit on the king's council of advisors, something that was unheard of at that

Hawaiian Reformation CONTD.

time. After Kamehameha's death in 1819 it was revealed that distrusting the leadership of his son and heir, Liholiho, the king had given Kaahumanu the rank of "kuhina nui" or prime minister. She was the first Hawaiian women on equal political footing with a ruler, and she used this to her advantage, working to end archaic customs of an ancient religion. Working with Liholiho's mother Keopuolani, Kaahumanu used her influence to break the rigid codes of the kapu system. Under these strict societal rules every wrong step was punishable by death. Some rules prohibited Hawaiians from owning land and forbid a commoner from stepping in the high chief's shadow or fishing during the wrong time of the year. But, it was women who were the most strongly effected, being governed by a religion that wouldn't let them participate. One of the most honored rules prohibited men from sitting and eating with women. As Liholiho took the throne as Kamehameha II, he was persuaded to make a grand gesture towards abolishing the kapu system and sat and ate a meal with Kaahumanu and the other high ranked women. When Hawaiians saw that Liholiho had survived the gods wrath, the breaking of the kapu system was embraced. Kaahumanu continued to rule with Liholiho until he went to England in 1823. She was then appointed regent until Kamehameha III came of age. While March is National Women's History Month, we take March 8th to celebrate the international woman. Queen Kaahumanu is a great example of what female strength and power can accomplish, but we must also look past the US and honor those who are making a difference around the world.

Credits to Radha Weaver

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MESSAGE FROM THE SEEM

From time to time, the best interest of the organization is served by a leader's reprimand of an associate. How that task is handled is a mark of effective leadership. There's an old proverb that says, "Do not use a hatchet to remove a fly from your friend's forehead." —Stan Toler

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Quote: "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

—Howard Hendricks

Special Emphasis Programs News:

**23 March 2005
1130-1300**

**Forts McPherson and Gillem Celebrate Women History Month
GUEST SPEAKER DR. BARBARA MOORE PULLIAM
SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT CLAYTON COUNTY PUBLIC
SCHOOLS**

Upcoming Observances	Dates
African-American History Month	February 1 st - 28 th /29 th
Women's History Month	March 1 st -31 st
Asian-Pacific Heritage Month	May 1 st -31 st
Women's Equality Day	August 26 th
National Hispanic Heritage Month	Sep 15 th - Oct 15 th
National American Indian Month	November 1 st -30 th



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Equality for Everyone