

National Collaborative for Women's History Sites

2014-2015 Annual Report

President's Report and Summary - Heather Huyck, NCWHS President, 2011-2015

First, I want to thank those who have helped rebuild NCWHS during the time since 2011 when I became President....especially Peg Strobel and Barb Howe—for their work on the webinars, their thoughtfulness... their copyediting and agenda monitoring.... Want to recognize Lori Osborne for all her efforts to get NCWHS to be stronger electronically in finding “Wild Apricot” and “Mail Chimp” and organizing our administrative files. Most of all, thank each of you for your contributions to more and better women's history at U.S. sites and parks and greater appreciation and tools at history conferences of all kinds. This year Dr. Susan Ferentinos will speak at our Annual Meeting.

When I became President in 2011 we had had a year after Peg had retired as President, and NCWHS was not heading in a good direction—membership was down, funding was down, and the Board needed to be stronger. I began by strengthening the Board, which is how Barb and Joan Catapano and others were invited to join. I looked for people with a variety of backgrounds all of whom had expertise in women's history and/or historic sites. I worked to increase the membership by delivering better membership signups, by finding key partners, etc. We were founded by the National Park Service (NPS) and have long worked closely with them. We had been told that we needed to have a national agreement, not one solely with the NPS' Northeast region. The NPS with over 400 sites and parks and 240 million visitors annually preserves and interprets a lot of women's history. That's where we'd been founded and had worked for years—both of our two publications, *Women's History: Sites and Resources* and *Revealing Women's History: Best Practices for Historic Sites* came from working with the NPS' Northeast Region. Twice we applied to the NEH for funding for our Heritage Trails—being turned down both times was quite disappointing and discouraging.

We held a two-day workshop “Integrating Women's History” and a session at the 2011 Berkshire Conference on the History of Women at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst for NPS employees and NCWHS members. That workshop covered a range of issues and ideas; videos are on our website (www.ncwhs.org). Under Peg's presidency in 2008, we'd had 8 sessions at that Berkshire Conference. We moved our headquarters from California to Washington DC and later at DC's request, we moved to the Evanston History Center in Illinois. In 2012 the Secretary of the Interior called for a women's history initiative following one in Latino history. NCWHS was positioned to be the organization to do that, because we had the expertise, the interest, the credentials and the proven track record to do it. We signed a new Cooperative Agreement with the NPS in 2012 which guides all we do with them and which has provided our monthly conference calls. We signed a \$94,000 Task Agreement under the umbrella Cooperative Agreement. As part of that, we and the NPS held a two-day workshop in December 2012 at the Sewall-Belmont House & Museum in DC; see the report with recommendations (http://ncwhs.org/images/stories/PDFfiles/Telling_report_final.pdf), and NCWHS under Susan Ferentinos' lead, doing a national survey of potential sites.

We also agreed to do two or three National Historic Landmark nominations. Since then, Marjorie Stoneman Douglas has become a NHL. In addition, former Board member Mary Melcher's idea that Annie Wauneka, the amazing Navajo woman who brought traditional Navajo medicine together with western practices, should be recognized in a NHL is now underway. Her home is so remote on the Navajo Nation that our contract includes renting a 4-wheel drive vehicle! The Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray, first African American woman ordained an Episcopal priest, a civil and women's rights crusader, lawyer, poet, author of the powerful *Proud Shoes* and *Song in a Weary Throat* and LGBTQ person is our third NHL project. We are now working with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Pauli Murray Project to make her childhood home our third NHL. Iron Mountain donated restoration funds after seeing that the Pauli Murray home, with encouragement from NCWHS, had become a National Trust America's Treasure.

Sadly, the NPS has been stressed every way imaginable—budget cutbacks, government shutdowns, and other struggles which slowed our progress together. Barb and I, with help from Peg and Erin Devlin, gave a four-session webinar to the NPS in Spring 2014, "Doing Women's History at your Sites" which covered finding, researching and integrating women's history into historic sites. Wonderfully, our membership numbers have grown: thank you ALL.

We have also developed and gave NCWHS sessions at AHA, OAH, NCPH, National Association of Interpreters, the Western Association of Women Historians, the "Diverse Voices" meeting on re-visioning National Historic Landmarks, and the Berkshire Conference. We have also worked to build ties with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the US Forest Service, and the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), including signing a letter recognizing our partnership with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Page Harrington is the co-chair of the AASLH Affinity group in Women's History; at Barb Howe's urging, NCWHS is now an institutional member of AASLH. Our Heritage Trails Committee with Marsha Weinstein and Jan Dilg held two meetings to work on how best to recognize the centennial of women's rights and suffrage—sites of suffrage? Marsha Weinstein led a tour on women's suffrage history at the 2015 Louisville AASLH. These sessions have brought our sites and insights together with research and scholarship in women's history so that we have strengthened both. Thanks also to Camesha Scruggs our Secretary and Joan our chair of Nominations, and especially to Barb our Treasurer and Peg our Assistant Treasurer for their efforts, and to our Vice President Lori Osborne.

Looking back, we have worked hard to strengthen and encourage the organization, especially through our website and also through our Facebook and Twitter run by Marla Miller and Susan Ferentinos; through getting members processed faster and better; through looking for ways to give member benefits. Lori, Erin, and Page have worked on that. We now have a newsletter which Lori and I have written and Peg has edited. Lori also deserves recognition for wanting to have regular fundraising; I found an anonymous donor who agreed to give \$1000 if we raised \$4000. We want to thank the donor for encouraging NCWHS to do our first—and very successful—fundraising campaign. We have also reached out to the National Trust, the Forest Service, and the AASLH (I gave a free session to them, "House/Home/Work") to build partnerships helpful to each other. While many of these things are "housework" for us, they are crucial to having a strong (and legal) organization. Nupur Chaudhuri our incoming President will strengthen us even more as will new Board members Lynn Weiner and Antonia Castaneda. We are looking to develop a stronger relationship with the Evanston History Center and to find ways to recognize 2020 the Centennial of women's suffrage.

We bridge between sites and scholarship—too often sites know little and sometime care little about women’s history. Given our history and the potential for inculcating a lot of women’s history, the NPS needs to be kept as an important partner even as we work with others who want to play well with us—keeping good and current scholarship, recognizing excellence, and being creative. I see our goals as making NCWHS organizationally sustainable, ensuring that quality scholarship undergirds all our work and building a strong and diverse national community.

I will be staying with Research and Interpretation Committee which first met July 2015 and will meet again in October 2015 to develop reference resource of books/websites and other sources useful to anyone who wants to research and/or interpret women’s history at historic sites. The RIC is also working with several NPS sites to develop session(s) for the 2017 Berkshire Conference at Hofstra University. As the primary author of the webinars, I will work to determine their best future. I’ll continue with the Pauli Murray NHL, with the NPS project “Diverse Voices,” and other work as asked. I plan to focus more on the book I’m writing, the forthcoming *Interpreting Women’s History at Museums and Historic Sites*.

We and I have also had some disappointments. For example, we wanted a national Girl Scout badge in women’s history but our efforts to set up a partnership with the Girl Scouts didn’t work out. That’s all part of organizational lives; best to keep moving. Thanks again to all of you who have pitched in to make us who we have become—as someone who remembers our delight years ago when we first got a logo, I know we’ve come a very long way to become a more professional and well-regarded organization. And we are much more financially stable as we continue to get more members, raise more money, and get additional grants. We have a unique opportunity and a special role, one that presents more than half of all Americans, one that has only begun to tell the Whole Story. Thank you all for all that we’ve accomplished together. I look forward to More & Better Women’s History at sites and parks everywhere.

Treasurer’s Report - Barb Howe

The NCWHS depends on membership dues, donations, and income from various projects to support our work. For example we receive overhead from our Cooperative Agreement projects with the National Park Service that is a percentage of the expenses for the various tasks we complete under this agreement. However our most important source of income this year has been significant increases in dues payments because we have new members plus a high rate of membership renewals and the outstanding response to our appeal for donations in addition to memberships. We had an anonymous donor offer \$1000 last winter if we could raise \$4000 in new memberships and donations. Thanks to all of you, we met and exceeded that goal. Thank you!!

Our expenditures include routine but crucial items—buying required insurance, licenses, IT support, a subscription to Wild Apricot to send you those friendly reminders to renew your membership, postage, and payments to the Evanston History Center for overhead and staff support. The staff support expenses soon will increase substantially as we start our transition to paying for some of the support that Lori Osborne and others at the Evanston History Center are providing for us. We need to do this to manage all our activities more efficiently and not overburden volunteers. I very much appreciate the assistance of Peg Strobel, our Assistant

Treasurer, who has done an amazing job of keeping track of our financial transactions related to our NPS Cooperative Agreement, and Lori, who has done our local banking in Evanston.

Committee Activities

Partnerships: Page Harrington, Barb Howe, Heather Huyck, Peg Strobel

- The National Park Service - We continued our work through our Cooperative Agreement, including completing the Marjorie Stoneman Douglas NHL nomination and working on two more NHL nominations. One is a property related to Annie Wauneka, a Navajo leader who brought together traditional Navajo and western medicine to respond to major health crises, especially tuberculosis. The second is the childhood home of Pauli Murray, African American activist for civil rights and women's rights and the first African American woman ordained as an Episcopal priest. We also are working with the NPS to improve how sites understand and present women's history to their 280 million visitors each year.
- The National Trust for Historic Preservation - We continued working with the Trust on their National Treasures program, identifying women's history-focused properties for protection. And we are working together on the Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray nomination (more in President's report above).
- AASLH - NCWHS is partnering with the newest AASLH affinity group, the recently formed Women's History Affinity Group (WHAG). The initial interest meeting for WHAG took place at the 2014 Annual Meeting in St. Paul with participants sharing ideas and brainstorming about interpreting women's history. The advisory committee, co-chaired by Rebecca Price and NCWHS board member Page Harrington, soon thereafter began working on the required governing documents and launching the web page. WHAG is comprised of those who are interested in presenting and encouraging accurate, compelling, diverse, and often-controversial women's history, the WHAG community currently has 120 subscribers. First year goals include launching a monthly blog on the AASLH site and preparing for the 2015 Annual Meeting in Louisville. The WHAG co-sponsored, along with NCWHS and the local League of Women Voters, a Suffrage History walking tour of downtown Louisville followed by a brainstorming session about the upcoming 2020 Suffrage Centennial. Members of the affinity group advisory committee also presented a roundtable discussion group "*From a Whisper to a Shout: Finding Ways to Share Women's History through Innovative Collaboration*," and a panel discussion (both online and full session) "*We Can Do It: Uncovering Women's History Together*." Additionally, WHAG spearheaded a "tweet up" during the block party on Friday night. The WHAG also held its first business meeting while in Louisville and outlined priorities for year two which includes expanding the blog community, continuing to partner with NCWHS on a resource page on the website and encouraging more women's history content for 2016 AASLH annual meeting in Detroit.

Online Communications: Sue Ferentinos, Marla Miller, Michael Regoli

We have 769 followers on Twitter and 922 people have "liked" us on Facebook. We hope you have found NCWHS online if you use these social media outlets—and please share our posts with your friends and colleagues. In addition, we love posting news from members on Facebook: let us know via contact@ncwhs.org if you've got brief news you'd like us to post. The committee also manages our website www.ncwhs.org and invites NCWHS members to share their insights and activities. We welcome short articles (600-800 words) sharing member news; if you've launched

a new tour, created a new exhibit, or undertaken some other projects that you'd like to share with your peers, get in touch! Please send your submissions to: contact@ncwhs.org.

Membership and Development: Page Harrington, Erin Krutko Devlin, Lori Osborne
This year the Membership and Development Committee accomplished several key goals: retaining more current members; adding more new members; and holding our first-ever annual appeal. Our total membership grew from 90 to 115 in the past year. Additionally, the Member Survey we completed in fall 2014 was an important guide all year for member programs and benefits. Adding to these services for members will be the focus for 2015-16. We appreciate everyone who joined or renewed their membership in the past year. The annual appeal, which ran from December 2014-January 2015, generated \$4,000 in donations and earned us the challenge grant of \$1,000 from an anonymous donor. We are very grateful to this donor who really spurred us on with his/her confidence. A follow-up appeal for women's history month in March was also successful. Thank you to everyone who gave something extra during these appeals.

Heritage Trails: Janice Dilg, Marsha Weinstein
To commemorate the 2020 centennial celebration of woman's suffrage, NCWHS in April 2009, led by Board Members Pam Elam and Mary Melcher, founded the NCWHS Women's Heritage Trails Committee.

The goal of the Heritage Trails Committee is to highlight the role of each state in the 72-year national battle to achieve, "Votes for Women." This project will culminate in an online resource linking all of these sites on a national map that will help teach the public about historic sites where women lived, worked, and advocated for suffrage to improve their communities, states, and the nation. Through the digital map, the complete story of the enfranchisement of over half of the nation's population can finally be told. Information will also include sites related to those who opposed suffrage for twelve states, ten of which were south of the Mason-Dixon line, which did not ratify the suffrage amendment until after August 1920.

In 2014 NCWHS Board Members Jan Dilg and Marsha Weinstein assumed leadership of the Committee with the following goals: continue outreach to connect NCWHS and the Heritage Trails Committee with representatives from each state; continue to direct existing sites/trails/tours to NCWHS and list them on the NCWHS Google trails map; find ways to situate the suffrage campaign in the larger struggle beginning with the Declaration of Sentiments in 1848; and explore new media formats that could be useful and affordable for making sites/trails/tours accessible on electronic and mobile devices.

At the American Association of State and Local History (AASLH) Annual Conference that was held in Louisville, KY, in September, 2015, the Trails Committee partnered with the (AASLH) Women's Affinity Group, along with the League of Women Voters of Louisville to sponsor a tour of Louisville suffrage-related sites. A brainstorming session was also held on developing plans and identifying suffrage historic sites to celebrate the centennial of women's suffrage in local communities. With the woman's suffrage story, we have the opportunity to literally connect the historical dots from site to site, building to building, state to state to show how history is made and social change occurs.

If you are interested in the learning more about the work of the Heritage Trails Committee, or know someone who could serve as a representative of your state, please contact us at contact@ncwhs.org.

National Collaborative for Women's History Sites

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