

REVEALING WOMEN'S HISTORY:



Best Practices at Historic Sites



Featuring Five Case Studies

Edited by
Heather A. Huyck & Peg Strobel

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National Collaborative for Women's History Sites



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Edited by Heather Huyck and Peg Strobel

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NCWHS
c/o Grace Hudson Museum
431 South Main Street
Ukiah, CA 95482
womenshistorysites@gmail.com

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Introduction

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, the National Collaborative for Women's History Sites (NCWHS), in partnership with the National Park Service Northeast Region, asked historic sites to nominate themselves as Best Practice Sites — those that exemplify ways to best preserve and interpret the past of half the human race: women and girls. Actually, *every* historic site is a women's history one, although too often people still don't recognize that. The NCWHS seeks to make visible the female part of humankind's history, or as historian Gerda Lerner once said, "the majority finds its past." We received numerous nominations and carefully read and evaluated every one of them. Working with a team of advisors, we winnowed the list to five, focusing in particular on those not seen primarily as "women's history sites." Experts visited each of the five, gathered information, evaluated each site using nine elements, and conducted extensive interviews with their staffs. Finally, we worked to identify practical "lessons" applicable elsewhere.

We sought a variety of historic sites in terms of geography, period, public/private governance, and size. The five case studies range from the large, revolutionary and early nation Independence National Historical Park; to Massachusetts's Otis House; to President Andrew Jackson's home, The Hermitage; to Sharlot Hall Museum in territorial Arizona; to recent Little Rock Central High School National Historical Site. We have also spotlighted several quality female-focused sites: the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum in Chicago, Illinois; the Georgia O'Keeffe Home and Studio in Abiquiu, New Mexico; and Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site in Hyde Park, NY. To those historic sites not included here: we look forward to highlighting *you* (!) soon.

Too many historic sites have not adequately researched, preserved, and interpreted women's history in its richness. The answer lies in asking deceptively simple questions: "What women were present? What women were affected by events/people at this site? How did women affect this site? How did they perceive it?" Such questions help us "see" women too long invisible — women in general, but especially women of color or women from lower socio-economic groups. Yet it took every one of us to make this country the amazing place it is. We betray Americans of the past and we betray ourselves when we do not tell the whole story — the one that includes every one of us. I once worked with a site that solely wanted to tell its story as "104 men and boys." I found that appalling . . . as bad as only telling the story of "104 women and girls" when men were also part of the story.

Historic sites often say they want more visitors as they compete with many other attractions (including staying on the sofa). Because women often plan family trips, finding ways to attract more women is key to increasing visitation. When people see themselves in history, they are more likely to go willingly and not be dragged along. As a child, I well remember

being taken to numerous battlefields, puzzled by what such places had to do with me. Only later did I understand that their fighting had meaning for us all. Knowing that the stories of all sites include females helps all of us – women and men, girls and boys – connect to these places.

Every time we think we know all that women did, we find they did something more, that they did something else, and that they were actually in more places. Our image of the Alamo comes from movies, not from reality (there were women and girls there as well as Davy Crockett).



All of us come from families, which by definition include women (mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, aunts, grandmothers, etc.). Many of us are fortunate enough to have people in our lives sometimes even

closer than our biological families. Our predecessors had similar relationships. Think of the Little Rock Nine and the deep relationships forged among them, or the women boarders in Otis House in Boston, or the many enslaved people living at The Hermitage who had their own lives, personalities and community apart from their white owners. They became family too.

And what have we learned? That including women in each and every tour works better than segregating them on tours labeled “women’s history.” That we must recognize the wondrous complexity and contradictions of women’s lives. That by offering the *Real Thing*, we encourage people of all ages to make real intellectual and emotional connections with our sites, in both past and present. Come with us and help us bring all these amazing women alive again.

The National Collaborative for Women’s History Sites is committed to working with historic sites to increase awareness of the history women caused, experienced, and lived through – in all its diverse forms. We do this through research, preservation, and interpretation; through training, website publishing, and conference presentations; as historians, archeologists, curators, managers, archivists, and architects. We work closely with various sites and organizations, especially the National Park Service with its parks, National Historic Sites, National Historic Landmarks, National Register of Historic Places, and National Heritage Areas. We look forward to working closely with *you*.

Cheers!
Heather Huyck
www.ncwhs.org
May 1, 2011



Independence Hall is a World Heritage Site, reflecting its importance as an icon of freedom and human rights. Tourists come from around the globe to learn about the American Revolution and the founding of a new nation. With tourist expectations focused on the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, it is a challenge to work in women's history within these walls. Photograph by Dan Smith.

Independence National Historical Park

Dawn C. Adiletta

INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK (NHP) covers over fifty-four acres in the heart of Philadelphia, once the largest city and the early nation's capital. It comprises more than twenty-five individual sites, ranging from historic houses and public buildings to modern exhibition facilities, cemeteries, gardens, houses of worship, and public art. Accredited by the American Association of Museums, the park covers colonial to present history. Specifically, the park preserves the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall, where the American patriots negotiated and wrote the founding documents of the United States of America. Preserved and managed by the National Park Service, the park also partners with private nonprofits.

Independence National Historical Park

In its entirety, Independence NHP is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Underground Railroad Network to Freedom; seven structures are National Historic Landmarks primarily reflecting the early nation. One building, Independence Hall, is a World Heritage Site. Here, founders wrote the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution. The early U.S. Congress met here, and the U.S. Supreme Court as well.

The mission of Independence NHP is to preserve “certain historical structures and properties of outstanding national significance . . . associated with the American Revolution and the founding and growth of the United States. . . .” Independence NHP further defines its mission to preserve “its stories, buildings and artifacts as a source of inspiration for visitors to learn more about the ideas and ideals that led to the American Revolution and the founding and growth of the United States.”¹ As steward of such icons, Independence NHP represents freedom and democracy for U.S. citizens and international visitors alike.

The site abounds with women's history. Early Quakers settled there, bringing with them surprising ideas of equality for women. Eighteenth-century Philadelphia women operated businesses from print shops and taverns to boarding houses and upholstery shops. As residents of the city and the newly forming nation, women patriots wrote public arguments in



Just as views of Independence Hall have changed over time (at one time the building was held in such low regard it was nearly demolished), so too have ideas about interpretation, so that women's stories are now seen as part of the complex tale of our nation's founding. “Independence Hall in Philadelphia,” Ferdinand Richardt, ca. 1858-63, Courtesy of The White House Historical Association (White House Collection).

favor of declaring independence from Britain while women loyalists welcomed the occupying British Army. Philadelphia women were among the first in colonial America to form Ladies Associations offering organized support for the Revolution.

After the Revolution, Philadelphia became the new nation's capital, as women welcomed George and Martha Washington (who arrived with their slaves) and John and Abigail Adams to the first President's House. Martha Washington and Abigail Adams began creating roles and expectations for succeeding First Ladies. Independence NHP's built landscape reflects this early national period with the Todd House, where the vivacious future first lady, Dolley Todd [Madison], resided with her first husband John Todd. Nearby, Congressional chaplain Bishop William White lived with his family and servants. Independence preserves parts of the lively city that shaped the young nation.

In the nineteenth century, women antislavery advocates and women's rights activists worked here.

In the nineteenth century, women antislavery advocates and women's rights activists worked here. In 1876, after being ejected from the official Centennial Celebration, Susan B. Anthony read the Declaration of Women's Rights in Independence Square.

Omitting women's history from this site would leave its story remarkably incomplete. Fortunately, Independence NHP has incorporated women's history into its interpretation for some time, and it continues to explore the best ways to expand the historical visibility of women and other groups not always included in history.

Themes of Site/Women's History Themes

In 2007, as a result of strategic planning intended to enhance the visitor experience by connecting the past to the present and increasing the inclusiveness of its interpretation, Independence NHP published its Long Range Interpretive Plan. Since then, all tours focus on one of four themes:

What Was Revolutionary about the American Revolution?

Places the American Revolution, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution within the political, economic, and social context of the eighteenth-century Age of Enlightenment.

Liberty: The Promises and the Paradoxes

Explores theories of liberty and democracy, the reality of legal enslavement, and limited citizenship.

E Pluribus Unum: Out of Many One

Examines cultural, political, racial, and religious diversity in the United States and how diversity was viewed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Benjamin Franklin: The Relevant Revolutionary

Presents Franklin, and the conflicts between his personal and political ideals and practices, as the human face of the Enlightenment.

Although no single theme focuses specifically on women's history, each one provides chances to include women's history within any tour. As discussed in more detail below, these opportunities have been well developed and implemented in most instances. In a few cases, however, that potential has not yet been achieved.



Martha and George Washington brought slaves to the new nation's capitol. The stories live on at the President's House and the Germantown White House. Martha Dandridge Custis (Mrs. George) Washington by Charles Willson Peale, from life, 1795. Courtesy of Independence National Historical Park.

Tangible Resources

The most obvious of Independence NHP's tangible resources is its extraordinary collection of buildings. The park's architectural richness provides an enviable backdrop for telling the stories of the Revolution and expanding definitions of democracy.

In addition, Independence NHP cares for almost three million artifacts dating from the seventeenth through the twenty-first centuries. The collections are comprised of fine and decorative arts, architectural and archeological remnants, and military and personal memorabilia. Library and archival materials include 90,000 photographic images and 20,000 maps, plans, and drawings documenting restorations. The public has access to the library and archives and to an online catalogue.

Such repositories are potentially rich in unexplored women's history resources, especially the decorative arts collections and the note card file of area individuals, sites, and events from 1730-1950, and the Society Hill and Old City insurance surveys from 1752 to post-Civil War.

Interpretive Resources

Independence NHP offers its staff and visitors a wide range of interpretive resources. Staff receive training and design their own tour outlines. Both staff and tours are reviewed annually. In addition to using the library and archival materials, staff are encouraged to attend special programs such as public lectures or Teacher's Institute training sessions. All the rangers interviewed were personally as well as professionally motivated to continue their research and education, and they wished for more research time.

Visitor resource options address different learning styles. Visitors are welcomed with two introductory films at the visitor center and an additional film at the Declaration House, where Thomas Jefferson lived while he wrote the Declaration of Independence. The museum shops sell relevant scholarly publications, children's historical games and books, and general audience pamphlets and handbooks. Traditional exhibits provide visual and textual information. Visitors seeking access to Independence Hall receive maps for self-guided tours. Rangers lead guided tours for groups of various sizes. Independence NHP partner Historic Philadelphia, Inc. (HPI) places costumed interpreters throughout the park.

Teachers' Institutes, created in collaboration with teachers in Philadelphia, provide educational resources for elementary and secondary school teachers. Lesson plans and curricula are posted on the Independence NHP web site.

Interpretive Programs

The park's scale and resources afford rich and varied interpretive experiences. Close to four million people visited in 2010. A year-round Independence NHP staff of more than 200, plus 100 seasonal employees and up to 200 volunteers, combine to meet and exceed visitors' expectations. Additional staff employed by HPI and other partners supplement the Independence NHP experience.

Visitors may choose ranger-led tours, audio-enriched tours, or self-guided tours with cell phone and Smartphone enhancements. Demonstrations, films, and interactive exhibits further enrich visitation. Some sites require advance ticketing for designated times, and access to the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall is regulated by security checks. Such controls help ensure a quality experience, but they limit numbers.

In addition to welcoming traditional site visitors, Independence NHP hosts multidisciplinary Teacher's Institutes and workshops that permit teachers to explore Independence NHP collections, meet prominent scholars, and discover new ways to inspire their students. As a special Women's History Month event, Independence NHP offers a presentation and tour

Independence National Historical Park



Women as mothers, wives, artists, writers, business owners, inventors, and rights advocates have all shaped our history; tourists connect to their stories through tangible links to the past.
Courtesy of the National Park Service.

exploring various nineteenth-century women's rights activists' connections to eighteenth-century revolutionaries.

Although women's history is not a specific theme, most sites include it. The **Franklin Court Printing Office and Bindery** and the **Liberty Bell** (discussed under Lessons Learned) are two examples of how Independence NHP can shine at including women's history in areas not traditionally considered women's history sites. The Franklin Printing Office interprets the importance of printers and newspapers to the successful distribution of revolutionary ideas, political arguments, and war news. Women, as writers as well as print shop owners and partners, were integral to these civic arguments. The Printing Office prints, displays as interpretive tools, and sells many documents from the Revolutionary period, including reproductions of the Declaration of Independence, broadsides soliciting women's support of boycotts, women's political editorials, and works by early women's rights activist Judith Sargent Murray and enslaved African American poet Phillis Wheatley. Visitors can purchase a copy of Abigail Adams' letter to her husband to "remember the ladies" while forming the new government. Information about Mary Katherine Goddard, who ran her brother's Philadelphia print shop from 1768-74 before opening her own shop in Baltimore, may be part of the general tour. Rather than segregate women's involvement in the printing business, the Franklin Printing Office has integrated it into the larger theme of the importance of eighteenth-century printers as the major form of public information. In a courtyard behind the Printing Office and Bindery stood Benjamin and Deborah Franklin's mansion, now marked by steel girders sketching the open frame of a "ghost" house. The Franklins' correspondence reveals the crucial role Deborah Franklin, like other war-time wives, played as

“deputy husband” in overseeing the house construction and running the entire household during Benjamin Franklin’s prolonged absences in Europe. Her role is included in the site’s interpretation and highlighted in introductory exhibits.

Although Independence NHP primarily documents middling and elite activities, the park also shows the lives of hired servants and enslaved girls and women. The Washington family slaves are interpreted at the President’s House (see below). Bishop White’s house features both his family’s and servants’ living and working spaces; his cook, Mrs. Boggs, worked in the cellar kitchen.

Challenges & Reactions to Women’s History

Current Independence NHP staff acknowledged no staff resistance or negative response from visitors regarding including women’s history. Other indications suggest an initial reluctance to change old interpretive patterns but also illustrate how effectively Independence NHP has addressed and continues to address such obstacles. According to its self-analysis, Independence NHP considers its historic house sites as the easiest places to include women’s history and Independence Hall as the most difficult.

Several factors contribute to this conclusion: women are more obvious participants in domestic history, and their interpreted presence is anticipated and accepted. In civic spaces, however, specifically Independence Hall, visitors’ expectations and rangers’ tours understandably concentrate on the creation of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, activities from which women were excluded by cultural norms. Nonetheless, as historian Mary Rothschild argued, “Abigail [Adams] enabled John [Adams] to follow his avocation and help realize their joint dream of declaring independence and forming a new nation. In a time when married women lacked many legal rights, Abigail made the money that allowed John to continue in politics.”² Given the immeasurable effect this space has had on women’s as well as men’s lives, the telling of women’s history here becomes not only appropriate but imperative.

The Independence Hall experience illustrates how much the success of Independence NHP institutional efforts to include women’s history depends on the cooperation and knowledge of each individual ranger who provides tours and programs. As noted, rangers design their own tour outlines. Such individualized tours reward repeat visitors with different viewpoints, keep the staff fresh, and provide an opportunity to incorporate new research. Outlines may focus on a variety of specific issues ranging from architectural, political, social, women’s, or minority history, providing the tour connects to one of the four major themes listed in the Long Range Interpretive Plan referenced above. All of the tour outlines are reviewed and subject to approval. But since the minimum interpretive *requirements* do not specify that

Independence National Historical Park



The Liberty Bell has become an icon known around the world and a symbol for causes such as antislavery and women's rights. Photo at right of Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell by Robin Miller, 2003. Courtesy of Independence National Historical Park.

women (or racial/ethnic minority) roles be included, tours focusing on architecture or even political history can easily omit women's historical contributions and experiences — as well as the crucial effects the events that happened here had on women's lives.

Independence Hall tour logistics, however, are probably more limiting than are individual rangers' interests. Tours that begin every fifteen minutes and require moving up to seventy-five people through several spaces within as little as thirty minutes curtail the amount of time rangers truly have to spend with visitors. This reality, coupled with visitors' focus on the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, make Independence Hall an interpretive challenge for including women's history. Yet, most rangers adhere to current museum best practices and query visitors instead of lecturing. By asking questions about whose voices were involved in the broader political debate, or about groups excluded by the original intent of the U.S. founding documents, rangers enable visitors to consider the changing definitions of liberty and so succinctly include the often overlooked involvement of diverse groups in the formation of the U.S. founding documents.

Experiences at the **Dolley Todd House** reveal not only initial visitor resistance to women's history but also the park's skill at addressing the issue. Dolley Payne Todd was a vibrant and socially and politically adept woman whose second husband was future president James Madison. Seeking more visibility for women's history, Independence NHP offered distinct women's history tours at the Todd House. Visitors, however, routinely opted for the "regular tour," fearing they would not receive a complete picture of the historical significance of the house and its residents if the tour centered on women. Rather than eliminate women's history, staff combined elements of the different tours to create a program that seamlessly includes women within the broader context of the house story. Since the revisions, the Todd House has been frequently cited by staff, former visitors, and local residents as a successful example of making historic women more visible.

Two new exhibits have further expanded women's historic visibility. *The President's House – Freedom and Slavery in Making a New Nation* opened in December 2010. The Independence NHP website calls the President's House a "joint initiative between Independence National Historic Park and the City of Philadelphia." Located on Market and 6th Streets in front of the Liberty Bell exhibit and across the street from Independence Visitor Center, the President's House marks the location of the official executive mansion of Washington and Adams.

The **President's House** is an open-air installation, comparable to that at the Franklin House. Here, however, instead of steel post and beams creating a "ghost" house, brick half-walls mark the outline of the original dwelling, kitchen, and quarters for the nine enslaved people who made up a significant portion of the Washington household. A glass window allows visitors to see the archeological evidence for the site's footprint. Thanks to new text panels, video screens, and updated ranger tours, a more inclusive and complete story of all of the residents of this house, male and female, black and white, free and enslaved is portrayed. Narrative from the perspective of enslaved men and women provides a new and needed voice, and the memorial for all those enslaved affords an opportunity for reflection.



The Todd House is located within the park, interpreting the story of Philadelphia's eighteenth-century middle class – as well as highlighting the early life of widow Mrs. Dolley Payne Todd, who would go on to become one of the nation's most beloved First Ladies as wife of James Madison, fourth president of the United States. From an original picture by Gilbert Stuart. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Independence National Historical Park

Women's roles in perpetuating slavery are referenced through Martha Washington's so-called "dower slaves," part of the wealth she brought to her marriage. Women's roles in the early antislavery movement are acknowledged through Abigail Adams' private statements against slavery.

The **Germantown White House**, once the Deshler-Morris House, served as a part-time residence of George and Martha Washington and their household. Located in the northwest section of Philadelphia originally on the outskirts of the city, this rented house provided relief from the summer heat of the city and refuge from yellow fever epidemics. The site interprets the story of the first president from his perspective as well as the viewpoints of his wife Martha Washington, granddaughter Nellie Park Custis, and enslaved African woman Oney Judge, who later freed herself.



Women are discovered as part of the interpretation at President's House, where visitors see and hear the story of Martha Washington's slave and personal servant Oney Judge, who escaped to New Hampshire in 1796, and at the Franklin Court Printing Office, where rangers demonstrate eighteenth-century printing techniques. Seen here, a ranger displays a "just off the press" broadside created by noted printer, publisher and postmistress Mary Katharine Goddard, who was the first to include the signers' names on the Declaration of Independence. Courtesy of the National Park Service.

In the midst of these many strengths, Independence NHP's alliance with Historic Philadelphia, Inc., sometimes presents a challenge. Costumed actors and interpreters can bring vibrancy to teaching history and create an approachable connection to the past. But dressed in period clothing, their strong visual appeal to visitors should hold them to a high standard of accuracy in dress and interpretive discussions. The less rigorous training provided by HPI can dilute the positive Independence NHP impact. One actor, for example,

stationed to play a hammered dulcimer and discuss the role of music could not answer basic questions about eighteenth-century women and music. Instead, in an attempt to continue to engage visitors, he discussed twenty-first-century practices, missing an opportunity to talk about gender roles and the evolving definitions of class and gentility.

Lessons Learned & Transferable to Other Sites

The Independence NHP experience illustrates that teaching women's history is best done as part of a complete story and not in isolation. Often it takes a changed attitude and thoughtful additions and restatements to incorporate women's history into the larger story.

- Visitors to the Todd House embraced women's history when it was **presented as a component of the larger story**, suggesting that visitors to other parts of Independence NHP would do likewise.
- The Liberty Bell exhibit is **an excellent example of integrating women's history**. Ironically, the exhibit is slated for revision because its reliance on text panels is no longer considered a best practice. After describing the creation, installation, and damage to the bell, the exhibit then discusses how the bell became an icon of liberty. Beginning with early nineteenth-century antislavery and women's suffrage groups, images of the Liberty Bell symbolically emphasized both the revolutionary aspects of their respective causes and their connection to natural rights for all people. In this exhibit, especially, women's voices did not seem forced or artificially added in order to be represented.
- It is critically important that **all those who represent the site support institutional policies**. HPI partners with incomplete training or reluctant rangers have a more direct impact on visitor experience than glossy policy statements. Helping all staff and affiliates learn how to accurately include women and minorities in their interpretation without reducing the "real" history is essential.

Organizational Structure & Administrative Resources

As a unit of the National Park Service, Independence NHP relies primarily on paid employees, although it has volunteer internships. Like similar agencies, the management is hierarchical, yet with an apparent ease and comfort of communication between administrative levels. New ideas as well as criticisms have been welcomed from staff and the public, as shown in the now regular Women's History Month presentations and interpreta-

Independence National Historical Park

tion at the President's House. Both senior staff and interpretive rangers are clearly committed to telling all parts of the nation's freedom story.

Because Independence NHP is managed by the National Park Service, an agency within the Department of the Interior, the park receives most of its annual funding from the federal government. But it also partners with more than forty other local private nonprofits. Many of the buildings that are part of Independence NHP are actually owned by the city of Philadelphia or separate nonprofits. The bookstore and visitor center are operated by nonprofit partners, as is the National Constitution Center. Historic Philadelphia, Inc. manages bus tours, horse-drawn carriage rides, and the Betsy Ross House, and it provides costumed actors to augment the ranger experience. HPI-costumed actors interact with the public on the streets and within the modern public buildings. Each of these organizations contributes valuable resources to the partnerships.

Research & Preservation Opportunities

The reality of overseeing nearly two dozen eighteenth-century buildings presents continuing preservation and interpretive opportunities (and challenges) as seen by the President's House and the Germantown White House. Independence NHP successes illustrate that all of its historic sites are women's history sites and can be inclusively interpreted. New perspectives on previously studied materials and Independence NHP commitment to including women of all races and classes as well as minority history into its public programming will continue to expand Independence NHP interpretation and the public's understanding of the evolution of democracy.

Independence National Historical Park shows the varieties of women's history available and continues to find ways of illustrating a diversity of roles and behaviors across social, racial, and gender lines.

Independence National Historical Park

143 S. Third Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106
800-537-7676
www.nps.gov/inde

¹ Independence National Historical Park Long-Range Interpretive Plan (2007), p. 7, http://www.nps.gov/inde/parkmgmt/upload/LRIP-2110_INDELRIIP_Rev12-13-07.pdf, accessed 21 April 2011.

² Mary Logan Rothschild, "Placing Women in the Past," *CRM* 20:3 (1997); <http://crm.cr.nps.gov/archive/20-3/20-3-26.pdf>, accessed 7 April 2011.

Spotlight on Revealing Women's History



La Posada, a hotel in Winslow, was designed in 1929 by Mary Jane Colter, who also designed Hopi House and Bright Angel Lodge in Grand Canyon National Park. Courtesy of La Posada.

Arizona Women's Heritage Trail, AZ

The Arizona Women's Heritage Trail (AWHT) links women's history with historic sites throughout this large, southwestern state. The project informs the general public about women's roles and contributions in building communities, political life, arts and architecture, movements for reform, work, education, and historical preservation. Interpretive projects include a web exhibit, walking tours in cities, driving tours, a statewide traveling exhibit, speakers' bureau, and bus tours.

A complex structure ensures quality, commitment from diverse stakeholders, and varied funding sources. Three boards govern the development of the trail: a Coordinating Council, a Researchers and Scholars Board, and an Advisory Board.

Mary Jane Colter worked for the Fred Harvey Company, designing buildings at the Grand Canyon National Park and hotels throughout the Southwest. She designed La Posada in Spanish Colonial Revival style, imagining the building and grounds as a sprawling ranch house that could have been found in the Southwest when it was part of Mexico.

Carmen Soto de Vasquez founded Teatro Carmen, a Spanish-language theater in Tucson, from 1914 to 1926. It became a point of pride for the Mexican and Mexican American population of Tucson, featuring excellent musicals, melodramas, and opera. Vasquez attracted theater troupes and musicians from throughout the Southwest and Mexico to perform.

www.womensheritagetrail.org



The AWHT Tucson Walking Tour in Women's History features Teatro Carmen, located downtown in Barrio Viejo. Courtesy of Mary Melcher, AWHT Historian.

Spotlight on Revealing Women's History



The courtyard of Prowers House, the 1867 home of John and Amache Ochinee Prowers, faced east toward the sunrise, Cheyenne style. Courtesy of Boggsville Historic Site.

Boggsville Historic Site, Las Animas, CO

Boggsville Historic Site, which interprets a stretch of the Santa Fe trail running through Bent County in southeastern Colorado, has benefited from the archeological research of Dr. Bonnie J. Clark, who included gender in her research plan. Clark's brochure, "Women of Boggsville," corrects the commonly held male-centric view of the development of western towns.

Boggsville reflects the central role Hispanic and Native American women played in the transmission of land and culture in the nineteenth-century West. Amache Ochinee Prowers was the daughter of a Cheyenne leader and wife of John Prowers, one of the male principals at Boggsville. The archeology of Boggsville revealed the many ways she retained Cheyenne traditions, such as the use of stone tools and architecture oriented to the cardinal directions.

The site also exemplifies how marriage gave Anglo men access to western land at a time when married women in the U.S. typically could not own land. Boggsville is located on land owned by Rumalda Jaramillo Luna, the wife of Thomas Boggs. The Jaramillos of Taos, New Mexico, were politically and economically influential. Five women in the family lived at Boggsville, including Rumalda's aunt Josefa Jaramillo, a wife of Kit Carson. Each woman claimed portions of the four million acre Vigil and St. Vrain Mexican land grant of 1843.



Although a website identifies Boggsville as the "first white non-military outpost in this wild country," Hispanic and Native women were critical to settlement, landownership, and cultural patterns. Here, Josefa Jaramillo Carson holds Kit Carson Jr., ca. 1860. Courtesy of the Kit Carson Historic Museum.



Historic sites often find it difficult to consider changing the way things have always been done, but at Historic New England, careful research and consideration resulted in a highly successful change in interpretation that increases relevance and tells a more inclusive story of Boston's history. Woodcut of Otis House, Boston, Mass., frontispiece for *The Ladies Medical Oracle or Mrs. Mott's Advice to Young Females, Wives, and Mothers*, Boston, 1834. Courtesy of Historic New England.

Otis House

Ellen Cronin

OTIS HOUSE, a National Historic Landmark, is a meticulously restored, 1786 Federal style mansion that the noted architect Charles Bulfinch built for Harrison Gray Otis and Sally Foster Otis. Located at the foot of Beacon Hill in a formerly prestigious residential neighborhood known as Bowdoin Square, the building, along with its environs, underwent great changes in use and occupancy before the Society for the Preservation for New England Antiquities (now called Historic New England) purchased it in 1916. Today, interpretation reflects the evolution of Otis House from post-Revolution prosperity through industrialization and immigration of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The change in social mores and economic status of Otis House inhabitants reflects the rapid transformation in Boston with the growth of industry, commerce, and population. The inha-

Otis House

bitants changed from an elite, Federal era family with multiple servants; through a series of commercial entrepreneurs, including operators of a private hospital and an upper-middle-class “proper” boarding house with separate family apartments, a common parlor, and a dining room serving three meals a day; to its final inhabitants, working-class lodgers who rented rooms.



Today, the story of the Otis House merely begins with that of the Otis family during the Federal era (1796-1802). Miniature of Sally Foster (Mrs. Harrison Gray) Otis by Edward Greene Malbone. Watercolor on ivory. Gift of Miss Sophia H. Ritchie. Accession number: 1947.783. Photograph by David Bohl. Courtesy of Historic New England.

Harrison Gray Otis was a lawyer, politician, and real estate speculator, one of the “founders” of Beacon Hill, a residential area on a rise of land overlooking the Boston Common. Otis built the house for his family but also to impress potential buyers of available land in the area, much of which he owned. As planned, the elegant houses of Beacon Hill became the homes of the Boston elite, many of whom had become very wealthy with the China trade.

When the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities first opened the house to the public in 1916, they named it the Harrison Gray Otis Museum and emphasized the life of Harrison, leaving out its other inhabitants. The current interpretation, developed a decade ago despite concerns of reluctant board members, also includes the story of Harrison’s wife, **Sally Foster Otis**, servants of the Otis family, and several other residents in a “march through time” continuing into the twentieth century. Women’s stories emerge naturally, and in the end they have great impact.

In the early nineteenth century, owners Dr. Richard and Mrs. Elizabeth Mott ran a hospital with their associate Harriot Kezia Hunt, a crusader for women’s rights and the personal physician of the abolitionist Grimke sisters. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Williams sisters set up a business, an upper-middle-class boarding house, dividing the lovely, spacious Federal style rooms into apartments. Finally, in the latter part of the 1800s, lodging house landlords divided the house into separate rooms for rental to industrial workers.

The new interpretation reflects the economic and social history of the changes in this Boston neighborhood over a period of 120 years. And, this new interpretation resulted in a new name for the museum. In 2002, Historic New England changed the museum name from Harrison Gray Otis House to Otis House.

Themes of Site/Women's History Themes

The major themes of tours of both the house and Beacon Hill neighborhood are the social and economic history of the inhabitants. The guides tell the story of Otis House by tracing the evolution of the residence from post-Revolutionary prosperity through industrialization and immigration of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Visitors learn about the lives of inhabitants of varied social positions through time as they pass through rooms furnished to depict each of four periods. Most of the rooms interpret the Federal period of the Otis family, including the warming kitchen that helps illustrate the story of the servants. One upstairs room depicts the 1830s and 1840s conversion to a hospital, and another room tells the story of a "boarder" during the 1850s and 1860s. The Saturday walking tours begin with a tour of Otis House and then trace a path through both sides of Beacon Hill, noting the changes in the social and economic status of the inhabitants through two centuries.

***Women's stories
emerge naturally,
and in the end they
have great impact.***

1796–1802: The Otis Family

The themes of the interpretation of this period are based on the lives and experiences of the women and servants who lived there, the rhythms of daily life in turn-of-the-century Boston. Sally Foster Otis was an upper-class political wife whose husband, Harrison Gray Otis, was absent for great periods of time while serving in the U.S. Congress and Senate. Tours illustrate the daunting challenges of singly running a large household with several servants while simultaneously handling her absent husband's real estate business; the interdependence of elites and the people who worked for them; the hardships of eighteenth-century pregnancy, childbirth, and infant care; and the expectations that an elite mother both provide rigorous early childhood education and shoulder heavy social obligations. Unfortunately, Sally Otis' papers were destroyed, and documentation for her life must be taken from her husband's carefully preserved letters to her and from the diaries and letters of several other comparable Boston women.

Of particular note is the interpretation of Sally Otis' exquisitely appointed bedroom. Here she gave birth to two children and nurtured their four siblings. It was also the room where she taught her young children and occasionally received visitors. Regular house tours and a special "Ladies of the House" tour emphasize Harrison's responses to Sally's letters that described the harsh conditions of pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing of infants during this time. In that patriarchal society, Sally exerted her independence when she acted against Harrison's wishes to hire a wet nurse. She did not want to be separated from her child, who would have lived in the wet nurse's home.

Otis House



Sally Otis's bedroom was, in many ways, central to her life, as a place where she nurtured and taught her children and occasionally received visitors. Today the room provides a setting for understanding the period's patriarchal society and harsh realities of pregnancy and childbirth. Sally Otis's bedchamber, as reinterpreted in 2002, Otis House, Boston, Mass. Photograph by David Carmack. Courtesy of Historic New England.

Documentation for the servants' lives comes mainly from Harrison's letters to Sally and from Boston City Directories and Tax Assessor records. The directories list names of adult male servants only. Harrison's letters to Sally contain names and advice on hiring and managing female servants. In addition, researchers used diaries and letters of Boston women of comparable elite status to understand the life experiences of these hard-working servants.

1833-1847: Dr. Richard and Mrs. Elizabeth Mott and Harriot Kezia Hunt

The stories of the lives of two remarkable women tenants of Otis House in this era, Elizabeth Mott and Harriot Kezia Hunt, bring out many themes: successful female entrepreneurship, women physicians' development of common sense methods for treating women's medical needs, the role of older women as mentors, eighteenth-century challenges to women's rights for education (especially in medical school), and women as advocates for female rights and public health.

In 1822, Otis House was divided in half and sold. Eleven years later, a husband and wife rented the western half of the house for their private hospital. One of the upstairs bedrooms serves as exhibit space interpreting this period. Dr. Richard Mott, a medical school graduate, saw male patients. Elizabeth Mott, who had no medical degree, treated women and children while practicing "alternative medicine" involving diet, herbal baths, massage, and rest. One of the Motts' protégés, Harriot Kezia Hunt, later became a noted lecturer on women's suffrage, abolition, and sanitary reform and a staunch advocate for the right of women to learn and practice medicine. Prevented by prejudice from studying at Harvard Medical College, Hunt received an honorary medical degree from the Female Medical College of Philadelphia in recognition of her pioneering work for women in medicine. The gallery interpreting this era displays the accomplishments of Mott and Hunt through a substantial collection of their photographs, drawings, and writings.

1854-1864: Boarding House Maintained by the Williams Sisters

In 1854, the two parts of Otis House were reunited and rented to the Williams sisters. The Bowdoin Square area had become commercial and was no longer the preferred location for wealthy homeowners. As Boston experienced industrial growth, newly arrived workers needed affordable, temporary housing. Many of the larger, older houses, like Otis House, were converted into boarding houses. In 1854, the Misses Williams, four unmarried sisters, leased the entire house and ran an upscale "genteel" boarding house.

The Williamses established one of the few businesses acceptable for nineteenth-century white women.

The overriding theme of the boarding house era is the owners' attempt to provide new urban migrants a homelike atmosphere with private bedrooms and a common dining room and parlor. Using entrepreneurial skills, including astute marketing, women developed boarding houses that maintained a reputable atmosphere. With a combination of business acumen and an understanding of the strict Victorian middle-class social mores, the Williamses established one of the few businesses acceptable for nineteenth-century white women. They chose Otis House, with its appealing upper-class origins, and set about attracting "the better sort." "Respectability," "gentility," and "a family-like atmosphere" successfully attracted middle-class families, married couples, and single men. Single women (like themselves) were un-

Otis House

welcome, since mixing single men and single women in the same establishment was considered “promiscuous.” One Otis House bedroom is furnished as the quarters of a single male boarder of the time. The stark contrast in period furniture quality and style reflects the changing occupants, neighborhood, and city during the later nineteenth century.



These before and after images demonstrate the changing fortunes of Otis House, from richly appointed home for an upper-class family to a “family” of unrelated boarders who rented modestly appointed rooms in the house and shared a common dining room and parlor. Back bedroom, (left) before and (right) after reinterpretation in 2002. Photo at left by David Bohl. Photo at right by David Carmack. Courtesy of Historic New England.

1900–1916: “Unsupervised” Rooming House

Again, reflecting the social changes taking place in Boston with a great influx of working-class immigrants, Otis House changed from a boarding house to a lodging house, where small rooms were rented out but no meals served. “Unsupervised” refers to the availability of rooms to both single men and single women. The house remained as such until 1916, when the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities purchased it. The interpretation of the rooming house era is planned when the third-floor bedrooms will become part of the museum tours.

Tangible Resources

The Federal style, brick Otis House mansion is three stories high. It lacks its original basement because the house was moved back forty-two feet to widen Cambridge Street in the 1920s. The original kitchen was in the basement, separating the servants’ work area from the main household.

The first floor consists of a side garden entrance with a small reception area and desk. It is adjoined by the original pantry, which serves as a viewing room for an introductory slide presentation. Also, on the first floor is the warming kitchen, where the servants' life stories are told. School groups also use this space for hands-on projects. Exposed walls show the original placement of a fireplace and bake oven.

The entire first floor and half of the second contain galleries to interpret life during the residence of the Otis family. Historic New England has restored Otis House with painstaking accuracy, including chemical analysis of original paint colors and reproduction of the original wallpapers. Drawing on the vast collections of Historic New England, the first-floor center hall, stairway, parlor, office-study, dining room, and the second-floor drawing room and Sally Otis's bedroom are all furnished with original and period pieces.

Two bedrooms on the second floor interpret the Mott period and the boarding house period with the Williams sisters as proprietors. The third floor of the main house is now used as office space for Historic New England. A three-story addition in the rear of the original building houses more office space, the archives, and the bookstore.

Interpretive Resources

The web sites of Historic New England and Otis House contain extensive information. An introductory slideshow is available to visitors with several pamphlets published by Historic New England and the House Museum Alliance of Downtown Boston. The library and archives of Historic New England are in the basement of the new addition with a full-time staff available for research by appointment. The research done by a Historic New England committee of experts provides extensive resources. Examples are a fully documented treatise on the lives of Sally Otis and the domestic servants during the Federal period and a study of genteel boarding houses in nineteenth-century Boston.

The Museum Store is stocked with books on New England home life, architecture, furniture, and wallpaper, many of which are published by Historic New England. Several books on Beacon Hill, most with text and photographs of Otis House, and a small supply of prints, cards, magnets, and children's books on architecture and Boston history are for sale.

Interpretive Programs

The museum is open from Wednesday through Sunday from 11:00 to 4:30. The staff relies on guided tours as the best way to interpret the history of the house. They give tours year round, every half hour, on demand. Guides conduct walking tours each Saturday from April through October that begin with a tour of the house and follow with a walk through Beacon

Hill that includes women and emphasizes social history. The Education Program includes a yearly visit to Otis House by every fifth grader in the Boston parochial and public schools. With the help of grants, the visits and busing are paid for by Historic New England. The fifth-grade experience involves hands-on activities and role playing of residents of Beacon Hill of diverse social and economic positions at the time of the Otis family.

Groups can arrange special tours tailored to their particular interests, such as the lives of the African American servants or Federal period furniture. The "Ladies of the House" program conducted each March for Women's History Month (but worth offering far more often), features a house tour that emphasizes the lives of the women of all social and economic levels who resided in Otis House from 1796 through 1916.

Challenges & Reactions to Women's History

The major change in interpretation undertaken from 1999 through 2002 by Peter Gittleman, presently team leader for visitor experience, did not come easily. The staff had to work hard to convince the board and officers of Historic New England to tell the story of Sally Otis and the servants and the subsequent inhabitants of the house as the neighborhood changed. The program involved removal of beautiful Federal furniture from some of the rooms to create separate galleries to tell the stories of people from lower economic and social levels, those of the Motts, and the subsequent boarding house owners and lodging house tenants.

The driving force behind the acceptance of change was data collection.

The board more easily accepted interpretation of Sally Otis' life because she came from a "Boston Brahmin" family, and the valuable Federal furnishings could remain. The board and officers were more reluctant to remove antiques and create galleries to interpret the lives of the Otis' servants and subsequent inhabitants of lower social status.

The driving force behind the acceptance of change was data collection. Over a period of two months, every visitor answered a short survey and ranked his or her preferences on how they wanted the house interpreted. The survey results showed the visiting public's desire to learn about the changing social and economic dynamics of Boston. The majority of Otis House visitors have been women who expressed great interest in learning more about the lives of Sally Otis and other women residents. After reviewing the data, the board and officers accepted the change.

Challenge sometimes comes from the "furniture people" more interested in the extraordinary collection of valuable works of art, furnishings, wallpaper designs, and china than they are in the lives of former residents. Guides are instructed to "please the visitor" and are ready to "talk furniture" when asked.

Leah Walzcak, the museum operations manager of Otis House, expressed the difficulty of researching women's lives. Perhaps to protect privacy and modesty, women's husbands and children often destroyed their letters and diaries. Before 1850, the only women listed in censuses and city directories were female heads of households. Researchers learned about Sally Otis's life from her husband's letters to her and from diaries of other Boston women of the same social class. Servants' lives were even more difficult to research.

Lessons Learned & Transferable to Other Sites

- Before engaging in a campaign to change interpretation, a museum staff needs to **gather and compile plenty of data** on visitors' interests. Since a large majority of visitors to house museums are women, the data gathered in the case of Otis House proved that visitors wanted to hear the women's stories.
- **Women's history is not forced** at Otis House. It emerged when study was made of the "whole picture" of its inhabitants. House museums that exclude women from their interpretation tell an incomplete story; recent visitor surveys at Otis House have shown that visitors react positively to informative tours based on research of women's lives.
- **Researching current (as well as potential) audience desires** plays an important role in understanding their needs and shaping tours and programs that respond to visitors' interests. Gathering data helps leadership and staff design appropriate changes and judge their success at the same time.
- Some sites also need to consider **which groups of people are *not* visiting**, to be able to craft tours and programs more appealing to those groups as well. Staff should be flexible in giving tours so that visitors interested in particular aspects, for example, the decorative arts, can also be served.
- Finally, **working with students and faculty** seeking M.A. and Ph.D. topics can provide more research to strengthen a sites' knowledge base.

Organizational Structure & Administrative Resources

Historic New England, previously known as the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, owns Otis House Museum. The mission of the Society is "to serve the public by preserving and presenting New England Heritage." Historic New England is a tax-exempt, nonprofit historic preservation organization that has its headquarters at Otis House. According to its brochure *Guide to Historic New England*, it is "the oldest, largest

Otis House

and most comprehensive regional heritage organization in the nation.” Historic New England owns thirty-six house museums, including fourteen National Historic Landmarks. A twenty-three-member board of trustees governs the society. Historic New England relies on membership fees, fundraising campaigns, annual giving, and grants to finance five program areas: historic properties, collections, archives and publications, educational programs, and preservation services.

Historic New England, which has a CEO and a large full-time and part-time staff, provides all administrative resources for Otis House Museum. There are no volunteers. Historic New England's staff experts for each program area are available to each of the separate museums, but Otis House, with the regional office in an attached building, is considered the “flagship” house.



Most of the nine part-time tour guides at Otis House have backgrounds in history or the decorative arts and must have demonstrated experience at other sites. They first serve as apprentices, following tours with experienced guides several times. They receive a training binder of information on the house and its inhabitants and are expected to learn it. Historic New England encourages guides to cover these themes but to adapt their tours depending upon the visitors, for example, furniture collectors or families with young children. The number of non-English speaking visitors has increased lately, and the guides adapt the tours appropriately.

Peter Gittleman manages with a democratic style, overseeing a PPIP committee (Proactive, Preservation, Interpretation, Planning) comprised of eight members with varied expertise: curatorial, conservation, property care, education and interpretation, research and archives, marketing and publicity, and grants development. The committee concentrates on one house for a period of three to four years and then makes recommendations for the site. Otis House was the first project of a PPIP committee that began its work in 1999. It focused on Sally Otis, the servants, and subsequent residents.

Otis House partnered with four other museums in the House Museum Alliance of Downtown Boston to produce a brochure with a walking tour map including information about all five of its members. It also advertises in *The Beacon Hill Visitor's Guide* brochure that includes Otis House on its map.

Research & Preservation Opportunities

A paid, full-time staff does most of the work, but Historic New England offers unpaid internships to students in several fields involving American history, museum studies,

preservation studies, library science, and related fields. Internships are also available to students interested in marketing, public relations, and development in the nonprofit sector. The Historic New England website lists areas for possible study. From time to time, depending on funding, interns and fellows are hired for special projects. Currently, Historic New England encourages students to approach them with special interests.

The data-driven, carefully researched change from Harrison Gray Otis House to Otis House has transformed and enriched the history interpreted there. Change at historic sites that comes deliberately (in both senses of the word — on purpose and with due deliberation) can and must be both responsive to current interests and historically grounded. Otis House has courageously and thoughtfully enlarged the history it preserves and interprets, as its programs and name change demonstrate.

Otis House

141 Cambridge Street

Boston, MA 02114

617-227-3956

www.historicnewengland.org/visit/homes/otis.htm



Children were a feature of canal life. This younger child, from about 1900, is tethered to prevent accidental falls into the canal. Photographer: E. B. Thompson; Catalog Number: HPC-000064.

Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park, MD/DC

The Chesapeake & Ohio Canal (C&O Canal) interprets the history of the C&O Canal and the people who operated it, that is, the families that operated the boats and lockhouses. In some rare cases women were the official locktenders, and those stories are included, but typically the stories represent the experiences of entire families. In this way, women's experiences are integrated into the total story, not isolated, except during occasional special programs.

The most difficult story tells of the dangers faced by children doing the heavy work of tending locks or driving mules. The C&O Canal NHP has a number of oral histories from women who worked as adults or children on the canal; staff use these to inform programming. Difficult topics are not avoided, and rarely are women's experiences separated because they were integral to their family's experiences. Most interpretation programs incorporate and value the experiences of all of the groups who worked on the canal. Bill Justice, Chief of Interpretation at the C&O Canal NHP believes this is the only sure way to ensure that women's or any other group's experiences are adequately recognized.

Because the experiences of the women are well documented, and because people accept that the entire family worked locks and canal boats, there have been no particular challenges or resistance from staff or visitors to telling this inclusive story.

www.nps.gov/choh



Whole families, like this unidentified woman and child from the 1920s, lived and worked at lockhouses along the canal. Photographer: E. B. Thompson; Catalog Number: HPC-000856. Courtesy of the Department of Interior, National Park Service Historic Photograph Collection, Harpers Ferry Center.

Booker T. Washington National Monument, Hardy, VA

The birth and early life of Dr. Booker T. Washington, a leading black educator and political leader, is interpreted at Booker T. Washington National Monument. The site recreates the mid-nineteenth-century tobacco plantation where Washington lived as an enslaved person.

Through a National Parks and Public Health Grant, interpretive staff developed a program focusing on food shortages and substitutions during the Civil War to demonstrate how women made ends meet while men fought. Staff linked the needs and resourcefulness of the past to present day health issues. A private health care partner provided advice about healthy diet substitutions and base line health screenings for men and women. Several site bulletins and rack cards discussed women's gardens and medicinal uses of plants during that era.

Programming reflects the differences in the lives of female versus male slaves. Very few primary documents exist concerning women on this site. Most information about Washington's mother comes from his autobiography, *Up from Slavery*, and the inventory of her property.

Booker T. Washington's papers include letters the Burrough family daughters (the plantation owners) wrote as adults. One living history tour portrays the owner's daughter's ghost and her memories of the plantation, using the tangible resources onsite such as the footprint of the Big House along with the kitchen cabin.

www.nps.gov/archive/bowa/home.htm

Programming at the site connects past food practices to current health and food issues. Courtesy of the National Park Service, Booker T. Washington National Monument.



A living history tour depicts Booker T. Washington (portrayed by Keenan Mitchell), born into slavery, and his mother, Jane (Keena Mitchell), who cooked on the Burrough's plantation. Courtesy of the National Park Service, Booker T. Washington National Monument.



Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, Hyde Park, NY

Eleanor Roosevelt developed from a shy, introverted child into a woman of great courage who became the social conscience of America and the world, writing and speaking out about controversial issues. Catapulted to national status as wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, she chaired the United Nations Human Rights Commission after World War II and helped write the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While “ELRO” is an obvious place to do women’s history, the site has made valuable use of partnerships to put together innovative girls’ leadership programs transferrable to other sites.

The Stone Cottage, the first structure built at the site in 1925, was used initially by Eleanor Roosevelt as a retreat, shared with close friends and political mentors Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman.

Initially constructed in 1926 to house a furniture factory to provide employment for local youth, Val-Kill Cottage became her permanent residence after President Roosevelt’s death in 1945. Here she often wrote books, magazine articles, and her daily newspaper column.

A strong partner organization, the Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill, runs a program for high school girls, the Girls’ Leadership Workshop. The students spend ten days at the site learning about Eleanor Roosevelt, leadership, and women’s history. Other special projects at the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site include a badge called “Eleanor Roosevelt and Me” offered by the Dutchess County Girl Scout



Eleanor Roosevelt worked on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in her Val-Kill office. Courtesy of the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site.



Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962) serves as inspiration for developing leadership in girls. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Council. Part of the badge requirements is a trip to the site to learn about this remarkable woman. Teaching the Hudson Valley, an organization that fosters collaboration among schools, museums, parks, historic sites, art galleries, libraries, and other groups, helps promote lesson plans, such as “Eleanor Roosevelt: An American Hero,” for middle school students.

www.nps.gov/elro



The final version of The Hermitage mansion was completed in 1837, just as Andrew Jackson finished his second term as president. His daughter-in-law Sarah Yorke Jackson oversaw the furnishing of the remodeled home and managed The Hermitage household for Jackson.
Courtesy of The Hermitage: Home of President Andrew Jackson, Nashville, TN.

The Hermitage, Home of President Andrew Jackson

Tara Y. White

THE HERMITAGE, home of President Andrew Jackson (1767–1845) and a National Historic Landmark in Nashville, Tennessee, is one of the largest historic site museums in this country. Jackson purchased the land in 1804, when Nashville was on the American frontier. He, his wife Rachel Donelson Robards Jackson (1767–1828), their many relatives, and over 150 enslaved African Americans together transformed their wilderness home into an impressive plantation.

Since 1889, the mansion on this 1,100-acre former cotton plantation has memorialized Jackson's life and legacy. In addition to Jackson's life, the site interprets the lives of the women closest to him: wife Rachel Donelson Robards Jackson, daughter-in-law Sarah Yorke Jackson, niece Emily Tennessee Donelson, granddaughter Rachel Jackson Lawrence, and the

The Hermitage

numerous enslaved women who labored to create a life of wealth and leisure for the Jacksons. According to Curator Marsha Mullin, “these stories of Indians, white men moving west, slavery and freedom, the changing role of women, religion and reform, and fortunes made from cotton are the stories of Jacksonian America.” The museum also interprets the Ladies’ Hermitage Association (LHA), which preserved The Hermitage.

Themes of Site/Women’s History Themes

For many years, The Hermitage home served as a shrine to Andrew Jackson, a frontiersman elected seventh president of the U.S. who was popular nationwide for celebrating the “common man.” Today, research and interpretation at The Hermitage



Rachel Donelson Jackson (1767-1828). Miniature by Louisa Catherine Strobel, based on unknown source, ca. 1830. After Rachel Jackson’s death, Andrew Jackson had many of her portraits copied for himself and various family members. This miniature by a Washington artist was Jackson’s favorite. Courtesy of The Hermitage: Home of President Andrew Jackson, Nashville, TN.

includes the experiences of the men *and women* who lived there. No longer does interpretation focus solely on its white family; The Hermitage works hard to tell the stories of the enslaved African American men and women there. Finally, The Hermitage presents the preservation-advocating women of the Ladies Hermitage Association who realized its importance to Tennessee and the nation. Following the Mount Vernon Ladies Association model, the LHA collected, preserved, and interpreted the legacy of Andrew Jackson and his family for many decades.

One theme of the site’s new interpretive plan funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, *Women’s Roles in a Changing America*, examines how women’s lives, expectations, and opportunities changed in the U.S. from the 1790s to the 1840s. The much mythologized Rachel Jackson lived as pioneer girl, wife, mother, aunt, sister, plantation mistress, and general’s and presidential candidate’s wife (she died before his inauguration). Without children of their own, the Jacksons welcomed and raised several nephews. Although Rachel Jackson worked as a plantation manager in her husband’s absence, home-centered lives defined later generations of women. Still, two younger Jackson family women (see facing page) accompanied Andrew Jackson for his presidency (1829-37) and participated in “parlor politics” at the White House. Enslaved women — the majority of residents — worked as housekeepers, sewers, and field hands.

Using The Hermitage plantation records, census records, correspondence, archeology, and family histories, The Hermitage staff have reconstructed the histories of three enslaved fami-



Emily Tennessee Donelson (1807-36). Portrait by Ralph E. W. Earl, ca. 1833. The two women shown here served as White House hostesses for President Jackson. Rachel Jackson's niece Emily married her first cousin Andrew Jackson Donelson. After Rachel's sudden death in December 1828, Jackson invited Andrew and Emily Donelson to accompany him to the White House, where Andrew served as Jackson's secretary and Emily, at the age of 21, became White House hostess.



Sarah Yorke Jackson (1805-87). Portrait by George Peter Alexander Healy, 1845. Andrew Jackson's daughter-in-law, Sarah was orphaned by age ten and grew up in Philadelphia among an extended family of prominent Quaker and Presbyterian merchants who had connections to the slave trade and Jamaican sugar plantations. She exemplifies the ties that bound the North and South together before the Civil War. Both courtesy of The Hermitage: Home of President Andrew Jackson, Nashville, TN.

lies that lived and worked there and the names of more than 500 people enslaved over sixty years. The Hermitage details Gracy Bradley, plantation sewer and personal maid of Sarah Yorke Jackson; "Louisa," nurse of Andrew Jackson Jr.'s and Sarah Yorke Jackson's children; "Old Hannah"; and cook "Betty."

Tangible Resources

Tangible resources at The Hermitage include thirty-two historic buildings – the mansion, the Jacksons' tomb, slave cabins, The Hermitage Church, and farm outbuildings. Jackson's original manor house, a brick Federal style house built between 1819 and 1821, had two parlors, a dining room, and the Jacksons' bedroom on the first floor, with four bedrooms

Revealing Women's History

The Hermitage



Hannah Jackson (ca. 1794-1895). Photograph by W. G. and A. J. Thuss, Nashville, TN, ca. 1880. Hannah Jackson had been Rachel Jackson's personal servant and head of the enslaved house workers at The Hermitage. In 1863 she, two of her daughters, and some of her grandchildren freed themselves by fleeing to Union occupied Nashville. After emancipation Hannah worked as a nurse/caregiver in Nashville. Courtesy of The Hermitage: Home of President Andrew Jackson, Nashville, TN.

on the second floor. Rachel Jackson decorated them all to reflect her taste prior to her death in 1828, just before her husband became president. During his presidency, Jackson had the house remodeled to include one-story flanking wings and a two-story entrance portico with ten columns, giving it a Classical architectural appearance. After an 1834 fire heavily damaged it, he rebuilt it again into an imposing Greek Revival mansion with a central hall and six Corinthian columns across its front. Today, visitors see a *much* more imposing mansion than Rachel Donelson Jackson ever knew.

Besides the well-preserved buildings, the LHA purchased the furnishings from Jackson descendants. Some of these furnishings, paintings, and wallpaper show Rachel Jackson's taste and her growing status as a wealthy plantation owner's wife. The 1834 fire destroyed most of her letters. Costumed docents point out scenic French wallpapers she chose, inspired by Greek mythology depicting the morality tale of Telemachus searching for his father Odysseus. Docents use her jewelry, a cap, and several religious books that she enjoyed reading to discuss her life. A garden tour

features heirloom varieties of flowers Rachel Jackson loved. Plantation records and archeology provide evidence of historic rose varieties present during her life.

Walking into the mansion, visitors first meet Hannah Jackson, head of the household slaves, a woman crucial to the Jacksons' way of life. Interpreters inside the mansion discuss Jackson's niece Emily Donelson and his daughter-in-law Sarah Yorke Jackson, who both became indispensable to President Jackson. They were his official hostesses, helping him navigate Washington's political society. Exhibits display artifacts associated with their crucial roles in fulfilling the presidency's social obligations.

After Jackson returned home at the end of his presidency, Sarah Yorke Jackson became his main caretaker until his 1845 death, and she furnished the house with its present Philadel-

phia Classical style furniture. Records and letters show her as a skillful plantation manager during the remainder of Jackson's life and the early years of the Civil War. Because the enslaved families left no known written accounts, The Hermitage staff have combined plantation records and genealogical ones with archeological evidence to research and interpret enslaved residents. Enslaved people's descendants' family histories have been crucial to understanding their ancestors' experiences; archeological artifacts have provided key evidence.

Since 1988, archeological investigations at The Hermitage have assembled an impressive collection of approximately 800,000 artifacts that provide evidence for enslaved women who worked in professions such as sewer. Elsewhere, interpreters have linked plantation records with family correspondence to refurnish the outlying kitchen and ground-level dining room. In the dining room, interpreters explore entertaining guests and period etiquette. Interpreters discuss the hard work and difficult conditions that "Betty" endured while cooking elaborate meals over open hearths year-round for the Jackson family and their guests.



Betty (ca. 1793 - ca. 1870) "Andrew Jackson's Servant and her Great Grandchildren." Photograph by C. C. Giers, 1867. The subject of the photograph has been identified as Betty, the Jackson family's recently emancipated cook. By 1867 most of the emancipated former slaves from The Hermitage had left. Only Betty had enough extended family still living in the Hermitage neighborhood to include great-grandchildren.
Courtesy of The Hermitage: Home of President Andrew Jackson, Nashville, TN.

Interpretive Resources

Interpretive programs include docent-led tours, exhibitions, public programs, self-guided tours, and audio tours (including one that features Rachel Jackson) as well as audiovisual and print materials to tell their stories. The Andrew Jackson Visitor Center provides richer, more complex interpretation. Visitor orientation includes an introductory film focusing on Jackson's presidential years and a museum gallery that presents the lives of other Jackson family members – their adopted son and wards (her nephews) and other children, including a Cherokee boy Lincoya Jackson. Traditional museum exhibits display original Jackson family objects and archeological artifacts. They explore the role of twenty-one-year-old Emily

The Hermitage

Donelson as official White House hostess during Jackson's presidency with artifacts from Jackson's White House days and gifts he received.

Visitors get a sense of the life of Gracy Bradley, the Jacksons' enslaved African American sewer, from several archeological artifacts – sewing needles, straight pins, a lace-making bobbin, and thimble sets found near the slave cabins as well as spinning and weaving tools. In addition to sewing the wardrobes for Sarah Yorke Jackson, Gracy Bradley and other slaves spun and wove cloth for their own use from cotton grown on the plantation. The Hermitage

Interpreters have linked plantation records with family correspondence to refurbish the outlying kitchen and ground-level dining room.

staff also uses period children's dolls and marbles to explore the lives and play of generations of Jackson family and enslaved children.

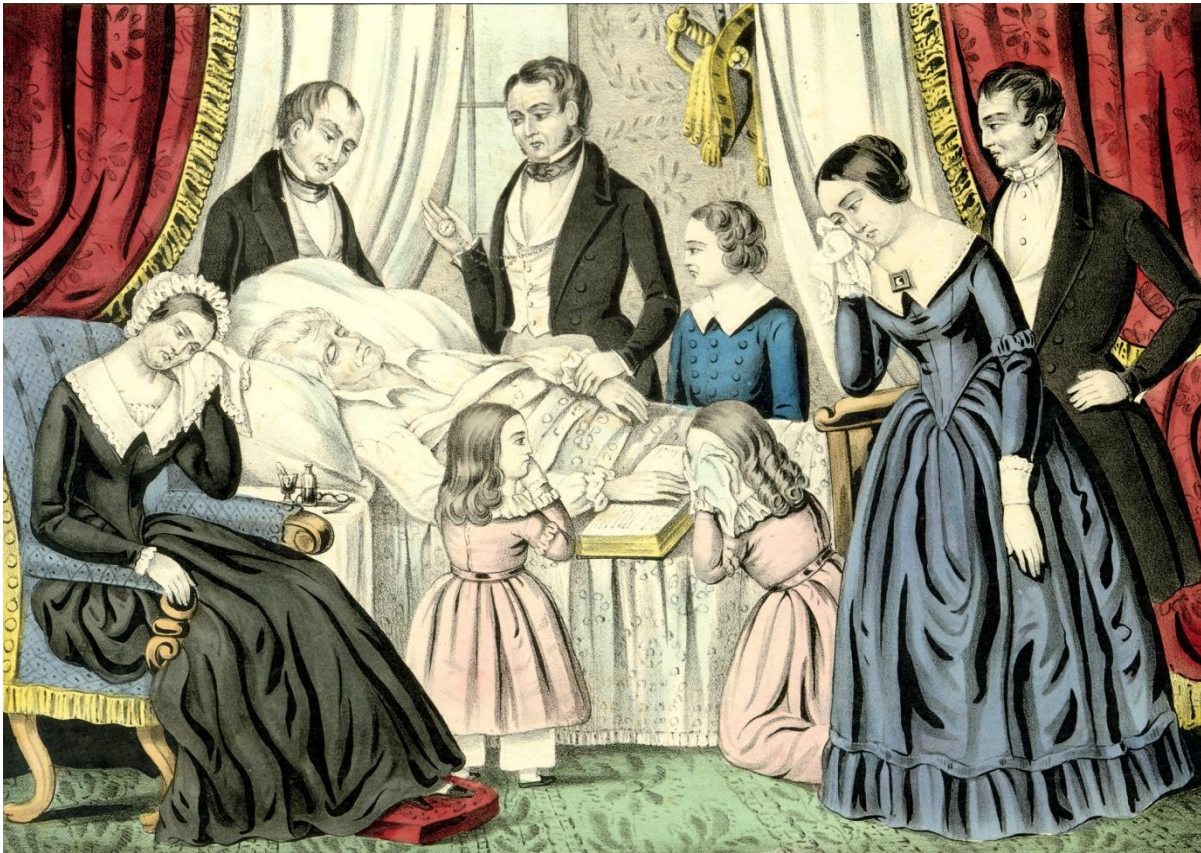
The visitor center gallery employs group photographs, brochures, and a special event program to document the important story of the Ladies' Hermitage

Association and its ongoing preservation work. One exhibit includes various LHA membership pins and a jewel-encrusted LHA brooch belonging to an early board leader. In the late nineteenth century, Amy Rich Jackson, Rachel Jackson Lawrence, and other members of Rachel Jackson's family joined the movement to preserve The Hermitage and helped found the LHA.

Audio tours give visitors more information on The Hermitage's inhabitants. An exhibit on the 1815 ball held in Jackson's honor to celebrate his victory in the Battle of New Orleans uses Rachel Jackson's actual physical measurements to create a life-sized mannequin of her, wearing a replica of the gown she wore to the War of 1812 Victory Ball held in New Orleans. As a part of the exhibit, an audio program describes her preparation for the festivities and attendees' recollections. Other audio guides located throughout The Hermitage plantation interpret the everyday lives of *everyone*.

Interpretive Programs

The Hermitage offers various interpretive tours, including four seasonal tours (April-October): "The Hermitage Garden," "Changing Landscape," "Tour with the 'President,'" and "Restoring an American Landmark." The "Restoring an American Landmark" tour portrays the remarkable work of the Ladies' Hermitage Association. A separate summer tour, "The Hermitage by Wagon," lets visitors ride through the plantation from the perspectives of enslaved people. The Andrew Jackson Visitors Center, grounds, and mansion are open year round.



Death of General Jackson. Tinted lithograph published by J. Baittie, New York, 1845. In this artist's recreation members of Andrew Jackson's family grieve for him at his death on June 8, 1845. The adult participants are (left to right) Marion Yorke Adams, Major William B. Lewis, the attending physician, Elizabeth Martin Donelson, and her husband Andrew Jackson Donelson. Strangely, Jackson's adopted son, Andrew Jackson Jr., and his wife, Sarah Yorke Jackson, are not pictured. Marion Adams was Sarah Jackson's sister. Courtesy of The Hermitage: Home of President Andrew Jackson, Nashville, TN.

The furnished home of Andrew Jackson interprets Rachel Donelson Jackson's and Jackson's daughter-in-law Sarah Yorke Jackson's everyday lives as plantation managers and hostesses for the politically powerful elites who frequently visited. Tours discuss thoroughly Sarah Jackson's choice of furnishings for the mansion. Tours also cover early nineteenth-century etiquette and entertaining styles.

Costumed staff discuss Sarah Jackson's daily life as she cared for Andrew Jackson as an elder statesman and invalid. Interpreters also discuss his granddaughter Rachel, a little girl who brought joy in his last years. Because most of the furnishings are original to The Hermitage, visitors get a rare glimpse into the tastes of wealthy white plantation owners.

The Hermitage

Lessons Learned & Transferable to Other Sites

The Hermitage has a comprehensive approach to interpreting the lives of women, free and enslaved, who once lived and worked there. Although The Hermitage began in 1889 as a shrine to President Andrew Jackson, the Ladies Hermitage Association gradually expanded its interpretation to bring alive for visitors his family and friends, overseers, and the people of the enslaved community. Based on their experiences, The Hermitage staff members offer the following recommendations:

- The market for people's free time and their dollars is highly competitive. Sites compete with other historic sites and museums, and with other entertainment venues, such as movie theaters and amusement parks. Therefore, in addition to being good museum stewards and good historians, staff members must also ask themselves, **"Are people going to have fun doing this?"** The staff also wants visitors to leave with curiosity, questions, and an understanding that The Hermitage, even in its mythology and complexity, still reflects the story of America.
- No single historic site can teach visitors everything about a historic subject. Sites can provide visitors with experiences that make the past vivid through their senses as well as their minds — such as in kitchens with cooking and gardens with flowers. Sites must see themselves as one way of learning about the past and encourage visitors to increase their knowledge about that past. Sites must then **offer additional ways to learn** — books, videos, podcasts, websites, etc.
- Visitors frequently want a nice place to spend time with their families and friends. Historic sites are excellent places for intergenerational groups, because they provide activities for people ages eight to eighty-nine and "something to do" for the whole family. **Deliberately engaging family groups** enhances everyone's experience. If children are intrigued by a site's stories or activities, the rest of the family usually becomes fascinated as well.
- Good interpretation at historic houses **must include the experiences of all that house's inhabitants**. Enslaved persons or live-in domestic servants experienced sites like The Hermitage as their home and workplace. For domestic servants, census records provide especially helpful information; for enslaved persons, family histories and genealogies assist. Archeological research at The Hermitage has also provided much information about enslaved people there. This specific information helps place individuals within the context of their families and humanizes them as individuals and not only as "slaves," a term that covers their legal status but not their personalities. Site interpretation should include neighbors and family members who lived nearby and interacted with the site's residents as well as people who did business there. Visitors at

the time may have left valuable descriptions of their impressions. Finally, places such as The Hermitage were not isolated communities but operated within their larger society and economy. Consider how this larger context — and the people who lived and worked in that context — affected the site as well as how it affected them. Most important, **assume women were present (nearly) everywhere** and seek them in any and all research. Creativity and determination win.

- Good interpretation of women will present an integrated interpretive experience, where the life stories of all its inhabitants are woven throughout the entire site, not awkwardly squeezed into a few places. Women lived and worked throughout these sites, *not* only in the kitchen or bedrooms. Because they lived throughout sites, **interpretation should include their presence**, experiences, and contributions everywhere they were. For example, The Hermitage interprets Rachel Jackson in the gardens that have been replanted to reflect her choices in plantings, giving visitors a better sense of her life and choices — also happily engaging visitors' senses.

- Implementing this approach obviously depends on available primary and secondary sources. Finding quality sources requires research and knowledge to **avoid inadvertently repeating hoary old myths** such as those about Rachel Jackson. Working with local college history departments and organizations can identify lesser-known quality sources and current scholarship that is not always easily accessible. Libraries and schools with access to databases such as “Women and Social Movements” or JSTOR, which electronically publishes articles from scholarly journals, provide sites with intellectual resources once unimaginable. The Organization of American Historians’ *Magazine of History* publishes excellent scholarship in a condensed highly readable format appropriate for historic sites. The American Association for State and Local History magazine *History News* focuses on historic interpretation.

- Historic sites feature real people and real stories that are not always “happy.” **Many aspects of history challenge us** — early deaths, horrible medical treatments, negligible rights for women and non-existent rights for slaves, cruel punishments, very young child workers, dreadful living and working conditions — the list goes on and on. Pretending that any time in the past was some Golden Age distorts both then and now. Slavery in its myriad aspects must be confronted. The U.S. was a slave society, with its laws, customs, practices, and economy all interwoven with and supporting slavery. (Most early presidents owned slaves; northern mills wove southern slave-grown cotton.) Slavery is not a comfortable subject for visitors. Nor should it be. Interpreters must give as honest and research-based interpretation as possible, without minimizing it (“slavery wasn’t really that bad”) or over-generalizing about it (“all slaveholders were evil”). Slavery varied greatly by time, place, and owners. Slaves and slave owners negotiated

The Hermitage

work conditions; some slaves resisted with work slowdowns, breakages, and running away; some found spaces they claimed solely for themselves. Some Hermitage slaves freed themselves during the Civil War. While evidence from child and maternal death rates shows the slave community at The Hermitage apparently fared better than slaves at other plantations, their owners still considered and treated them as property rather than as people. Quoting Frederick Douglass, “The feeding and clothing me well could not atone for taking my liberty from me.”¹

- During the past thirty years, much research on slavery has shown its many varieties and pernicious linkage with race. When developing site interpretation, interpreters should ask, “**How would you have felt being enslaved? How would you have reacted?**” Reading current scholarship on slavery, such as renowned historian Ira Berlin’s *Many Thousands Gone*, will greatly help understanding and ability to interpret this difficult aspect of our past. Interpreting enslaved women becomes especially challenging, given the sexual aggression they often experienced. Enslaved women produced through their unpaid labor and reproduced through often coerced sex, thus increasing their slaveholder’s wealth two ways. Reading Sara Evan’s *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* provides a good synthesis; Deborah Gray White’s *Aren’t I A Woman*, and Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson’s *A Shining Thread of Hope: A History of Black Women in America* are excellent. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich’s *Age of Homespun* links objects with their female owners and users – an especially helpful approach. Anthologies of women’s history articles provide quality current scholarship. For additional recommended sources see www.nchws.org.

- Applying for grants to reinterpret a site can be transformational. **Start with small planning grants** from state and local humanities councils, state arts councils, or field services offices at state historical societies. These smaller planning grants help sites establish track records before applying for larger amounts from major foundations and federal grant programs such as the National Endowment for the Humanities or the Institute for Museum and Library Services. Family foundations and local businesses can also provide good fund sources for site reinterpretation.

- **Building partnerships and collaborations** will help develop women’s history site interpretation. Local history departments can provide women’s history specialists to speak to site staff or do projects with them. These historians can be valuable partners in researching and incorporating women’s history into interpretation; their students often need research topics. The National Collaborative for Women’s History Sites has specialists from different disciplines who do women’s history research and interpretation for public audiences. Joining organizations gives access to their resources and to other people interested in the same questions.

Challenges & Reactions to Women's History

Unpacking the mythology around Rachel Donelson Jackson provides the greatest interpretive challenge facing The Hermitage regarding women's history. A long series of popular biographies, novels, and films have presented Rachel Jackson as a tragic heroine who died from a broken heart after being victimized by Andrew Jackson's political enemies. More recent research on the Jackson marriage suggests that Andrew and Rachel Jackson were aware of the issues relating to their marriage from the beginning. As with all of the interpretive themes, The Hermitage hopes to encourage visitors to look at the complexities of the history being presented.

Organizational Structure & Administrative Resources

The Hermitage, a National Historic Landmark, is owned and operated by the Ladies' Hermitage Association. Its twenty-four-member board, once strictly female and exclusive, today has men and women members and a general public membership.

The Hermitage greets 170,000 visitors annually (including 35,000 children). Its annual budget is over \$4 million. The president and chief executive officer of The Hermitage, currently Howard J. Kittell, is hired by the LHA Board to manage daily operations. He oversees 35 full-time employees (with five vice-presidents: museum services, marketing, site operations, finance, and development), 45 part-time and seasonal employees, and 25 volunteers. Museum Services, the division responsible for most site interpretation, includes Collections, Preservation, Interpretation, Education, and Archeology.

Collaborators and partners include Metro Nashville Public Schools, Middle Tennessee State University, and "Sista' Style," an African American theater troupe. The Hermitage has participated in many Teaching American History grants and National Endowment for the Humanities "Landmarks of American History" summer teacher institutes.

Research & Preservation Opportunities

The Hermitage has diverse resources for exploring Jacksonian America and women's history of the period. Although the University of Tennessee has the Papers of Andrew Jackson, the site has collected relevant local government records, photographs, and documents – annual census records, probate inventories, property records, and slave schedules. The site used genealogical and historical research to create interpretive panels on an enslaved wife and husband, Gracie Bradley and Alfred Jackson, and their family. After

The Hermitage

Emancipation they and their two children chose to stay at The Hermitage, where they worked for Sarah Jackson and were The Hermitage's first interpreters. The complete Ladies' Hermitage Association records (about fifty linear feet) are available for research. The Hermitage offers unpaid student internships in various museum fields such as curatorial practice and museum education. The staff welcomes researchers to add to knowledge about The Hermitage and its residents.

The Ladies Hermitage Association, staff, and volunteers of The Hermitage have long been devoted to preserving the legacy of Andrew Jackson. The vision and hard work necessary to save the plantation and the effort spent collecting and preserving artifacts, performing meticulous research, and interpreting Jackson's role in America provided a strong basis for the next step: the thoughtful interpretive planning and commitment to telling the whole story and bringing "their" women to life.

The Hermitage

4580 Rachel's Lane

Nashville, TN 37076

615-889-2941

www.thehermitage.com

¹ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855; 2nd ed., Washington Square Press, New York, 2003), 120.

Spotlight on Revealing Women's History



Georgia O'Keeffe's bedroom, adjacent to her studio, has large windows overlooking her beloved New Mexico landscapes. Photographer Herb Lotz. Courtesy of Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. © Georgia O'Keeffe Museum.

Georgia O'Keeffe Home and Studio, Abiquiu, NM

The tour uses Georgia O'Keeffe's home, studio, and garden to discuss both artist and art, focusing on how elements there inspired some of her most famous and iconic paintings. In 1945, O'Keeffe purchased the 5,000 square foot, Spanish Colonial era compound then in ruins. After her friend Maria Chabot supervised its restoration, O'Keeffe moved into it, making New Mexico her permanent home and muse.

As visitors stand in a small courtyard, they see how O'Keeffe transformed the famous black door into some of her most recognizable paintings. Seeing a large skull hanging there and the winding road to Santa Fe she also painted gives visitors a much better understanding of her art. Her large freezer shows how far Abiquiu was from Santa Fe when only dirt roads, rather than interstate highway, connected them. Touring O'Keeffe's personal property in Abiquiu gives a remarkable firsthand understanding of her life and the landscape views she loved and painted – the process of a self-aware woman creating her own aesthetic.

www.okeeffemuseum.org

Jane Addams Hull-House Museum, Chicago, IL



Hull-House Museum staff polled visitors about alternative labels describing Jane Addams' relationship with Mary Rozet Smith, shown in this 1898 oil on canvas painting by Alice Kellogg Tyler. Courtesy of Jane Addams Hull-House Museum, UIC Special Collections. JAMC_1966_01 12_0005.

One of the museum's most captivating artifacts is an 1898 painting of Mary Rozet Smith by artist and teacher Alice Kellogg Tyler. Neither scholars nor family members agree how best to describe Rozet Smith's and Addams' relationship. Some describe Rozet Smith merely as a prominent Hull-House patron, others as Addams' companion, her lesbian lover, or life-long partner. Given the cultural and historical specificity of language, problems arise from applying current understandings of words such as "lesbian" or "life partner" to a relationship between women from an earlier era.

After consulting with historians and descendants, museum staff crafted three different labels and displayed them next to the painting, inviting visitors to indicate which label they found most meaningful by posting their comments on a nearby large public response board. Staff hoped the project would inspire visitors to think more critically about the history presented at the museum and to reflect on what was at stake — the determining of the meaning of

history and who gets to decide. Thousands of people responded to the project, both at the museum and online, and these responses ultimately informed the treatment of the painting in the museum's new permanent exhibit. The exhibit now includes additional artifacts and photographs illustrating the deep emotional intimacy the two women shared.

Staff hoped that this project would usher in the possibility for museum visitors to become co-producers of knowledge. Surrendering control over the dominant narrative and creating a public space for discourse and dissent has been one of the most exhilarating parts of this process.

www.hullhousemuseum.org



Built in 1864, the Governor's Mansion served as territorial historian Sharlot Hall's home from 1927-36. Courtesy of Sharlot Hall Museum.

Sharlot Hall Museum

Mary Melcher

THE SHARLOT HALL MUSEUM and campus, a four-acre site, provides a rich arena for exploration of life in territorial Arizona and women's past. Located in Prescott, a lively mining town during the territorial period, the museum contains historic buildings, exhibits, archives, and beautiful grounds where the visitor can explore the roles of women in American Indian and Euro-American culture. Arizona attained statehood in 1912, as the forty-eighth state admitted to the Union. Arizona had a lower population in comparison to other states in the West, and frontier conditions existed into the twentieth century. The state's economic mainstays were ranching, farming, and mining.

The mission of the Sharlot Hall Museum involves interpretation of both natural and human history, providing a wide base for investigation of life in the changing Southwest. Founded by writer and historian Sharlot Hall in 1928, the museum exemplifies women's roles in historic preservation and the economic and cultural life of the multiracial Southwest.

Themes of Site/Women's History Themes

The Sharlot Hall Museum's mission is to serve as "an educational and cultural center which fosters public and community understanding and appreciation of historical, social, and natural aspects of Arizona, with emphasis on the central highlands, and which promotes involvement in and support for research, collections, conservation, exhibits, and related

The museum exemplifies women's roles in historic preservation and the economic and cultural life of the multiracial Southwest.

programs." The site contains several historic buildings that are artifacts in and of themselves and that also serve as interpretive sites. Because the museum's exhibits involve both natural and human history, one interpretive theme relates to people's interaction with the land of north central Arizona and their interactions with each other. The site's campus and programs provide a means

to interpret Native people's lives, intercultural relations, the region's flora and fauna, territorial Arizona history, and people's changing impact on the land. Within these wider themes, women's history is discussed throughout the historic buildings and exhibits.

Sharlot Hall (1870-1943) moved with her family to Arizona in 1881. She worked on the family ranch, wrote articles and poetry, and served as Arizona's territorial historian from 1909 to 1912. Sharlot Hall's legacy and the importance of historic preservation is a theme woven throughout the museum, as is the vital role of women in historic preservation. As Arizona's territorial historian, Hall was the first woman to hold public office in Arizona. She traveled all over the territory by wagon, collecting artifacts and history relating to American Indians and Euro-Americans. She also collected oral histories in order to preserve Arizona's past, which was being lost as the early settlers died. Her ability to collect widely provided a base for the collection housed in the museum today.

Later, in the 1920s, she fought to preserve the log structure called the Territorial Governor's Mansion where Arizona's governor and his staff resided during the 1860s. She secured the assistance of Arizona State Legislator Pauline O'Neill, who lobbied leaders to buy the building. Then, Hall raised funds to restore it and established a museum in the mansion. Later, she secured New Deal funding to construct what is now called the Sharlot Hall Building, which provides additional space for exhibits. She also brought to the site the cabin called Fort Misery, another nineteenth-century building. According to John Langellier, the museum's executive director, Sharlot Hall "was a pragmatic, hardworking, practical person who had to raise the funds and literally lived on the land to make certain vandals didn't come through and that things were open. . . . [S]he was a dynamo until the end of her life."



Pictured here in the Governor's Mansion in 1930, Sharlot Hall served as Arizona's territorial historian from 1909 to 1912. Courtesy of Sharlot Hall Museum.

Another theme is the importance of women's economic role in all cultures of the West. An outstanding exhibit on the Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe called *The Baskets Keep Talking* describes women's roles in making baskets and gathering plants that provided 70 percent of the tribe's diet. The importance of baskets in preserving life and culture among the Yavapai-Prescott people shines through this exhibit. The economic contribution of ranch women is displayed in the ranch house through photos and text. Women's leadership and participation in cultural life are also interpreted within the historic houses and gardens.

Stories of women's work and daily life are displayed throughout the museum's buildings and exhibits. When asked about themes related to women's history, one staff person responded, "Women have always been here [in this region] and have always contributed." Through paying attention to women's experiences, museum staff have woven women's history into the interpretive fabric of the site.

Tangible Resources

The Sharlot Hall Museum and campus are incredibly rich in tangible resources. The campus contains four historic buildings, including the Territorial Governor's Mansion, which is on the National Register of Historic Places; the Bashford House; the Fort Misery cabin; and the Frémont House. The 1885 Iron Turbine Windmill, used to pump water and relocated from a local ranch, is also on the National Register.

Constructed on this site in 1864, the **Governor's Mansion** is made from Ponderosa pine logs cut nearby. It housed the first territorial governor, John Goodwin, and his staff, including Secretary (later Governor) Richard McCormick and his bride Margaret McCormick. The territorial capital remained in Prescott until 1867, at which time Governor McCormick sold the cabin. Large and well built, it was called a "mansion" in comparison to the crude cabins and tents where many other people resided at the time. After the state purchased this building in 1927, Sharlot Hall lived in it from 1927 to 1936 while operating the museum.

The **Sharlot Hall Building** is constructed of native rock and pine logs. Completed by the Civil Works Administration in 1934, it is the museum's largest exhibit hall. Hall worked with Grace Sparkes, a leader in Yavapai County, to secure the New Deal funds for this building. Hall was also responsible for acquiring **Fort Misery**, one of the oldest territorial buildings existing in Arizona. Constructed in 1863, it was owned by several people, including Mary Ramos, who ran a boarding house there. It was later owned by a man who also operated a boarding house but cooked so poorly that his boarders called it Fort Misery.

The **Frémont House**, built in 1875, was home to Jessie Benton and John C. Frémont, her explorer husband, when he was Arizona's territorial governor (1878-81). Ambitious daughter of a prominent Western senator, Jessie and their daughter crossed the Panama isthmus' jungle in 1849 to join John in California. She collaborated with her husband and molded his expedition notes into influential official reports. In later years her writings supported their then-impooverished family. Built in 1877, the **Bashford House** is an example of Prescott's Victorian architecture. It was moved to the museum grounds in 1974 and now houses the gift store. The store sells numerous books pertaining to women's history, including an excellent collection of diaries and memoirs by women from the western U.S. The museum campus also contains a Transportation Building built in 1937 as an automobile repair garage, a ranch house constructed under Sharlot Hall's direction, and a school house.

The grounds of the museum contain several gardens, including a kitchen, pioneer herb garden, and ethnobotanical garden, featuring plants such as the Apache Plume, Golden Rabbit Bush, and Yellow Columbine. Near the Territorial Governor's Mansion is the **Territorial Women's Memorial Rose Garden**, where over 470 rose bushes have been planted in honor of Arizona women born before statehood, which occurred in 1912.

Biographies of the honorees are housed in the museum's main building and the archives; they are also available online. The women honored are of European, American Indian, and Mexican heritage.

The museum has a new archives building containing several collections related to women of the region. Sharlot Hall's own book collection is in the rare books section. The archives contain Hall's personal collection and that of several other women, including an early school teacher and early women legislators, such as Pauline O'Neill, an important Arizona suffragist. A collection of several hundred oral histories contains many women's life stories. The archives also houses items

pertaining to Viola Jimulla, a Yavapai-Prescott chieftess who was instrumental in preserving the tribe's culture and in guaranteeing its economic survival during her tenure from the 1940s to the 1960s.



Mary Ramos ran a boarding house in “Fort Misery,” so named for the abominable cooking of a subsequent manager. Courtesy of Sharlot Hall Museum.

Interpretive Resources

The Sharlot Hall Museum has a ten-minute orientation video in the main museum building that introduces visitors to the site and provides an historical overview of the region's history. It explains the founding of the Sharlot Hall Museum and its mission, while briefly discussing the historic buildings, exhibits, and gardens. The museum's brief pamphlet describes the site and museum programs.

Interpretive Programs

The Sharlot Hall Museum's diverse programs are based on the idea that different interpretive methods will draw in a greater variety and number of visitors. Therefore, the museum provides several different programs and educational arenas, including tours for school children and adults, exhibits, gardens, living history, and theatre. The museum also offers the **Arizona History Adventure**, with living history presentations throughout the campus, every second Saturday of the month. Some of the women portrayed during these programs are Jessie Benton Frémont, governor's wife, in the Frémont House; Mary Ramos, a

medicine woman who ran a boarding house in Fort Misery; and a ranch wife who cooks all meals, including breads, meat, and vegetables, on the woodstove in the ranch house. The Arizona Humanities Council funded the origination of this program through a start-up cultural heritage tourism grant.

Once a month, on Sunday afternoons, the museum hosts a lecture relating to Arizona history. Museum staff and volunteers also organize three festivals throughout the year: the Folk Arts Fair, Prescott Indian Art Market, and the Folk Music Festival. A new annual event is the Day of the Dead, a Mexican and Mexican American celebration occurring around November 1. With all these varied events and activities, the museum attracts approximately 34,000-40,000 visitors annually. In the last year, visitation has decreased approximately 15 percent due to Arizona's poor economic conditions. There is some seasonal fluctuation in visitation, with winter being the slow time.

The **Blue Rose Theater** and living history programs provide other interpretive modes. Staff person Jody Drake directs the historical theater, which produces four new shows annually. The theater also provides folk music programs. Drake began her career at the museum with her living history portrayal of Sharlot Hall. From this beginning, she became

Lynch has learned that it's best to embed women's or minority history into an exhibit rather than to spotlight it.

enthusiastically engaged in women's history in the western U.S. Drake began the "Ladies of the Garden" historical theater, which portrays women honored through the Territorial Rose Garden. According to Drake, these shows began with the portrayal of "powerhouse women, like Sharlot Hall, Grace Sparkes, and Viola Jimulla," but they are now investigating the lives of more

ordinary women who also have fascinating lives. The theater provides a means to represent the variety of cultural, religious, and ethnic groups in the central Arizona region. Drake relies on the archives' primary sources, including diaries, letters, and oral histories, along with the museum's artifact collection, for her research and theatrical development.

While women's history is interpreted throughout the museum campus and in the various historic houses, a few exhibits highlight women's work and roles. In the main museum building, an exhibit describes Sharlot Hall's life and work. It includes artifacts such as the copper dress Hall wore when serving as a presidential elector. Reflecting the role of copper production in the state's economy, it is made of copper mesh with a copper colored sheath worn underneath. The museum also features Hall's hat made from cactus spines, along with interpretation of her life, youth on the family's ranch, writing career, and work in historic preservation.

Anthropologist Sandra Lynch curated another fascinating exhibit, ***The Baskets Keep Talking***. To develop the exhibit, Lynch worked with the Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe,



The Baskets Keep Talking exhibit examines Native women's roles in tribal economic and cultural life. Courtesy of Sharlot Hall Museum.

securing the assistance of tribal members who reviewed exhibit text while contributing stories and guidance in exhibit development. This collaboration resulted in the creation of an exhibition celebrated by all that describes the prehistoric and historic life of the tribe. The featured baskets, most of which are over 100 years old, relate the tribe's culture, stories, and history. Through a collaborative process, Lynch and museum staff were able to gain and eventually share knowledge about women's economic roles in gathering, preparing and storing food. Lynch set out to tell the story of an economy and a way of life; she discovered that women secured 70 percent of the tribe's diet through gathering plants. By focusing this exhibit on baskets and their role in the culture, the interpretation describes an important and vital role of tribal women. Not only did the baskets allow for food gathering, they also reflected the tribe's art and history.

The Sharlot Hall Museum has no formal evaluation program. One means of determining the success of programs is through visitor attendance. The weekend festivals, living history performances, and theater productions are well attended. The staff and volunteers offer an abundance of activities that draw people of varied interests.

Challenges & Reactions to Women's History

Because the Sharlot Hall Museum was founded by Sharlot Hall, who played a significant role in preserving several of the site's buildings, the interpretation of women's roles in historic preservation is a natural storyline. The museum's collections of artifacts, oral histories, photos, and written primary sources also provide excellent material for women's history interpretation. Museum staff are highly aware of women's active role in ranching and other economic arenas; they have readily available the primary sources and documents needed to tell this history. Because women's stories are often embedded in the overall interpretation, staff have not faced many challenges in relation to women's history.

Museum and historic site staff must research the multicultural history of people in the area in order to interpret the complete story.

However, interpretation of the history of Mexican American women is incomplete, most likely because more research is needed. Even though people of Mexican descent have been a sizable proportion of the region's population, their history has not been

thoroughly documented. African Americans are also not visible in the interpretive storyline, but few blacks have lived in this region of Arizona. Curator Sandra Lynch, an American Indian, discussed in some detail her philosophy related to interpreting women's history.

During the course of her career, Lynch has learned that it's best to embed women's or minority history into an exhibit rather than to spotlight it. She also avoids "Holocaust stories." "If you have a story of an abused minority, think of presenting the story as quietly and factually as you can, and you'll end up with people on your side," she said. She does not want to make her audience feel guilty for something in the past that they did not personally do.

In *The Baskets Keep Talking* exhibit, the story of the conquest of the Yavapai-Prescott Tribe, including that of a brutal massacre of tribal women and children, is presented factually, without fanfare, along with the history of their recovery and the more recent, positive developments experienced by this group. Lynch interprets women's vital role in the tribe's economic life without "waving a flag that it's a women's history exhibit."

Rather, she tells the story within the context of the tribe's entire history. Lynch believes that embedding the story of women and/or minorities into the total product and not stressing oppression will result in people retaining information and learning more. "Change, when it really comes, comes one person, one idea, at a time," said Lynch.

Lessons Learned & Transferable to Other Sites

Sharlot Hall Museum staff have integrated women's history successfully into their interpretation because women are an essential part of the site's story. "You have to want to show the whole picture and have the research materials to do it," said Chief Curator Mick Woodcock.

- Sharlot Hall staff have been able to rely on an extensive collection of primary source materials that aided in their interpretation of Euro-American and American Indian women. In order to improve their representation of women from other minority groups, additional research is needed. Thus, a transferable lesson is that museum and historic site **staff must research the multicultural history of people in the area** they serve in order to interpret the complete story.
- In addition, by forming partnerships with the neighboring Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe, museum staff expanded outreach and accurately portrayed this group's history. While the site's tangible resources are not transferable to other museums or historic sites, the ability to form partnerships and to work with other communities can be done anywhere. By **inviting another community to participate** in creating an exhibit or program, museums may expand their outreach and ensure accurate portrayal of underrepresented groups.
- Another lesson for other sites is to **embed women's history in the site's interpretive storyline**. Staff at the Sharlot Hall Museum have not created separate exhibits relating to women; rather their history is represented within existing exhibits and historic houses. In living history and historical theater, however, women's stories are individualized and separate.

Organizational Structure & Administrative Resources

The Sharlot Hall Museum has existed since 1928 and has always utilized both state and private funds. The museum is operated by a single board overseeing the two entities that comprise the Sharlot Hall Museum: the Prescott Historical Society is an Arizona state agency that manages the state funding for the museum, while the Sharlot Hall Historical Society controls the private funding. The state of Arizona's funding has dropped to approximately 40 percent of total funding. In the last few years, the museum has lost state funding for eight staff people. The position of education curator, formerly paid for by the state, is now funded by nonprofit partners. Likewise, the custodial position, formerly paid for by state appropriation,

is now funded by private funds. Consequently, private funding has become increasingly vital in keeping the museum running.

Because the museum receives both state and private funding, management follows state laws and rules relating to procurement practices and most other areas of operations. For daily operations the director answers to the board and supervises the staff. The director, however, ultimately is responsible to the governor of Arizona, who appoints the individual to this position as a member of her executive department staff.

This museum has a budget of approximately \$1.5 million, which has been decreasing due to loss of state funds. In all, there are twenty-four staff people, but eight of them work part-time. There were ten staff people on the state payroll in 2010. The museum and grounds are open every day, all year round, except for New Year's, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Days. Operation of the museum would be impossible without the work of the 400 volunteers who assist in many different capacities by serving as docents, working in collections and archives, researching archeological artifacts, performing living history, maintaining computers and buildings, planting gardens, and writing biographies for women in the Territorial Women's Memorial Rose Garden.

***The museum's staff
actively works with others
to become a strong force in
the Prescott community.***

Sharlot Hall Museum staff actively work with others to become a strong force in the Prescott community and the state of Arizona. The museum belongs to and is accredited by the American Association of Museums. The museum is also an institutional member of the Association of Living History, Farms and Agricultural Museums. Within Arizona, Sharlot Hall Museum partners with the Arizona Women's Heritage Trail (AWHT) and hosted the AWHT's traveling exhibit in 2010. This museum is a site on the AWHT. Director John Langellier also sits on the boards of the Western Heritage Trail and the Arizona History Convention and collaborates with the Prescott Coalition for Tourism and Prescott Downtown Partnership. Another important partner is the Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe, which funded the ethnobotanical garden and provided information and funding for *The Baskets Keep Talking* exhibit. Ernie Jones Sr., Yavapai-Prescott Tribal president, served on the museum board for several years.

Research & Preservation Opportunities

The Sharlot Hall Museum Archives provide research opportunities to students and scholars who want to explore the history of central Arizona. The new archives building, which opened in 2008, has office space for visiting scholars who plan to work there for several days. It also contains a conference room with computer capabilities for group use.

Volunteers may gain research opportunities at the museum by serving as adjunct curators or archeologists. One group of volunteers is analyzing and dating prehistoric and historic arrow points collected in Arizona. These volunteers received instruction prior to commencing their work and are helping to catalog an unprocessed collection.

The museum has offered a Summer Archives Internship in the past to a history student. It is not offered when internship endowment revenues are insufficient. There are no formal opportunities to work in preservation at the Sharlot Hall Museum, although some volunteers work in maintaining its historic houses.

Staff at the Sharlot Hall Museum, like others around the U.S., have faced difficulties during the recent severe economic recession, but they have maintained the museum's programs and viability through staff dedication and ongoing community and state partnerships. The museum's programs and displays are enhanced through the interpretation of women's stories, lives, and economic roles in the multiracial Southwest utilizing the campus' excellent tangible resources. The Sharlot Hall Museum demonstrates the importance of creating partnerships to develop interpretation and provides a model of the integration of women's history into a site's storyline.

Sharlot Hall Museum

415 West Gurley Street
Prescott, Arizona 86301
928-445-3122
www.sharlot.org

Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, St. Louis, MO

Jefferson National Expansion Memorial (JEFF) features the Old Courthouse and the Museum of Westward Expansion beneath the Gateway Arch. Programs that integrate women into the story of westward expansion and reenactments of slavery/civil rights trials have been very popular. Changes to the site now being planned promise to include women's history even more.

"Oregon Trail" and "Sod House" programs use excerpts from women's diaries to depict both the arduous journeys of women who traveled west on the overland trails and their experiences setting up homesteads after they arrived at their destinations.

Rangers also

interpret the lives of Native American women who lived in tipis compared with white women's prairie houses.

JEFF hosts a successful trial program in the courthouse, the site of the 1850 trial that led to the 1857 U.S. Supreme Court's "Dred Scott Decision," which denied blacks rights as citizens. Dred Scott was not alone in this fight. Harriet Scott, his wife, petitioned for her own freedom at the same time. Rangers also interpret the motivations of the Scotts' owner, Irene Emerson, to try to help modern audiences understand how slavery was viewed in the 1840s and 1850s. Scholars now know there were over 300 suits for slavery like those of the Scotts, about 60 percent initiated by women slaves.

Other trial programs explore Lucy Delaney, about sixteen when she sued for her freedom in 1844, and Virginia Minor, an officer in the National Woman Suffrage Association, which during the 1872 presidential election decided to challenge voting restrictions that excluded women.

www.nps.gov/jeff



Harriet and Dred Scott, date unknown. Harriet Scott's 1850 lawsuit claiming her freedom was more important than her husband's, because the status of their two daughters, as children of slaves, depended on the status of their mother. Courtesy of the National Park Service, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial.



In 1872, Virginia Minor tried to register to vote and was denied. She sued. In 1874, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against her, saying "the Constitution of the United States does not confer the right of suffrage upon anyone." Courtesy of the National Park Service, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial.

Spotlight on Revealing Women's History



Women feature prominently in funerary art, here the Warner Monument and below, the Lea Monument. Both courtesy of Laurel Hill Cemetery.

Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia, PA

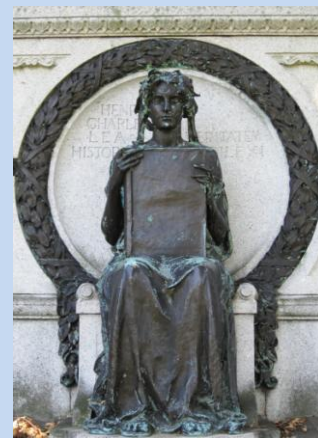
Opened in 1836 as a “rural cemetery” to appeal to the emerging middle class, Laurel Hill served as a place for both mourning and recreation, where visitors strolled scenic green acreage among monuments overlooking the Schuylkill River.

Following the Civil War, Laurel Hill ceased to be a destination. Today, the site promotes itself as a sculpture park with many stories to tell. The city's notable men left well-documented histories and magnificent monuments; women's stories are obscure by comparison, research hampered by lack of source material and identities subsumed by fathers and husbands.

Women's history programming launched in 2007 with tours like “Classy Broads and Daring Dames” that highlight the achievements of Laurel Hill's female “residents,” including authors, actresses, Civil War nurses, archeologists, and inventors. However, most of the women at Laurel Hill remain literal dead ends.

Possibilities for Laurel Hill? Sarah Josepha Hale, the editor of the influential, taste-making *Godey's Lady's Book* is buried at Laurel Hill. Her magazine defined an era's sense of domesticity and reinforced mourning rituals that impacted women the most, from specific jewelry and fashion to sentimental odes to lost children due to the period's high mortality rates. The pursuit of ideal domesticity extended even to the tomb – an extension of home and haven for connection to family and roots in time of change. While specific women's identities may be obscure, there is potential in a thematic exploration.

TheLaurelHillCemetery.org



The genealogical workshop, “Don't Forget About the Ladies,” recognizes women's importance as keepers of family lore and demonstrates techniques for researching and remembering female ancestors.

The Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center, East Hampton, NY

This National Historic Landmark site is the former home and studio of abstract expressionist painters Jackson Pollock (1912-56) and Lee Krasner (1908-84). Opened to the public in 1988, it preserves and interprets the two artists' living and working environment, offers an educational program, and provides resources for research on modern American art.

The site wanted to raise visitor awareness of Krasner, who is overshadowed by her famous husband. Staff have done this by emphasizing the fact that she occupied the site for twenty-eight years after his death; by discussing and illustrating her art work (although the site owns only prints, no paintings, by her); by celebrating the 2008 centenary of her birth with a major exhibition of her work; by carrying publications about her in the museum store; and by featuring her prominently in the audio tour and on the website.

These efforts were greatly enhanced by the release in 2000 of the motion picture *Pollock*, directed by and starring Ed Harris, for which Marcia Gay Harden received an Academy Award as Best Supporting Actress for her role as Krasner. Many visitors have seen the film or visited the website before coming, so they are now far more aware of Krasner than they were in the museum's early days. Gail Levin's *Lee Krasner: A Biography*, which has received excellent reviews, will also elevate her profile.

www.pkhouse.org



Often overshadowed by her painter husband, Lee Krasner died in 1984 as the first full retrospective of her work toured the U.S. Krasner is seen here in the barn studio at work on *Portrait in Green*, 1969. Photograph by Mark Patiky. ©Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center, East Hampton, NY. Used by permission.



Little Rock Central High School, pictured here in 2005, functions as both a school and a historic site that interprets the efforts in 1957 of nine black students to integrate a previously all-white school. Photo by Ben Wagner. Courtesy of the Jefferson National Parks Association.

Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site

Tara Y. White

FOR DECADES Arkansas, like many states, operated separate schools for black and white students to segregate them racially. Little Rock, Arkansas, had two well-funded public high schools for white students. Dunbar High School, an excellent school for African American students, was accredited by the North Central Association at a time when many southern schools (for white or black students) were not.

The 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Oliver Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* directed U.S. school systems nationwide to provide black and white students equal education and equal opportunity. The case had been brought by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The court determined that separate schools were inherently unequal, denying black students equal opportunity and due process under

Little Rock Central High School

the U.S. Constitution. The court ruled state laws mandating school racial segregation illegal and ordered states to integrate their schools. Determined to keep black students out of white schools, many states resisted the court's mandate. The town of Little Rock and its Central High School became key players in the well publicized national battle for integrated public education. In 1957, nine black students entered Central High School; in 1958, school closed for that year; it reopened in 1959.

Today, the Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site (NHS) interprets the crisis created in Arkansas' capital when President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent in U.S. Army troops to force Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus to integrate Central High School and to protect from mob violence the nine black students chosen to integrate it.

A courageous group of local black students volunteered and were accepted by the school administration. These teenagers, **“the Little Rock Nine,”** six girls and three boys, prepared to enter Central High School in the initial phase of the district's school integration plan for the fall of 1957. Girls, especially girls with good grades, were thought to be less threatening than boys. Mrs. Daisy L. Gatson Bates, President of the Arkansas state branch of the NAACP, encouraged and mentored the Little Rock Nine and their families and acted as a liaison among the students' families, school system, and the media. The six young women were Melba Pattillo (Beals), Carlotta Walls (LaNier), Minnijean Brown (Trickey), Elizabeth



U.S. Army 101st Airborne Troops guarded black students as they integrated Little Rock Central High School in 1957. Courtesy of the U.S. Army.

Eckford, Gloria Ray (Karlmark), and Thelma Mothershed (Wair). The three boys were Ernest Green, Terrence Roberts, and Jefferson Thomas. The nine showed remarkable bravery, tenacity, and determination as they faced intimidation, social isolation, and raw racist behavior from nearly all of their white classmates at Central High, as well as from local white adults in the area. An iconic photograph of the Central High School crisis shows a white girl snarling hatred at Elizabeth Eckford.

In addition to the Little Rock Nine, the historic site also interprets the actions of two groups of local white women, the Mother's League and the Women's Emergency Committee, responding in different ways to Governor Faubus' decision to close *all* the public schools in 1958 rather than desegregate them. As mothers and students, white women and girls played key roles in the Central High School crisis and in the larger story of encouraging or resisting racial changes in Little Rock. The Mother's League supported Governor Faubus' decision to keep Central High closed and segregated, while the Women's Emergency Committee argued that Central High should remain open with black students there.

Little Rock and its Central High School became key players in the well publicized national battle for integrated public education.

Themes of Site/Women's History Themes

The extensive research process at Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site, like other historic sites, documents historic buildings, their original furnishings, and appearance, using diverse written and physical sources. They then develop a variety of planning documents from Environmental Impact Statements, to General Management Plans, to Long Range Interpretive Plans, all of which coordinate the preservation and interpretation of tangible resources with visitor use and programs. These research studies and plans combine complex legal and resource requirements with the historical themes and visitor needs and preferences. When this park prepared its Long Range Interpretive Plan, it developed the following interpretive themes to explore women's history.¹

The Event

The integration of Central High was a landmark battle in the modern civil rights movement in America. It forced the people of a city and a nation to confront the issue of discrimination, created an international problem for the country by exposing racism in American society, pitted federal upholding of constitutional civil rights against states' rights of self-governance, and provided a foundation for supporting and forging new attitudes of racial tolerance. Many of the main participants in this event were women, including members of the Little Rock Nine, NAACP chair Daisy Bates, and white women of the Mother's League and the Women's Emergency Committee.

Little Rock Central High School

Some of these women, inspired by their struggle for inclusion, equal opportunity, and equal protection during the civil rights movement, later argued that, as women, they also need such rights.

Civil Rights Movement

The 1957-58 events at Central High School were one of many battles in the ongoing struggle for equal rights for everyone. The 1954 *Brown* decision was the first time that the U.S. Supreme Court had issued a definite ruling deeming the “separate but equal” doctrine unconstitutional and unfair to African American citizens. Central High School’s integration followed the successful Montgomery bus boycott (1955-56) organized by black women and the 1956 integration of the University of Alabama by Miss Autherine Lucy. In 1957, following the Montgomery bus boycott, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). SCLC helped coordinate the southern black freedom movement along with the NAACP, which had long used lawsuits to fight Jim Crow. Subsequent events, such as college student sit-ins across the South, demonstrated that racial discrimination would not be ended quickly or easily.

Black and white women were an integral part of the civil rights movement as student activists, leaders, and organizers in the NAACP, Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), SCLC, and later the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Some white women fought equally hard *against* black equality.

Use of Executive Power

President Eisenhower issued Executive Order 10730, “Assistance for the Removal of an Obstruction of Justice within the State of Arkansas,” which made a federal commitment to enforce civil rights, one of the few times presidents used their executive powers for African American’s civil rights.

Equal Rights

In the Declaration of Independence, the United States proclaimed as its founding philosophy a commitment to certain “self-evident truths,” including that “all men are created equal.” Almost 200 years later, and after several constitutional amendments that strengthened and clarified that commitment, events at Little Rock Central High tested the commitment to equality. Little Rock struck at the heart of Jim Crow, as black parents demanded an educational foundation for their sons and daughters to be treated equally.

This same argument later provided the foundation for Title IX, which prohibits sex discrimination in any educational activity that receives federal assistance.

The School

Built in 1927, Central High is both a building and a symbol of educational excellence, of architectural achievement, of the end of segregated school systems, and of humanity at its



Hollywood actor Kerry Washington (left) visits with Little Rock Nine member Elizabeth Eckford, who is pictured in the iconic photograph behind them.
Courtesy of the National Park Service.

best and worst. At its completion, the American Institute of Architects designated Central High School, with both Art Deco and Collegiate Gothic architectural styles, as the nation's "most beautiful school."²

The City and the State

As a relatively progressive southern capital, with several integrated institutions, including the public library, public buses, parks, and the University of Arkansas law and medical schools, 1950s Little Rock seemed an unlikely site for civil unrest over school integration. But the integration crisis there exposed significant white opposition to black students attending school with white ones, creating an explosive situation. Most of the South's Congressional delegations promised "massive resistance" to the Supreme Court's attempt to outlaw racial segregation and mandate integration. The 1956 "Southern Manifesto," which all but two of Arkansas' Congressional delegation signed, accused the Supreme Court of overreaching and declared the *Brown* decision unconstitutional. Local prosegregation whites organized and used racial fears, intimidation, and the threat of social isolation and ostracism to maintain a united front among most white residents. In 1959, when Little Rock Central High School reopened, most white students (who attended county public schools or private schools during 1958) returned.

Tangible Resources

The twenty-seven-acre site consists of the Park Visitor Center, Little Rock Central High School building and its twenty-one-acre campus, a commemorative garden, the restored Magnolia Mobil Station, and the former Ponder Drug Store site. The Park Visitor Center opened in September 2007, on the fiftieth anniversary of the crisis. The Magnolia Mobil station, then a working gasoline service station, is now an education center. Major tangible resources include the Mobil/Magnolia Service Station, Central High School, and a

Central High School is a natural venue for women's history . . . because girls and women played critical roles.

memorial/reflection park. The home of Daisy Bates is nearby. The park has an active museum collections program, acquiring documents such as photographs, leaflets, pamphlets, flyers, newspapers, magazines, and ephemera from the crisis, and responses to it. These include archival resources from the Mother's League and the Women's Emergency

Committee. In addition, the park has more than sixty oral history interviews from the Little Rock crisis participants, including the Little Rock Nine and former Central High School students and their parents. The site collections are open for research. The park collection has a few historical artifacts mostly related to the National Guard and Army's presence there.

Interpretive Resources

The park website provides access to an excellent assortment of educational materials for K-12 teachers. In addition to printed materials, schools can request programs from the site's speakers bureau or access distance-learning opportunities (electronic field trips), and a virtual school tour. Park rangers conduct talks at libraries and schools across the state. Schools may also borrow traveling trunks with reproduction 1950s artifacts. Finally, the park provides educators professional development workshops on the Little Rock crisis history to create lesson plans and curriculum materials.

The site offers many resources to interpret women's history and women's experiences at Little Rock, including well written general booklets filled with photographs and primary sources produced by the National Park Service on the topics of the crisis, the Little Rock Nine, Daisy Bates, and the Women's Emergency Committee. Another covers black Philander Smith College, whose faculty tutored the Little Rock Nine so the teenagers could begin their school year at Central High with their white classmates.

Local newspaper publisher Daisy Bates, the state NAACP president during the crisis, played an important role in local, state, and national civil rights activism as a strategist, advisor, and



Phyllis Green and Mackenzie Green, wife and daughter of Little Rock Nine member Ernest Green, toured the new visitor information center in 2007, the fiftieth anniversary of the desegregation crisis. Behind them is the painting *America Cares* by George Hunt, commissioned to commemorate the fortieth anniversary. Courtesy of the National Park Service.

leader. The Bateses opened their home, now a National Historic Landmark, as a strategy center and gave moral support and comfort to the students and their families during this difficult period.

Bates and her husband, L. C. Bates, owned the *Arkansas State Press*, a prominent statewide black newspaper. As a member of the black press, she helped galvanize national moral and financial support from black leaders and white liberals outside of the South for the Little Rock Nine and their families, who suffered reprisals.

The bookstore sells current general and scholarly works on the American civil rights movement, African American history, Southern history, blacks in Arkansas, the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the Little Rock crisis, Daisy Bates, and school desegregation.

Interpretive Programs

Central High School continues to operate as a school. Park staff conduct tours twice daily for the general public and by appointment for organized groups by agreement with the school. The park's museum and visitor center provides a multimedia and multisensory approach to interpreting the Little Rock crisis. Beginning with the early American republic, exhibits trace the creation of a race-based system of American inequality from slavery through the Civil War and beyond. The site uses the American Constitution to explore American inequality, relying on the writings of leading Americans to analyze the African American struggle for freedom and equality. In the South, where black literacy had been punishable by death, free public education came with Reconstruction for both blacks and whites.

After Reconstruction, the exhibits focus primarily on public education and the birth nationwide of African American educational institutions. Black communities, churches, and



Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar, center, toured the site with Park Ranger Spirit Trickey-Rowan and her mother, Little Rock Nine member Minnijean Brown Trickey. Courtesy of the Department of Interior.

northern philanthropists such as Julius Rosenwald then helped build schools for blacks. The site features the crucial role women — black and white — played as teachers of freed people and later as reformers and community builders. Several exhibition panels feature white and black women in these roles, from American Missionary Association teachers to Freedmen's Bureau school teachers.

ideas of suffrage and voting to democracy and greater female participation in the democratic process and connects the women's rights movement to the movement for African American civil rights, both of which, obviously, include black women.

The museum exhibitions do an exceptional job of covering the national civil rights movement, broadening "civil rights" to include women, Native Americans, the disabled, and other groups. A prominent panel on the women's suffrage movement ties the

The park recently began an interpretive bike tour of the Little Rock Central High School Historic District and surrounding areas, including the homes of Daisy Bates and Fletcher Terry, founder of the Women's Emergency Committee. This tour interprets well the roles of women in their children's education and shows how their various views of segregation in-

fluenced their activism during the crisis. The bike tour expands visitors' understanding of 1950s and 1960s activism and illustrates how gender influenced the different perspectives on the crisis. Black and white mothers had very different ideas about the benefits and drawbacks of integration for their children; their understandings shaped their activism. Some white parents feared that integration would decrease the quality of education their children received; black parents sought greater opportunities integrated schools gave their children.

The site's website offers extensive information for park visitors and web browsers alike. This media-rich website shows primary source documents, historic photographs of the students and oral history videos – all including women. Junior ranger activities include the *Junior Ranger Gazette*. The park posts current educational materials and upcoming public programs. In planning their educational and public programs, the park ensures that women and women's voices are completely integrated and thoroughly represented.

The park recently began an interpretive bike tour of the Little Rock Central High School Historic District and surrounding areas.

The Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site uses various methods to interpret women's roles in Little Rock's crisis.

Minnijean Brown Trickey, one of the Little Rock Nine, often volunteers and speaks to groups visiting the site; her daughter, Spirit Trickey-Rowan, is an interpreter there. Programs feature the six women of the Little Rock Nine, and the site hosts a Daisy Bates Day program to commemorate this NAACP leader.

Other programs include a film series and Women's History Month programming. "Picture This . . . Framing the 'Reel' Civil Rights Movement," a film series, is offered throughout the year. Since 2008, the NPS has partnered with local organizations to present films featuring civil rights movement women, including *The Story of Ruby Bridges* and *Journey to Little Rock: The Untold Story of Minnijean Brown Trickey*. For Women's History Month, the site presents special programming. Valerie Red-Horse, member of the Cherokee Nation and president of Red-Horse Financial Group, has spoken on "Women and the Economy." Joanne Bland, former director of the National Voting Rights Museum and Institute in Selma, Alabama, has spoken on the importance of voting rights and the experiences of her family in the voting rights struggle in Selma.

Challenges & Reactions to Women's History

Central High School is natural venue for women's history, even though most people think of the story as a civil rights story, not a women's history story. Because girls and women played critical roles, there has been little or no resistance to including women in the story – it could not be told without mentioning women. A further opportunity exists, however, in

interpreting more deeply how gender roles in the African American and white communities shaped women's behaviors and how the crisis drew upon or expanded these roles. Due to shortage of space, broader discussion of gender roles occurs during tours and other programming more than in the exhibition itself.

Organizational Structure & Administrative Resources

The Little Rock Central High School NHS became a unit of the National Park Service in 1998 by Public Law 105-356. Managed by the National Park Service, the site has nine staff members and thirty-five volunteers with an annual visitation of 45,000-50,000. The 2009-2010 fiscal year budget was \$1,003,000.

Robin White is the current park superintendent for the Little Rock Central High School NHS. White has extensive experience in management, cultural resource preservation, and interpretation, and in building partnerships and collaboration. She previously worked at related Brown v. Board of Education NHS. Laura A. Miller, the park's former chief of interpretation and cultural resources, holds an M.A. in public history from University of Arkansas at Little Rock; her M.A. thesis analyzed the Women's Emergency Committee. At the park she worked with interpretive planners and exhibit designers to include women's voices throughout the site's interpretive exhibits.

The site partners with several entities:

- *The Little Rock School District* for educational programs using collaborative teams that include the district's teachers, social studies specialists, and curriculum specialists.
- *The Mosaic Templars Cultural Center*, a private museum located on the site of the national headquarters of this early twentieth-century black fraternal organization, for programs related to local African American history.
- *The University of Arkansas at Little Rock* (UALR) public history program for relevant oral histories and for student volunteers, seasonal guides, and graduate students assisting with research and interpretation.
- *Philander Smith College*, a local historically black college, for student volunteers and seasonal guides.
- *Related historic facilities*, including the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site in Topeka, Kansas; the National Archives and Records Administration William Jefferson Clinton Presidential Library and Museum in Little Rock; the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail; the Daisy Bates House National Historic Landmark; and the Fletcher Terry House National Historic Landmark.

Lessons Learned & Transferable to Other Sites

- **Be proactive.** Employ a proactive approach to including the stories of women in the interpretation of the entire site. Look for the places where women are historically located at the site and how the presence of those women affects the events or people at the site.
- **Do the research** and planning that provides a site its intellectual and legal foundation. Whether from their nonprofit incorporation documents or their congressional legislation, historic sites have legal, intellectual, and moral underpinnings that must be understood, articulated, and respected. This site significance must be meshed with the knowledge base available about a site and the needs of its tangible resources being preserved and of visitors/audiences being served. That mandate remains and must be reviewed and updated as new scholarship changes its knowledge base and as visitor needs change.
- **Broaden the story.** Instead of describing civil rights solely as an African American issue, use a broad definition based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, created by former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and United Nations General Assembly in 1948. This inclusive determination embraces women, the disabled, and other minority and ethnic groups in America. Such an approach allows a site to tell a broader, more inclusive story about the struggle for basic rights of a variety of citizens in America, including women.
- **Develop partnerships.** Little Rock Central High School NHS has been very successful in creating and sustaining collaborations and partnerships with cultural organizations in the state, the local school district, and local colleges and universities. In today's funding environment, collaborations allow organizations whose missions overlap to meet their clients' needs by sharing resources. Collaborate with organizations that champion women and women's issues, such as the YWCA, local women's clubs, and organizations or sororities.
- **Make sure** the site's interpretation of women represents a diverse group of their views, and develop storylines to reflect differences in race, class, and gender.
- **Work with local schools** and their students to strengthen research and public programs. Hire the best students as employees and encourage their development.

Research & Preservation Opportunities

Little Rock Central High School NHS has a completely processed and well documented collection and finding aid available for research. Many of the rangers are current or former students at UALR or Philander Smith College who have used the site's interpretive themes as topics for their academic projects.

Little Rock Central High School NHS offers many opportunities for internships and hands-on practical project experience in collections management, historic site interpretation, visitor services, and educational and public programming. Students interested in internships and project work should contact the park superintendent.

The Little Rock Central High School NHS skillfully uses its interpretive resources to place courageous, tenacious women at the center of this historic battle for equal access to public education. The interpretation of these women's actions remains crucial to understanding U.S. racial relations today.

Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site

2120 Daisy L. Gatson Bates Drive
Little Rock, AR 72202
501-396-3000
www.nps.gov/chsc

¹ Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site Long-Range Interpretive Plan (2004), pp. 6-9, <http://www.nps.gov/chsc/parkmgmt/upload/Long%20Range%20Interpretive%20Plan.pdf>, accessed 21 April 2011.

² America's Most Beautiful High School, In-Depth History of Little Rock Central High School, <http://www.nps.gov/archive/chsc/lrchshistoryindepth.html>, accessed 22 March 2011.

Spotlight on Revealing Women's History



This "mirror" evokes an 1857 scene of Julia Dent Grant torn between the views of her husband, Ulysses S. Grant, future Union general and president, and her slaveowning father, as the enslaved cook Kitty observes. Courtesy of the National Park Service.

Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site, St. Louis, MO

At Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site, traditional interpretation methods as well as modern technology provide visitor insight into the lives of women. Julia Dent Grant spent most of her childhood and early adult life at the country estate known then as White Haven. Additionally, African-American slaves, the majority of whom were female, lived and worked at White Haven prior to their emancipation.

Tours of the historic home provide one of the best opportunities for addressing the interactions between all of these individuals. In particular, the dining room immediately immerses visitors into an 1857 dinner table discussion between Ulysses Grant and his father-in-law, Frederick Dent. A "mirror" above the fireplace reflects a furnished dining room, with Grant and Dent at opposite ends of the table. Julia Dent Grant sits between her father and her husband, obviously torn between her upbringing in a slaveholding family and her love for her husband, who does not support slavery but even more does not want to see the Union dissolved. Coming in and out of the picture is the enslaved cook, Kitty, who is an unseen (by the whites) witness to the debate but who clearly understands the implications of the discussion for her life and other blacks.

Through the tangible resources of the structures and artifacts, the history of the women who lived and worked at White Haven is being told, helping visitors experience the complexity and turmoil of the past.



Julia Dent Grant was a partner, friend, and confidante to her husband throughout their lives together. Courtesy of the National Park Service.

www.nps.gov/ulsg

Yosemite National Park, CA

The park's written and visual history (and management) had been male dominated for years. In recent years, Yosemite's very active and successful federal women's program has supported the work of a passionate volunteer, Lois Orr, whose research has dramatically enhanced interpretation.

Native women have always been a strong part of the story in Yosemite. Some of the most notable historic artifacts in Yosemite's museum collection are the baskets created years ago by women such as Lucy Tulles and still today by Julia Parker. The story of Maria Lebrado Ydarte is



Maggie Tubuce Howard demonstrated acorn preparation and basket weaving at the Yosemite Museum from 1929-42. Courtesy of Yosemite Research Library.



Enduring the sexism typical of her time, Enid Michael worked as a seasonal ranger naturalist for two decades and oversaw the construction and development of the wildflower garden behind the museum. Courtesy of the Department of Interior, National Park Service Historic Photograph Collection, Harpers Ferry Center.

prominently featured in the new exhibit hall in the Yosemite Valley Visitor Center. The website features Maggie Tubuce Howard, “a Paiute born at Mono Lake [who] spent much of her life in Yosemite Valley [and who was] one of the first American Indian women to do cultural demonstrations.”

While naturalists Loye Miller and Harold Bryant are often credited with launching interpretation at Yosemite and the national parks, women also helped connect visitors with natural wonders. Claire Marie Hodges, the first female national park ranger, served in 1918. Enid Michael was a volunteer in 1920 and was then hired as a seasonal ranger naturalist from 1921 until World War II. A prolific writer on Yosemite natural history subjects, she produced 537 articles – the largest body of writing on Yosemite by any author. Michael taught for the Yosemite Field School of Natural History (with Bryant as its first director) from its inception in 1925 until the war.

www.nps.gov/yose

About the Authors

Dawn Castiglia Adiletta received a B.A. in history from the University of Rhode Island and M.A. in U.S. history from the University of Connecticut. She has worked in museums throughout southern New England for more than thirty years, most notably Old Sturbridge Village, where she was a member of the research department and provided interpretive training in women's roles in the early nineteenth century, and as the curator of the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center in Hartford, CT. She is a contributing editor at *Connecticut Explored*, a Connecticut history journal; the author of *Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Women's First Vote*, a biography for young adults; and co-author of *Massachusetts Quilts: Our Commonwealth*, edited by Lyn Bassett. She is a past board member of the National Collaborative for Women's History Sites.

Ellen Cronin received a Teacher Scholar grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities during her thirty-two-year career as a public school teacher. The award proved to be a gateway into an active "retired" life as an independent scholar focusing on the history of manufacturing and economic development in Delaware County, PA. She has produced a history of early mills in the area, a history of inventors and manufacturers in the Sellers Family, and an oral history of women workers in local factories during World War II. Currently, while fundraising for the restoration of a local historic site, Sellers Hall, she is researching the role of both the male and female members of the Sellers family in the founding of the Pennsylvania Abolitionist Society and their participation in the Underground Railroad in Philadelphia and Upper Darby, PA.

Mary Melcher, Ph.D., is the historian for the Arizona Women's Heritage Trail, a statewide project which links women's history with historic sites. She also acts as a historical consultant, curating exhibits, collecting oral histories, and writing reports for historical agencies. Mary serves on the board of the NCWHS and is the co-chair of the NCWHS Trails Committee.

Tara Y. White teaches American history and African American studies at Middle Tennessee State University. Her research explores the preservation activities of black women's clubs during the twentieth century. She has worked as a historian and a museum professional for more than fifteen years. White holds a Ph.D. in public history (MTSU); an M.A. in history museum studies from the Cooperstown Graduate Program at SUNY-Oneonta, NY; and a B.S. in biology from the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

About the Editors

Heather A. Huyck, Ph.D., now chair of the National Collaborative for Women's History Sites, is a public historian, professor, and former NPS who has visited 313 NPS units. She teaches at the College of William & Mary and researches Maggie Lena Walker.

Margaret (Peg) Strobel, Ph.D., activist and academic, taught women's studies and served as director of Jane Addams Hull-House Museum at the University of Illinois at Chicago until her retirement. She is a former chair of the Collaborative.

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Join the NCWHS to Help Preserve and Promote Women's History Sites

The **National Collaborative for Women's History Sites** (NCWHS) supports and advocates the preservation and interpretation of places, collections, and organizations that bear witness to women's participation in American history. By making women's lives visible at historic sites, all women's experiences and potential can be fully valued – and our history can be truly understood. The NCWHS is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) educational institution. Contributions are tax deductible. We welcome both organizational and individual members. Please visit our website for more information: www.ncwhs.org.



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Women's History? Historic Sites? *Of course!*

Historic sites, whether mansions or battlefields, reveal women's past in many ways. No historic site lacks women's history. In fact, most are full of women if we just know how to look.

Assume that women were present – and integral to the story. Research thoroughly to get an accurate picture of what women did. Then, integrate women's history fully and seamlessly, not just in one physical space, special topic, or single month. Good interpretation presents a multiplicity of women's voices and recognizes how the lives of the women depicted influenced the world today and the people around us.

Revealing Women's History suggests ways to interpret past history and respond to present visitors. This exceptionally well researched account presents varied and useful "best practices" for today through five extended case studies and twelve shorter spotlights.



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