

ABOUT AMERICA

WOMEN of INFLUENCE



Pocahontas, 1614

Pocahontas, daughter of the Native Prince
was captured by the Jamestown colonists, and
married and baptized in the Christian faith, and
went to live with the English.

TORY.
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WOMEN *of* INFLUENCE

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INTRODUCTION



In recent years more and more societies all over the world have begun to recognize the vital contributions of women to commerce, their communities, and civic life. Whether it be Afghan women voting in a presidential election or women starting micro-businesses in Ethiopia, the worldwide trend toward greater equality is clear. Yet “the denial of women’s basic human rights is persistent and widespread,” as a 2005 United Nations Population Fund statement put it.

This publication offers a glimpse at how women in one country — the United States — have helped shape their society. These notable women — from the Native-American Sacagawea, who guided white settlers through a vast wilderness; to Sojourner Truth, who fought for the end of slavery and equal

“Women are the real architects of society.”

— Writer and abolitionist
Harriet Beecher Stowe

rights for all; to Rosalyn Yalow, winner of the Nobel Prize in Medicine for a new technique for measuring substances in the blood — believed that they had a contribution to make and did not shrink from the obstacles in their way. This account of their accomplishments is a reminder that all societies benefit from the talents and expertise of their women.

GUIDING LIGHTS TO A NEW WORLD

The survival of the American colonies and later the newly born United States was never guaranteed — far from it. Settlers in the early 17th century — even in flourishing outposts — could count on harsh living conditions, scarcity of food, disease, and toil. The “lost colony” of Roanoke, Virginia, is ample proof of the difficulties they faced. Two centuries later, in the 1800s, Americans would trek westward across the Mississippi River from the relative comfort of established cities, seeking new territories and access to the Pacific coast. The survival of the colonies and the ability to explore western territories were critical to the establishment and growth of the United States. Two young Native-American women — Pocahontas and Sacagawea — played a vital role in these efforts.



Pocahontas, after a 1616 engraving by Simon van de Passe.



The Sacagawea gold dollar coin, first minted in 2000.

Both women would act as beacons, literally and figuratively, to the settlers they encountered. While still a child, Pocahontas would serve as a bridge between the first European arrivals and local Indian tribes, saving the life of one explorer and acting as a go-between during times of tense relations between the two groups. Sacagawea would take part in the first U.S. expedition to map the lands west of the Mississippi. She lent her skills in tribal languages and knowledge of western territories to guide the first American explorers safely to the Pacific and back.

Pocahontas

A Symbol of Peace

Born: c. 1595/6; Died: 1617

Born around 1595 in the Algonquin tribe of American Indians, Pocahontas became the subject of legend. She was, in fact, a woman who sought to bring peace to the lives of the United States' first settlers and to her own people.

Pocahontas was the daughter of Powhatan, a powerful chief of the Algonquin tribe in the territory of present-day Virginia. Although nobody can be sure, she may have seen European settlers for the first time in the spring of 1607, when Captain John Smith landed with other settlers at Jamestown. Smith himself later would describe a decisive moment in his life during which the young Pocahontas played a critical role.

According to Smith, he was captured by the Algonquin tribe and threatened with death. Rushing forward and placing herself between Smith and his would-be executioner, young Pocahontas pleaded for the captain's life. Her wish was granted and a friendship developed. Accounts say that Pocahontas went on to befriend the new settlers, bringing them food and delivering messages from her father from time to time.

As tensions arose between the settlers and the Algonquin tribe, an Englishman by the name of Samuel Argall kidnapped the young girl, holding her for ransom until he agreed to terms of settlement. After relations between the Algonquin and settlers had improved, Pocahontas was married to Englishman John Rolfe. Although the timing is unclear, Pocahontas had, by the time of her marriage, converted to Christianity under the name "Rebecca." Importantly for the future of the United States, the marriage helped to calm tensions between settlers and the Algonquin.

In 1616, she made a well-publicized journey to England by ship, along with her husband and their young son. Pocahontas was presented to King James I and to the royal family. Perhaps the most



Pocahontas

thrilling moment for her was meeting Captain Smith, whom she had believed dead for many years. Tragically, Pocahontas contracted a fatal disease on the trip home and died in March 1617. She was buried in Gravesend, England.

Despite her short life, Pocahontas's romantic story continues to appeal to the American imagination. It has become the subject of much myth-making, as witnessed by the many stories, books, paintings, and even films — most recently *The New World* — based on her life, and the towns, school buildings, and a Civil War fort named after her.

Sacagawea

An Explorer of Extraordinary Talent

Born: c. 1786; Died: December 20, 1812

A member of the Lemhi band of the Shoshone Indian tribe in present-day Idaho, Sacagawea demonstrated her strength and intelligence during the 1804-1806 Lewis and Clark expedition to explore the lands leading to the Pacific Coast of North America.

Early in her life, Sacagawea (a name possibly meaning “Boat Launcher” or “Bird Woman”) was captured by a rival tribe. She was either sold or traded to a French-Canadian fur trader by the name of Toussaint Charbonneau, whom she later married. At approximately 16 years old, Sacagawea gave birth to a son in the vicinity of Fort Mandan in the Dakota territories of the western United States.

In 1805, her husband was hired to assist a newly formed expedition, led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, and charged by President Thomas Jefferson with finding a passage to the Pacific. Sacagawea, who spoke several Indian dialects, quickly proved herself — as an interpreter, as a guide, as a symbol to various tribes of the expedition’s peaceful intentions, and even as a diplomat when the expedition encountered the Lemhi band, over which her brother was now chief. She arranged for the Lemhi to provide horses, provisions, and shelter, the very things that made the journey possible. Sacagawea transported and cared for her infant son, Jean Baptiste, throughout the difficult journey.

Following the expedition, Sacagawea and her husband lived for a time in St. Louis before returning to the Dakotas. She is widely believed to have died in 1812, although an elderly woman claiming to be Sacagawea passed away in 1884. In 2000, an artist’s imaginary rendering of Sacagawea cradling her son was added to U.S. currency on a dollar coin.



Sacagawea, from a drawing by E.S. Paxson.

“... the sight of This Indian woman, wife to one of our interprs. confirmed those people of our friendly intentions, as no woman ever accompanies a war party of Indians in this quarter.”

October 19, 1805, William Clark

THE COLONIAL ERA

The European immigrants who colonized British North America in the 17th century brought the Old Continent's social and political mores with them. But soon the colonists began to drift away from England, influenced by their new environment, the mix of nationalities and religions, and English traditions of political liberty. An American identity began to emerge. It encompassed, among other traits, increased religious tolerance, an affinity for political liberty and representative government, social mobility, and a tough individualism. This period also saw the establishment of the foundations of American culture and education.

The thousands of women colonists of this era made huge contributions to the settlements of the New World. They raised children and educated them as they cleared the wilderness alongside their husbands, built cabins, and made or traded basic necessities. Women were the mainstays of church and community.



Anne Marbury Hutchinson

Painting of Anne Dudley Bradstreet by LaDonna Gulley Warrick.

The achievements of the two women named Anne — Hutchinson and Bradstreet — highlight the courage, confidence, and devotion to learning it took to create a nation out of primitive surroundings. Hutchinson was an early advocate of religious freedom who refused to betray her principles despite the threat of exile. The poet Bradstreet, in turn, was the first to touch on the New World experiences that give U.S. literature its distinctive voice.

Anne Marbury Hutchinson

“Courageous Exponent of Civil Liberty and Religious Toleration”

Born: 1591; Died: August/September 1643

The core American concepts of freedom of religion and freedom of speech had one of their earliest advocates in Anne Marbury Hutchinson. Born in England to a dissenting Anglican clergyman and his wife, she married the merchant William Hutchinson in 1612 and bore him 15 children, according to most sources. Yearning for greater freedom to practice her religious beliefs, in 1634 she persuaded her husband to follow her beloved minister, John Cotton, to the Massachusetts Bay Colony, today's Boston.

Then her troubles began. Well-educated and not afraid to speak her mind, Anne Hutchinson began inviting devout women to her home to reflect on Cotton's sermons. As her reputation grew, the gatherings attracted men, too, including the governor, Henry Vane. In addition to stepping outside the bounds of conventional women's behavior, her denunciation of the colony's ministers and her belief that “he who has God's grace in his heart cannot go astray” set her at odds with the religious establishment. They moved to prosecute the woman Massachusetts's new governor, John Winthrop, criticized for having “a very voluble tongue, more bold than a man.” According to Harvard professor Rev. Peter J. Gomes, at her trial “she bested the best of the ... Colony's male preachers, theologians, and magistrates.” Despite her vigorous defense of her beliefs, she was excommunicated and banished in 1638, and moved with her family and other followers to Rhode Island. She is considered one of the founders of that colony, the first to establish complete separation of church and state and freedom of religion in what would become the United States. After her husband's death in 1642, Anne Hutchinson moved to Long Island, in New York. Tragically, she and all of her children save one



Woodcut depicting Anne Hutchinson's sentencing to be banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

were killed there in an Indian raid.

“Courageous Exponent of Civil Liberty and Religious Toleration” says the inscription at the bottom of a statue raised in her honor in Boston. But the most fitting tribute to Anne Hutchinson's influence — proof that her ideals ultimately prevailed over her opponents' — is the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

Anne Dudley Bradstreet

“The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America”

Born: c. 1612; Died: September 16, 1672

The first important American poet, Anne Dudley Bradstreet was born in England of prosperous parents who had embraced the Puritan faith. She was married at 16 to Simon Bradstreet. With her parents and husband, she sailed to North America in 1630 as a member of the Puritan group that founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Unlike most women at that time, Anne Bradstreet grew up with a love of books and received an excellent education in literature, history, and the classics. She wrote poems while she raised eight children, kept a home, and served as a hostess for her husband, a governor of the colony.

Her brother-in-law took her poems to England without her knowledge. They were published there in 1650 as *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America*. Ironically, these — the only poems published during her lifetime — are today considered her least interesting. Inspired by English metaphysical poets, they are long and often dull, dealing with conventional subjects such as religion as seen through the seasons. Contemporary critics and defenders of her work prefer her witty poems on daily life and her warm and loving verses to her husband and children, including one on her feelings upon the death of a month-old grandchild.

Her writings and the few records that remain about Anne Bradstreet reveal her to be a woman of high intelligence and courage. She was painfully aware of her society’s disapproval of women who ventured beyond their domestic duties. In one of her poems, she proclaimed, “I am obnoxious to each carping tongue,/That says my hand a needle better fits!” And she dared to remain a friend of Anne Hutchinson, even as the men in the colony, including her husband and father, worked to banish the dissenter from their ranks.

Anne Bradstreet’s literary gifts; her exploration of the universal themes of devotion to family,



Left, Anne Bradstreet, stained glass in St. Botolph's Church, Boston, Lincolnshire, England. Right, the frontispiece to the 1650 edition of *The Tenth Muse*.

To my Dear and Loving Husband

If ever two were one, then surely we.
If ever man were lov'd by wife, then thee.
If ever wife was happy in a man,
Compare with me, ye women, if you can.
I prize thy love more than whole Mines of gold,
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.
My love is such that Rivers cannot quench,
Nor ought but love from thee give recompence.
Thy love is such I can no way repay.
The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.
Then while we live, in love let's so persevere,
That when we live no more, we may live ever.

“To my Dear and Loving Husband” is reprinted from *Several Poems*. Anne Bradstreet. Boston: John Foster, 1678.

love, and loss; and her courage in standing by controversial friends make her an attractive model for women — and men — everywhere.

BIRTH OF A NATION

Great men — leaders like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton — dominate accounts of the War for Independence (1775-1783) that gave birth to the United States of America. These Founding Fathers also have the starring role during the difficult period that followed independence, when the young nation struggled to give legal form to the ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence. They wrote the Constitution with its Bill of Rights, persuaded the autonomous 13 states to join in a “more perfect Union,” and created the nation’s democratic government.

American women played a large, if until recently often unacknowledged, role during this era. Many tended the family farms and businesses while the men were fighting the war or fashioning the peace. Others went to battle side by side with the men, nursing the sick and burying the dead.



Portrait of Abigail Adams by Benjamin Blythe, 1766.



Margaret Corbin, illustration by Herbert Knotel.

In the stories of Abigail Adams and Margaret Corbin, we see that women in the revolutionary era were as ardently patriotic as the men and were equally determined to enjoy “liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” Adams with a pen and Corbin behind a cannon showed that women were valuable partners in the creation of a democratic nation that today guarantees equal rights to all its citizens.

Abigail Smith Adams

“Remember the Ladies ...”

Born: November 11, 1744; Died: October 28, 1818

Wife of the second president of the United States and mother of the sixth, Abigail Adams’s multiple claims to fame also rest on her championing of women’s rights, including the right to an education. Her voluminous correspondence is full of wit and vivid insights into the early years of her beloved nation. She shared and helped shape her husband’s political thought and career, and excelled in the management of their farm and finances.

Born at Weymouth, Massachusetts, Abigail Adams lacked a formal education, as did most women of that time. She was, nevertheless, an ardent reader from an early age. She married John Adams in 1764. Their 54-year union — as reflected in their letters to each other — was warm, loving, and intellectually lively. Her husband’s frequent travels meant long separations, so she raised their four surviving children and managed their home affairs on her own, all the while acting as her husband’s chief political confidant. In 1776, she made her strongest appeal for women’s rights in a letter to Adams, then a member of the Continental Congress that declared independence from Britain. “In the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies,” she wrote, “and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors.” Her plea was the first call for the equality that American women would gradually achieve. When George Washington’s army was facing certain destruction later that year, she boldly wrote that the British forces instead would be opposed by “a race of Amazons in America.”

Abigail Adams joined her husband in Paris and London when he served as diplomatic representative of the new nation. She dutifully acted as his hostess when he became the country’s first vice president, in 1789, and president, in 1797.



Engraved portrait of First Lady and author Abigail Adams.

Defeated by Thomas Jefferson in the 1800 election, Adams retired to their home in Massachusetts, where he and Abigail enjoyed their remaining years until her death in 1818. On that sad occasion, her son John Quincy Adams, a future president, paid her this tender tribute in his journal, “There is not a virtue that can abide in the female heart but it was the ornament of hers.”

Margaret Cochran Corbin

“The First American Woman to Take a Soldier’s Part in the War for Liberty”

Born: November 12, 1751; Died: c. 1800

Margaret Cochran Corbin fought alongside her husband in the first two years of the War for Independence. She was the first woman whose valor and sacrifice were recognized with a U.S. government pension for disabled soldiers.

Born near Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, Corbin was orphaned at age five when Indian raiders killed both her parents. She married John Corbin when she was 21 and accompanied him when he joined the First Company of Pennsylvania Artillery for service in the Continental Army. Like the other women who followed the troops, she cooked, washed clothes, and tended the sick or wounded. On November 16, 1776, British and Hessian troops attacked Fort Mifflin, New York, and John Corbin, one of the soldiers firing cannons in defense, was shot and killed. Margaret Corbin, at his side to help him load the cannon, took over loading and firing the cannon until she was hit by grapeshot, which tore her shoulder and wounded her in the chest and jaw.

Her fellow soldiers took her to a hospital in Philadelphia, but she never fully recovered from her wounds, and was left with a disabled left arm. In recognition of her bravery, the Continental Congress granted her a lifetime soldier’s half-pay pension. She was formally mustered out of the Continental Army in April 1783. Known by neighbors as “Captain Molly,” she died near West Point, New York, probably before her 50th birthday. In 1926, the Daughters of the American Revolution re-interred her remains at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. A bronze plaque to “the first American woman to take a soldier’s part in the War for Liberty”



Corbin in a sketch by Herbert Knotel.

Margaret Corbin’s grave at the West Point Cemetery in New York.

commemorates her courage and initiative near the place of the battle, in today’s Fort Tryon Park, New York City.

BREAKING THE CHAINS OF SLAVERY

At the mid-19th century, America was paradoxically both a freedom-loving and a slave-holding society. In places along the eastern seaboard, slavery was more than 200 years old and an integral part of the economy of the South. But as the century advanced, an increasingly assertive abolitionist movement called attention to the gulf between the nation's ideals and the practice of slavery in the Southern half. Tensions grew and, in 1861, erupted into civil war. It took four years of bloody warfare before the North, under Abraham Lincoln's leadership, prevailed, a result that sealed the end of slavery in the United States.

Women were vital to the emancipation movement, and several stood out as leaders. Former slaves Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, featured in the next two pages, gave personal testimony to the evils of slavery. A third figure, Harriet Beecher Stowe, a white woman, wrote a famous book, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in 1852. The novel inspired widespread enthusiasm for the antislavery cause, particularly in the rising generation of voters in the North. It secured Stowe's place in history as an ardent abolitionist. And, just like Tubman and Truth, she became a celebrity, speaking against slavery at many gatherings.



Harriet Tubman



Sojourner Truth

The freeing of the black population and the granting of voting rights to male African Americans made many women recognize their own unequal position in society. Emancipation adherents like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Tubman, and Truth later became advocates for the emerging women's rights movement.

Times were changing and women seized the opportunity to take increasing control of their lives. By great personal sacrifice and perseverance, women like Tubman and Truth dedicated their lives to noble goals: freedom from the tyranny of slavery, and human rights for all.

Sojourner Truth

Antislavery Activist, Advocate of Women's Rights

Born: c. 1797; Died: November 26, 1883

An ardent abolitionist and a proponent of women's rights, Sojourner Truth found her voice in the early 1840s. She was born a slave named Isabella Baumfree. She took the name of Sojourner Truth because she felt God had called her "to travel up and down the land, showing the people their sins and being a sign unto them."

After a difficult life as a youth in Ulster County, New York, she labored for a succession of five masters until New York State abolished slavery on the Fourth of July, 1827. Soon she moved to New York City and began to speak out against the evils of slavery. She was an imposing figure — almost six feet tall — with a powerful, resonant voice, who vividly described the abuses of slavery and the hardships she had endured.

Truth was self-educated and possessed a quick wit and a charisma that often drew large crowds. Facing a heckler in an audience once who said he did not care for her anti-slavery speech anymore than he would a bite from a flea, Truth replied, "Perhaps not, but Lord willing I'll keep you scratching."

A staunch supporter of suffrage, Sojourner Truth became a national symbol for strong black women, and for all strong women. Her speech, "Ain't I a Woman," given at the 1851 Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, has become a classic text on women's rights.

During the Civil War she gathered supplies for black volunteer regiments and she was involved in various political causes. In tribute to her efforts, President Lincoln received her at the White House in 1864. She was appointed to the National Freedman's Relief Association in the same year, where she worked to better conditions for all African Americans.



Abraham Lincoln reading the Bible with abolitionist Sojourner Truth. Baltimore's black community presented this print to the president to commemorate the Emancipation Proclamation.

After the Civil War, she set out on a final unsuccessful crusade to gain support for her dream of a land distribution program for former slaves. By this time she had made her home in Battle Creek, Michigan, where, surrounded by her family and friends, she died in 1883.

On the 200th anniversary of Sojourner Truth's birth, NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory announced that the name for their Mars Pathfinder rover would be "Sojourner," a fitting tribute to the 19th-century abolitionist and champion of women's rights.

Harriet Tubman

Leader of the Underground Railroad

Born: c. 1820; Died: March 10, 1913

Born a slave in Dorchester County, Maryland, Harriet Tubman was an extraordinary African-American woman who courageously freed herself from slavery by running away to safe haven in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In 1850, when the Fugitive Slave Act made it illegal to help a runaway slave, Tubman decided to join the “Underground Railroad,” the network of people who helped slaves to their freedom.

The Underground Railroad, neither underground nor a railroad, was an elaborate and secret series of houses, tunnels, and roads set up by abolitionists and former slaves as a way out of the oppressive South. Tubman knew these routes so well that she was never captured and never failed to deliver her passengers to safety. She began an intensive speaking tour in 1860, calling not only for the abolition of slavery, but also for a redefinition of women’s rights.

She guided 300 slaves through the Underground Railroad in the years leading up to the Civil War. Tubman made the perilous trip to slave country 19 times. On one trip she rescued her 70-year-old parents, bringing them to Auburn, New York. Auburn became her home, as well.

In 1861, when the Civil War began, she served as a nurse, spy, and scout for the Union forces. Well acquainted with the countryside from her days as a “conductor” on the Underground Railroad, she was considered especially valuable as a scout.

Owing to inefficiency and perhaps lingering racial discrimination, Tubman was denied a government pension after the war and struggled financially for many years. She pressed to advance the status of women and blacks, to shelter orphans and elderly poor people.



Harriet Tubman, far left, whose talents as Underground Railroad scout freed 300 slaves before the Civil War.



Painting by Paul Collins of Harriet Tubman's Underground Railroad.

Eventually she did receive a small pension from the U.S. Army, most of which she spent in 1908 to build a wooden structure that served as a home for the aged and needy in Auburn, New York. She worked in that home and was herself cared for in it the last few years before her death in 1913.

A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO VOTE

The 19th-century drive to secure equal rights for women arose in part as well-educated women involved themselves in other social issues. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott met in 1840 at an anti-slavery conference in London. Unhappy at being excluded from activities of the convention because of their gender, Stanton, Mott, and other female delegates staged a walkout, then began planning a similar convention on women's rights. It took place in Seneca Falls, New York, eight years later.

The Seneca Falls Convention drafted a Declaration of Sentiments based on the U.S. Declaration of Independence that had, in 1776, separated the United States from Britain. The declaration set the agenda for the movement: the right of women to their children in the event of a divorce, the right to testify against a cruel husband in court, the right of women to enter various kinds of jobs and to keep their salaries instead of turning money over to their husbands, and — the most controversial at that time — the right of women to vote.

The political insight of Stanton and her equally famous partner in the 19th-century women's rights movement, Susan B. Anthony, was that in order to change society, you have to change public opinion first. Both women were bent on propagating ideas: Stanton through her writing, Anthony through personal leadership and extensive lecture tours. In addition, both women realized that freedom and liberty for some groups essentially means freedom and liberty for all groups. Arguing for the abolition of Negro slavery, they aimed to convince Americans in the late 19th century that women, like former slaves, deserved well-defined and legally protected rights.



Left, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and right, Susan B. Anthony, c. 1870s.

Finally, they both realized that universal, fair, and free elections are necessary to allow all members of society to express their needs in an effective way.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton

“The Mother of Woman Suffrage”

Born: November 12, 1815; Died: October 26, 1902

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was one of the major forces behind the empowerment of women in the United States and throughout the world. In particular, she was a founder and leader of the 19th-century women’s rights movement, which in 1920 won American women the right to vote.

Born in 1815 to a father who was a prominent New York state congressman and judge, Stanton read law informally under her father’s tutelage, and discovered an early vocation to reform the law of the day so it would treat men and women equally. In 1840, she married Henry Brewster Stanton, a lawyer, orator, and abolitionist. This marriage gave her a further entrée into politically progressive circles. In 1848, Elizabeth Stanton helped persuade the New York legislature to enact laws protecting the property rights of married women. In July of that year, along with feminist Lucretia Mott, she helped lead the first women’s rights convention in the United States and probably the world, in the New York town of Seneca Falls. The convention passed numerous resolutions appealing for rights for women, and — significantly — a demand for female suffrage (the right to vote) in the Declaration of Sentiments, a document modeled on the U.S. Declaration of Independence.

Elizabeth Stanton gave birth to seven children between 1842 and 1859, but this scarcely diminished her enthusiasm for her work. During the U.S. Civil War, she and her husband worked to abolish slavery, later splitting with other progressives over the lack of emphasis given to the votes-for-women issue.

Around 1850, Stanton began her association with Susan B. Anthony, also a leader in the movement to give women the right to vote. Their 50-year-long collaboration benefited from Stanton’s skills as the better orator and writer and Anthony’s as the organizer and tactician. “I forged the



Elizabeth Cady Stanton, in a photo from her book, *Eighty Years and More: 1815-1897*.

thunderbolts,” Stanton said of their partnership, “and she fired them.” Stanton became famous as president of the National Woman Suffrage Association, and also lectured on topics such as maternity, divorce law, and the social effect of liquor, which some felt destroyed homes, marriages, and lives. After 1880 she retired to collaborate with Anthony on the *History of Woman Suffrage*. She died in 1902, having created a national agenda for women’s political and social equality that was to be realized in decades following.

Susan Brownell Anthony

“Incomparable Organizer” of Women’s Rights Movement

Born: February 15, 1820; Died: March 13, 1906

Like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony came from the Northeast, and began her life under the tutelage of a strong-willed father. Born in Adams, Massachusetts, Anthony grew up in the home of a successful businessman, Quaker, and abolitionist. She was known as a gifted child, reportedly able to read and write at the age of three.

In her mid-20s Anthony began a teaching career, eventually settling in the Rochester, New York, area as the headmistress of a local school. She was drawn towards the temperance movement, a political and religious movement that viewed alcohol consumption as the root of social and familial ills, and campaigned against the “bottle.” Feeling marginalized and unable to speak in a male-dominated organization, Anthony and some friends founded the Woman’s State Temperance Society of New York. Around 1850 she met Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and joined her in the larger crusade for women’s rights.

Unlike Stanton, Anthony never married, and put all her time and energy into political organizing. Anthony worked as a member of the American Anti-Slavery Society from 1856 until the outbreak of the U.S. Civil War in 1861 and continued to work for slaves’ emancipation during the war. With Stanton, she engaged in petition drives for women’s rights, founded a progressive magazine, *The Revolution*, and helped organize the New York Working Women’s Association. With the adoption in 1870 of the 15th Amendment, all citizens were guaranteed the right to vote regardless of “race, color, or previous condition of servitude,” but not regardless of gender. Appalled at this situation, Anthony took direct action, leading a group of women to the polls in Rochester.



Susan B. Anthony, 1899.

Arrested and awaiting trial, she took advantage of the publicity to begin a lecture tour. In 1873, she again engaged in civil disobedience, again trying to vote. She was denied the right to testify at her own trial because of her sex and given a light fine, which she refused to pay. Spurred on by the fight and the attendant publicity, she worked more vigorously than ever to secure American women the right to vote — through national organizations and individual lecture tours in eastern states and western territories.

In 1888, Anthony organized the International Council of Women and in 1904 the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, bringing her crusade to the international level with meetings in London and Berlin. She died in 1906 — four years after Stanton — but their work paved the way for the ratification of the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which, in 1920, granted American women the right to vote.

A ROLE IN GOVERNMENT

The first half of the 20th century saw the United States transformed into a world power after emerging victorious from two world wars and overcoming a depression. Economic and social reforms gave workers and their families improved standards of living and African-Americans increasing hope that, at last, they could secure racial equality.

These years also saw women making breakthrough gains in fields long considered outside their traditional roles as wives, mothers, and caretakers. Many attended college or took up jobs in industry while the men fought World War II. Winning the vote in 1920 inspired women to countless other victories in the arenas of politics and government. The western state of Montana, which gave women the vote decades before the nation as a whole did in 1920, elected Jeannette Rankin as the first female representative to Congress. Soon hundreds and then thousands of women ran for city, county, state, and national office. These included Connecticut's Ella Grasso, the first woman elected as governor on her own right; Wilma Mankiller, the first female principal chief of a Native-American nation; and several who have run for president or vice-president of the United States, including Shirley Chisholm and Elizabeth Dole. Appointees to office



Jeannette Rankin



Hattie Caraway



Eleanor Roosevelt



Sandra Day O'Connor



Wilma Mankiller

like Eleanor Roosevelt at the United Nations, Sandra Day O'Connor in the Supreme Court, and Condoleezza Rice at the State Department also are among the many notable women whose talents have enriched political life in the United States and abroad. But their stories start with trailblazers like Jeannette Rankin and Hattie Caraway.

Jeannette Pickering Rankin

First Woman Member of the U.S. Congress

Born: June 11, 1880; Died: May 18, 1973

Jeannette Rankin took her seat in the U.S. House of Representatives — the first woman to be elected to either chamber — on April 2, 1917. It would be another three years before women throughout the United States earned the right to vote.

Rankin, born in Montana, was an energetic young woman with a zest for politics and a life-long devotion to feminist and pacifist causes. With a degree from the New York School of Philanthropy (later Columbia University's School of Social Work), she became a social worker in Seattle, in Washington State. To gain first-hand knowledge of her clients' condition, she worked for a while as a seamstress. Rankin joined the 1910 suffrage drive in Washington and led the successful campaign in 1914 for women's suffrage in Montana. The new women voters in Montana helped Rankin become one of the few Republicans elected to Congress in 1916.

Seeing it as her "special duty" to speak for American women, she helped draft legislation helping women and children and supported a constitutional amendment to give women the right to vote. She did not stay in Congress long enough to see suffrage extended to all American women in 1920, however. Voters rejected her bid to become a senator in 1918, probably because of her vote against U.S. entry into the First World War a year earlier.

Rankin returned to social work and to reform organizations, such as the National Consumers' League, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and — in 1919 — attended the Second International Congress of Women in Zurich. Re-elected to Congress in 1940, she cast the only vote in Congress against war on Japan after the attack on Pearl Harbor. With her political career ended by this unpopular vote, Rankin



Jeannette Rankin addresses a rally at Union Square, New York, September 1924.

devoted the rest of her life to her favorite causes. At age 86, for instance, she participated in the March on Washington opposing the Vietnam War.

Jeannette Rankin understood the importance of engaging women's talents and expertise to build better societies. "Men and women are like right and left hands; it doesn't make sense not to use both," she said. In her will, she left money to ensure that women could get an education to help improve society. The Jeannette Rankin Foundation, one of the many legacies of this determined and committed American, has been providing educational opportunity to low-income women since it was chartered in 1976.

Hattie Ophelia Wyatt Caraway

First Woman Elected to U.S. Senate

Born: February 1, 1878; Died: December 21, 1950

Hattie Caraway was the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate in her own right.

A native of Tennessee, she earned a degree from Dickson Normal College. There, she met Thaddeus H. Caraway, married him in 1902, and had three sons. The family moved to Arkansas, where Thaddeus Caraway was elected to the U.S. Congress in 1912, and to the U.S. Senate in 1920. After he died unexpectedly in 1931, Arkansas Governor Harvey Parnell appointed Hattie Caraway to her late husband's seat. A special election January 12, 1932, confirmed her appointment. Before Hattie Caraway was elected, only one woman — Rebecca Latimer Felton — had served as a courtesy appointment for one day, also as a result of a senator's death.

In contrast to the outspoken Jeannette Rankin, Hattie Caraway made no speeches nor did she take on unpopular causes. Such was her restraint, as a matter of fact, that she earned the nickname "Silent Hattie." She was a diligent public servant, however, taking her responsibilities seriously and building a reputation for integrity. A Democrat, she routinely supported President Franklin D. Roosevelt and New Deal legislation on behalf of veterans and organized labor.

"Silent Hattie" spoke up and took everyone by surprise on May 9, 1932. Invited to become the first woman to preside over the Senate, she announced to the reporters gathered for the event that she was running for re-election. She won that election, thanks in part to Senator Huey Long of Louisiana, who campaigned hard for her. In the 1940s she



Sen. Hattie Caraway, shown with Sen. Joseph Guffey (left), as she becomes the first woman to preside over an open meeting of a Senate Committee in Washington, D.C., February 26, 1936.

signed on as a co-sponsor of the proposed Equal Rights Amendment. She left the Senate in 1945, after being defeated by William Fulbright. In a typical understatement, she summed up her fourth-place showing, "The people are speaking."

Her career in public service was not over, however. Roosevelt appointed her to the U.S. (federal) Employees' Compensation Commission and later to the Employees' Compensation Appeals Board. In January 1950, she suffered a stroke and resigned her post. She died at the close of that year. Her correspondence and other papers tracing her years in office were published under the title *Silent Hattie Speaks: The Personal Journal of Senator Hattie Caraway*.

Anna Eleanor Roosevelt

“First Lady of the World”

Born: October 11, 1884; Died: November 7, 1962

Born to a rich and influential family in New York City, Anna Eleanor Roosevelt transformed the role of first lady during her husband Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s presidency of the United States (1932-1945). She became an inspiration to millions around the world by giving a voice to the powerless: minorities, women, the poor, and the disadvantaged. She was a controversial figure to others because of her dedication to human rights, civil rights, and women’s rights.

Orphaned at the age of 10, Eleanor Roosevelt grew up shy and insecure. She followed her family’s tradition of community service, teaching in a settlement house before marrying her outgoing cousin Franklin in 1905. They had six children, one of whom died as an infant. Her husband’s election to the New York State Senate in 1910 launched her career as political helpmate.

Several of her biographers see her traumatic discovery in 1918 of her husband’s affair with her social secretary as the spur behind Eleanor’s expanded social activism, but others point to her education and expanding network of friends as her inspiration. When Franklin Roosevelt was stricken with poliomyelitis in 1921, she turned increasingly to politics, to further his career and her ideals of social justice.

Once Roosevelt was elected president, Eleanor toured a country devastated by the Great Depression. She reported back to him on conditions and tirelessly promoted equal rights for women and minorities, child welfare, and housing reform. She became the first president’s wife to hold regular press conferences, to write a syndicated column (“My Day”) and do radio commentary, to go on the lecture circuit, and to address a political convention. She used symbolism to great effect: In 1939, when the Daughters of the American Revolution banned African-American



Eleanor Roosevelt regarded her work on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as her greatest legacy.

singer Marian Anderson from performing in their auditorium because of her race, Eleanor Roosevelt resigned from the organization. She suggested that Anderson sing at the Lincoln Memorial instead, in a concert attended by 75,000 people.

After Franklin’s death, President Harry Truman appointed her a delegate to the United Nations. She served as chairman of the U.N.’s Commission on Human Rights and played a leading role in the drafting and adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy made her the chair of the President’s Commission on the Status of Women, work she continued until her death in 1962.

President Truman admirably called Mrs. Roosevelt “First Lady of the World.” She was, typically, more unassuming in describing her achievements: “I just did what I had to do as things came along.”

Sandra Day O'Connor

First Woman Justice of the Supreme Court

Born: March 26, 1930

The woman whom President Ronald Reagan would appoint to the U.S. Supreme Court a half-century later was born in El Paso, Texas. She grew up on the Lazy B Ranch in southeastern Arizona. She married John Jay O'Connor III soon after graduation from law school and has three sons.

Despite her law degree — with honors — from Stanford University, O'Connor was turned down by law firms because of her gender, a common practice in the 1950s. O'Connor became deputy county attorney of San Mateo, California. Years later, she recalled that her first job “influenced the balance of my life because it demonstrated how much I did enjoy public service.”

The family moved to Germany and then to Arizona, where O'Connor held a succession of jobs, raised her children, and became involved in Republican Party politics. In 1969, she was appointed to the state senate, won re-election twice to that post, and became senate majority leader in 1972. In 1975, voters elected her to a state judgeship on the Maricopa County Superior Court. Four years later, Arizona's governor appointed her to the state's Court of Appeals, and Reagan formally nominated her to the Supreme Court on August 19, 1981. O'Connor brought to the Supreme Court experience in government, as well as being the only sitting justice previously elected to public service.

In her years on the Court, O'Connor's pragmatic bent made her a consummate compromiser, turning her into the “swing” vote in many 5-4 decisions. Many saw her as the most powerful woman in the United States. O'Connor's opinions have



Left, Sandra Day O'Connor at Georgetown University, October 27, 2004. Above, O'Connor poses with her family and Chief Justice Warren Burger on the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court prior to her swearing in, September 1, 1981.

provided judicial guidelines on federalism — the constitutional sharing of power between the states and the federal government — and on controversial topics such as affirmative action, the death penalty, and abortion. Through it all, she remained mindful that — as the first woman in the Court — some people might focus only on her sex and not her talent while, paradoxically, her appointment represented an achievement for American women. “The power I exert on the Court depends on the power of my arguments, not on my gender,” she once said. But she also insisted that “half the population in my country are women, and it makes a difference for women to see women in positions of authority in high office.”

Justice O'Connor retired from the Supreme Court on January 31, 2006. She is currently co-chair of the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, a group dedicated to preparing the next generation of Americans for citizenship.

Wilma Pearl Mankiller

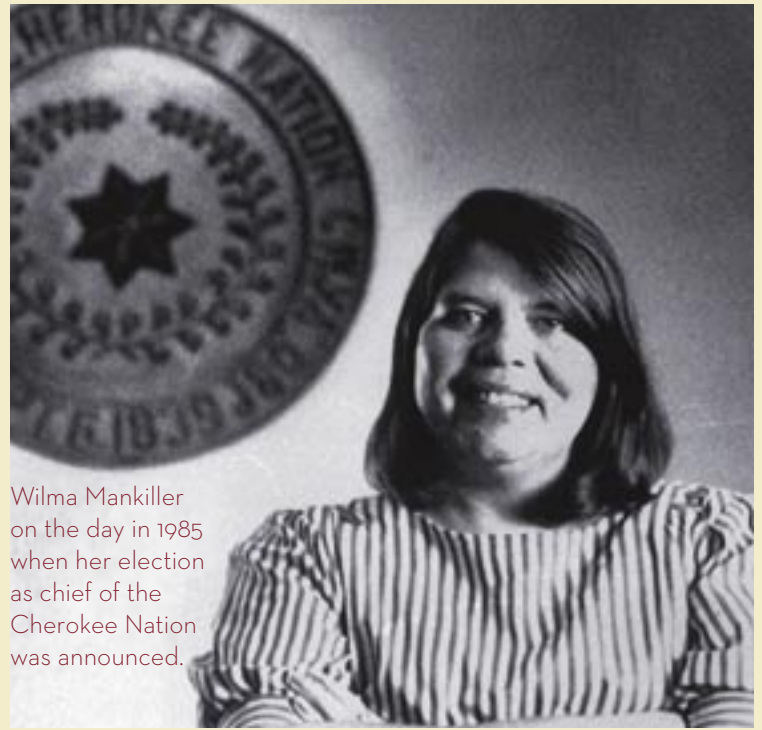
First Woman Chief of an American-Indian Nation

Born: November 18, 1945

Wilma Mankiller has said that, before her election as the first female principal chief of the Cherokee Nation, “young Cherokee girls would never have thought that they might grow up and become chief.”

The woman who did become head of one of the largest tribes in the United States and established thriving community-building programs for her people was born in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Her family believes their surname signifies a Cherokee military ranking. A U.S. government Indian relocation program forced her family’s move to San Francisco when Mankiller was young. There she joined the Native-American activist movement of the late 1960s, which drew inspiration from the development of Third World nationalism in that decade, as well as the U.S. civil rights movement. She raised funds for the support and defense of the young men who seized Alcatraz Prison for 18 months to protest wrongs suffered by Native Americans. These experiences shaped her understanding of Native-American social and economic problems, and of the uneasy relationship between the sovereign tribal nations and the federal government.

Mankiller went to work for the Cherokee Nation, founding its Community Development Department and devising programs like the Bell Water and Housing Project. Each Indian family in the Bell project was responsible for laying one mile of water pipe and for raising the money needed to do so. It was a great success: Many homes got fresh running water for the first time. Valuing her leadership abilities, then Principal Chief Ross Swimmer asked Mankiller in 1983 to run for election as his deputy. Mankiller received death threats during her campaign and some who opposed a woman leader for the tribe slashed her car’s tires. She and Swimmer won, however. In 1985



Wilma Mankiller on the day in 1985 when her election as chief of the Cherokee Nation was announced.

Swimmer resigned and Mankiller assumed his post. She was elected in her own right in 1987, and twice after that, by overwhelming majorities.

Mankiller, who believes Indians should “solve their own economic problems,” found herself presiding over more than 220,000 people, with an annual budget of \$75 million. She signed a landmark self-government U.S.-Cherokee Nation agreement in 1990 that allowed her people to manage federal funds previously administered on their behalf by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. She also established a tax commission and improved the Nation’s courts, education, and police.

Ill health, including two kidney transplants, may have been behind Mankiller’s decision not to seek re-election in 1995. She remains, however, the most celebrated Cherokee of the 20th century, receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1998, as well as several other awards.

EXPANDING HORIZONS



Clara Barton



Jane Addams



'Nellie Bly'
(Elizabeth Cochrane Seaman)

Over the course of American history, women have dedicated many years to achieving rights and gaining opportunities most men had taken for granted, from the right to vote to equal access to an education and a paying job.

Going back to Colonial times, widespread opposition to the formal education of women was the norm. But in 1821, Emma Hart Willard succeeded in getting funding from the citizens of Troy, New York, to found the Troy Female Seminary, the first of its kind in the country. It offered what now would be considered college-level courses in science, mathematics, literature, and history. In 1833, Oberlin College opened as a coeducational institution, the first school to grant higher-education degrees to women. In 1861,

Vassar was founded as the first private women's liberal arts college. In the second half of the 19th century, women began to gain admission to other coeducational colleges and universities.

Many fields, not just government and politics, remained largely closed to women well into the 20th century, however. Outstanding individuals like physicist Rosalyn Yalow and Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor still found it difficult, at least initially, to gain admission to most universities in disciplines considered "masculine" provinces — science, law, mathematics — or to get a job commensurate with their abilities and training.

Nevertheless, determined women overcame educational hurdles and other obstacles in pursuit of their ambitions and ideals. In the 20th century, they steadily joined the labor force, excelling in



Rosalyn Yalow



Sheila Johnson



Maya Ying Lin

professions previously considered out of bounds to their sex. Disparities remain, but women's progress in many areas has been remarkable. Two statistics from the last U.S. Census Bureau illustrate this development. In education, women are expected to earn 59 percent of the bachelor's and 60 percent of the master's degrees awarded for the school year 2005-06. Businesses headed by female entrepreneurs had receipts of \$940.8 billion in 2002.

The women featured in this section are just a few among the many pioneers and achievers of the past 150 years. They have been eager to make a difference, to employ their talents to the fullest. They have had the courage to stand up to authority when necessary, or to face controversy. And, in the process, they have made great contributions to the social, economic, scientific, and cultural wealth of their communities, their country, and the world.

Clara Harlowe Barton

“Angel of the Battlefield”

Born: December 25, 1821; Died: April 12, 1912

The image of Clara Barton — tending the Civil War wounded and the dying in her bonnet, red bow, and dark skirt — is a familiar one to most Americans. But Barton’s devotion to victims of war and natural disasters did not end with the war in 1865. She went on to become the founder of the American Red Cross, and worked for decades to persuade the U.S. government to recognize the organization.

Born in North Oxford, Massachusetts, Clara Barton was the youngest of five children. Her brothers taught her horseback riding and other “boyish” pursuits, but her family often fretted about her extreme shyness. Once grown up, she taught for several years, eventually moving to New Jersey, where she founded that state’s first free (later public) school. Denied the chance to run the school because of her sex, Barton moved to Washington, D.C. She took a job as a clerk at the U.S. Patent Office, earning the same salary as the male clerks. This was a great achievement at a time when government jobs were not available to women.

Then, on April 12, 1861, the Civil War broke out. Thousands of wounded Union soldiers poured into Washington and Barton realized that the government was not prepared to care for them. For nearly a year, she pleaded with the bureaucracy to allow her to bring medical supplies to the field, something no one — let alone a woman — had done before. Permission finally granted, she became the nursing “angel” to soldiers in some of the war’s bloodiest battles: Second Manassas, Antietam, and Fredericksburg.

Once the war ended, Barton took charge of identifying and marking the graves of the 13,000 Union soldiers who died at the Andersonville, Georgia, prisoner-of-war camp. She became the first woman to head a U.S. government bureau, the Missing Soldiers Office, and located 22,000 of



Clockwise, starting from above, a notice marking Clara Barton’s Missing Soldiers office in Washington, D.C.; Barton in 1884; and a spinning wheel frames her field desk at the Clara Barton birthplace and museum in North Oxford, Massachusetts.



the missing between 1865 and 1868. On doctor’s advice, Barton went to Switzerland in 1869. She joined the relief effort during the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War. This introduced her to the Red Cross, the organization created in 1864 to provide humane services to war victims.

Barton came home to establish the American Red Cross, which was recognized by the U.S. government to provide aid for natural disasters on May 21, 1881. She resigned its presidency in 1904. She had succeeded in getting the United States to sign the 1864 Geneva Convention and becoming a member of the International Red Cross. She received many awards for her humane work, including the Iron Cross from Germany, the Silver Cross of Imperial Russia, and the International Red Cross Medal.

She died at age 90 in her home in Glen Echo, Maryland.

Jane Addams

Social Reformer, Humanitarian, Pacifist

Born: September 6, 1860; Died: May 21, 1935

Jane Addams was an internationally known advocate for the poor, a pacifist, a reformer, a leader in progressive groups, and the first American woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. She is best remembered as the founder of Hull-House in Chicago, one of the first settlement houses that provided services for the working class immigrants in the neighborhood and served as a laboratory for reform.

A native of Cedarville, Illinois, Addams graduated from the Rockford Female Seminary. Her father's death in 1881 and surgery in her back combined to make her nearly an invalid for two years. On a trip to Europe with her school friend Ellen Gates Starr, they visited London's Toynbee Hall, a settlement house. Inspired by this experience, the two friends founded Hull-House in 1889. Addams lived and worked there until her death.

With donations, Hull-House grew to serve more than 10,000 people a week: immigrants from European countries in its first decades, and then African Americans and Mexicans in the 1920s. It offered night school for adults, a public kitchen, a gym, a library, a day nursery for the children of working mothers, and meeting places for trade union groups. Addams realized that the poverty around her would not end unless the country's institutions organized to get rid of it. She campaigned with Hull-House's clients for legislation to protect immigrants from exploitation, limit working hours for women, recognize labor unions, institute the first juvenile-court law, and provide for safe work places. In 1910 she became the first woman elected president of the National Conference of Social Work.

Addams directed her talents and unflagging energy to other causes, including women's suffrage, politics (seconding Theodore Roosevelt's nomination by the Progressive Party in 1912), and as a



Above, Jane Addams never lost her concern for children and devoted much of her energy to meeting their needs. Right, Hull House in Chicago, Illinois, shown here on July 10, 1946.



founding member of organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) — the pre-eminent civil rights and anti-hate organization — and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). She wrote 11 books and many articles. She became involved in the international pacifist movement in the first decade of the 20th century, and was elected chairman of the Woman's Peace Party and first president of the International Congress of Women at The Hague in 1915. When the United States entered World War I, a move that she opposed, some Americans began to criticize Addams and her causes.

Her many achievements led to many awards, most importantly the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1931, which she shared with Nicholas Murray Butler.

Jane Addams died in Chicago. Hull-House has been preserved as a national monument to her memory.

Nellie Bly

“The Best Reporter in America”*

Born: May 5, 1864; Died: January 27, 1922

When she was about 21 years old, Elizabeth Cochrane assumed the pen name “Nellie Bly” and wrote her way into worldwide fame in what had been the man’s world of journalism.

She was born in a small Pennsylvania town, but her family moved to Pittsburgh after her father’s death. An article opposing the goals of the 19th century feminist movement angered Cochrane into sending a stern letter denouncing the writer to the editor of the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*. The editor was so impressed with her letter that he hired her, making her one of the first women reporters in the United States. Her byline, “Nellie Bly,” came from a Stephen Foster song.

Instead of restricting her beat to women’s subjects, Nellie Bly focused on ordinary men and women, even going under cover to investigate their lives and jobs. She worked in a factory, for instance, and wrote about child labor, unsafe working conditions, and the poor wages she witnessed first hand. When advertisers began to complain about her stories, her editors tried to restrict her writing. Bly instead traveled to Mexico in 1886-87 and filed stories about the country, describing its poverty and corruption. The assignment ended abruptly when the Mexican government expelled her. Unhappy back in Pittsburgh, Bly decided to try her hand elsewhere. “I am off for New York,” said her note to the editors. “Look out for me. Bly.”

In 1887, Bly became a reporter for the *New York World*. There, she pioneered investigative journalism, or, as it was often called, “muckraking” — exposing corruption, crime, and abuse. She had herself committed to a woman’s asylum and, once she left, wrote articles that revealed the horrors in the treatment of the mentally ill. “The insane asylum on Blackwell’s Island is a human rat trap,” Bly concluded. “It is easy to get in, but once there



The U.S. Postal Service honored Nellie Bly with this stamp, issued in September 2002.

it is impossible to get out.”

Despite her vivid writing, her courageous muckraking, and the reforms her articles inspired, Bly is best remembered for mimicking the feat described in Jules Verne’s *Around the World in 80 Days*. With her newspaper’s support, she left New York on her 24,899-mile trip on November 14, 1889. She circled the globe, and was back in New York in 72 days, six hours, 11 minutes, and 14 seconds — a new record. The highly publicized trip allowed newspaper readers to follow her travel day by day and made Bly an international celebrity.

Bly retired from journalism in 1895, when she married Robert Seaman, a millionaire industrialist. After his death, she tried unsuccessfully to keep his companies afloat. To escape the collapse of the companies, she left for Europe in 1914, and reported on World War I for the *New York Evening Journal*.

Elizabeth Cochrane Seaman died at age 57, of pneumonia.

**New York Evening Journal*

Rosalyn Sussman Yalow

Nobel Prize Winner for Physiology or Medicine

Born: July 19, 1921

Nobel Prize for physiology or medicine, Albert Lasker Basic Medical Research Award, and U.S. National Medal of Science: These are the most prominent among scores of prizes and honorary degrees awarded to Rosalyn Yalow in recognition of her achievements. With her colleague Solomon Berson, Yalow devised a technique — radioimmunoassay (RIA) — that measures hundreds of substances in the human body, from viruses to drugs to hormones. Thanks to their discovery, we now can screen blood-donor supplies for hepatitis, treat hormone-related health problems, detect foreign substances and some cancers in the blood, and gauge effective dosage levels of antibiotics and drugs.

When Yalow was born in the Bronx, New York, and then when she graduated with honors from Hunter College in 1941, women were not expected to become physicists or mathematicians. But, with so many young men fighting in World War II, she was offered a teaching assistantship in physics at the University of Illinois. There, Yalow was the only woman in the physics department and the first woman to study physics at that university since 1917. She married a fellow student, Aaron Yalow, in 1943 and received her doctorate in 1945.

In 1947, Yalow agreed to work part-time to start a radioisotope service in the Veteran's Administration Hospital in the Bronx. She and Berson used radioactive isotopes to investigate the mechanism behind adult-onset diabetes, the research that led to RIA.

Yalow and two other joint recipients won the Nobel in 1977, but not Berson, who died in 1972. She was the second woman to win this Nobel, and only the sixth to win any Nobel in the sciences.

After receiving the Nobel, Yalow hosted a five-part dramatic TV series on the life of a famous forerunner, Polish-born physical chemist Marie



Dr. Rosalyn Yalow at her Bronx Veterans Administration Hospital, October 13, 1977, after learning she was one of three American doctors awarded the Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine that year.

Curie. In 1979, she became a distinguished professor at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine at Yeshiva University. She left that post to become the Solomon Berson Distinguished Professor-at-Large at the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine in 1986. She retired in 1991.

Throughout her years juggling her work as a scientist, wife, and mother of two children, Yalow was mindful of her standing as a trailblazer for women scientists and professionals. She has said, “Those of us who have had the good fortune to move upward ... must feel a personal responsibility to serve as role models and advisors to ease the path for those who come afterwards.” And, in her Nobel Banquet speech, she reminded those in power not to undervalue women’s potential. “The world cannot afford the loss of the talents of half of its people if we are to solve the many problems which beset us,” she said.

Sheila Crump Johnson

Philanthropist, Entrepreneur, Musician

Born: 1949

Sheila C. Johnson is a businesswoman, a musician, a philanthropist, and reportedly the first African-American woman to become a billionaire. She is also one of the few women in the United States who owns a professional sports team: She is president and managing partner of the Washington Mystics women's basketball team. Asked about her many achievements by a reporter, she answered, "I always had a drive in me that desired to be the best that I could be."

Johnson was born in Pennsylvania, the daughter of a neurosurgeon who instilled his love of music in his daughter. Her first dream, to become a concert violinist, came true when she became concert violinist and concertmaster in the Illinois All-State Orchestra, and won Illinois's statewide violin competition. After her marriage to Robert Johnson, she taught music in Washington, D.C. Her Young Strings in Action student orchestra was so successful that it was invited to perform in Jordan. King Hussein gave her the country's top education award after she helped set up Jordan's first national music conservatory.

Young Strings in Action also helped pay the family's bills after she and her husband founded Black Entertainment Television (BET) — the first and only cable TV network focused on African-American audiences — in 1980. Sheila Johnson was the network's vice president of corporate affairs and developed an award-winning teen talk show, "Teen Summit," which allowed youth to discuss issues like illegal drug use and AIDS. She recalls that the network faced a lot of problems because of the Johnsons' race. "We had to get advertisers to believe that African Americans would buy products." BET's success and influence, however, was no longer in question when the Johnsons sold the company to



Sheila Johnson with General Motors Global Group Vice President Gary Cowger, left, and Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Foundation President Harry Johnson Sr., right, at the August 22, 2005, launch of the Kids for King program marking the 1963 March on Washington.

Viacom for about \$3 billion in 2000.

The couple divorced in 2002, after 33 years of marriage and two children. Since then, Sheila Johnson has launched new business ventures, but her primary interest has been philanthropy — particularly her international work on the safety of children and the opening of cultural opportunities and arts training for youth. She has donated millions to charities, including the United Negro College Fund, the International Center for Missing and Exploited Children, several colleges, and the Sheila C. Johnson Foundation, which makes it possible for poor children to attend college. She sits on the board of several organizations and philanthropies, including Parsons The New School for Design, the Christopher Reeve Foundation, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, and the Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership.

Maya Ying Lin

“A Strong, Clear Vision”

Born: October 5, 1959

Maya Lin became a controversial figure at the age of 21, when she won first prize in the design competition for a Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. She still remembers her anger and bitterness when a group of veterans denounced her design as “a black gash of shame.” That initial criticism, however, no longer matters. The memorial by the then Yale University architecture student has become the most-visited and beloved monument in the United States and an acknowledged architectural masterpiece. Hundreds of thousands of visitors have been moved and comforted as they read and touched the names of the dead and missing inscribed on its V-shaped black granite wall. Seeing the visitors, and the mementos they leave behind near the names of their loved ones, any observer would agree that Lin succeeded in her goal: “This memorial is for those who have died, and for us to remember.”

Since that first famous project, Lin — born in Athens, Ohio, of Chinese immigrant parents — has designed many other significant works that often combine her skills as an architect and a sculptor. Her Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama, in the form of a wall and flat disk over which water flows, was inspired by Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I have a dream” speech. Lin used water as its principal feature, drawing on King’s words: “We are not satisfied and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.” The Langston Hughes Library in Clinton, Tennessee; the Museum for African Art in New York City; a line of furniture for the Knoll company called “The Earth Is (Not) Flat”; and another memorial, The Women’s Table at Yale University, are some of her other works.



Left, visitors look at the names inscribed on the wall of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. Right, Maya Lin in her New York office.

She has won the architecture prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Presidential Design Award, and the American Institute of Architects Honor Award, as well as honorary doctorates in Fine Arts from Harvard, Yale, Brown, Smith, and Williams. In 2003, she was one of the selection jurors for the World Trade Center Site Memorial competition. In 2005, Lin was elected to the National Women’s Hall of Fame in New York. An award-winning documentary about her life, *Maya Lin: A Strong, Clear Vision*, took its title from a speech she gave about the monument design process.

In interviews, Lin has said that the Hopewell Indian earthen mounds, Japanese raked-sand gardens, and the American earthworks artists of the 1960s and ‘70s have influenced her creations. She always works with the landscape. Concerned about the environment, she uses recycled, living, and natural materials in many of her works.

About America: WOMEN OF INFLUENCE
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