



# Telling the Whole Story

*Women and the Making of the United States*



**December 10 –11, 2012**  
**Sewall-Belmont House and Museum Washington DC**

*A workshop co-sponsored by the  
National Park Service - National Collaborative For  
Women's History Sites*

*Workshop Convenors/Team: NPS: Stephanie Toothman, Julia Washburn,  
Heather Huyck, Page Harrington, Lexi Lord, Susan Ferentinos*



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All photos NPS

Front cover: Telling the Whole Story: Women's History Workshop participants at Sewall-Belmont House and Museum, Washington DC.

# Introduction

**F**or over two decades scholars, educators, and visitors have been asking, “Why don’t we hear more about women’s stories at National Park sites? Where are the women’s stories in the National Park Service?” On December 10 and 11, 2012, through a partnership of the National Park Service (NPS) and the National Collaborative for Women’s History Sites (NCWHS), more than 50 women and men from various backgrounds in history, archeology, architecture, preservation and interpretation; from the National Park Service parks and programs; and from academic and professional organizations met to exchange views on women’s history and what must be done to emphasize that history in our national parks and through our National Historic Landmarks (NHL) and National Register of Historic Places (National Register) programs.

The workshop was hosted at the Sewall-Belmont House and Museum in Washington, DC, by Executive Director and Vice-President of the NCWHS Page Harrington. The Sewall-Belmont House is a registered National Historic Landmark and NPS-affiliated site, famous for being the headquarters of the extraordinary National Woman’s Party – the perfect place for scholars and practitioners to come together and discuss the future of women’s history in the National Park Service. Workshop members were greeted by the Department of the Interior’s Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Rachel Jacobsen and National Park Service Director Jonathan Jarvis and Deputy Director Peggy O’Dell. NCWHS President Dr. Heather Huyck and NPS Associate Directors Dr. Stephanie Toothman and Julia Washburn led an opening panel’s discussion of the importance of including more women’s history in the National Park Service’s parks and programs.

“Women as half of all Americans, half the residents, half the taxpayers and now more than half the voters come in every conceivable variety, and historically have had a truly impressive set of varied experiences. American females have been every ethnic/socio economic status, and are fundamental to human society, yet women and girls are too often invisible in history. They provided much of our daily sustenance and support yet are omitted from much of our formal history. What happened historically and what we know as history are two different things. We need to work with parks to find these missing women, to uncover their lives and experiences. By doing so we will tell a richer, more accurate history.”

**Jon Jarvis**  
*Director, National Park Service*



Dr. Heather Huyck leads an opening panel discussion.

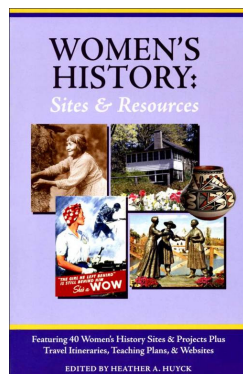
# Women: Essential to American History

Every day, the National Park Service interprets history to many of its 278 million American and international visitors at its 400 National Park units. But surprisingly few parks specifically feature women's history, giving the misleading impression that American history had few women or girls in it. In addition, relatively few National Register properties or National Historic Landmarks have been designated or preserved for women's history or had existing women's history fully researched, preserved, and/or interpreted. The participants in this workshop explored why more and improved women's history needs to be done and how to accomplish that task. In 2005 the NPS published *Exploring a Common Past: Researching and Interpreting Women's History for Historic Sites*. But NPS publications, websites, and exhibits need to do much more to reflect current scholarship in women's history. Although few parks are specifically designated for women, every park has women's history, including those that feature natural resources. Every National Historic Landmark and National Register property also has women's history, some obviously, others less directly, and some in unexpected ways. For example, the site of the Ludlow Massacre, best known for its labor unrest, features women who ran boarding houses and helped organize the strike. They and their children also died in the massacre's resulting fire.

The NPS, working with its partner the National Collaborative for Women's History Sites on the Women's History Initiative to "Tell the Whole Story," seeks to increase and enhance women's history in parks, historic sites, National Historic Landmarks, and National Register properties by researching, documenting, and interpreting diverse women's history. As an NPS biologist said, it's hard to understand a species by studying only half of it.

The National Collaborative for Women's History Sites, a nationwide non-profit organization with both individual and organizational members, has considerable interdisciplinary expertise in women's history. In addition to arranging sessions at many scholarly and professional conferences, holding various workshops,

*Women's History: Sites and Resources* (2009) and *Revealing Women: Best Practices Interpretation at Historic Sites* (2011) are two publications by NCWHS that make women's history visible.



training sessions and webinars, and publishing on its website, [www.ncwhs.org](http://www.ncwhs.org), the NCWHS published *Women's History: Sites and Resources* (2009) and *Revealing Women: Best Practices Interpretation at Historic Sites* (2011). Through partnerships, projects, and advocacy, NCWHS makes women's history visible.

During the past forty years many disciplines have worked hard to uncover women's history; they have identified new sources, found fresh stories in old familiar ones, and asked new questions, including ones that could not have even been asked earlier. The NPS and the NCWHS can now work together to strengthen interpretation and preservation at park and historic sites including National Historic Landmarks and National Register properties. Together they



Too few Americans realize that six of the Little Rock Nine were girls.

can build stronger bridges between scholarship and sites so that these cultural resources can better teach both scholars and the public. Surprisingly little scholarship draws on the physical resources of landscapes, structures/buildings, and objects/artifacts. Even today, women's history often remains under- and misrepresented at historic sites. Few women of color, working class, or poor women are appropriately presented in historic site interpretation.

For example, too few Americans realize that six of the Little Rock Nine were girls, or that in preindustrial economies every family member's work – including the women's and girls' – was essential to their household's survival. Consider the battlefields originally family farms or the families such as William and Anna Petersen, who ran the boarding house that in 1865 tragically became The House Where Lincoln Died. There are thousands of other examples of women too little recognized in our history--the National Park System has many more tangible resources generally realize that document women's essential roles in American history. As the head of the NCWHS said, "We look forward to the day when every park and historic site fully includes the women and girls associated with that site."

The "Telling the Whole Story" workshop was charged with developing both a framework to approach women's history and specific recommendations for parks, programs, National Historic Landmarks, and National Register Properties. Participants, who came from different locales and disciplines as well as perspectives of many kinds, held fervent presentations and thoughtful discussions. Since then, a small NPS and NCWHS team has consolidated and shaped the initial recommendations into nine goals with processes to achieve them; they are now setting up "goal groups" to make these goals a reality. In the spirit of Susan B. Anthony's "Failure is Impossible" – and success too important – a survey on potential new women's history sites has been taken and new women's history National Historic Landmark nominations are being considered.

## The workshop featured presentations from experts in relevant fields:

- *Tangible Resources and Women's History*

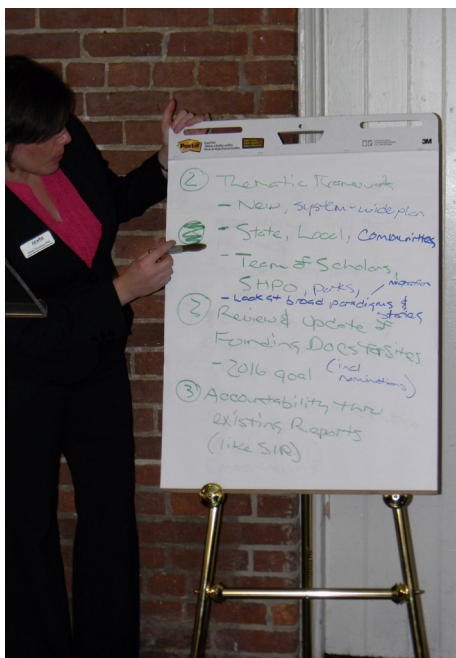
Dr. Whitney Battle-Baptiste (Archeologist, University of Massachusetts – Amherst), Dr. Michelle McClellan (Historian, University of Michigan), Dr. Sarah Leavitt (Architectural Historian, National Building Museum)

- *Women and the Making of the United States*

Dr. Joy Kinard (NPS – Site Manager, National Capital Parks East) and Dr. Alexandra Lord (NPS – Chief, National Historic Landmarks Program)

- *NPS and NCWHS Initiatives:* Marta Cruz Kelly (NPS – Program Manager, Interpretation and Education), Paul Loether and Carol Shull (NPS – Chief, National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmark Programs, and Interim Keeper, National Register of Historic Places), and Dr. Mary Melcher (Public Historian – NCWHS).

Workshop members discussed tangible resources, conceptual issues, and current work related to women's history in the NPS. Out of the discussion came over two dozen recommendations. The top nine recommendations were incorporated in the eight goals and processes at the end of this report.

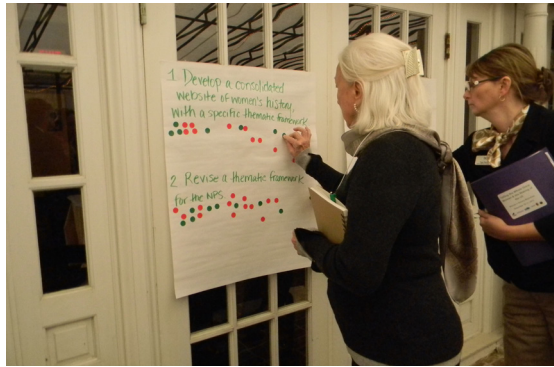


Dr. Susan Ferentinos discusses and analyzes recommendations.



Julia Washurn, Associate Director for Division of Interpretation and Education of the National Park Service, leads an opening panel discussion. (top)

Jon Jarvis, Director of the National Park Service, greets workshop members. (bottom)



Workshop members decide which goals were most important.

On Tuesday, December 11, 2012, these nine recommendations were presented to Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar during a reception at the U.S. Capitol sponsored by Eastern National and the National Park Foundation. Secretary Salazar expressed his commitment to telling not only women's stories but the stories of all Americans. He gave a heartfelt speech about the significance of his mother and grandmother over the course of his life and the importance of including stories such as theirs in the parks and programs of the National Park Service.

This workshop was a great opportunity for representatives of the National Park Service's history and interpretation and education programs to work alongside members of the National Collaborative for Women's History Sites and other partners. Next steps in 2013 for the initiative and this collaboration have included:

- Develop goals, processes, and specific actions, and timelines based on recommendations from the workshop.
  - Identify workgroups drawn from the NPS, NCWHS, conference participants, and other scholars and professionals who support this work.
- Post the conference recommendations, summaries, goals, and actions and other information on the initiative on multiple cross-linked websites, including the NPS, NHL, and Interpretation and Education websites and the NCWHS website.
- NCWHS surveyed conference participants and other interested persons to identify additional candidates for NHL and National Register designation.
  - Develop new NHLs that reflect women's experiences and contributions in American history. NCWHS is committed to producing two new NHL nominations. Sites designated in March 2013 as NHLs featuring women's experiences and contributions to American History include: Yaddo (NY), artists retreat founded by financier Spencer Trask and poet Katrina Trask; Harriet Beecher Stowe House (CT); Casa Dra. Concha Melendez Ramirez (PR); Camden Amphitheatre and Public Library (ME); Edmund Pettus Bridge (AL); and Old San Juan Historic District (PR).

# Goals and Processes for Women's History Initiative

## GOAL 1

### WOMEN'S HISTORY IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES AND THE NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK PROGRAMS

The National Register of Historic Places and the National Historic Landmark programs document the stories and historic places associated with the history of all American women and girls, using interdisciplinary scholarship, reflecting multiple points of view, and embracing difficult stories.

## PROCESS

Work with public and private partners to survey, analyze, and document the places and stories associated with American women and other under-represented groups to achieve greater diversity in the listings of the National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmark designations to support their long-term preservation. Seek increased funding from the Historic Preservation Fund and philanthropic sources to support this work.

## GOAL 2

### WOMEN'S HISTORY IN THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM

National Park System areas document the history and places associated with the history of all American women and girls. NPS historians and interpreters know and share stories that fully include women, using interdisciplinary



Dr. Lexi Lord and Julia Washburn lead a small group discussion.

scholarship reflecting multiple points of view, and embracing difficult stories.

#### PROCESS

NPS works with the National Collaborative For Women's History Sites and other experts on women's history to facilitate research to identify candidates for additional sites and to train its interpreters and educators to support the expanded interpretation of women's history. Park interpretive plans include themes associated with women's history and other under-represented groups.

### GOAL 3

#### NPS INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK

The NPS Interpretive Framework of Themes and Essential Questions reflects the breadth of the American experience, including women's history, and provides a framework for interdisciplinary research as well as interpretive and educational programs.

#### PROCESS

Work in partnership with the NWCHS, academics, public historians, and practitioners in the fields of interpretation and education to develop an inclusive Interpretive Framework of Themes and Essential Questions based on current scholarship. Use the framework to help determine priorities for training, research, and interpretation.

### GOAL 4

#### FEDERAL MARKER PROGRAM

A federal marker program complements existing preservation programs to enrich our understanding of historic places that reflect Americans' pluralism and women's history.

#### PROCESS

Work with public and private partners to develop and support a federal program to commemorate all American's stories.

### GOAL 5

#### IDENTIFY AND REMOVE BARRIERS

The NPS works with various communities to gather, document, and share their stories and to preserve their historic and cultural resources associated with women.

#### PROCESS

Identify and remove barriers that prevent women and their communities from engaging with the NPS to document and preserve their own stories

and places. Revise NHL and NR criteria to remove institutionalized biases of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, ability, and religion. Include full diversity in the vision and implementation the 21st Century Civilian Conservation Corps.

### GOAL 6

#### NPS MANAGEMENT DOCUMENTS

NPS core management documents include multiple themes and layers of history. Communities have revised and updated National Historic Landmark/National Registrar of Historic Places documentation that incorporates a gendered understanding of America's pluralism.

#### PROCESS

Update NPS foundational documents to reflect the layers of history represented by NPS units. Ensure that NPS thematic frameworks, sponsored research, and interpretation and educational programs support a gendered understanding of America's pluralism through funding criteria and NPS guidance.

### GOAL 7

#### WEB SOLUTIONS

NPS has robust web and mobile devices solutions for place-based women's history to facilitate research, teaching, and personal discovery.

#### PROCESS

Develop and maintain web and mobile solutions, including but not limited to, a Women's History on the NPS website, which incorporates lesson plans and content in the new NPS Education Portal on iTunes University and a women's history forum on Inside NPS link with National Collaborative for Women's History Sites.

### GOAL 8

#### AMERICAN PUBLIC

The public understands and appreciates all American women's lives, experiences, and contributions in American history.

#### PROCESS

Hold a White House Women's Heritage conference that highlights American women's lives in their full diversity, showcasing the variety of resources available to tell these stories.

# Acknowledgments

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