

HCR

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SPONSOR STATEMENT

HCR 11 - Establishing March as Women's History Month

HCR 11 is intended to bring to the forefront the contributions of women in our nation and in Alaska.

The designation of March as "Women's History Month" is in response to the nationally recognized lack of published material on the role of women in history, literature and academia in general. Traditional history concentrates on economic political and military events which tend to omit the recognition of women in such activities as social change crusades, charitable and philanthropic activities and in the labor force.

Women's History Month was first designated by Congress in 1987 after five years of hard work by the National Women's History Project located in California. Every year since, Congress has passed a bi-partisan resolution selecting March as "Women's History Month." The idea of celebrating the unique, multicultural history of women has captured the attention of teachers, librarians, community groups, schools and individuals across the nation. "Women's Hall of Fame" institutions have been established in many cities and more and more published material is available. The efforts of many communities has turned national Women's History month into a major celebration and a spring-board to celebrating women's history all year round.

This resolution will not only bring about a heightened awareness of the contributions of women in Alaska's history, but nationally as well. Please join me in supporting HCR 11.



NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY PROJECT

January, 1993

OUR FOUNDING MOTHERS

By Sally Roesch Wagner

National Women's History Month is one of those holidays like Mother's Day, which it seems has always been with us. But Mother's Day, herstorians have recently "discovered," was created by feminists only 100 years ago as an International Women's Peace Festival. And National Women's History Week (now Month) was created by feminists in Santa Rosa, California fourteen short years ago. I envy the future herstorians who "discover" the women and men of the National Women's History Project who have made a place on the national calendar for the business of repopulating our past.

The story the herstorians unravel will begin in 1977 with a handful of Santa Rosa feminists poring over history texts, looking for women. Growing frustrated, they experience exactly what suffragist Matilda Joslyn Gage had found 100 years before: that women have been denied "...the right to do, and when she has done, denied...the credit of doing." In the time-honored tradition of dedicated activists, these second-wave feminists organize, do their homework, and then change the world.

Their first victory comes when they convince the Sonoma County school board to designate a "Women's History Week" on the school calendar. The

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History of National Women's History Month Celebrations

As recently as 1977, women's history was virtually unknown as a topic of study in the K-12 curriculum. To address this omission, the Education Task Force of the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women initiated a "Women's History Week" for local schools. We chose the week of March 8 to make International Women's Day the focal point of the celebration. The celebration met with enthusiastic support, and within a few years, dozens of schools planned special programs for Women's History Week, close to a hundred community women participated in the Community Resource Women Project, the annual "Real Women" essay contest drew hundreds of entries, and we were staging a marvelous annual parade and program in downtown Santa Rosa.

Local Celebrations

In 1979, Molly MacGregor, then the director of the Sonoma County CSW, was invited to participate in the Women's History Institute at Sarah Lawrence College, sponsored by the Women's Action Alliance and the Lilly Foundation. The institute was attended by the national leadership of a wide variety of organizations for women and girls. When she told the other participants about our countywide

Women's History Week celebration, they liked the idea so much they decided to encourage their own organizations and school districts to initiate similar celebrations. The group also agreed to support our efforts to



Joaquin Miller Elementary School (Oakland, CA) was one of the first to celebrate Women's History Week.

secure an official Congressional Resolution to declare "National Women's History Week." Together we achieved success! In 1981, Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Ut) and Rep. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md) co-sponsored the first Joint Congressional Resolution for National Women's History Week.

Overwhelming Response...

As the word spread across the nation equity specialists in many state departments of education encouraged celebrations of National Women's History Week as a practical means to

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The NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY PROJECT

The National Women's History Project, now a thriving organization employing eleven women year 'round, as well as many volunteers and seasonal workers, had humble beginnings as a women's history class project at Sonoma State University in the early 1970s.

With photographs taken from history books, magazines and posters, we put together a slide show called "We the Women: Advocates for Social Change." We showed it in our class, and then to the Commission on the Status of Women and other local women's groups. The response was always the same: utter surprise and a tremendous emotional outpouring as women came face to face with a history that had been totally unknown to them.

in 1977 we started working with the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women, and, after traveling throughout the state, and sometimes beyond, with the slide show for a number of years, we began to focus our efforts on organizing a Women's History Week celebration for our local school districts and community. By various means, word of our local programs began to travel across the country, and inquiries about materials and program ideas began to be received from educators as far away

as Maryland and New York. It soon became obvious that a separate organization was needed to respond to the rapidly developing interest in women's history.

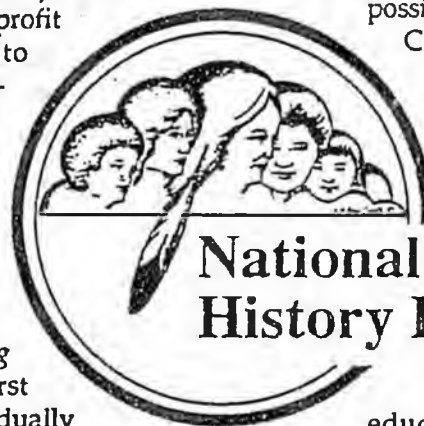
In 1981, we established the National Women's History Project as an educational, nonprofit organization, to promote the multi-cultural study of women's history in the K-12 classroom. A 60-page *Women's History Curriculum Guide* and a *Community Organizing Guide* were our first publications. Gradually teachers contributed materials they had developed, and we obtained grants from the Women's Educational Equity Act Programs to develop curriculum materials and videos on women's history. The National Women's History Project Catalog was initiated in

1981, with a simple two-page flyer. Then books were added, more posters were printed and more curriculum materials located. Each year the offerings have expanded; the 1993 edition of the Catalog now contains more than 325 items!

From our office and warehouse in rural

northern California, the Project staff organizes conferences and work-shops for state departments of education, and school districts throughout the country, provides technical assistance to program planners, coordinates the Women's History Network, publishes a quarterly newsletter, researches and writes curriculum materials for elementary and secondary classroom use, designs posters and display materials, produces videos on women's history, maintains information and photo archives on notable women, and reviews hundreds of publications for possible inclusion in the NWHP Catalog.

In the past few years we have been reaching out more actively to



National Women's History Project

educators through exhibit booths at social studies and curriculum conferences through-out the country. We are also encouraging those of you who have been celebrating National Women's History Month, and/or using our materials in your classroom, to assist our efforts to reach a wider audience. We produced the "History Revisited" and "Activities to Celebrate Women's History" videos to make it easy for anyone to give a presentation on National Women's History Month to a faculty, school board or PTA meeting. And, we'll be happy to supply you with multiple copies of the NWHP Catalog for distribution to your colleagues. Please contact us to find out how you can bring National Women's history Month to your community.

National Women's History Project Staff

Executive Director:	Molly Murphy MacGregor
Projects Director:	Mary Ruthsdotter
Business Manager:	Maria Cuevas
Publications Director:	Bonnie Eisenberg
Computer Services:	Sharron Rose, Donna Kuhn and Denise Hawe
Administrative Assistants:	Susanne Otteman, and Lisl Smith
Shipping Department:	Kathryn Rankin, Jeanne Thomas, and Bobbi Hamblin
Archive Librarian:	Sunny Bristol

Why Women's History?

The primary goal of the National Women's History Project is to promote a more equitable portrayal of women in United States history for elementary and secondary students. During the fourteen years that our staff has been working with classroom teachers, we have seen how learning about the role of women in our nation's past helps young girls and women feel more self-assured, more willing to take responsibility for planning their futures, and more optimistic about the control an individual can have over her own life. Self-esteem is key to learning. Therefore, it is essential that the representations of women in all areas of the curriculum be historically accurate and presently realistic. Only then will the expectations of students, female and male alike, match the realities of the world they will face as adults.

Celebrating National Women's History Month sets aside a special time

each March for schools and communities to recognize and celebrate the lives of countless women of all races, ages, cultures, ethnic traditions and ways of life. Women are honored who have participated in history by living out their lives, whether in ways grandly eloquent or steadfastly ordinary, and by so doing have contributed to our shared history.

This year's theme, "Discover A New World: Women's History" invites you to discover not only the world of people and events that has been neglected in the traditional telling of history, but also the "new world" of your own life, once you are touched by the knowledge of women's history.



What is Women's History?

Multicultural women's history tells the story of our nation's past from an expanded perspective. It does not rewrite history; but it does make very different judgements about what is important.

Traditionally history has focused on political, military, and economic leaders and events. This approach has virtually excluded women, people of color, and the mass of America's ordinary citizens. What the children of those ignored groups learn from such history is that they, and people like themselves, are unimportant, and have contributed little to our society. By expanding the focus of history to include the activities and contributions of women from all walks of life, we give all children an opportunity to see themselves as active participants in the

life of the nation, capable of making important contributions to the future.

Women's history approaches the past with a wide-angle lens, taking in a much wider vision of what was going on in any given time period. In addition to the activities of the government and military in the public sphere, we also look at the private sphere, at the everyday life experiences of people from all walks of life, people just like ourselves and our own families. Women's history also provides a wealth of new role models for today's young people and for adults as well. The courageous women of the past who have dared to forge new roads join women living quietly at their families' center to create a world where future possibilities are limitless. Their stories are an inspiration for us all.

Our Founding Mothers

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women enter an historical tradition by choosing the week of March 8, International Women's Day, which originated 69 years before with a strike of working women in New York City. The observance then spread to Europe, and became an international event in 1945 with a World Congress of Women held in Paris.

They have constructed the frame; now comes the tedious job of quilting the past. Scraps of the lives of women are carefully woven into a multi-colored fabric strong enough to support our dreams of the future. Three years of stitching and the fabric covers the nation.

Women in Congress pick up the thread. The White House calls. President Carter has issued a Message encouraging all Americans to celebrate National Women's History Week, March 2-8, 1980. Women's History Week spreads like a good recipe, as friends share with friends and the pattern of women's lives is sewn in more and more towns and states across the nation. Fourteen years old and it has outgrown its week-long covering; a month can barely contain it. And it is growing...

"One Generation sows and another reaps, often forgetting what has gone before," Olympia Brown, the first regularly ordained woman minister in the U.S., wrote in her autobiography. Our granddaughters sitting in their classrooms, looked down upon by the faces of their kind through the ages, may never know the names of the women who made that knowledge possible. But we do. And today we celebrate the back-breaking, eye-straining, absolutely triumphant work of the National Women's History Project.

Written by Dr. Sally Roesch Wagner, on the occasion of the anniversary of the National Women's History Project.

The National Women's History Project originated and is now the primary promoter of National Women's History Month as a coast-to-coast focal celebration each March. National Women's History Month sets aside a time for honoring the contributions of the women who have come before us and those who are creating the historical legacy of future generations.

In thousands of schools, communities and worksites around the country, special programs, displays and events are planned that combine the theme and materials developed by our staff with the talent and creativity of local planners. Reports of these programs are exciting and heartwarming, and their numbers are increasing every year!

Beginning each fall, we conduct a national media campaign, calling attention to the fact that March is National Women's History Month.

Our staff provides short articles, feature stories, photos, quizzes, research assistance, and inspiration to hundreds of newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations. The response has been tremendous! In the past few years, publications as diverse as "Seventeen" magazine, the United Postal Workers Union newsletter, USA Today, the Houston "Chronicle," and the Prodigy Computer Network have publicized National Women's History Month to their constituencies.

Each year we work with teachers and artists to develop the national theme and commemorative poster for National Women's History Month, words and pictures that will adorn the walls in thousands of schools and offices throughout the country each March. But our work goes on every day, year 'round. Preparing for March is only one aspect of what we do.

● Because of our efforts over the past twelve years, children from New York City to San Ysidro, California, from Bayonet Point, Florida to Sitka, Alaska are being introduced to women's history in their daily classroom lessons. Today's students are learning about strong women from the past who have made important contributions to the life of our nation. Young girls are expanding the possibilities for their own futures, and boys are learning that the girls beside them are important people, too.

● In addition to developing materials for classroom use, the NWHP provides information and referrals, without charge, for hundreds of workplace, school, and community people seeking multicultural women's history information.

● Equity officials look to our Project for innovative strategies and materials to use to improve the school or workplace environments for which they're responsible.

● Organizations, libraries and museums turn to us for informative, multicultural videos and display materials.

● Since 1978, we have made the search for quality, multicultural films, books, posters, games and celebration items a lot easier. The National Women's History Project has become "the source," inventorying over 300 items for quick delivery. With the direct help of our supporters, we now distribute 220,000 Women's History catalogs each year, and hundreds of thousands of focused promotional brochures on topics like Women's Equality Day and Black History Month.

In addition to our work with schools and workplace program planners, we have become a valuable resource for the media.

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● Journalists, authors, and radio and television representatives rely on our office as a source for information about women from the past.

● We react quickly to popular media events. "The Civil War" series was a public sensation — but viewers were left wondering what women did during those tumultuous times. Our widely published "Letter to the Editor" filled in the blanks for teachers and writers alike. And our popular "Women and The Civil War" poster tells the story concisely and colorfully!

● We also furnish the media with information about women for special features throughout the year: Black History Month (February), Susan B. Anthony's birthday (February 15), Mother's Day (May), for sports and athletics in the spring, Women's Equality Day (August 26), Veteran's Day (November), and other days as we are asked.

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Our office has been instrumental in linking women's history enthusiasts nationwide.

- We founded The Women's History Network in 1984. It's now nationwide, and 700 members strong. The Network connects representatives of federal workplaces and local libraries with parents and historians, teachers and performers.

- Our staff coordinates activities with Network members and provides consultation for their projects and programs.

- We issue an eight-page, quarterly newsletter of current developments and topical background information. The articles we run frequently reappear in women's newspapers and magazines, and in other organizations' newsletters, too. We also compose an annotated

directory of the membership to facilitate networking.

- We respond to requests from people who need specific women's history information, or women's history in a different format.

Responding to teacher requests, we continue to develop new curriculum materials where gaps are most apparent.

- Very young children were being overlooked by curriculum publishers — so we developed a number of multicultural biography units for early elementary use.

- No comprehensive, multicultural films or videos existed to quickly introduce women's history — until we produced "Women in American Life," a five-part video documentary series.

- Little information was available about the history of Mexican-American women, either in print or video. We filled this need with a biographical pamphlet, "Las Mujeres" and a 30 minute video, "Adelante Mujeres."

- Our curriculum unit on Women and the Constitution was released just in time for the bicentennial celebration in 1987.

- Efforts to increase girls' interest in math and science careers have been strengthened by the development of display materials featuring prominent women scientists: "Outstanding Women in Math and Science" display kit and a new "Women in Science and Mathematics" poster.

Every year our catalog contains hundreds of women's history books, posters and classroom materials.

- Many of these items have been created by our staff, with the help of classroom teachers, artists, and other content experts.

- Dozens of publications from publishers across the country are reviewed each year, and the best are selected for inclusion in the National Women's History Project Catalog.

Teacher training workshops, in California and throughout the country are enthusiastically received by teachers and administrators alike.

- State departments of education, school districts and regional centers across the country have requested our trainers to conduct workshops, from one to four full days.

- Hundreds of teachers, curriculum specialists, equity specialists, librarians and administrators have been introduced to strategies and resources for integrating multicultural women's history into all areas of the K-12 curriculum.

The current economic recession and the funding crisis being faced by many school districts throughout the country has caused a noticeable reduction in the sales of women's history materials for a while. But our staff has undertaken an aggressive marketing campaign which has enabled us to reach a larger audience nationwide. Response to our services and materials remains strong, and we are confident that we will continue to provide quality materials to schools, workplace program planners, community groups and parents for many years to come.

The National Women's History Project is a nonprofit educational organization 501 (c) (3), located at 7738 Bell Road, Windsor, CA 95492. Phone 707-838-6000. FAX 707-838-0478.

National Women's History Month

Continued from p. 1

achieving equity goals within the classroom. Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Oregon and other states developed and distributed women's history curriculum materials and program ideas to thousands of schools in their respective states. NOW and AAUW chapters sponsored women's history essay contests and other special programs in their local areas. Within a few years, thousands of schools and communities were celebrating National Women's History Week, supported and encouraged by NWHW resolutions from governors, city councils, school boards and the U.S. Congress!

The Entire Month of March

For 1987, at the request of many school districts, museums and libraries throughout the country, we decided to expand the national celebration to the entire month of March, to allow more time to explore the increasingly accessible field of women's history. Since then, the National Women's History Month Resolution has been approved with broad-based, bipartisan support in both the House and Senate.

The idea of celebrating the unique, multicultural history of women in the U.S. has captured the imaginations of teachers, librarians, community groups, women's organizations, and thousands of individuals throughout the nation. Each year programs and activities in schools and communities have become more extensive as information and program ideas have been developed and shared.

Growing Interest in Women's History

The popularity of women's history celebrations has sparked a new interest in uncovering women's forgotten heritage. A number of states and cities have instituted a "Women's Hall of Fame," or have published biographical materials on prominent women in the history of their particular locale. In

many areas, state historical societies, women's organizations, and groups such as the Girl Scouts have become involved in planning Women's History Month programs. The efforts of educators, workplace program planners, parents, and community

organizations in thousands of communities across the country have turned National Women's History Month into a major focal celebration, and a spring-board for celebrating women's history all year 'round.

Congressional Resolution

Designating the Month of March as

"Women's History Month"

Whereas American women of every race, class, and ethnic background have made historic contributions to the growth and strength of our Nation in countless recorded and unrecorded ways;

Whereas American women have played and continue to play a critical economic, cultural, and social role in every sphere of the life of the Nation by constituting a significant portion of the labor force working inside and outside of the home;

Whereas American women have played a unique role throughout the history of the Nation by providing the majority of the volunteer labor force of the Nation;

Whereas American women were particularly important in the establishment of early charitable, philanthropic, and cultural institutions in our Nation;

Whereas American women of every race, class, and ethnic background served as early leaders in the forefront of every major progressive social change movement;

Whereas American women have been leaders, not only in securing their own rights of suffrage and equal opportunity, but also in the abolitionist movement, the emancipation movement, the industrial labor movement, the civil rights movement, and other movements, especially the peace movement, which create a more fair and just society for all; and

Whereas despite these contributions, the role of American women in history has been consistently overlooked and undervalued, in the literature, teaching and study of American history:

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that March is designated as "Women's History Month." The President is authorized and requested to issue a proclamation for each of these months, calling upon the people of the United States to observe those months with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

Since 1987, this resolution, or a version similar, has been passed by Congress to designate the month of March each year as "Women's History Month."

SUBSCRIBE TO THE WOMEN'S HISTORY NETWORK

THE WOMEN'S HISTORY NETWORK offers you up-to-the-minute information about resources: books, movies and videos, historic sites, archives, exhibits, and individuals in the rapidly expanding field of women's history. Nowhere else is this information available from a single source. As a Network member you will also be supporting the vital work of the NWHP: to document and disseminate information about multicultural women's history, and to provide technical assistance to researchers, librarians, and teachers throughout the country.

As a subscriber you will receive:

- "NETWORK NEWS," the quarterly, 8-page newsletter of information for educators, researchers, program planners and general women's history enthusiasts;
- TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE from the staff of the National Women's History Project for your research or program planning;
- REFERRALS to excellent women's history performers, films, exhibits, classroom activities and the like;
- THE NETWORK DIRECTORY, listing members, and detailing their interests and experience;
- 5% DISCOUNT on purchases from the NWHP Resource Catalog

*Subscribe to the Women's History Network.
Write to the NWHP office for a sample copy of
"Network News."*

Annual Fees:
\$25 individual
\$50 institutional or group membership
\$50 supporting member
\$100 sustaining member

ADOPT - A - SCHOOL

Do you belong to a social or service organization, like Soroptomists, Kiwanis, AAUW, NOW, or BPW? Are you looking for a project that will have a positive impact on the lives of hundreds of children? Your club or organization can "Adopt a School" in your community to introduce the students and teachers to fascinating women from U.S. history. Adopt-a-School projects can include purchasing books for the library, sponsoring special NWHM programs, and other projects to improve the quality of education in your community. Request a free copy of our *Adopt-A-School* pamphlet (item # 7903) of strategies and ideas. Call or write:

National Women's History Project
7738 Bell Road, Windsor, CA 95492 707-838-6000

Putting Women Back Into History

Women's History project helps fill in the blanks

*(This article was reprinted with permission
from the Healdsburg (CA) Tribune.)*

When the University of Pennsylvania wanted to know who was the first woman to earn a doctorate in Mathematics from its institution, the school placed a call to Windsor.

When the National Bar Association wanted to know the name of the first Hispanic individual to pass the bar, members called Windsor.

Need information on the Salem witch hunts? The first woman to play pro baseball? The first American female aviator?

Mary Ruthsdotter of the National Women's History Project, located in Windsor, has the answer. "We can answer any question you have, or find the answer by the end of the day," she said. When it comes to women's history, that is.

Biographies and information about American women, from authors to service women to the ladies who worked on the California railroads, can also be found among the copious files of the National Women's History Project.

The non-profit agency is the major supplier of women's history information and curriculum in the United States.

"I know," says Ruthsdotter, co-founder of the History Project which was established in 1978 in Santa Rosa. "you'd expect a national project like this to be in New York or some big city. But Sonoma County is where we live."

The agency, which relocated from Santa Rosa to Windsor in 1989, has been especially busy gearing up for the

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Writing Women Back Into History

Continued from page 7

month of March, National Women's History Month, but the resource center keeps up with a barrage of informational requests, material compilation, curriculum planning and public appearances all year round.

Ruthsdotter points to rows of file cabinets containing information on women's contributions to this country's evolving history, and then to the never ending bookshelves full of literary resources, which continue to grow and take over the office space on Bell Road.

The amount of information available on U.S. women shouldn't be a big surprise. "Women have always been half of the population," Ruthsdotter says. "And after wars, we've been more than half the population...but where are our stories?"

Where they're not, to a great extent, is in the text books and curriculum materials of the nation's public schools. In a 1982 study of state-recommended high school history books, the lack of significant reference to women in U.S. history was depressing to Women's History Project organizers.

"Countless hours were spent laboriously going through those books and counting how many times women were mentioned by name or pictured with names," says Ruthsdotter. "The result was so discouraging that we went back through and counted the women pictured, even if they weren't mentioned by name." At the time, women figured in only 11 percent of the texts' historical references.

Since then, Ruthsdotter acknowledges, more recent curriculum and texts show a greater awareness of women's roles in U.S. history and current events, but the progress is slow. Ruthsdotter has estimated that less than one in six of America's 105,000 public and private schools purchase materials to teach women's history and that, "even if the growth of the past five

National Women's History Project
7738 Bell Road
Windsor, Ca 95492



Mary Ruthsdotter and Sunny Bristol

years continues through 1997, the cumulative total spent for women's history materials for all American schools will add up to less than \$80 per school site."

The Women's History Project strives to compile the information to fill in the "big blanks," as Ruthsdotter refers to them, that exist in school history and social studies programs.

Picking up a video cassette from her desk top, she says, "This is a tape about Margaret Chase Smith, the only

senator to call Joe McCarthy on his investigation of communist affiliations. She was challenging someone in her own party. This was an incredible woman."

Women's History Project archivist Sunny Bristol has just returned to work from a vacation in Florida and reports to Ruthsdotter, "I heard two references to Women's History Month on the radio there. But there was no follow-up information...just the two references."

Replies Ruthsdotter, "Well, that's something. It's a start. Two references are better than nothing at all."

Bristol was excited to have found some information and a poster on Bessie Coleman, the first Black female aviator. "She had to go to France to learn how to fly," says Bristol. "They wouldn't teach her here."

The Women's History Project is working at full steam to bring these stories into American schools. Catalogs full of literary resources are made available to schools by the History Project, which also sends staff to lead workshops and to give presentations to schools and community groups across the country.