



Worcester Women's History Project

"WE REMEMBER OUR PAST TO BETTER SHAPE OUR FUTURE."

WWHP VOLUME 10, NO. 2, FALL 2010

Fall into Women's History with Fall Event Series

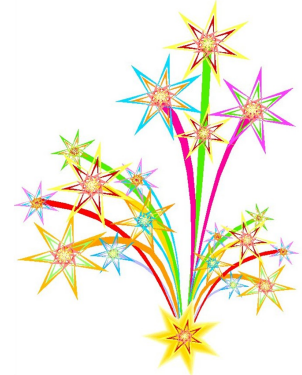
By Heather-Lyn Haley

The Worcester Women's History Project celebrates its 15th anniversary and the 160th anniversary of the first National Woman's Rights Convention with a series of events over the historic weekend of October 22, 23 & 24.

First, on **Friday, October 22, 2010**, we're hosting an event we've titled "Trailblazers by Timing, Activists by Choice" at Worcester State University's Blue Lounge in the Student Center. The evening will begin with a brief introduction by both the first and most recent presidents of the organization, Lisa Connelly Cook and Fran Langille, highlighting some of the WWHP's many accomplishments and ongoing initiatives. This introduction will be followed by a lovely dinner. Then we'll adjourn to a nearby auditorium for an exclusive performance of "Madame Secretary, Frances Perkins" written and performed by Ann Marie Shea, professor emeritus at Worcester State University and performer extraordinaire. This fundraising event will begin at 5:30pm with registration, 6:00pm for dinner, and it will end 8:30pm. The cost is \$50. Reservations are required for this portion of the weekend's festivities by October 12; please email WWHP.Office@gmail.com or call 508-767-1852 or reserve at www.wwhp.org.

On **Saturday, October 23, 2010**, the WWHP will hold their Annual Meeting and elections at the Worcester Public Library, followed by a viewing of "Developing the Women's Political Voice," a video production of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor focusing on the 1850 convention and featuring present and former WWHP re-enactors. Discussion follows with Ranger Chuck Arning of the National Park Service, who directed and hosted the program. The meeting will begin at 1:30pm, and the video will begin at 2:30pm. The meeting and program are free of charge and open to the public, and light refreshments will be available. Please join us!

The trailblazing spirit has spread to our friends at the Massachusetts Audubon Society on **Sunday, October 24, 2010**, when they will commemorate the 160th anniversary of the first National Woman's Rights Convention with their "Mothers of Conservation Nature Walk." This event will occur from 1:00-3:00pm at Broad Meadow Brook, 414 Massasoit Avenue, Worcester, MA. For more information and to register for this event please visit: <http://www.socialweb.net/Places/2582.lasso>, or call 508-753-6087.



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This issue of the newsletter is dedicated to our dear friend Deirdre Morrissey-Barrett passed away May 20, 2010, after a year of battling cancer. She was 43 years old. WWHP steering committee members will remember Deirdre's efforts in helping to plan *Women 2000*. She shared her valuable skills with us in the early years of the project, helping us to market the weekend celebration of the 150th anniversary of the first National Woman's Rights Convention. Deirdre later served on the steering committee (2004-07) as co-chair of the grants committee, helping to secure grants to ensure that the Project would continue. Deirdre lived a life full of passion and was resolute in her commitment to several causes, particularly WWHP and the League of Women Voters. We will miss her deeply, but feel grateful for her years of service and beautiful friendship.

**WORCESTER WOMEN'S
HISTORY PROJECT**

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Karen Folkes, Heather-Lyn Haley,
Barbara J. Sinnott, Dianne Bruce

WWHP is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable and educational organization with a vision “to celebrate and document women’s contributions to the history, social fabric, and culture of Worcester and beyond.” Its mission is to

- raise awareness of the rich history of women in the Worcester area
- create national recognition of Worcester’s role in the history of the women’s rights movement
- advance the ideals put forth in the 1850 convention that there should be “equality before the law, without distinction of sex or color,” or ethnicity.

Visit www.wwhp.org

President’s Corner

Dear WWHP Friends,

Do you remember Adeline Perry? No, you probably wouldn’t. I wouldn’t know who she was if I hadn’t portrayed her in “Angels and Infidels”, the *WOMEN 2000* re-enactment of the 1850 first National Woman’s Rights Convention. Adeline Perry was a Worcester schoolteacher. I know very little about her. Emily Thomas, who was researching the convention, encouraged us to find out about our “character.” I checked some census records, found her name, but not much more. I presume she probably attended the convention because she was a well-educated woman working as a teacher and paid only one-third of what her male counterparts were earning.

I would venture that Adeline was an ordinary Worcester citizen living in a time of extraordinary historical significance. She was certainly curious and interested in the goings on of a remarkable group of women in her community. I can relate to that. I first became aware of WWHP when I served as a member of the city’s Status of Women Committee. Lisa Connelly Cook came to our meeting hoping to gain our support. It didn’t take much convincing. We were impressed with her research and her determination to get recognition for Worcester as the site of the first National Woman’s Rights Convention. It was my privilege to represent the Status of Women Committee at the City Council meeting in October, 1995 and announce the organization of the Worcester Women’s History Project. And so it began

Anniversaries are times of remembering ... and celebrating. I hope you’ll join in this year’s anniversary celebrations and find yourself inspired to stay involved or get more involved. Who would have known that WWHP would continue beyond *WOMEN 2000*... or find new projects to bring us well into the 21st century?

What is most remarkable to me, what is most to be celebrated, is the commitment and dedication of so many volunteers, the “Adelines” (past present and future) who assure that WWHP continueswe are celebrating YOU!

Fran

Calling all re-enactors!

It’s time for a reunion! Remember *WOMEN 2000* and *Angels and Infidels*? **Come to our Annual Meeting, Sat., Oct 23**, at 1:30pm at the Worcester Public Library, and come in your costume and character portrayed, if possible.

“Discovering Plymouth Through Women’s Stories”

By Kara Wilson

Every year, I look forward to WWHP’s annual day trip. This year, in June, I was particularly pleased to learn the destination would be historic Plymouth, MA. Plymouth is usually associated with Plimoth Plantation and the Pilgrims, but we were treated to a different view of Plymouth’s history through learning about important women of Plymouth.

While we were on the bus on the way to Plymouth, WWHP Events Chair Judy Finkel handed out an article about Zilpha Harlow Spooner. Spooner was a member of a prominent Plymouth family and her name came up many times throughout the course of the day. Spooner also was an ardent abolitionist and women’s rights activist and attended the first National Woman’s Rights Convention in Worcester in 1850.

Our first stop upon arriving in Plymouth was the Harlow Old Fort House. This house, built in 1677 by William Harlow, is one of the few buildings still standing in Plymouth from the 17th century. Most of Plymouth’s original waterfront was razed in 1920 to prepare for the 300th anniversary of the Pilgrims’ landing, but fortunately the Harlow Old Fort House was saved by the Plymouth Antiquarian Society and converted into a historic house museum in 1922.

While at the Harlow Old Fort House, we were greeted by Dr. Donna Curtin, Director of the Plymouth Antiquarian Society and our guide for the day. Curtin began a one-hour Women’s History Walking Tour of Plymouth by giving us some history of the Plymouth Antiquarian Society. A group mostly comprised of women founded the organization in 1919. These women were dedicated to preserving the town’s historic buildings and landmarks. They also were interested in preserving green space in the town, such as Brewster Gardens. The Gardens were created in 1920 on the original garden plot belonging to Elder William Brewster in 1620. In the Gardens, there is a tribute to women in the form of the statue “Pilgrim Maiden”, created by sculptor Henry Hudson Kitson in 1922.

Our walking tour also led us to the childhood home of Lidian Jackson Emerson (wife of Ralph Waldo Emerson), the Revolutionary War-era home of Mercy Otis Warren, and the former Russell Library building, which is now the home of the Plymouth Guild for the Arts.

We then proceeded to Patrizia’s Trattoria for lunch. During lunch, Dr. Curtin told us about some exciting news pertaining to Zilpha Harlow Spooner’s family. Last fall, it came to the attention of the PAS that some 19th and early 20th century documents, papers, and photographs related to the Harlow, Hussey, and Knapp families of Plymouth had been found. Some of these documents include letters written to Zilpha Harlow Spooner from friend and fellow abolitionist, Nathaniel Whiting of Marshfield and “constitution” created by Plymouth women in 1831 as a guide for their anti-slavery activities. The PAS has been able to purchase some of these documents and are currently raising funds to hopefully purchase the rest.

Article continues on p7.

Photos by Laura & Kara



Dr. Donna Curtin



NOTICE OF 15th ANNUAL MEETING OF WORCESTER WOMEN’S HISTORY PROJECT

Saturday, October 23, 2010, 1:30pm
Worcester Public Library, Saxe Room
Salem Square, Worcester, Massachusetts

FOR THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES:

1. To hear the President’s report.
2. To approve the minutes of the last Annual Meeting held September 16, 2009.
3. To approve the Treasurer’s report for fiscal year ending June 30, 2010.
4. To approve the budget for fiscal year ending June 30, 2011.
5. To elect Officers, Steering Committee, and Nominating Committee.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Plummer, Clerk

Note: Following the meeting is an event free and open to the public. See front page.

Oral History Workshop Held for Community



By Maureen Ryan Doyle, Co-chair of the

Oral History Project (with Charlene Martin)

As part of an ongoing commitment to the greater Worcester area, the Worcester Women's Oral History Project (WWOHP) presented an Oral History Community Workshop on May 27 at the Worcester Historical Museum. Free of charge and open to all members of the community, this workshop provided practical and detailed assistance to individuals interested in collecting oral histories from a variety of sources. Presenters at this event included Linda Rosenlund who provided background information on the Worcester Women's History Project (WWHP) and WWOHP, as well as Charlene Martin and Maureen Ryan Doyle, Co-Chairs of WWOHP.

It was an engaging and dynamic evening and the presenters covered a variety of topics including the mission of WWHP, which is to celebrate and document the contribution of women in the history, social fabric, and culture of Worcester. Many aspects of oral history were discussed including its purpose, its many uses, and the identification of major U.S. oral history projects. The legal documentation required for accurate oral histories was also presented to the group.

The art of asking questions was a popular subject and WWOHP shared its list of carefully designed interview questions with those present. The art of listening was also discussed in depth. Attendees were given specific suggestions on how to listen to interviewees and how to develop their own follow-up questions while conducting interviews. Advice was also shared about the transcription process of completed interviews.

An animated question and answer portion followed the presentation and those in attendance posed many perceptive and insightful questions. Participants were invited to share completed oral histories with WWOHP. It was explained that the permanent repository for WWOHP's records is now the Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute of Harvard University.

WWOHP will continue in its mission to offer free programming about oral history to the public. Our next event will take place in December.



Charlene Martin & Nancy Johnson



Kris Allen, Maureen Ryan Doyle & workshop participants



Judy Fask & Linda Rosenlund

About Two Local Organizations *By Karen Folkes*

The Investing in Girls Alliance is an outcome of the Mayor's Task Force on Youth at Risk in the City of Worcester. IIGA is a consortium of state and local agencies, public school departments, non-profit organizations, state and local government and business professionals. Coming together to explore issues facing adolescent girls, and with financial support from the Women's Initiative, a research report was developed to assess the concerns and needs of young girls in our area.

The Tri-Chairs include Iliana D'Limas, Elisa Lopez-Dobski, and Linda Cavaoli, who was a founding member of WWHP. The Honorary Chair is also a member of WWHP, The Honorable Harriette L. Chandler, Mass. State Senate. Their website is www.investingingirls.org

The Women's Initiative of United Way of Central Mass. focuses on building, strengthening, and supporting the development of confident and safe adolescent girls. Under the guidance of Kate Myshrall and Kerry Conaghan, among other fantastic women, WI has some wonderful upcoming events, including a collaboration with WWHP, February 2011, and well-known girl advocate author Rachel Simmons in April. http://www.unitedwaycm.org/what_we_do/womens_initiative.htm

Thanks to our members

VICTORIA ABERHART
 KRISTINA NILSON ALLEN
 MRS. HILDEGARD ARMSTRONG
 ANITA J. ASPEN
 NANCY AVILA
 LINDA BARRINGER
 TOM BIGGINS
 IN MEMORY OF ANN BIGGINS
 PATRICIA BIZZELL
 PAULETTE BLUEMEL
 ELIZABETH BOOSAHDA
 MARILYNN BORST
 SHEILA BOTTI & ROCCO BOTTI
 DIANNE BRUCE
 ALTA-MAE BUTLER
 LUCY CANDIB, MD
 IN MEMORY OF ANN NEMITZ, MD
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 SUSAN MCDANIEL CECCACCI
 SENATOR HARRIETTE L. CHANDLER
 MARJORIE MERAKIAN COHEN
 MARY S. COLLINS
 KATHLEEN COMER,
 IN MEMORY OF AUDREY CLOUGH
 LISA CONNELLY COOK
 JEANNE Y. CURTIS
 CAMILLE DAILY
 PATRICIA A. DALY
 JUNE AND CARLTON DAVENPORT
 ELIZABETH O. DEAN
 MELANIE DEMARAIS
 JANE DEWEY
 CAROLYN DIK
 MAUREEN RYAN DOYLE
 SUSAN DURHAM
 REGINA M. EDMONDS
 PHYLLIS ESTUS

JUDY FREEDMAN FASK
 JUDY FINKEL
 MARY & WARNER FLETCHER
 PATRICIA FLETCHER
 LOUISE GLEASON
 MAUREEN L. GLOWIK
 DORISTA GOLDSBERRY
 YVONNE P. GOLDSBERRY &
 CHERIE A. HOLMES
 RAYE-MARIE GREEN
 LIZBETH GUSTAVSON
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 HEATHER-LYN HALEY
 BARBARA G. HALLER
 TONA HANGEN
 BETH HARDING
 MARJORIE HASTINGS
 HONEE HESS
 BETTY HOSKINS,
 IN MEMORY OF JOAN GOODWIN
 JAYNE M. HUGHES
 BARBARA COMBES INGRASSIA
 WENDY HOWARD INNIS
 LYNDA JOHNSON
 MARY (BETSY) JOHNSON
 NANCY A. JOHNSON, MD
 SANDRA A. JOHNSON
 ANNE JONES
 JANET S. JONES
 MAUREEN M. KELLEHER
 PEGGY KOCORAS
 BARBARA KOHIN
 KATHERINE KOWALOFF
 FRAN LANGILLE
 LYNNE MCKENNEY LYDICK
 CHARLENE MARTIN
 LINDA MAYKEL DDS
 DONNA L. MCDANIEL
 HELEN P. MCLAUGHLIN

BARBARA MERCIER
 LINDA ANTOUN MILLER
 DIANE MIRICK
 KAREN BOARD MORAN
 ELLEN MORE
 DOLORES S. NEELY
 MITZI NELSEN
 DAVID O'BRIEN
 BEVERLY H. OSBORN
 SALLY D. PETTIT
 MARY PLUMMER
 DR. PHYLLIS POLLACK
 MARY PORTER
 CJ POSK
 HELEN PROVENCHER,
 IN MEMORY OF ROBERT
 PROVENCHER
 MARJORIE PURVES
 PATRICIA QUAIEL
 ANNETTE A. RAFFERTY
 JEANNE ROSENBLATT
 LINDA ROSENLUND
 NORMA J. SALMI
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 LOWERRE SIMSARIAN
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 POLLY TRAINA
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 DOREEN VELNICH
 SHARON SMITH VILES
 SUSAN R. VOGEL
 KRISTIN WATERS
 SHEILA WILSON
 KARA WILSON
 STEPHANIE YUHL
 CHARLOTTE ZAX
 And 38 STUDENT MEMBERS

Some History of WWHP

1994, Founded
 1995, September 27 Incorporated
 1995, October 23 Launching at City Hall Plaza
 1998, Dedication of Plaque at site of first National Woman's Rights Convention,
 370 Main Street, Worcester (In 1850, Brinley Hall stood there.)
 1999, Portraits of Clara Barton, Dorothea Dix, Abby Kelley Foster, Lucy Stone
 installed at Mechanics Hall
 2000, Dedication of Plaque for Tuckerman Hall, former site of the Worcester
 Woman's Club, and its architect, Josephine Wright Chapman, for Worcester
 Women's History Heritage Trail
 2002, Launching of *Worcester Women's History Heritage Trail* booklet
 2004, Premiere of *Yours for Humanity—Abby*
 2005, Launching of Worcester Women's Oral History Project at 10th Anniversary
 Celebration at Union Station

Membership year is March to March,
 which month is
 National Women's History Month.

Out To Lunch Summer Concert Series

By Heather-Lyn Haley

This summer, the Worcester Women’s History Project was a visible participant in the Worcester Cultural Coalition’s *Out To Lunch Summer Concert Series*. For six of eight weeks in July and August, volunteers and steering committee members set up an informational table on the Worcester Common with an interactive art component. While teaching people about the art of paper rolling or quilling, the volunteers also spread the word about the WWHP mission of celebrating the strong women of Worcester and educating Worcester’s citizens about the first National Woman’s Rights Convention. Cupcake the Clown joined the volunteer list for two weeks in July, attracting families to the booth by providing free face painting. WWHP vice president Heather-Lyn Haley continued the tradition by painting faces at two August concerts. We’d like to extend a special thanks to Hanna Solska, Mary Plummer, Kathy Comer, Sharon Smith-Viles, Liz Gustafson, Louise Gleason, Hayley Louise Gleason, Dianne Bruce, Kara Wilson, Laurie Wodin, and Glen Harris for staffing the table at various times over the summer.



Face Painting



Quilling

Paper Rolling

Fun!

Significance of the first National Woman’s Rights Convention

The first National Woman’s Rights Convention, in 1850 in Worcester, was significant for a number of reasons. It marked the beginning of the organized movement for women’s rights and called for the total reorganization of “all social, political, industrial interests and institutions.” The convention elected officers who were appointed to committees on education, civil and political rights, social relations, and avocations.

Cupcake the Clown



“Wild Unrest...”

By Louise Gleason

(Just a note that this is a book received by WWHP from Oxford University Press this summer, and I asked Louise if she would read it. She did and here's her review. – Nancy)

Wild Unrest: Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the Making of “The Yellow Wall-Paper” by Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz (an uncorrected advance reading copy) 210 pages plus 33 pages of notes. This is a primary source biography of Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Its sources are her diary and letters and the diary of her first husband, Walter Stetson (poor relation of the Stetson hat).

Charlotte was born July 3, 1860 in Hartford, Connecticut to Mary Westcott Perkins and Frederick Beecher Perkins. Her great aunts were Harriet Beecher Stowe and Catherine and Isabel Beecher. Her uncle was Edward Hale of Boston. Frederick abandoned the family. Charlotte, her brother Thomas, and her mother lived an impoverished life and were forced to rely on relatives for support. They moved 18 times in 19 years. Her mother withheld affection and discouraged and stifled Charlotte's imaginative mind.



The book is about Charlotte's struggle with depression. Charlotte felt trapped in the Beecher Family Tradition and the Victorian ideal woman and wife. She vacillated between wanting independence and giving into the dependency of married life which contributed to her frustration and depression. She always felt she had the ability to achieve something great. Her depression was severe enough at one point to need the “rest cure” of famed neurologist S. Weir Michell. She was discharged improved after one month of treatment. Michell advised Charlotte to live as “domestic life as possible”. He also recommended “two hours of intellectual life a day” and never to touch pen or brush for the rest of her day. (Charlotte was also an accomplished artist and schooled at the Rhode Island School of Design.) After three months and with a declining mental status, she stopped following his advice. It was at this point she wrote “The Yellow Wall-Paper”. Her purpose was to change S. Weir Michell's “rest cure” for women. She sent him a copy which he never acknowledged receiving but he did change his treatment. Attempts were made to publish “The Yellow Wall-Paper.” Horace Scudder, editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, rejected it commenting, “I could not forgive myself if I made others as miserable as I have made myself.” It was finally published in the *New England Magazine*.

Charlotte divorced Stetson and later married Houghton Gilman, a successful lawyer and younger cousin. He was very agreeable to Charlotte's desires and independence. This marriage did not create the inner conflicts Charlotte previously experienced.

Charlotte embarked on a much recognized career as a writer, poet, reformer, suffragist, championing

“women's political rights and obligations and attacking the legal constraints governing marriage and structures of inequality in employment.” One of her important writings was “Women and Economics” which examined and theorized the causes of women's subordination to men. Charlotte Perkins Gilman died August 17, 1935 in a planned mercy death three years after being diagnosed with inoperable breast cancer. *Wild Unrest: Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the Making of “The Yellow Wall-Paper”* is an intelligent provocative read. Charlotte's life depicted the struggles of women of her time and onward. “The Yellow Wall-Paper” is a true horror tale of a woman trapped by traditions of family and culture in a male-dominated society. It is a “cry of pain against the constraints governing marriage, prejudice medical practices, restrictive social roles, and narrowed expectations that could and did drive women mad.”

Referenced: “Charlotte Perkins Gilman The Yellow Wall-Paper and other stories.” Chapter 9 of “Wild Unrest” is important for understanding “The Yellow Wall-Paper” and what it represents. “The Yellow Wall-Paper” is a short story 17 pages. Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz is Sydenham Clark Parsons Professor of History at Smith College.

Continued from p3 “Discovering...”

Our tour concluded with a tour of the recently restored Hedge House. The house was originally built in 1809 by sea captain William Hammatt, and purchased in 1830 by merchant Thomas Hedge. The Hedge family lived in the house until 1918. The house was originally located on Court Street, where Memorial Hall is currently located. The house was nearly demolished in order to build Memorial Hall, but one of the first initiatives of the women of the Plymouth Antiquarian Society was to save this historic house. They bought the house for \$1 and moved it to its current location on Water Street. The house contains original furnishings and possessions belonging to the Hedge family and many more are still being restored to display to the public in the future. It wasn't until the end of the day that I learned that Dr. Curtin and the PAS created this women's history tour of Plymouth specifically for WWHP. What an honor! I was pleased to learn they intend to continue conducting the tour on a regular basis for future groups. Dr. Curtin and all of the docents throughout the day were extremely knowledgeable and enthusiastic. We were also fortunate to have with us Katherine Kowaloff, former WWHP Events Committee member and current PAS trustee, who had a hand in planning the day trip. As always, Judy Finkel, CJ Posk, and the entire WWHP Events Committee did an outstanding job planning and executing another wonderful, informative day trip. I'm already looking forward to next year's trip.

Author Jean Kilbourne, Ed.D., keynote speaker at important event for girls

By Karen Folkes

On Tuesday, May 11, 2010, the Women's Initiative of United Way and The Investing In Girls Alliance put together a remarkable and powerful program to benefit girls and their families. The event, held at the Worcester Technical High School, began with the Girls Health Expo, which had important information for girls from local organizations. A semi-circle of tables offered resources and encouragement for participation, and girls could meet with representatives from each program, while enjoying some tasty nibbles and beverages.

The keynote address began at 6:45 to an auditorium which held a diverse audience of young girls, teens, educators, and some members of WWHP. Author Jean Kilbourne, Ed.D., a pioneer on the study of images of women in advertising, came to discuss how advertising relates to young girls. Her latest book, *So Sexy So Soon: The New Sexualized Childhood and What Parents can do to Protect their Kids*, is a perfect launch pad for those who realize there is a problem but haven't quite examined the realm of ads and considered their profound impact on society.

Kilbourne has made a career of doing just that. Using a movie-sized slide show, the audience was shown advertising examples alternating from the 1970's to the current. Often sexually exploitive, degrading and purposely shocking, gasps were heard when slide after slide revealed imagery that we have become accustomed to, and yet when viewed in succession, one begins to understand the cultural manipulation we are inundated with, and the negative way girls and women are portrayed.

At a time when girls should be free to explore their goals and pursue their dreams uninhibited, they are constantly conditioned through advertising, the sole purpose of which is to sell a product, but they also influence our values and ideals with the margay they present. Considering the average person spends 3 years of their life watching ads, as put by Kilbourne, "Ads may seem trivial but their influence isn't." Critical discussion of advertising is not common debate in middle or high school, but after this presentation, we understood it should be.

Lucky enough to briefly speak with Jean Kilbourne prior to her lecture, she being one of the many women to inspire myself, I was thrilled to share with her a little about our wonderful organization - the Worcester Women's History Project - and our endeavor to uncover women's historical contributions, and the belief of many of us that women's true history was an important missing tool towards a young girl's interest and action. Her response sums it perfectly, "If girls had a deeper sense of the history of feminism and the history of women, they would have a better understanding of real empowerment."

The potent presentation was full of Kilbourne's years of expertise and insight and....humor! Several girls stepped up to mics for questions after the slide show, and the author signed books and spoke to the audience after the presentation. Thanks to The Investing In Girls Alliance and the Women's Initiative of United Way for a very important evening!
www.JeanKilbourne.com



Liberty Farm notecards will be available for sale at the Anniversary Dinner on October 22, Annual Meeting on October 23, and upcoming events, and at the Worcester Historical Museum and Abby's House



Painting by Elizabeth Boosahda of Worcester and reproduced with permission.

It's 5 x 7.

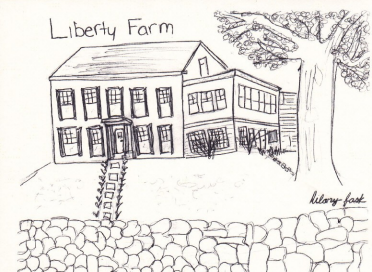
Liberty Farm was the home of Abby Kelley Foster (1810-1887) and her husband, Stephen Symonds Foster, from 1847 until 1881.

Though both were widely sought after as lecturers, in 1847, the couple purchased Liberty Farm, and immediately opened the house to slaves escaping north on the Underground Railroad.

Liberty Farm, a National Historic Landmark, is located at 116 Mower Street in Worcester.

Sketch by Hilary Fask of Worcester at age 12 and reproduced with permission.

It's 4.25 x 5.5.





WISE Course Commemorates 160th Anniversary of First National Woman's Rights Convention

By Charlene L. Martin

Lynne McKenney Lydick is offering a course to the Worcester Institute for Senior Education at Assumption College on "Women in the Struggle for Equality" this fall and the timing could not be better. Her course will coincide with the anniversary of the first National Woman's Rights Convention held in Worcester 160 years ago. The Worcester Institute for Senior Education (WISE) is a lifelong learning institute where members participate in a wide variety of liberal arts, non-credit courses. Members of WISE develop their own curriculum and recruit group leaders from their membership, faculty from Assumption and other area colleges, or professionals from the community.

The Director of WISE is Charlene L. Martin, a member of the Worcester Women's History Project Steering Committee. Knowing that many WISE members have a special interest in history courses, she recommended Lynne McKenney Lydick as a group leader for a course that will review the history made in our own city. Lynne has invited distinguished guest speakers Dr. John McClymer, author of *This High and Holy Moment*, and Dr. Arlene Vadum, co-editor (along with Dr. McClymer) of *Images of Women in American Popular Culture*, to provide background on the historical aspect of the women's movement and the lives of women during the 1850's. Dr. Vadum is also a member of the Steering Committee. She, Dr. McClymer and Lynne have been involved with the Worcester Women's History Project since the planning of *WOMEN 2000*. Patricia Perry will provide a look at women's fashions and etiquette of the Victorian period and Chuck Arning, Lead Ranger for the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, will present a video and information on "Developing Women's Political Voice." The class concludes with a discussion of abolition with Lynne's portrayal of Worcester's own 19th century radical abolitionist and woman's rights activist, Abby Kelley Foster. Since WISE classes often include at least two generations of enthusiastic learners, this course is sure to inspire much discussion on the lives of women past and present.

S. C. Members Attend History Conference

By Maureen Ryan Doyle

Charlene Martin and Maureen Ryan Doyle, Co-Chairs of the Worcester Women's Oral History Project and members of the Steering Committee, were joined by fellow Steering Committee member, Doreen Velnich, at the Massachusetts History Conference: Imagining Lives, Preserving & Interpreting Personal Stories, on June 7 at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester. This conference was sponsored by Mass Humanities for Massachusetts history organizations.

The keynote address was presented by Jane Kamensky, the Harry S. Truman Professor of American Civilization and chair of the History Department at Brandeis University, and Jill Lepore, the David Woods Kemper '41 Professor of American History at Harvard University and chair of the History and Literature Program. They are the co-authors of the historical novel, *Blindspot*. Their speech was entitled, *Heads or Tales? History and the Art of Story*.

The main focus of the conference was to explore personal narrative history from the 17th century to the present, particularly how this pertains to local historical organizations and small museums. The value of such items as letters, diaries, journals, oral histories, financial papers, photographs and negatives, birth and death records, local maps, genealogical research, household items, clothing, toys, tools, and homes was discussed.

Small sessions allowed for more in-depth exploration of particular topics. Some of those sessions included *Seldom Heard Voices: Bringing Veterans' History to Light*, *Diaries on the Web*, *National Events through the Local Lens*, *Stories from within the Community*, *Creating Public Programs from Personal Correspondence*, and *Conversion Narratives: Q & A on Digital Technology for the Humanities*.

Ellen Rothman, Deputy Director of the Jewish Women's Archive, received the Bay State Legacy Award for her outstanding contributions to the interpretations and presentation of Massachusetts' history. The Jewish Women's Archive is a national non-profit based in Boston and dedicated to uncovering, chronicling, and transmitting the rich history of Jewish women in North America.



The *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* received the first Mass Humanities Massachusetts History Commendation.

Our Dearest Abby

By Karen Folkes

The word “trailblazer” conjures up many images for people, and for most I suppose the image would not be the antiquated, serene, humble, and gracious vision of Abby Kelley Foster, but she is the absolute epitome of the definition, a pioneer in any field or endeavor.

It is difficult for us to comprehend the social animosity and personal danger which awaited any woman brave enough to enter the public arena of reform in Abby’s era, but it was their reality, one in which Abby was steadfast in her belief that her participation was vital, should be accepted, and the direction of her life was ordained from God.

From the onset of her work as a lecturer, she was forging a path and creating an existence never experienced by women. In 1838, in the very beginning of her life’s work for reform, she spoke for the American Anti-Slavery Society at Philadelphia’s Pennsylvania Hall. Two days later, in a most riotous spectacle, the building was burned to the ground by an angry mob. Far from being dissuaded to continue, Abby would go on to become one of the most powerful speakers for abolition for decades to come.

Abby began her work in earnest at a time when the very idea of women at meetings of Anti-Slavery or other societies was the cause of violent internal and public protest, was actually the defining point for the splitting of organizations, and became the cause for very powerful clerical admonishment that female involvement was ‘repugnant’. Women wanting to participate had to endure endless debate over whether memberships should be made up of ‘men’ or ‘persons’. Amidst all the turmoil, our trailblazer was nominated to an American Anti-Slavery Society business committee in 1840 by William Lloyd Garrison, to the consternation of many. Such uproar arose when her name was announced that a vote was immediately taken; and to a thunderous applause of hundreds, it seemed in the affirmative. Then the applause of hundreds in the negative came as well. The final tally, 571 yea, 451 nay. More uproar followed and many of the men nominated stood and said they would not serve on a ‘promiscuous’ committee, that it defied Scripture and custom. Someone then voiced that slavery is customary as well and yet we object to that. Abby then said “In Congress the masters speak while the slaves are denied a voice. I rise because I am not a slave.” The meeting was adjourned before a walkout or worse erupted. The next day the membership officially split, and the objectors formed a new society, as did Garrison and Kelley, and three other women, were named to the newly-formed Executive Committee of their new organization. (Chapman, Child, and Mott)



In 1843 Abby traveled to none other than Seneca Falls, New York, and held multiple meetings, and though she was pelted with eggs, she managed to organize with the local women an anti-slavery fair that was quite successful in raising funds. She left in her wake nothing short of a woman on trial with her church. Rhoda Bement had brought to the Reverend of her Presbyterian Church notices of Abby’s lectures and wanted him to promote them to the congregation. He had refused. The chaos that followed developed into a trial that lasted for months and ended with Rhoda removed from church membership, found guilty and refusing to apologize. Instead, a new congregation was born, The Wesleyan Methodist Church. Founded on the freedom of speech and abolitionist ideals, the church hosted such reformers as Abby’s friend Frederick Douglass. In 1848 they would host a Woman’s Rights Convention that would be the springboard for the first National Woman’s Rights Convention in 1850....in Worcester!

Abby was indeed a pioneer and her legacy is lasting and profound. We have only begun to understand her courage and the inspiration we can gain from her unshakable determination.



William Lloyd Garrison



Frederick Douglass

A Note About Abby In 1845 at the Annual Quaker Meeting in Mount Pleasant, Ohio, minutes after beginning to speak Abby was physically carried out of the building.



Massachusetts Cultural Council — WWHP is pleased to announce it has been awarded a 2-year grant.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 22, 23, 24: 15th Anniversary of Worcester Women's History Project & 160th Anniversary of first National Woman's Rights Convention *(See front page.)*

November 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 (1:00-2:30pm): "Women in the Struggle for Equality"

W.I.S.E. course at Assumption College led by Lynne McKenney Lydick

Assumption College sponsors the Worcester Institute for Senior Education (W.I.S.E.), a Learning in Retirement Institute open to senior citizens in Central Massachusetts who are interested in continuous learning. For more information, call 508-767-7513. http://www1.assumption.edu/gradce/senior_education.html

January 15, 2011: Abby Kelley Foster's 200th Birthday Abby's House and Worcester Women's History Project honor Abby with a 12 noon luncheon at Abby's House, 52 High St., Worcester. Reservations \$25 may be made by calling Abby's House 508-756-5486 Ext. 35 before January 3. Seating is limited. A program follows at 2:30pm at the Worcester Public Library with historian Casey King speaking on Abby Kelley Foster. The Library program is free and open to the public.

February 15, 2011: A program of the Women's Initiative of United Way *(more info later)*

March 9, 2011, 5:30pm, Worcester Public Library: Eighth Annual WOMEN IN PRINT *(snow date March 16)*

March 27, 2011, 4pm, Tuckerman Hall: "Visionary Women" - The Master Singers of Worcester collaborate with the Worcester Women's History Project to celebrate the remarkable achievements of New England women. Settings of Massachusetts poets Emily Dickinson, Mary Oliver and Worcester-born Elizabeth Bishop will be featured in choral compositions by Gwyneth Walker, Ronald Perera and other contemporary composers, as well as a performance of a new collaboratively-composed work celebrating three outstanding women of the Women's Rights Movement with strong ties to Worcester: Clara Barton, Abby Kelley Foster and Lucy Stone. Special guest performers will include renowned mezzo-soprano D'Anna Fortunato and a string quartet. Preceding the concert, a lecture will be presented at 3:00 PM by the Worcester County Poetry Association about New England's famous female poets and their place in the history of American poetry.

WOMEN of WWHP: CJ Posk has been on the WWHP Steering Committee and Events subcommittee for the past two years. She is currently writing a book on Worcester which will be in both print and Braille. Raising funds to archive the history of North High School for the new school opening in September 2011 is a goal of hers. Accomplishments – She took over NAPE, a PXE organization in Denver and made it a national foundation (www.PXE.org) and was involved in it for ten years as national director and editor of its newsletter. She also started a New England chapter in Massachusetts which has become PXE International. In addition, she worked eight years in television and film in Denver. She has also managed a large meal site for Volunteers of America, embracing the elderly, handicapped, and homeless. Now that CJ has returned to Worcester, her interests have turned to preserving history. We are proud and happy to have her as a member of WWHP.

FACT: The first National Woman's Rights Convention is noted for being the first time rights for black women were included in the discussion of women's rights. (See WWHP mission statement on p2.)

☞ *Are you thinking about learning more about WWHP? Think about volunteering.*



*Worcester Women's
History Project*

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OCTOBER 2010 - OCTOBER 2011

**15TH ANNIVERSARY OF
WORCESTER WOMEN'S HISTORY PROJECT**

**160TH ANNIVERSARY OF
FIRST NATIONAL
WOMAN'S RIGHTS CONVENTION**

Become a member

Memberships are renewable in March in celebration of National Women's History Month.

I wish to support the Worcester Women's History Project.

Membership Level

Abby Kelleyite \$500 Reformer \$100-\$499 Activist \$50 Supporter \$35

Enclosed is my membership of \$_____. Please make your check payable to Worcester Women's History Project and mail with this form to its office at 30 Elm Street, Worcester, MA 01609.

My employer will match my gift. Company _____

Please make my donation in memory of _____

*WWHP is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Gifts are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.
No goods or services are provided in exchange for donations.*

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**We're on the web
www.wwhp.org**