



# Worcester Women's History Project

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

VOLUME 10, No. 1, SPRING 2010

## Massachusetts Women's Legislative Caucus Welcomes Abby Kelley Foster

By Lynne McKenney Lydick

January 27, 2010

As I set up my props in the front of the "Members Room" in the State House, I could not help wondering what Abby would be thinking had she been there. Everything she had worked for, struggled for and believed in had led up to this room full of female legislators, white and of color! Thanks to co-authors Carolyn Howe and Karen Board Moran of *Yours for Humanity—Abby*, I was about to share Abby's words with these women who can not only vote but who had been voted into office by both women and men. And to think most of them knew nothing about her.

I was thrilled to be introduced by the Honorable Harriette L. Chandler, WWHP member and Project supporter, who by starting her introduction with the first words of the play took the mission of WWHP another step forward ("...to celebrate and document women's contributions to the history, social fabric, and culture of Worcester and beyond." ).

Looking back on the moment, the enormity strikes me and I am touched by it. The women in that room had all stood on Abby's strong and committed shoulders. They had all benefited from her courage, convictions, dogged perseverance and her unfailing spirit without knowing her name. They do now.

Abby is proof that one person can make a difference—can bring about change. I can imagine Abby's legacy living on...in our State House and across the nation.

Rep. Ruth Balser (D-Newton) said, "Ms McKenney Lydick's performance of advocate Abby Kelley Foster was extraordinary and inspirational. I had never heard of Abby Kelley Foster and was so moved to know about this leader for human rights. Anyone in need of inspiration for why it's important to never give up the fight should watch Ms McKenney Lydick's performance."

Sen. Harriette L. Chandler (D-Worcester) said, "I was thrilled to see a Worcester heroine celebrated and brought to life in front of the women's legislative caucus. Lynne did such a wonderful job in her portrayal, and I think we all enjoyed learning about this extraordinary female historical figure."

### Abby Travels North

On Saturday, January 30, 2010, a performance of *Yours for Humanity—Abby* was the final event in a month-long series at the Bangor Public Library, Bangor, Maine.

The series celebrated individual people who brought about change, and our beloved Abby was certainly one of those people. It was an honor to represent Abby and the Worcester Women's History Project.

Diane Smith said, "Lynne McKenney Lydick undoubtedly has the heart of an accomplished thespian, but also the soul of a dedicated educator...it is so important to remember those "whose shoulders we are standing upon."



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**WORCESTER WOMEN'S  
HISTORY PROJECT**

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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](http://www.wwhp.org)

**President's Corner**

Dear WWHP friends,

Many wonderful things are happening in the realm of Abby! You'll read about much of that in this newsletter ... and rejoice!! Included among good things celebrated was Annette Rafferty's 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday!! She was honored at a reception at the Hanover Theater on February 14<sup>th</sup> with many friends and admirers, who afterwards enjoyed "100 Years of Broadway" as a benefit for Abby's House! Happy Birthday, Annette!

In October this year, WWHP will be celebrating its 15<sup>th</sup> year as well as the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first National Woman's Rights Convention. Some wonderful ideas are in the works, but perhaps you have a suggestion on how WWHP should mark these momentous occasions. Send them to [wwhp.office@gmail.com](mailto:wwhp.office@gmail.com) or call and leave a message at 508-767-1852.

We anticipate a very special celebration in 2011 as we mark the anniversary of Abby Kelley Foster's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday! One event will be a collaborative with Abby's House, for which there was an organizational meeting with Annette Rafferty and Julie Komenos of Abby's House. Want to get involved? Contact Nancy Avila at [wwhp.office@gmail.com](mailto:wwhp.office@gmail.com).

Many thanks and congratulations to the WWOHP for their nomination for the T&G Vision Award ... a significant recognition of our contribution to the Worcester community. "Kudos" to Lynne McKenney Lydick for bringing *Yours for Humanity—Abby* to the Women's Legislative Caucus at the State House on January 27<sup>th</sup> and very special thanks to Senator Harriette L. Chandler who helped make that a reality. What GREAT ways to start a remarkable year. ...And the beat goes on....

A new membership year starts March 1. As you renew your membership (or consider joining WWHP for the first time), I invite you to think generously. By your support, you are part of making a difference in the Central Massachusetts community by raising awareness of the rich history of women in the Worcester area, both past and present.

Please open your hearts (and your pocketbooks), my dear friends, and help celebrate Abby with the best birthday gift EVER!!

Heartfelt thanks,

*Fran*

## MARCH is NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

*The public celebration of women's history in this country began in 1978 as "Women's History Week" in Sonoma County, California. The week including March 8, International Women's Day, was selected. In 1981, Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Rep. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.) co-sponsored a joint Congressional resolution proclaiming a national Women's History Week. In 1987, Congress expanded the celebration to a month, and March was declared Women's History Month.* [www.infoplease.com/spot/womensintro1.html](http://www.infoplease.com/spot/womensintro1.html)

WORCESTER WOMEN'S HISTORY PROJECT *presents*

# Dear Abby,

A new dramatic presentation of the letters and conversations between Abby Kelley Foster, Stephen Foster and their daughter, Alla.  
Written by Carolyn Howe and Lynne McKenney Lydick.



Photo taken at Hope Cemetery by Elaine Pajka.

### *Performers*

Lynne McKenney Lydick, Tom Lydick & Madeline McKenney-Lydick

**Sunday, March 28, 2010**

**2:30 p.m.**

**Saxe Room, Worcester Public Library  
Salem Square, Worcester**

Public Invited

Refreshments

Free

**"Did You Know It Happened in Worcester County?"** Although as a woman she was unable to vote, Ann B. Earle won a seat on the Worcester School Committee in 1869.

**NewsNotes** Fran Langille, her daughter, Krista, and granddaughter, Kali, are "in it to end it" in Boston's Avon 2-Day Walk for Breast Cancer on May 15, 16. Fran & Krista are walking and Kali, 12, is on "Youth Crew." Support Fran's team at <http://www.avonwalk.org/goto/FransClan>

## Oral History Event held at Assumption College

By Maureen Ryan Doyle, Co-chair of the

Oral History Project (with Charlene Martin)



The audience at Assumption College on December 10 was alternately enthralled and intrigued by Dr. Steven Knott's presentation, *Reagan, Bush, and Clinton: An Oral History Perspective*. Dr. Knott was the main speaker at this event, sponsored by the Worcester Women's Oral History Project (WWOHP), and presented an enthusiastic address to a gathering comprised of faculty and administrators from local colleges, students, WWOHP and WWOHP members, as well as individuals from the community. Following his talk, Dr. Knott accepted several questions from the group, and a lively discussion ensued.

Dr. Knott is an Associate Professor of National Security Studies at the U.S. Naval War College and former Co-Chair of the Presidential Oral History Program at the Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia. Dr. Knott's most recent book, *At Reagan's Side: Insiders' Recollections from Sacramento to the White House*, is the culmination of his work overseeing the Reagan Oral History Project. He has also been involved in the Edward M. Kennedy, George H. W. Bush, and William J. Clinton Oral History Projects. His career includes six years at the JFK Library, and teaching positions in Political Science at the University of New Hampshire, Boston College, Quinnipiac University, and the U.S. Air Force Academy. Dr. Knott's other publications include *The Reagan Years*; *Alexander Hamilton and the Persistence of Myth*; and *Secret and Sanctioned: Covert Operations and the American Presidency*.

Dr. Knott's address at Assumption College was followed by several thought provoking and insightful presentations of oral histories by students. In addition, Dr. Knott signed copies of his new book for many in attendance.

This oral history event is just one of many offerings that have been, and will continue to be, presented by the Worcester Women's Oral History Project. It is part of a commitment to engage the wider Worcester community in the importance of oral history. The Project records, collects, and shares the personal and historical memories of women throughout the Worcester area.



### Coming up in May — ORAL HISTORY WORKSHOP —

Learn the basics of oral history: asking questions, art of listening, transcription tips, how to preserve the stories of Worcester women.

Do you want to help collect women's stories or are you interested in the memories of relatives for your family history, then attend the free workshop at the Worcester Historical Museum, May 27, from 5:30-7:30 pm.

## A Look Back at Breaking The Glass Ceiling

By Barbara J Sinnott

Way back in the 70s, frustration with watching our Worcester City Council in action or inaction as problems with uneven tax assessments, rising costs to homeowners and businesses, and what many felt was abdicating all political input to the City Manager under Worcester's Plan E form of government, an unusually large number of new candidates emerged to challenge the status quo. I was one, as was Barbara Kohin, both of us being endorsed by the good government organization Plan E Association. Our City Council was an all male body, and women holding elective office were only on the Worcester School Committee, so it was a highly unusual election year in 1972. Over the years when I had 4 small children at home, my husband and I enjoyed politics, and every election opened our home to candidates we liked, regardless of party affiliation, since Worcester's elections were non-partisan. On the national and state elections, I was an active Republican and a member of the Republican State Committee, even serving as Worcester County Chairman for the Nixon Campaign. When Watergate unfolded, I was upset, and decided I would run for office myself to address problems locally rather than work to get others elected. I was active with The League of Women Voters, a whole host of community organizations, had friends from both major parties, and had often attended Council meetings for the League, so I felt confident I could do the job. My husband encouraged me, my mother, Julia Mack, had herself run for Council in 1952, and narrowly lost, so she was delighted, and so began months of attending every event possible, going to every planned debate, and setting up coffee parties in every ward, and rounding up volunteers who were great in getting our signs made and locations found for them.

Incumbent Council members, all male of course, were mostly somewhat paternal towards the sudden emergence of female aspirants, but at least one Councillor blasted me for not simply running for school committee, where "A woman should properly run because children were involved." He was obviously of the belief that a woman's place was either in the kitchen or bedroom, so I really enjoyed running against him! Can't say I shed any tears when he lost the election.

The Telegram and Gazette and local radio stations in 1972 followed the race with great interest as this was really novel to have women in the hunt for City Council seats and some of the cartoons were a riot! Election Day finally arrived and when the votes were counted, three new female City Councillors replaced three male Councillors. I came in second in votes and both Barbara Kohin and Mary Scano were also elected. In those days it was up to the Councillors to decide who would be elected Mayor and they elected Israel Katz as Mayor and elected me to be the Vice Mayor. In reality that

simply made him the Chairman of the body who would conduct the meetings and I would do the same if he elected to speak out on an issue or if he was absent, as the City Manager was the one in charge of carrying out the Council wishes Barbara and I both concluded that several of our male cohorts arrived at meetings without having read much of the data prepared for us, but then we both had League experience, so came well prepared. Sadly we only had one term, as all three of us lost in the next election. Property revaluation and taxes had people up in arms and our short tenure was called "an experiment that failed" by the local media. I stayed active in politics and every once in a while shuffled through the game cards for Worcester Trivia, a clever product put out by the Worcester Historical Museum that includes in its questions about Worcester facts, *What 3 women were the first to be elected to the Worcester City Council? The answer? Barbara Sinnott, Barbara Kohin and Mary Scano!* Lots of memories. We also appear on a plaque commemorating our role in getting the new South High School built; so being elected accomplished something good for Worcester. Try it --You'll like it!

### About Barbara J. Sinnott

A graduate of Worcester State Teacher's College in 1955, Barbara Mack began her career as a teacher. In 1957, she and Joseph Sinnott were married and became parents of four children. Barbara became active with the League of Women Voters, community organizations, non-partisan city elections, and Republican efforts at the state and federal level. In 1970, she was appointed to head the Federal Census for Worcester County. Gov. Sargent then appointed her to serve on his newly-created Governor's Commission on the Status of Women. She was elected to serve as Vice Chairman of the Massachusetts Republican Party, elected to the Worcester City Council, and elected a delegate to the 1975 International Year of Women. Barbara worked for the Easter Seal Society of Mass. She was Co-Chair of the Reagan-Bush campaign in Worcester County and was appointed by Margaret Heckler, Secretary of HHS, to the Provider Reimbursement Review Board in Washington. When she completed her term, she returned to Worcester and was selected to serve as President of the Better Business Bureau of Central New England, which position she held for 18 years. Gov. Weld appointed her to the Worcester State College Board of Trustees on which she served two terms, the last as Chairman. Barbara also served on the Worcester License Commission from 1995 to 2003 and was honored by the City Council through a resolution approved in January 2004. She retired from the BBB in 2003. She continues to serve on the Board of the Worcester Regional Research Bureau, the Family Services of Central Mass., the BBB Consumer Education Foundation, and the Steering Committee of the Worcester Women's History Project.

**Let's go to Plymouth!** Saturday, June 5, 2010. Events Committee chair Judy Finkel informs us that this year we will be touring Plymouth and learning about significant women following the era of the Pilgrims and hearing a lecture on Plymouth women in the anti-slavery movement. Included also will be a luncheon and a tour of historic Hedge House Museum. More details will be in a flyer distributed in April and on [www.wwhp.org](http://www.wwhp.org).

## A Review of Women in Print 2010 by Kara Wilson

About 35 people braved the rain and wind to attend *Women in Print* on February 24, 2010 at the Worcester Public Library. Braving the elements paid off, as all attendees were met with an assortment of refreshments, courtesy of the WWHP Events Committee, followed by an engaging presentation by three local women authors.

A common thread between the three authors is that all write poetry. However, the style and inspiration for their writing varies considerably. Judy Finkel, WWHP Events Committee Chair, greeted the audience and introduced the three authors, beginning with Laura Jehn Menides.

Menides is Emeritus Professor of English at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. She is a scholar of the poet Elizabeth Bishop, who was a Worcester native. While Bishop is mostly known for the tragedy present in her work, Menides likes to focus on the comedic elements. According to Menides, "Comedy is more than just humor. Comedy is survival." Menides claims that Bishop could find the humor in tragic situations, and used the example of Bishop's poem "One Art" to indicate this. "One Art" is a poem about loss, but uses exaggeration in order to create humor and to convey that the poet will survive despite the loss. Menides also mentioned that her own poetry has been inspired by Bishop's poetry. She illustrated this point by reading Bishop's poem "First Death in Nova Scotia", followed by her own poem entitled "Destiny". Bishop's poem is written from the point of view of a child attending a funeral for the first time and referring to the adults as "kings and queens". "Destiny" is written from the perspective of a child wishing to discover her real parents are a king and queen who will arrive and take her away from her own family. Both poems showed the humor in situations unlikely to be funny if told from a different point of view.

The second author, Karen Sasha Tipper, introduced herself as "a Wilde woman", referring to her longtime fascination with and extensive research on the Wilde family. Tipper first became interested in the work of Irish writer Oscar Wilde while pursuing her undergraduate degree at Mount Holyoke College. She wrote her masters thesis on Wilde, followed by a doctoral dissertation comparing Wilde with Baudelaire. While working on her dissertation, Tipper began to learn about Wilde's mother, Lady Jane Wilde, whom she has since spent many years researching while on sabbatical from teaching English at Nichols College. Tipper's research has resulted in a biography entitled *A Critical Biography of Lady Jane Wilde: Irish Revolutionist*. Wilde is considered revolutionary because she felt that women's rights and women's education were important. Wilde was a voracious reader and writer of letters. People kept the letters Wilde wrote and they are now housed in numerous libraries all over the world. Tipper has spent

letters, from which she has based her research for the biography she has written on Wilde, as well as two other books entitled *Lady Jane Wilde's Letters to Froken Lotten von Kraemer* and *Lady Jane Wilde's Letters to Mr. John Hilson*, the latter which will be published later this year. Tipper ended her talk by sharing five of the poems she has written, which reflected some of her own life experiences including running, a moment with her teenage daughter, and the death of her mother.



From left: Judy Finkel, Laura Jehn Menides, Karen Sasha Tipper, Rev. Catherine Reed

The final author of the evening was Reverend Catherine Reed, who is Associate Pastor at Worcester's John Street Baptist Church and a Worcester native. Reed began by saying that she has kept a diary since she was young, which is how she started writing poetry. She noted, "Ministry keeps me grounded, poetry helps me dream, and my family keeps me real." Reed said she stopped writing poetry for a while when she started her career as a minister, but realized she needed to write to keep balance in her life. Some of Reed's poems reflect events in her own life, such as "I Can't Even Tie My Shoes", which discusses the struggles of being a single mother, but she also writes in many other voices. Reed read from her two books of poetry: *Crossing Boundaries*, which is about overcoming diversity, and *Between Midnight and Dawn*, which reflects how many events happen between those hours and "people learn a lot from those stormy times". Before reading her poem "The New Library", Reed quipped, "Right now, you all might be sitting in my old living room," since the poem talks about how the current Worcester Public Library was built on the site where her childhood home once stood.

As always, *Women in Print* proved to be an enjoyable, informative evening for all who attended and I look forward to *Women in Print 2011*. Many thanks go to Judy Finkel and the WWHP Events Committee for all their hard work in organizing this annual event.

**MARCH WOMEN'S EVENT**

**March 2, 2010, 4:30pm — *In the Name of Love*** — This documentary film is about mail order brides from Russia. Five women, four of them single mothers, struggle for dignity as they endure male chauvinism, poverty, and culture shock, all while searching for love. The film grapples with the tremendous economic challenges and difficult decisions facing Russian women today. Alden Trust Auditorium (Kennedy Memorial Hall Room 112). For more information, e-mail [redmonds@assumption.edu](mailto:redmonds@assumption.edu). [Regina Edmonds is Associate Professor of Psychology at Assumption College and also a member of WWHP Steering Committee.]

**NEXT FALL — A W.I.S.E. course at Assumption College led by Lynne McKenney Lydick*****Women in the Struggle for Equality***

Tuesdays, November 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 (1:00-2:30pm)

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](http://www1.assumption.edu/gradce/senior_education.html)

**WOMEN of WWHP: Charlene L. Martin, Steering Committee member and  
Co-Chair of Worcester Women's Oral History Project**

Charlene L. Martin was born in 1957, graduated from Assumption College and subsequently worked there for twenty-eight years. She spent most of her career at Assumption in the Continuing Education department working with adult learners and after a series of positions became Dean of the program. Her achievements include developing the first online courses for the College and founding the Worcester Institute for Senior Education (WISE), a lifelong learning institute for older adults. She earned a doctorate in higher education from the University of Massachusetts/Amherst. In an interview conducted for the Worcester Women's Oral History Project, Charlene discusses the frequent moves made during her childhood, the importance of education in her life, her love for the Assumption College community, and her passion for adult and older adult education. This passion continued after she left the College to start her own business, Pathfinders Retirement Innovations, where she provides seminars and consulting on educational programming for adults seeking meaning in the second half of their lives. She reflects upon the importance of seeking new challenges and learning opportunities throughout one's life. Charlene teaches in a doctoral program in Higher Education Administration and is currently co-chair of the Worcester Women's Oral History Project.

**Massachusetts Women's History Sites** as published in *Writing Women Back Into History*, Winter 2010

Adams Homestead, Quincy	<a href="http://nps.gov/adam/index.htm">nps.gov/adam/index.htm</a>
Boston Women's Heritage Trail, Boston	<a href="http://bwht.org/">bwht.org/</a>
Emily Dickinson House, Amherst	<a href="http://emilydickinsonmuseum.org/">emilydickinsonmuseum.org/</a>
Margaret Fuller House, Cambridge	<a href="http://margaretfullerhouse.org">margaretfullerhouse.org</a>
Mary Baker Eddy House, Newton	<a href="http://longyear.org/historic_houses/chestnuthill">longyear.org/historic_houses/chestnuthill</a>
Minute Man National Historical Park, Concord	<a href="http://nps.gov/mima/supportyourpark/center-for-18th-century-life.htm">nps.gov/mima/supportyourpark/center-for-18th-century-life.htm</a>
Sophia Smith Collection, Northampton	<a href="http://smith.edu/libraries/libs/ssc/ohlist.html">smith.edu/libraries/libs/ssc/ohlist.html</a>
Springfield Armory National Historic Site, Springfield	<a href="http://nps.gov/spar/forteachers/index.htm">nps.gov/spar/forteachers/index.htm</a>
Women at Work Museum, Attleboro	<a href="http://Womenatworkmuseum.org">Womenatworkmuseum.org</a>
Worcester Women's History Heritage Trail, Worcester (to be added)	<a href="http://wwhp.org">wwhp.org</a>

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



## WORCESTER WOMEN'S HISTORY PROJECT

30 Elm Street  
Worcester, MA 01609

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday, March 28, 2:30pm - *Dear Abby* in the Saxe Room, Worcester Public Library, Salem Square. Free and open to the public. (See page 3.)

Thursday, May 27, 5:30pm - ORAL HISTORY WORKSHOP at the Worcester Historical Museum, 30 Elm Street. Free and open to the public. (See page 4.)

Saturday, June 5 - All day bus trip to Plymouth. (See page 6.)  
More information will be forthcoming in April.

### Become a member of Worcester Women's History Project

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 \_\_\_\_\_

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No goods or services are provided in exchange for donations.

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