



WORCESTER WOMEN'S HISTORY PROJECT

We remember our past . . . to better shape our future.

WWHP VOLUME 14, NO. 1

SPRING 2014

The Day Thinking About Washing the Dishes Became Great Fun!!!

by Regina M. Edmonds

All in attendance at the November 7, 2013 performance of the one-woman show, *Someone Must Wash the Dishes: An Anti-Suffrage Satire*, enjoyed a spirited "rant" against giving women the right to vote. The play, written more than 100 years earlier in 1912 by Marie Jenney Howe, a strong advocate for a woman's right to vote, was performed to an enthusiastic audience in the packed Blue Room of the Student Center at Worcester State University. The play was brought to life and to us courtesy of The East Lynne Theater Company, a professional group dedicated to bringing forward the voices of those writing in both the near and distant past. The play's star performer, Michèle LaRue, a Midwesterner by birth, currently lives in New Jersey - just across the water from the bright lights of New York City's Broadway where she frequently performs. LaRue specializes in performances based on the writings of passionate women from the late 19th and early 20th centuries who addressed in their work the ongoing struggles for equality that women faced in those times. In addition to her inspired interpretation of the humorous parody of the arguments against women's suffrage highlighted in *Someone Must Wash the Dishes*, LaRue has also performed, among other classic works, the darker story based on Charlotte Perkins Gilman's powerful writing of *The Yellow-Wallpaper* which chronicles a woman's descent into insanity due to her confinement in a small room, undergoing what was known as the "rest cure" for the "hysterical symptoms" she manifested after the birth of her first child.

LaRue's enjoyable performance of *Someone Must Wash the Dishes*, which was co-sponsored by the Worcester Women's History Project and the Intergenerational Urban Institute of Worcester State University, highlighted the ways in which the arguments against women's suffrage were nearly impossible to counter because reasons in complete contradiction with one another were passionately put forward, often in the same breath, by men and sometimes women opposed to a woman's right to vote. In the play, LaRue's flighty and distracted character called these opposing arguments "couplets" and had everyone in stitches as she chronicled for the audience some of these contradictory couplets, such as "Women should not have the right to vote because they will simply follow whatever their husbands tell them to do, thus rendering their vote meaningless" coupled with, "Women should not have the right to vote because they will, simply out of spite, vote in the opposite way their husbands tell them to, thus cancelling out his vote and making both their votes meaningless." Hence if a woman followed her husband's ideas on voting or did not follow her

(Cont'd p6)

**MARCH
IS
WWHP
MEMBERSHIP
MONTH**

It's time to
renew/join/support
the work of WWHP

Please use form on
last page.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

NOTES	2
18th ANNUAL MEETING	3
WWHP	4
WOMEN IN PRINT 2014	5
THE EARLY DAYS	6
WORCESTER'S OWN...	7
CELEBRATION	8
ABBY'S TRAVELS	9
KAREN BOARD MORAN	10-11
CALENDAR	12
MEMBERSHIP FORM	12

WORCESTER WOMEN'S HISTORY PROJECT

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WWHP is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable and educational organization incorporated in 1995 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.

SPRING

www.wwhp.org



The Frances Perkins Center is located in downtown Damariscotta, Maine, and has an exhibit open for visitors.

Office & Exhibit: 170A Main St., Damariscotta, ME 04543
Mail: PO Box 281, Newcastle, ME 04553
Call 207-563-3374, **Email** info@FrancesPerkinsCenter.org

Website: www.francesperkinscenter.org



A comment from the audience at SOMEONE MUST WASH THE DISHES...on November 7, 2013: *Terrific panel and discussion after the play tonight. Thanks again to Parlee Jones, Chantel Bethea and Lee Bona for their insight and passion. I'm continually amazed at the quality of audience participation at WWHP events. There's some real sharing across generations and a restless spirit in the air. We can accomplish so much working together!*



Responding to the passing of Kenneth Moynihan on January 10, 2014, Lisa Connelly Cook, first president of WWHP, commented: *Ken Moynihan was one of the first men to join WWHP as a member, and he wrote applications to the National Women's Hall of Fame several times to try to get Abby Kelley Foster accepted.*



A 2011 review by Barbara Kohin of *Ahead of Her Time: Abby Kelley and the Politics of Antislavery* by Dorothy Sterling may be read at <http://www.wwhp.org/news-events/news-articles/2011/early-fighter-womens-rights> or find it by searching Barbara Kohin on the ABOUT page.



THANKS to all who brought Michèle LaRue to WWHP last night. The enactment, explanations, panel, and audience comments raised lots of hopes for more -- more community, more participation, more "Take Up the Song". - *Betty Hoskins*



PayPal PayPal is set up on our website on the membership page <http://www.wwhp.org/support-wwhp> — You may find it convenient for renewing your membership or giving a gift membership.



facebook Now you can "like" us on Facebook along with 96 others! Get updates about upcoming events and women's history news. <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Worcester-Womens-History-Project-WWHP/111903762230357>



Congratulations to Maureen Ryan Doyle! Maureen received the Assumption College Jack L Bresciani '72 Outstanding Alumna Award. A freelance writer for many years, she co-chairs the Worcester Women's Oral History Project with Charlene Longhi Martin and co-authored *Voices of Worcester Women: 160 years after the First National Woman's Rights Convention* in 2011.



Thank you! to contributors and proofreaders for this newsletter: Ann Marie Shea, Dianne Bruce, Janet Davis, Jeana Edmonds, Kara Wilson Yuen, Karen Board Moran, Kathleen Comer, Lynne McKenney Lydick, and Mary Plummer

President's Message

Greetings!

March is National Women's History Month, and March is WWHP Membership Month. Since joining WWHP several years ago and serving on the Steering Committee, I have become acquainted with some amazing women. Now, as your newly-elected president, I am honored and humbled to be involved with WWHP in another dimension. There are opportunities for challenge and growth within WWHP. They are here for all.

A few weeks ago, we lost one of the first men to join our work. Ken Moynihan, historian and journalist, was called "the conscience of Worcester County." He also assisted in ensuring Abby Kelley Foster's place in the National Women's Hall of Fame. He understood the need to document and celebrate the contributions of the many men and women who worked toward "equality before the law without distinction of sex or color." See our Mission Statement on page two.

Please support the work of WWHP by renewing your membership or joining if you have been thinking about it. As a member, you may vote at the annual meeting on our future direction and also may be nominated to serve on the steering committee. You will receive a discount on ticketed events and will receive the semi-annual newsletter. Let us know if you are interested in volunteering on a committee.

Your voice, your action and your ideas are necessary. With your support we will not forget the efforts of our pioneering women and men, like Abby Kelley and Stephen Foster who joined with activists from all walks of life to demand "equality before the law without distinction of sex or color."

Thank you, sincerely,

Dianne Bruce



WWHP

18th Annual



Meeting held



October 24, 2013

Prior to the meeting, a reception was held for new members Elizabeth A. Bacon, Cynthia F. Carruthers, Pingsheng Chen, Elizabeth F. Fideler, Melody Friedenthal, Paula Korstvedt, Barbara A. LaPlant, Susan Yerdon Lewandowski, Edward Osowski, Judy Pelletier, Ann Marie Shea.

The Welcome was given by President Heather-Lyn Haley and actress Lynne McKenney Lydick, who performs as Abby Kelley Foster in *Yours For Humanity—Abby*. The meeting proceeded to reports and the election of officers and Steering Committee members. See the current roster on page 2.

A Memorial Circle for charter member Angela Dorenkamp was held.

After the program presented by Karen Board Moran (see pages 10-11 for her talk), she signed copies of her book *Gates Along My Path*.

How National Women's History Month came into being

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

Dr. Lucia Knoles Captivates Audience at WWOHP December Event

by Maureen Ryan Doyle, Co-Chair WWOHP

Dr. Lucia Knoles, Professor of English at Assumption College, enthralled her audience in the Saxe Room of the Worcester Public Library on December 3 with her presentation of *Telling Our Stories is What Saves Us: Why Autobiographies, Oral Histories, and Family Stories Matter*.

In addition to her position at the College, Dr. Knoles is an advocate for the needs of nursing home residents and is a licensed Long-Term Care Ombudsman for Massachusetts. One of her outstanding professional accomplishments has been the establishment of a Writer's Roundtable at a local assisted living facility. The roundtable is based on several fundamental principles. These include the following: everybody has a story; everybody has a right to have her/his story told; by writing our stories, we continue to learn; by sharing our stories, we become a community, by passing on our stories, we give our families the gift only we can give.

Dr. Knoles began this project hoping that a few individuals would find the process useful and meaningful. At its start the group had only four participants. However, it has developed into a very successful undertaking. Three roundtables were used to accommodate all the individuals who wanted to share their stories. Today the Eisenberg Writers' Roundtable has 20 regular members and has self-published two books.



Dr. Knoles said, "I think the roundtable gives participants a sense that they are using time, rather than using it up. Writing in the privacy of their own apartments or discussing their stories in class, engages people's minds and allows them to produce something they can be proud of...I think sharing their autobiographies has made it possible to see what connects them is more important than what sets them apart from one another..."

Dr. Knoles also talked about her recent year-long sabbatical which she used to improve the quality of people's lives. She attended a seminar in Dignity Therapy and trained volunteers at the Jewish HealthCare Center to assist hospice patients in writing autobiographical statements to leave their family and loved ones. She has also worked with the daughter of an Alzheimer's patient, teaching her how to create the story of her mother's life using words and pictures. Dr. Knoles has been working most recently on two six-month autobiography classes at Christopher Heights in Marlborough and Whitney Place in Northborough. She is collaborating with Dr. Joel Popkin of St. Vincent Hospital and Reliant Medical Group and his medical team in this project. The medical team is surveying the participants of these classes in an effort to ascertain whether their participation in autobiography writing projects help to improve their medical, psychological, and cognitive functioning.

Dr. Knoles' talk ended with an enthusiastic and engaging question and answer session. This free seminar was part of WWOHP's ongoing commitment to present quality programs free of charge to the greater Worcester community, and the mission of WWOHP to create community by recording, preserving, and sharing people's stories.



Barbara Kohin

Physicist, Professor,

Worcester Councilwoman,

WWHP Steering Committee member

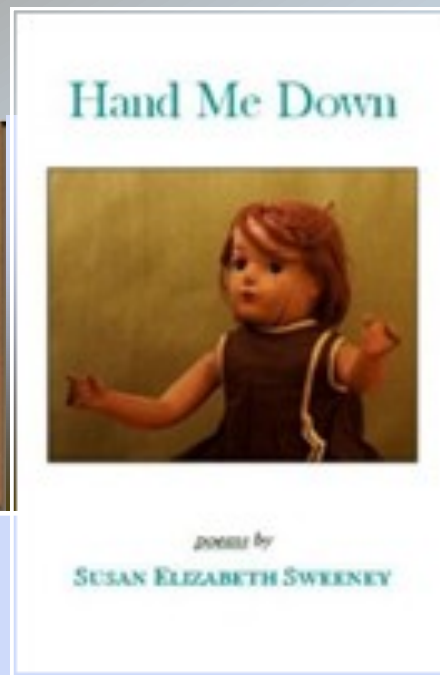
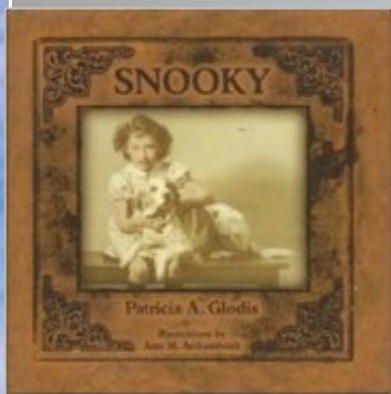
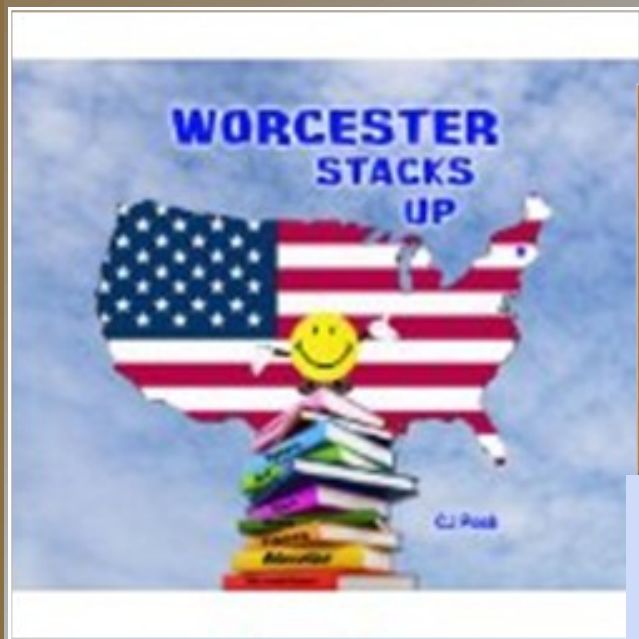
This is one of hundreds of interviews by WWOHP. It may be read in its entirety on www.wwhp.org

When I first came to Worcester it was [challenging]. The colleges didn't hire women. I sent my resume to WPI, Holy Cross, Assumption. I mean Clark was accepting women, but my husband already worked there so that didn't work. I sent my resumes around and they didn't even answer. They didn't respond or acknowledge. I remember, I thought I'd call up WPI and talk to the Physics guy and he said, "Well, we do have an opening for a Molecular Physicist" and I said 'I am a molecular physicist!' And he said, "Really?" I never got an interview. So I did get a job finally, at Worcester State.

Barbara Kohin, a former councilwoman in Worcester Massachusetts, was born in 1932 in Providence, Rhode Island. She attended the College of William and Mary, from which she graduated in 1953. After getting married to her husband Roger, she had three children, and now has two grandchildren. Barbara tells about her experiences growing up as a woman in America and the struggles she faced. She discusses these events such as not getting a job as a physicist at General Electric or as a professor at local colleges in Worcester. Barbara elaborates on the fact that she served on the Worcester City Council and was one of the first three women who did so. All three were elected in 1973. Barbara claims that her male counterparts on the Council were successful in getting her voted out of office. She spent numerous years with her family on her husband's sabbaticals, in which she traveled to Yugoslavia, Kenya, and India. Barbara maintains a strong presence in Worcester, with her vast experience from serving on numerous boards at organizations and schools, like on Worcester State College's [Now, Worcester State University] Board of Trustees, where she served as the chairwoman. Sharing advice with students everywhere Barbara said, "Try to learn about other cultures, make friends from other areas."

11th Annual

WOMEN IN PRINT 2014



**Join us for an evening
with three local authors!**

Wed., March 19, 2014

(Snow date: Wed., March 26)

CJ Posk To spark the interest and curiosity of both children and adults about Worcester, Posk delivers an entertaining history of the City's firsts and fun facts. The hope is that the spark will grow into a lifelong appreciation of Worcester.

Susan Elizabeth Sweeney authored this collection of poems which examines things that those we love have left behind. *Hand Me Down* was selected as a semifinalist in the 2012 New Women's Voices Poetry Chapbook Competition. Sweeney teaches American literature and creative writing at the College of the Holy Cross.

Patricia A. Glodis shares her beautiful book, *Snooky*, based on an adorable dog determined to steal the heart of one Quinsigamond Village family in the '40s and '50s.

5:30-7:30 p.m.

**Worcester Public Library
Saxe Room
3 Salem Square
Worcester, MA 01608**

Free & Open to the Public



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www.wwhp.org

The Day Thinking About (Cont'd from p1)

husband's ideas, her vote would be useless in either case!!! Subsequent to the dramatic dimensions of the evening's performance, LaRue gave the audience a fascinating and detailed history of the period depicted in the play along with some background on the play's author, Marie Jenney Howe, and her work to further the cause of women's rights during her lifetime.

Another marvelous element of the night's activities was a spirited panel discussion entitled *The Unfinished Business of Women's Rights* which followed LaRue's performance and lecture. The outstanding speakers who comprised the panel were Lee Bona, President of the League of Women Voters of the Worcester Area; Parlee Jones, Shelter Advocate at Abby's House; and Chantel Bethea, President of Women in Action, Inc. and the current chair of the Advisory Committee on the Status of Women for Worcester. The panel was moderated by Heather-Lyn Haley, past president of the WWHP and Assistant Professor in the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health at UMASS Medical School. Heather-Lyn's thought-provoking questions sparked a very lively discussion both among the panelists and within many audience participants. There was so much energy in the room - generated both by the passion and insights of the panelists and also when Grace Ross, a frequent candidate for public office and a strong advocate for policies informed by a social justice perspective, spoke from the audience and when Kathleen Walker from Charlton, MA rallied all in the room, especially retirees, to re-engage in public policy debates and to advocate for more progressive political agendas everywhere.



Orchestrating such a successful event took the coordination of many different organizations and the dedication of a great group of women. The WWHP would like to especially thank Maureen Power and Fran Langille for making possible the event's co-sponsorship by the Intergenerational Urban Institute at Worcester State University, Dianne Bruce, current president of the WWHP, Heather-Lyn Haley, former president, and most particularly Louise Gleason for bringing Michèle LaRue to the attention of the WWHP Steering Committee and for handling more details than I can even imagine with respect to all aspects of bringing this fine actress to Worcester and in organizing a successful raffle at the event. And of course, our thanks always go out to Nancy Avila, Executive Assistant to the WWHP, who keeps us all on track with our many exciting initiatives, and to all members of the WWHP family who helped out at the event and/or showed their support by attending and participating. And one other piece of great news – the performance was not only a creative success but also a financial one!!!! What a great evening it was!!!!

- Regina M. Edmonds

The Early Days of WWHP

1994

Founding of Worcester Women's History Project

1995

Incorporation September 27, 1995

Election of first Steering Committee October 2, 1995

Launching on October 23, 1995, Worcester City Hall Plaza

First meeting of Steering Committee November 30, 1995

1996

Sojourner Truth a one-woman show at Emmanuel Baptist Church

Reclaiming Our Heritage Colloquium at AAS

Native Daughter on Worcester poet Elizabeth Bishop at WPL

1997

Washed-Up Middle-aged Women Underground Railway Theater, co-sponsored and presented at Quinsigamond CC

A Conversation with Susan B. Anthony and Eleanor Roosevelt at Worcester Historical Museum

On the Road to 2000 commemorating the 147th anniversary of the first National Woman's Rights Convention

1998

Dedication of Plaque October 23 at site of first National Woman's Rights Convention 1850, Brinley Hall, now 340 Main Street

Dinner With the Dead Ladies: Reviving Women's History in the Classroom - Compiled educational binder of women's history resources for schools

Dessert With the Dead Ladies at Mechanics Hall, dramatization of women who attended 1850 Convention

1999

Four Women's Portraits – Clara Barton, Dorothea Dix, Abby Kelley Foster, Lucy Stone - installed in Mechanics Hall

Women's History 101 at WPL, two films shown, John McClymer of Assumption College discussed new book *This High and Holy Moment: The First National Woman's Rights Convention, Worcester, 1850*

Celebrate Women month-long exhibit at WPL emphasizing the historical contributions of women in Worcester County

Tea@Tatnuck at Tatnuck Bookseller

2000

Dedication of Plaque at Tuckerman Hall, former site of the Worcester Woman's Club, for its architect, Josephine Wright Chapman, for Women's History Heritage Trail

Women's Voices, a collaboration of WWHP with the Master Singers of Worcester and Preservation Worcester

Newspapers in Education a collaboration with the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*; featured profiles of fifteen notable Worcester county women noted in Women's History Heritage Trail booklet along with curriculum guides

Reclaiming Our Heritage: Worcester Women's History, 1850 exhibit opening and press conference

Women 2000, a celebration commemorating the 150th anniversary of the first National Woman's Rights Convention in 1850, held at Mechanics Hall & Centrum Centre, October 20-22, 2000. Speakers, presentations, workshops, music, exhibits, road race, conference for teachers, dinner Honoring Worcester's Best and two performances of *Angels & Infidels*

Worcester's Own Saint Frances

If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted towards your needy neighbour. ⁸You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be. - Deuteronomy 15, 7-8

With the recent accession of Pope Francis I as head of the Roman Catholic Church, the name of Assisi's compassionate saint is enjoying renewed popularity. But how many people are aware that Worcester has its own Saint Frances? (That's "Frances," with an "e," the feminine version of the name.)

The saint is a twentieth century career woman, wife and mother, Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor in the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, first woman ever to serve in a presidential cabinet, and architect of Social Security. In 2009, the Episcopal Church officially recognized her as a holy woman, or saint, and assigned the date May 13 as her feast day, as listed in the church's calendar of *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*. (The passage from Deuteronomy, above, is recommended reading for her feast day.)



Frances Perkins

Born in Boston in 1880, Fannie Coralie Perkins (as her parents christened her) was brought to Worcester as a toddler when her father opened a stationery business in the city. After graduating from Classical High School, Fannie earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Mount Holyoke College. Thanks to her American History teacher, Annah May Soule, who conducted field trips into the local industries, her middle-class consciousness was confronted with the plight of the working classes.

While teaching science at a girls' school in Illinois, Frances (as she then called herself) was drawn to the Episcopal Church. Abandoning the Congregational faith that she had been raised in (her family worshipped at Pilgrim Congregational Church), she was confirmed in the brand new Church of the Holy Spirit in Lake Forest, Illinois, in June 1905. As her biographer, Kirsten Downey points out, although her religious conversion was sincere, it just also happened to place her in "the most upscale social milieu" and gave her "a ready social stepladder." In the years to come, the common religious bond would ease social -- and political-- access to such important people as Winston Churchill and, of course, the Roosevelts.

Yet, at this same period of her life when her religious conversion opened doors to the socially elite and wealthy, Frances discovered Hull House, Jane Addams' community center that dealt with the most crushing conditions of working class Chicago. Eventually she took up residency at Hull House and engaged fully in the day-to-

day routine of improving the lot of the unemployed, underemployed, underpaid, underfed denizens of Chicago. Inspired by Upton Sinclair and the writings of Jacob Riis, she moved to Philadelphia, as general secretary of the Philadelphia Research and Protective Association, investigating women's working and living conditions, including sexual slavery.

Sharpening her financial acumen at Wharton School of Business and Finance, she then went on to Columbia University for a degree in social work. Serving as the New York State Secretary of Labor in the administration of Al Smith, and later Governor Roosevelt, she answered the call when the newly elected President Roosevelt invited her into his cabinet as Secretary of Labor.

"I came to Washington to serve God, FDR, and the poor working man," she is quoted as saying. The creation of the Social Security Act in 1935 was perhaps the most dramatic highlight of her career, combining her financial skills, her concern for the needy, and her dedication to working people. During the darkest days of her service, when the House Un-American Activities Committee was calling for her impeachment, she attended mass daily, attempting to pray for her enemies, but unable to utter their names—Congressmen Martin Dies and J. Parnell Thomas, among others. According to Downey, Frances phrased her prayers to bless "those who make false accusations."

During this period, she continued her practice of spending weekends at All Saints Convent in Catonsville, Maryland, a semi-cloistered community of religious women, whose vows included that of silence. The garrulous Frances somehow managed to observe this condition, with the exception of guidance sessions with the mother superior, wrestling with the challenge of how to honor God in a worldly career. She eventually joined the order as a lay member, and continued to visit up until shortly before her death in 1965.

Frances chose many of her battles. She pursued a career, rather than the middle-class domesticity her parents had envisioned for her. She chose to change her name, her religion. She chose to enter the man's world of politics and bureaucracy in order to realize her social vision. What she did not choose—what was thrust upon her—was to struggle with mental illness in her husband, and eventually, her daughter. With her deep Yankee roots (she had ancestors who had fought in the Revolution), her establishment religion, and her fame, it may appear that Frances had access to an easy life. But it should not be overlooked that for most of her married life, her husband's illness made her the breadwinner in the family. Her appreciation of the struggles of workers, especially women, was framed in part by her own experience. (Cont'd on p8)

*Abby's House
and the
Worcester Women's History Project
celebrate the
203rd Birthday of Abby Kelley Foster
and the 10th Anniversary of the premiere
of Yours For Humanity—Abby
Wednesday, January 15, 2014*



Annette Rafferty, Carolyn Howe,
Lynne McKenney Lydick



12 noon at Abby's House



Annette Rafferty appreciating Abby Kelley Foster as shown on one of the panels created by Carolyn Howe and her students at Holy Cross which was first exhibited in 2000, now in the halls of Abby's House



Standing ovation for Lynne

As a board member of Thoreau Farm, the birth house of Henry David Thoreau, I've seen many an historic re-enactor at work. While most of them are fine historians, very few have developed acting ability. The difference in power and engagement brought about by Ms. McKenney Lydick's obvious acting talent and experience makes an enormous difference in both the experience of the performance as well as the staying power of what has been learned. I was moved and changed by what I saw in Yours For Humanity – Abby. – Deborah Bier, PhD

Sorry I didn't have a chance to talk after your AMAZING performance!! It was spectacular and my family loved it too! – Kelly Brissette, Abby's House Board member

Review by Lisa Connelly Cook on amazon.com of *GATES ALONG MY PATH* authored by Karen Board Moran

I enjoyed this book very much—it is well-documented historical fiction. Aimed at a young audience, eleven-year-old Liza's encounters with other real and fictionalized Worcester characters will no doubt also appeal to many adult readers, who will get a feel for the mid-nineteenth-century city through the eyes of an orphan child. An immigrant Irish girl, not sure where she belongs, begins to consider her options from the margins of a community that includes social reformers, abolitionists and woman's rights activists, such as Stephen and Abby Kelley Foster. Possibilities may be limited for Liza, but local families who contribute to the care of the orphans provide a range of examples and a window into the lives of other Worcester children on various paths to adulthood, including those preparing to become laundry workers, candy shopkeepers, and elite educated professionals. I just love the way this story weaves historical facts with an intelligent and wise imagination—including helpful footnotes that clearly point out the difference. Good idea to put a glossary in the back, too. Karen Board Moran has brought her sensitivity as a former middle school teacher to this fine work of storytelling. I could see a young reader becoming really interested in history, and being motivated to learn more from reading this book. - Lisa Connelly Cook, Co-founder, Worcester Women's History Project 12.1.13

Worcester's Own Saint Frances (Cont'd from p7)

Like Saint Francis of Assisi, who famously rejected the privileged life of his merchant father, Saint Frances from Worcester abandoned the comforts her station in life promised. Rather, she followed her belief, in the words of the Episcopal readings for her feast day, "that the special vocation of the laity is to conduct the secular affairs of society that all may be maintained in health and decency."

For a detailed account of Frances Perkins' spiritual journey, read Donn Mitchell's article in the *Anglican Examiner* -- <http://www.anglicanexaminer.com/Perkins-4.html> . Kirsten Downey's *The Woman Behind the New Deal; Frances Perkins, FDR's Secretary of Labor and His Moral Conscience* provides a comprehensive biography.

Ann Marie Shea, Ph.D.

Abby's Travels

*Lynne McKenney Lydick
welcomed all to the 18th
WWHP Annual Meeting
October 23, 2013, with her
Report on "Yours For
Humanity—Abby"*

Where in the world has Abby been
In the year since we last met
And who has heard her message
Many people you can bet.

The folks who have met her
Have taken her to their hearts
All of you shall know the list
Before we all must part.

Oct -At the Abolition Hall of Fame,
Her name and being did appear
and those she met on those fine days
Were from places both far and near.

What states and countries, you might ask
And want to hear the list
So here it goes and let's hope not
One location - shall be missed

From Canada way up North
And down to Rio in Brazil
Several acquaintances were made
Her accomplishments live on still

From Oregon to Florida,
These people knew her name
Knew her work - for the Cause
And knew about her fame

From Ohio to Texas
Wisconsin to sunny Cal,
All of them were interested
In our local, Worcester gal

And add to that Connecticut
Now you finally have the list
Oh Wait, - Add New York
And NOW no state is missed.

September found Abby in Peru, VT
And August was Equality Day
US Army Corps of Engineer employees
Heard all she had to say

From Liberty Farm in April
Came a call from Judy Fask
A Japanese film crew was there
Would Abby be up for the task?

So donning petticoats and costume
I went out like a flash
Grabbing costumed daughter Maddie
We made a quick dash.

So Abby's story will be heard
On Japanese TV
And Liberty Farm will be a place
That Japanese people will see.

A church over in Tatnuck
Contacted Abby you see
Wanting to include her in
Their 300 year history

At Libraries and schools
At Historical Societies, too
All who heard her words
Have been inspired anew.

In January – A proclamation read
At Worcester City Hall
Abby earned due recognition
Her accomplishments stand tall

Well, Abby has traveled many miles
Both way back then and now
Across the states at quite a pace
Go her spirit, her words and Know- How.

From youngsters to seniors
To New England folks all around
Her selfless deeds speak to many
And her admirers abound.

Her message has hardly changed a bit
Perhaps not at all
Courage speaks out in volumes
In deeds both great and small

Her message through the centuries
Still rings out far and near
As all of us – WE humans
Owe her a debt – THAT is clear

So thank you WWHP, Karen and Carolyn
For assisting and allowing me to bring
Both Abby and her message forth
With a voice and words that ring.

Now Abby shall be remembered
As an agent of change should be
And so will the Project
And the Women of W-W-H-P.

PAST AND NOW THE PRESENT

We remember our past to better shape
our future. You have heard the past now
the PRESENT. In true Abby fashion,
since her National inductions in 2011, I
have urged, cajoled, appealed, and im-
plored both the American Antiquarian
Society and the Worcester Historical Mu-
seum to celebrate Abby's importance not
only to Worcester but TO THE
WORLD, by putting their respective AKF
letters collections on-line.

I am happy to report that the digitizing of
the letters is complete and in the not so
distant future all the letters in the two
collections will be on-line for the world to
see and anyone will be able to access them
via a link on the Project's website.

NOW ON TO THE FUTURE

And to quote Abby, *Nothing Can Be Consid-
ered Done while Anything Remains Undone!*
Once the letters are on-line then the task
of transcribing them begins. If you are
interested, in helping Abby's words reach
the world, please let me know.

Also, if you know any group who might be
interested in having the play, please speak
to me about that, too!

- Lynne

*P.S. After ten years on the road as
Abby, I continue to be amazed by
her achievements, humbled by her
determination to make everlasting
change in the world and honored
to bring her words and deeds to
life. Thank you Carolyn Howe,
Karen Board Moran and WWHP
for this extraordinary, continuing
experience!*

- Lynne McKenney Lydick

GATES ALONG MY PATH

*Karen Board Moran spoke about her book
Gates Along My Path at the 18th WWHP
Annual Meeting October 23, 2013*

It is wonderful to see so many familiar faces here tonight!

Almost 20 years ago Lisa Connelly Cook and Angela Dorenkamp raised our awareness of the historic event held in Worcester in 1850 that helped change the lives of American women. Lisa stimulated our curiosity and imagination about the first National Woman's Rights Convention and the women and men who initiated the event, carried it out and carried it onward. Many of us in this room joined the wave of enthusiasm to hear the stories of the past and continue the woman's rights movement forward into our own lives and those of the future.

I caught that wave and it changed my life when I went in search of 1850 Worcester and its people. In the summer of 1997 I began gathering evidence about the Convention and Worcester women as a teacher fellow at the American Antiquarian Society. I needed to find a voice that would capture the imagination of my 8th grade students at Auburn Middle School and help with the production of the "Centerpiece" of Women 2000.

I "met" Mrs. Abigail Gleason Rawson who attended the convention 163 years ago TODAY. I discovered she was a manager of the Worcester Children's Friend Society and committed to its success for over 37 years of her life.

As I read the 1849 *Children's Friend Society Record Book*, the entries about four orphaned children and a runaway captured my imagination. I thought they could speak to the children a century and a half later. Abigail had provided me with the thread of the novel I finally published this year, *Gates Along My Path*.

As a teacher I chose to write about and reenact average women and girls who were not especially famous, but experienced their time—people like us! Depending on the quality of information I am able to find, they may become a composite rather than a specific historic character. Their story is evidence that each of us has the ability to make a difference—influence others—and affect the next generation. And we do not always need to "rock a cradle to rock a world" to paraphrase Lucy Stone. Within these women's stories are life lessons we can apply in our own lives in hopes of avoiding similar pitfalls. Hopefully their stories inspire and enable us to carry the torch for a better world forward. Abigail's spirit helps me open a window on the past where ever and whenever I reenact her.

What if we could interview Abigail Gleason Rawson who lived from 1811-1895 for the Oral History Project? Of course she passed away generations before the project was founded. Sadly, I have yet to find anything in her own words. But perhaps her ancestors might still be alive. I actually did meet her Great-Great-Great granddaughter Donna Rawson Thurlow (and Donna's mother Barbara Rawson) when I spoke as Abigail at the 1998 February Brown Bag Lunch at Worcester Universal Unitarian Church promoting Women 2000. WWHP member Laura Howie was responsible for making that encounter happen which connected me to the Rawson family.

What if we could interview one of Abigail's charges Eliza McLoughlin who was born ca. 1842 and the heroine of this book?

Sadly, I have yet to find a descendant or found the time to pursue the McLoughlins whose name has been recorded in a wide variety of spellings. I decided to tell her possible story as a composite of similar young girls of the time starting with the facts I found.

Eliza, called Liza in the novel, was just one of the many Irish children brought to America by their parents in search of a better life. The death of her parents brought Liza and her siblings to Worcester where her sister Mary lived with the Miles' family at Chestnut and Williams Streets.

As the youngest member of the newly orphaned McLoughlin family, Liza finds herself stranded in the strange city of Worcester because she is too young to be indentured out. Luckily for her, Worcester is a hot bed of reformers where strong-minded women are not content to accept the status quo as to their place in society whether black or white. The Orphans' Home provides the link to the community throughout the novel.

As I read the minutes of the Children's Friend Society, I was amazed to learn about the escape of one 11 year old girl -- despite the safe shelter provided at the Orphans' Home. Liza's story was born in my imagination. What would she do?? Where would she go?

Take a moment to remember your life at age eleven. Do you remember being safely enrolled in 5th or 6th grade? By our time equal education reforms closed the gate on a situation like Liza's. (At least in the perfect world.)

Would Liza be prepared to face the "real" world? Would her story provide a medium to help people of today (especially young adults) understand the world of the mid-19th century and the importance of the first National Woman's Rights Convention? After all, the young adults of today enjoy many of the reforms discussed and fought for since the 1850 convention. They do not face entering the work place at age eleven, but **enjoy** --although they might not use that word--an additional 7 years of education, training and protection.

The novel's characters were all real people! Few left personal diaries or letters, so I was forced to use literary license to put words in their mouths based on my understanding of the times, period writings and human nature. Any misrepresentations are due to my own imagination. I tried to present the realities of 19th century childhood as Liza connects with Worcester families in different socio- economic, racial and ethnic groups.

Like today, it took a community to raise Liza in a challenging society where children were expected to grow up fast and fend for themselves or their family or employer. Luckily, Worcester had a strong benevolent tradition with strong-minded women who conquered their fears to step out of their traditional place to make the world better.

Liza tells the reader,

My [older] sister Mary had told us of how Mother Miles had boldly visited the abodes of poverty and wretchedness along Pine Street and Green Island for over a year.

(Cont'd on p11)

GATES ALONG MY PATH (Cont'd from p10)

Then she tried to enlist the practical sympathy of others to help “poverty-stricken human beings and friendless young creatures who present themselves in all their ragged wretchedness before us.

[Mrs. Miles] finally was able to organize the Children’s Friend Society for the protection and education of destitute children. At first she kept the orphans in her own home, but soon needed a separate Orphan’s Home.

Now would Liza really have spoken that way? I decided to include the rich vocabulary of the day to encourage the more advanced vocabulary found on state tests that continues to erode to text speak. My students actually looked words up in the dictionary and they quickly suggested I add a 19th century glossary. If we revisit the schoolbooks of 1850 like McGuffey’s readers, they not only used multiple syllable words, but also taught children morals and culture like “A Psalm of Life” by William Longfellow in *McGuffey’s Sixth Eclectic Reader* and also found in the *Children’s Friend Society First Annual Report*.

**Life is real; life is earnest;
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.**

**Not enjoyment and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way,
But to act, that each to-morrow,
Find us farther than to-day.”**

A 19th c. pep talk!

Telling HER-story, rather than HIS-story is a challenge I could not have met without the research I did to prepare WWHP for Women 2000. I thank the curiosity of the members and “Angels & Infidels” reenactors who opened the gate (some would say a flood gate) to 1850 Worcester and the Woman’s Rights Movement. The story is not just Liza’s, but has linked to the stories of the suffragists I portray in MA, AZ and now WI. The influence of Worcester heroines, Abby Kelley Foster and Lucy Stone, still stretches across America to today. The convention’s first principle of “Equality before the law without distinction of sex or color-- in education, the workplace, government and justice—is still unfinished! The Equal Rights Amendment is just 3 states short of becoming part of the US Constitution 90 years after being introduced by Alice Paul!

I never thought I would be a writer (most of you know how I’d rather talk). From my earliest days I knew I needed to share what I discovered—hence my career as a teacher. When my childhood dream of becoming a stewardess --today’s flight attendant-- was shattered by my shortness and glasses, I decided to follow Nancy Drew’s example as a detective. However, the mysteries of the past intrigued me more than present times.

As a teenager I boldly announced I would be an archaeologist until someone slammed that gate shut with the words, “It won’t work if you want to get married and have children.” Being in love at the time and not very brave about making waves, I did not explore that path for almost 30 years!

Liza’s fearful musings in the book show she was curious, strong and resilient—or at least for that moment--.

My thoughts keep wandering from the adventurous expectation of today’s escape to fear in a matter of seconds.

Am I making a terrible mistake? I must have courage. I made my decision to go through the gate offered by [my sister] Mary. I am tired of others leading me down paths they choose for me. I am old enough to choose my own!
My 10 year old granddaughter echoed this same sentiment just three days ago!

I hope this book will enable the reader to be aware of the ‘gates’ they face along their life’s path and think about how FEAR can be our own worst enemy. As 19th century philosopher Henry David Thoreau said, “We have nothing to fear but fear itself.” I’m sure each of us can look back with hindsight to a CLOSED gate and identify the gate keeper who changed our lives—whether they closed or opened the opportunity.

We need to ask ourselves if we are as courageous and aware as the heroine Liza or the women who influenced her. Did the experience make us stronger? Were we able to help others avoid the obstacles they encounter by joining the woman’s rights movement?

Sometimes our greatest impact can be opening NEW GATES. When WWHP challenged Carolyn Howe and me to bring Abby Kelley Foster to life from her letters, it opened a gate I would not have entered without the rich background gained at a “New Scholarship on Women” National Endowment for the Humanities Institute at Radcliffe in 1991 and the teacher fellowship at American Antiquarian Society where I encountered many of the characters in the draft of this novel. In turn, “Yours for Humanity – Abby” opened another gate so I could become a better writer and bring the past to life. I especially thank our “Abby”, Lynne McKenney Lydick for her dramatic insights.

Life is not a simple path as we’ve all discovered. It is a journey where it is up to each of us to hold true to our personal choices to be ourselves and NOT someone else’s version of who we are. *Gates Along My Path* includes a period map of Worcester to allow the reader to stroll mentally across town with Liza to meet the children in various families. It provides a slower, eye level pace we seldom can enjoy today from a car. You will recognize many Worcester locations as you follow Liza’s observations from the Orphan’s Home on today’s Shrewsbury Street near East Park.

Liza imagines following Pliny and Sarah Earle to their Quaker home on Nobility Hill across from City Hall. Sixteen year old Stephen Salisbury and his little step sister Georgianna allow Liza and the reader to share their much wealthier world living in the Salisbury Mansions on today’s Lincoln Square. How wonderful that we can still visit the house just up the hill thanks to the Worcester Historical Museum.

The economic realities of the African American community along Summer Street are revealed as Liza learns what her place will be in the tight economy, even more limited for an orphan. Emily Loveland, who we just heard, lived with her family in the neighborhood now under 290 near St. Vincent’s Medical Center. She offers insight into a woman’s career choices other than the drudgery of domestic duties Liza is being trained in at the Orphans’ Home before she is indentured out.

I hope you enjoy *Gates Along My Path* and share it with a young adult. It is both an exploration of Worcester and the Woman’s Rights movement to encourage the reader to consider what is left undone 163 years later. - Karen Board Moran

2014 CALENDAR

MARCH 19, Wed., 5:30pm, WOMEN IN PRINT 2014. (Inclement weather date: March 26)
at Worcester Public Library's Saxe Room (See p5)

**MARCH 27-29, COLLABORATION WITH WORCESTER HISTORICAL MUSEUM,
AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY AND MECHANICS HALL**

Thurs., March 27, 7pm, at WHM – Abby Kelley Foster: The Unsung Hero of Abolition lecture by Dr. William Casey King. Discussion follows. Event free and open to the public. Light refreshments.

Friday, March 28, 5pm, at Mechanics Hall's Boyden Salon – Abby Goes Digital! Press Announcement and Reception.

Sat., March 29, all day workshop at AAS – Suffragists, Teetotalers and Abolitionists: Social Reform in the Nineteenth Century workshop for K-12 teachers, museum professionals, and interested general public. Workshop will feature a lecture and discussion with scholar Thomas Angst and two hands-on workshops in which participants will work directly with original material from the AAS collections including the newly digitized Abby Kelley Foster Letters collections. See <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/hands-history-suffragists-teetotalers-and-abolitionists>

MAY 13, Tues: ST. FRANCES DAY (See p7)

JUNE: 11th ANNUAL WOMEN'S HISTORY BUS TRIP TBA



Quilting at the Peace Festival

2009 to 2014 issues of the WWHP newsletter are now on the website in .pdf. Go to www.wwhp.org and click on the tab NEWS & EVENTS.

To keep up to date, check us out on 

www.wwhp.org



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And

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