

CITY OF SISTERLY LOVE:  
A PRESERVATION ASSESSMENT AND URBAN LANDSCAPE RE-INTERPRETATION OF  
PHILADELPHIA'S SITES OF WOMEN'S HISTORY

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*To Hillary Rodham Clinton, for inspiring a generation of women activists  
to keep making history.*

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## INTRODUCTION

*Women's experience encompasses all that is human; they share—and always have shared—the world equally with men. Equally in the sense that half, at least, of all the world's experience has been theirs... In one sense, then, to write the history of women means documenting all of history: women have always been making history... But the history of women has a special character, a built-in distortion: it comes to us refracted through the lens of men's observations: refracted again through values which consider man the measure... And so, to construct a new history that will with true equality reflect the dual nature of humankind—its male and female aspect—we must first pause to reconstruct the missing half—the female experience: women's history.*

- Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past*<sup>1</sup>

For a country that has been so long engaged in historic preservation, the preservation of our nation's sites of women's history lags far behind that of our traditional, patriarchal version of history. The reasons behind this are complex, and written into the inequality women have faced in this country. Our current conception of history is a façade, and sees history through what Gerda Lerner aptly called a “built-in distortion.” Our history has been constructed through the lens of all that is straight, white, cis-gendered, able-bodied and male at the expense of stories of people who don't fit this mold. This inequality in story-telling is a manifestation of unequal positions held in life and in society, with privileged historical figures leaving behind their letters and photographs for future historians to examine and interpret. This fundamental inequality in the status of women has created a systematic misunderstanding of women's history as niche, subversive, or as that of a discrete interest group at odds with history as we know it today. This is not the case, and the traditional male version of

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1. Lerner 1979, 160.

history becomes less and less relevant as our nation becomes increasingly diverse -- sexually and otherwise.

Women's social organizations were the progenitors of historic preservation in this country, yet since the field's beginning the status and roles of women at historic sites have been challenged and criticized; likewise with efforts to identify, interpret, and protect the places significant to women's history.<sup>2</sup> While women have been the driving force behind the work and organization of preservation, women have rarely held the economic or social power necessary to define the narrative. Preservation, as a fundamentally political act, shapes how we as a nation view our history and our place within it. More so than history books, our historic places speak to and shape our collective memory and identities. As long as women's narratives are seen as irrelevant or secondary, women's stories will continue to become increasingly scarce and difficult for historians to engage with and interpret for the public.

Within the last 30 years, stories that were previously considered niche to a specific minority group are rightfully becoming more and more mainstream due largely to sociopolitical factors that signal a changing in America's demographic and our understanding of equality vs. equity. However, the tendency to treat women as a minority group is troubling. While women make up 50% of the population, the female story hasn't been treated as necessary to the national narrative in the same way that we

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2. Dubrow 2003, 3.



now understand the story of African Americans and increasingly Asian Americans, Latinx folks, and the LGBT community as ssential to our national narrative.

This raises a unique challenge: how can historians and preservationists best approach the stories of half of the population, which are both engrained in and separate from the national narrative. Further, how do we reconcile the fact that women have been overlooked on a national scale since the origins of the preservation field?

This challenge is further complicated by preservation's own history as a field driven by (primarily white) women. Some of the earliest preservationists in this country, the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association founded in the 1850s, used preservation as a tool to tie themselves to the revolutionary period and to the sacredness of the home and of domesticity.<sup>3</sup>

Preservation has failed women and women's history. When it has succeeded, it has been in uplifting a predictable few types of stories. The modest, everyday buildings that were the scene of social and economic struggles of women have not been recognized as historically significant, particularly in urban settings.<sup>4</sup>

Historic preservation relies heavily on the first part of its name- history. Likewise, preserving women's history responsibly must stem from the robust field of women's history. Feminist historian Gerda Lerner identified several stages in the development of Women's History as a field of study. Her assessment of women's history is an incisive

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3. Murphy 2013, 135.

4. Hayden 2003, 199-200.

framework to understand how preservation has not appropriately responded to women's stories. Based on her understanding of the progression of women's history, preservation is currently between stage one and stage two. Stage one is comprised of "compensatory history," meaning that women are highlighted only if they are deemed very significant within the national narrative. Frequently for women to attain this level of success, they were wealthy, white, and otherwise unimpeded. In terms of preservation efforts regarding women, stage one is best exemplified by guides such as *Susan B Anthony Slept Here* and *Women Remembered* by Marion Tinling and the recognition of women who are significant primarily on the national level- a requirement for National Historic Landmark theme studies.<sup>5</sup> Over-reliance on compensatory history results in an overemphasis of women whose lives and experiences most departed from the typical female experience rather than those whose lives are representative of the trends of their times.

The second stage of Gerda Lerner's framework was titled "contributory history," and focused on women's contributions to already accepted movements in the traditional conception of history, including the abolition movement, industrialization, urbanization, and Progressivism.<sup>6</sup> Current scholarship on women's history is pushing beyond stage one and two, and "...not only shows how women shaped American history

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5. Sharp 2003, 269.

6. Ibid.

but also how American history affected women and affected the definitions of womanhood and manhood.”<sup>7</sup>

In order to start reconciling the absence of women’s stories in preservation outcomes, it is necessary to identify the big names, big places, and big stories-- work which has still not been completed-- but it is equally necessary to study the unknown women and groups of women and the buildings and spaces they inhabited. Study must focus on women who were regionally or locally significant in addition to those who were nationally significant.<sup>8</sup>

However, historic preservation has not yet fully reached this level of “contributory history,” and to tell the wealth of diverse stories that the women’s history approach has to offer, this approach is necessary. Since most people leave behind no written records, and only leave behind their homes, furniture, and domestic tools, preservation is uniquely posed to bring these stories-- rooted in physical fabric-- to light. Expanding on existing scholarship in women’s history through the use of tangible objects and places, preservation allows historians to better include the everyday experiences of representative female citizens throughout time: their lives in the home rearing children, their experiences as of part of the workforce, and their struggles against oppression. Preservation is critical in understanding the full picture of many histories, but material culture is especially necessary to understanding women’s history,

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7. Miller 1992, 8.

8. Sharp 2003, 271.

particularly private spaces such as homes, and voluntary associations and organizations.<sup>9</sup>

In recognizing and reconciling these failings, Gail Dubrow outlined several steps that preservation as a field must undertake before answering the call of women's history:<sup>10</sup>

- I. Claiming the entire urban landscape as an important part of American history, not just its architectural monuments.
- II. Identifying building types such as tenement, market, factory, packing shed, union hall, etc.- which have housed women's work and everyday lives.
- III. Finding creative ways to interpret these modest buildings as part of the flow of contemporary city life. This means finding a politically conscious approach to urban preservation, complementary to architectural preservation, which emphasizes public processes to nurture shared memories and meanings.

### **Questions and Methods**

This thesis seeks to examine how well sites of women's history have been preserved, valorized, and interpreted in Philadelphia. When analyzing the sites that have been recognized as significant, does a complete narrative emerge? How has the

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9. Miller 1992, 8-9.

10. Hayden 2003, 200.

discrepancy in our male version of history been addressed thus far? Does public art offer a way to help bridge the gap between preservation and this wealth of untapped potential? By analyzing the problem at three scales --national, state, and local-- it is possible to focus in on the many ways the question of women's history has been addressed, each with varying degrees of success.

Traditional preservation hasn't been enough to address this problem. Many important sites have been already lost after mainstream preservation failed to recognize them. In an extreme example, Rosa Parks' Detroit home, completely dilapidated by years of neglect, was recently transported to Berlin by an artist.<sup>11</sup> Is American preservation so dire that artists must step in to save our significant historic sites? Based on the gaps left behind by these efforts, public art emerges as a particularly apt and already-tested solution to gain political momentum and bring awareness to sites that haven't been included in the Philadelphia story. This analysis draws on well-established academic literature in both women's history and preservation's relation to it, as well as the presence of a select number of preservation sites devoted intentionally to narrative women's histories.

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11. "Saved from Demolition, Rosa Parks's House Gets a Second Life." New York Times, May 2, 2017. The artist in question, Ryan Mendoza, has now announced plans to return the house to the United States. "Artist who took Rosa Parks' Detroit home to Germany wants to return it" Detroit Free Press, August 20, 2017.

## **Why Philadelphia? Why now?**

Philadelphia in 2017 offers a unique case study. Philadelphia is a city unparalleled for its historic resources, many of which contribute to an engaging story of women's involvement within a number of existing narratives that have been predominantly male-driven as well as in narratives that haven't yet been told. Philadelphia is also a hotbed for historic preservation and political activism, both of which are largely led by women.

A more intersectional feminism has been on the rise in many communities within the last five to ten years, and has created a generation of women who are more engaged in activism than the generation before them. Feminism is becoming more inclusive, diverse, and accessible to a wider range of women. Feminism has become almost mainstream, thanks largely to the ways in which the internet has allowed people to communicate somewhat anonymously about topics considered socially taboo, while giving marginalized voices a platform. After the 2016 Presidential election, in which many liberal-minded people were shocked and surprised that Donald J. Trump was elected to 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, there has been a resurgence of motivated, passionate groups of women enacting change in their communities.

Women's history as a field has seen a dramatic rise within the last 40 years; the quality and quantity of scholarship available is staggering. For the preservation field to successfully interpret more diverse stories, women's history is a field to be understood and emulated. The field found its origins around the 1876 centennial, with well-to-do

women becoming interested in both their personal familial histories and in the histories of powerful women. As women fought for the right to vote, this connection to powerful women from history became increasingly important. A resurgence in the 1960s and 1970s in the academic sphere echoed feminist activism nation-wide. Women's history has historically seen resurgences during periods where women's futures were uncertain and when women were well-organized politically. Many people are now coming to recognize this same uncertainty perpetuated today, and women's rights are in crisis as our recent political climate has affirmed that women's status is not equal to that of men.

### **Women's History as a New Framework**

Women's history is the best-suited approach to understanding our national story, uncovering the stories of people marginalized by the predominant, historically privileged, white male, national narrative. These stories are frankly more difficult to uncover, as the male-dominated culture has led to a cultural tradition that preserves the records, journals, letters, etc. of men over women, and in the same vein of white people over people of color, and of the wealthy over the poor and middle class. To understand a woman's place in these traditionally male stories from an intersectional feminist perspective, a deeper and more intentional type of research becomes necessary. This type of research uncovers more holistic and ultimately more interesting stories that better relate to people as they exist in the world today. Women's history as a lens provides a more complete approach to the history of our nation.

## **Assessment: National, State, Local**

To understand how preservation has approached sites of women's history and to ultimately answer how it can improve in the future, assessing preservation efforts made on national, state, and local levels seems the most logical way to categorize the many strategies. The institutions and organizations researched on each of these three scales reflect what one would expect to be the best indices of inclusion of women's history. Emphasis was placed on national efforts, which include efforts done both by federal agencies- particularly the National Park Service, including the National Register of Historic Places and the National Landmarks Programs- as well as efforts led by organizations and non-profits working on the scale of the entire country. These efforts have resulted in varying amounts of success and influence in the city of Philadelphia, and have been the most visible and well-researched preservation efforts undertaken to do with women's history.

State efforts are comprised of Pennsylvania's Historical Marker Program, which is one of the most meaningful ways that residents of the city interact with their history and environment daily. These state markers celebrate several significant women and women's organizations.

Local efforts are much more difficult to discern for a variety of reasons. Finding which sites on the local historical register include women in their narratives of significance is nearly impossible due to inaccessibility of the Philadelphia Historical Register's database. This problem isn't entirely unique to Philadelphia, as many local



registers are backlogged and underfunded. In a city as rich with historic resources as Philadelphia, however, this functional lack of transparency is difficult.

## **Hypotheses**

Philadelphia has enough sites associated with significant women and significant patterns in the lives of women that it seems a city-wide survey of sites is merited, as is a reassessment of preservation. In looking at individual sites, are they adequately valorized, visited, or funded? In informal conversations with fellow Philadelphians (typically on SEPTA) about significant women in Philadelphia's history, only one name came up consistently: Betsy Ross. How can it be that a city with historical resources as vast as Philadelphia only one woman has made it to be a historic all-star, so to speak? Could reinterpreting the wealth of women's history sites in the public, urban sphere serve to create a culture of deeper appreciation and understanding of women's history? Could this type of city-wide reinterpretation have the capacity to engage political activists and political action in the city in creating a more cohesive movement behind championing women's history in Philadelphia?

If traditional preservation and interpretation methods have proven inadequate to the task of representing women's histories, what other possibilities exist for a meaningful engagement with these histories? Public art may have potential as a mode of interpreting women's history, the sites of which are often lost or in deplorable physical condition due to being relatively unknown on the urban landscape. Public art

holds a prominent position in Philadelphia, both as a political agent and as a way of celebrating the city's culture and history.

## SECTION I: REVIEWING THE LITERATURE

To begin to frame the issue of representation of women in historic preservation, it became necessary to engage with the fields of women's history and historic preservation, with a variety of sources across feminist theory, public history, and everywhere in-between.

Kathleen M. Brown suggests that a comparative historical framework may be the best approach to American women's history, especially in creating a female identity that isn't assumed to be unified, homogenous, or separate from other systems of power.<sup>12</sup> Arguing that this framework allows for a deeper discourse while grasping the 'big picture' and avoiding essentialism and tired narratives, Brown uses this framework as a way to avoid placing white women (or even white men) as the prototype for gender for other women to be compared against.<sup>13</sup> Louise Tilly similarly argues that integration into the traditional, male histories and stories is not the goal-- the goal is to analytically use women's stories to answer questions and fill blank spots in the historical narrative.<sup>14</sup>

Theresa Ann Murphy's *Citizenship and the Origins of Women's History in the United States* argues that women's history began as a way to legitimize women's experiences during the fight for suffrage and for rights of 'full citizenship'.<sup>15</sup> Full citizenship is defined as the "...ability to participate equally with men in the political,

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12. Brown 1993.

13. Ibid., 315-316

14. Tilly 1989.

15. Murphy 2013.

economic, and intellectual life of the nation.”<sup>16</sup> By providing a history of women’s history, Murphy is able to explore the ways in which the study of our history evolved, and has been tied to political action and change.

As Evelyn Brooks Higgenbotham calls out in her article, “African-American Women’s History and the Metalanguage of Race,” an understanding of African-American women’s history falls short of white women’s history largely because mainstream feminism and feminist action have largely ignored race.<sup>17</sup> While Higgenbotham’s work is now 25 years old, and contemporary scholarship and feminism has become more intersectional, her claims still ring true in the the context of a traditional, male history. Higgenbotham’s call to not separate an African American woman’s experience into two separate parts-- African American and woman-- resonates today, and further ascertains that women’s history must separate whiteness from womanness to acknowledge the roles white women have played in oppression of people of color. Higgenbotham argues that African American histories fail to include women in favor of creating a monolithic “‘black community,’ ‘black experience,’ and ‘voice of the Negro.’”<sup>18</sup> By further showing examples of how the construction of race plays into histories of sexuality, class, and gender Higgenbotham offers a meaningful framework for preservation to be related to people of color’s stories, and to intersectionality.

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16. Ibid., 1.

17. Higginbotham 1992.

18. Ibid., p. 256.

The National Park Service has undertaken several initiatives to better integrate women's history into the parks. A National Historic Landmark Initiative began in 2012, which seems to have had little impact on the preservation of historical resources in Philadelphia. The literature on these initiative not only outlines the Park Service's commitment to Women's History on a national level, but their methodology which may serve as an example for a city-scale inventory.

Gail Dubrow's efforts to reclaim Boston's sites of women's history are outlined in her article "Claiming Public Space for Women's History in Boston: A Proposal for Preservation, Public Art, and Public Historical Interpretation."<sup>19</sup> As perhaps my only comparable in scale and in mission, Dubrow emphasizes the importance of visibility for these sites, which is perhaps more important than simple identification. She also assesses the efficacy of previous preservation efforts related to women's history, pushing for new approaches particularly in creating visibility. Analysing national efforts as well as grassroots efforts in their effects on the city of Boston, Dubrow explains the merits of grassroots efforts. Her methodology for increasing public visibility include: a "comprehensive survey of sites" and reviewing scholarship of significant "women, organizations, events, and experiences" in Boston, which led to an inventory of nearly 200 properties.<sup>20</sup> She pulls from this list to illustrate different approaches to visibility

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19. Dubrow 1992.

20. Ibid., 116-117.

and preservation as well as how she came upon these sites in her research. She then explains the significance of these efforts in creating concrete preservation action.

Marissa Moshier's 2010 thesis, "Commemoration and Protest: The Use of Heritage Trails to Connect Women's History with Historic Sites" offers another type of preservation success story, and explores Women's History Heritage Trails in Boston, New Jersey, Maryland, and the National Votes for Women History Trail in Upstate New York.<sup>21</sup> From the scale of cities to entire states, these trails offer another opportunity to link landmarks, landscapes, and sites in a more creative and often more accessible way.

A number of national guides to women's history have been created since the 1980s, and have had successes and failures for a number of reasons. These guides include *Susan B. Anthony Slept Here: A Guide to American Women's Landmarks* by Lynn Sherr and Jurate Kazickas<sup>22</sup> and Marion Tinling's *Women Remembered: A Guide to Landmarks of Women's History in the United States*.<sup>23</sup> Both were considered short-lived, under-utilized, and largely ineffective, largely because the type of landmarks they highlight focus exclusively on white, powerful women and big names, such as much of early preservation focused on figures like George Washington. Dubrow in her introduction to *Restoring Women's History Through Historic Preservation* notes that

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21. Moshier 2010.

22. Sherr 1994.

23. Tinling 1986.

these types of guides have been ineffective in leading to actual preservation work, and have instead lent themselves exclusively to tourism.<sup>24</sup>

Gail Dubrow and Jennifer Goodman's *Restoring Women's History Through Historic Preservation* offered links, in the form of essays by a number of historians and preservation scholars, between the many fields involved the question of women's history. It brought up issues on many different scales that must be addressed to fully answer the call of women's history, and was a starting point for much of this thesis.

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24. Dubrow and Goodman, 2003.

## **SECTION II. NATIONAL PRESERVATION ASSESSMENT**

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and National Historic Landmark (NHL) program are two key ways in which the American story has been defined, told, and preserved. These programs managed by the National Park Service seek to identify and list our national treasures, with the NRHP focusing on sites of local, state, and national significance and the NHL program calling out sites of national significance. These programs don't provide any protection aside from the assurance of the section 106 process, which prevents federal dollars going towards any project that undermines the integrity of a historic property without due mitigation. Therefore national listing is often not enough to ensure a building will be preserved, but is an important step in gaining valorization and often making rehabilitation easier through the historic rehabilitation tax credit.

In an analysis of the shortcomings of preservation efforts of sites of women's history, Gail DuBrow states the problem is not "...limited to an inadequate percentage of designated sites and buildings...rather, it extends to the inaccurate and distorted images of women which too frequently appear."<sup>25</sup> Preservation on the national level is comprised of efforts made by the National Park Service, National Historic Landmarks Program, and the National Register of Historic Places Program. There have also been a

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25. Dubrow 1987.



number of private and non-profit efforts that have taken on preserving women's history at a national scale, and these will be discussed in order to create a complete picture of the situation as it pertains to Philadelphia.

### **National Parks and Women's History**

Since the 1970s, several historic sites associated with women have become units of the National Park Service. There are currently ten units of the National Park Service that are associated with women's history, with the most recent added earlier this year.<sup>26</sup> Of the 417 total units of the National Park Service, of which 216 became parks primarily their historic values (87 National Monuments, 51 National Historic Parks, 78 National Historic Sites), these ten make up a pitiful 4.6%.<sup>27</sup> The efforts to include more parks associated with women came to a head during the late 1970s and early 1980s, and saw a resurgence in the 2000s and 2010s, particularly under President Barack Obama's liberal use of the Antiquities Act in creating National Monuments. These sites are heavily concentrated in Maryland and New York states, with only two outside of the National Capital and Northeast Regions. The sites associated with women's history include (Listed in chronological order of authorization):

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26. "Trivia Challenge: The 8 National parks Devoted to Women's History", National Parks Conservation Association

27. Numbers accurate as of April 2017.

- I. The Clara Barton National Historic Site in Glen Echo, Maryland, authorized by congress in 1974, which was the first unit of the National Park Service associated primarily with women.
- II. The Sewall-Belmont National Historic Site was authorized by congress in 1972 as an affiliated unit of the National Park Service, and was designated the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument in 2016 by President Barack Obama affording the site more protection, visibility, and funding opportunities. The historic house and museum interprets the history of women's suffrage and equal rights movements, and is named for National Women's Party leaders Alva Belmont and Alice Paul (a resident of Greater Philadelphia and University of Pennsylvania graduate).
- III. Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site in Hyde Park, authorized by congress in 1977 in Hyde Park, New York.
- IV. The Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site, authorized by congress in 1978 in Richmond, Virginia. This is home of the first woman banker.
- V. Women's Rights National Historic Park, authorized by congress in 1980 in Seneca Falls, New York. This type of park was unique at the time of its authorization, and includes Elizabeth Cady Stanton's home as well as the Wesleyan Chapel- two relics of the early women's rights movement. This cluster of houses and meeting

places come together in a unique way to interpret the American suffrage movement.<sup>28</sup>

- VI. Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site, in Northwest Washington DC, in the Logan Circle Historic District
- VII. First Ladies National Historic Site was established October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2000 in Canton, Ohio and includes the Ida Saxton McKinley Historic Home, the home of the wife of US President William McKinley. The Park is managed by Cuyahoga Valley National Park and the National First Ladies' Library.
- VIII. Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park was authorized by congress in 2000 in Richmond, California. The only National Park associated with Women's History on the West Coast, is still being programmed. This park interprets a number of resources to better understand the legacy of the US home front during WWII, and particularly the role of women in African-Americans in war industries.
- IX. Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park, was first established by President Barack Obama as the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Monument on March 25, 2013, and was later designated a National Historical Park by congress on December 19, 2014 across Dorchester, Talbot, and Caroline Counties in Maryland. The site includes sites that were significant during Tubman's life, and the Jacob Jackson Home, which acted as a

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28. Miller 1992, 4.

station on the Underground Railroad, and is co-managed by the National Park service and the Maryland Park Service, with a portion included in the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge co-managed between the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

- X. Harriet Tubman National Historic Park, authorized by congress on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017 in Auburn, New York. The park includes 32 acres, and contains the historic Thompson A.M.E. Zion Church and the adjacent rectory, associated with Tubman, her family, and her supporters- a significant place of meeting for the black community during her time.<sup>29</sup>

### **Women's History Trails and Walking Tours**

A national trend played out on the state and local level, women's history trails and walking tours have become an increasingly viable option in interpreting sites of women's history with little financial input. As sites of women's history are often discrete from one another in addition to being poorly managed, trails and walking tours offer a unique opportunity to engage with a variety of resources over a larger geographic area. Walking tours began largely as grassroots efforts to create an interpretative scheme that engages a variety of historic resources cheaply and effectively. Trails are the more grown-up sibling of these community and individually organized walking tours. Implemented on the scales of cities, and even states by government agencies at every

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29. "About the Park: Harriet Tubman National Historical Park", National Park Service.

level, trails are an extremely effective tool to interpret women's history, and are being used increasingly frequently.

Over the last 20 years, trails have increased in number and complexity. They began in the 1970s as an alternative to the traditional, domestic setting typically reserved for women's history. Trails were seen as having the potential to become the new house museum, by not only offering a more complex understanding of the women they respect, but in terms of the people they engage. This trend is largely credited with starting in the UK. One of the earliest and most successful of these such walks was established in London in 1978. Called the *London Feminist History Walk*, it interpreted women's labor and sites of social protest.

Trails can be difficult to manage by any one entity, as they typically span different ownerships, and while ownership of the individual sites or buildings is often not necessary, agreements must be made about traffic, boundaries of the trails, etc., depending on the site of the trail. There are a number of management strategies, including public private partnerships which help to create a wider audience, and can help ensure ongoing programming and events.

Historically speaking, trails are particularly well-suited to tell a story about women's history. Suffragists paraded along trails of significant public sites, a practice that peaked in the 1910s. By using public sites of national significance, they helped establish the legitimacy of their protest and of their plights.

Of the existing women's history trails, there are quite a few in the United States that function on the state level, including Connecticut (established 1993), New Jersey (established 1994), New York (established 1998), Florida (established 1999), Maryland (established 2003), Arizona (established 2013), Indiana (established 2008). Others are based in a single city, including Boston (established 1989), Portland, Maine (established 1997), Salem, Massachusetts (established 2000), Louisville Kentucky (established 2004), and Manhattan, New York (established 2008). Additionally the National Park Service manages the Votes for Women Trail, established in 2009 as part of Women's Rights National Historic Park.<sup>30</sup>

### **National Historic Landmark Women's Theme Study**

Some of the most significant efforts on the national level of creating a more cohesive and inclusive national story have come in the form of theme studies from the National Historic Landmarks program. Under the National Park Service, the National Historic Landmarks Program has completed a number of these theme studies, whose purpose is to unearth previously unknown sites of national significance. In recent years theme studies have been completed in attempts to reconcile holes in our national narrative. Recent theme studies have tackled minority cultures and in part the acts of violence committed against them by white culture, including Latino Heritage (2013), Civil Rights and Voting Rights (2007, 2009), and Japanese Americans in World War II (2012).

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30. Moshier 2010.

By the early 1990s, approximately fifty theme studies had been undertaken, with only three having any substantial representation of women. These three were the 1964 study of social and humanitarian movements, the 1971 study of American writers, and the African American theme study completed in the mid-1970s.<sup>31</sup>

To this day, the majority of properties important in telling the female story through history have not been identified or designated National Historic Landmarks or listed in the National Register of Historic Places if they still exist at all. Since women have typically worked in informal ways and in modest conditions, more often than not there are no buildings existing that document certain experiences. This is partially the result of a bias within the historic preservation profession that has favored architecturally unique buildings associated with important men, however public history's growth within the last 40 years has renewed an interest in ordinary people and groups of people, as well as the places they left behind. The National Park Service has taken a lead in "encouraging the identification, preservation, and interpretation of historic places associated with women."<sup>32</sup>

A theme study on women's history was completed from 1989 to 1993 by Page Putnam Miller, and was revisited in 2011. Its effects were not as far-reaching as many had hoped. When compared with the success of the theme studies associated with African American history, which as a field of study has made huge strides in the past 40

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31. Ibid., 14-15.

32. Ibid., 13.

years and whose success is attributed to the political mobilization of many African American communities, women's history lags far behind.

The Historic Landmarks Program is underfunded, resulting in a holding pattern of qualified, national significant sites. In the 1960s, more than twenty theme studies were completed. In the 1980s, fewer than 10 were completed.<sup>33</sup> The 1990s, when women's history and a demand for women's stories to make their way into the mainstream. This pattern continued, with 18 theme studies completed since 2000.

In the 1990s, Page Putnam Miller began a theme study on sites of women's history of national importance, using *The American Woman's Gazette* by Lynn Sherr and Jurate Kazickas and Marion Tinling's *Women Remembered: A Guide to Landmarks of Women's History* as a jumping off point, Miller began with more than 100 eligible sites to be National Historic Landmarks.<sup>34</sup> The first effort completed by 1990 resulted in 23 sites listed National Historic Landmarks. In 1990, additional funding by congress allowed for the addition of another 30 sites.<sup>35</sup>

These theme studies often only came after significant public pressure headed by groups who sought to find their stories and the stories of their ancestors included in the national narrative created by the collection of National Historic Landmarks. In both the case of African American history and women's history, significant pressure from the public, the historical community, and congress led the National Park Service to

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33. Miller 1992, 18.

34. Ibid., 16.

35. Ibid., 17.



undertake theme studies. This political action began in part in 1976 with Marion Tinling and Linda Ruffner-Russel's article in *Historic Preservation*, the magazine of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Their article called attention to the very few NHLs related to women's history, while noting the irony that women had been the instigators of historic preservation that their stories and places had been ignored.

In 1985, Joan Hoff, the then executive secretary for the Organization of American Historians (OAH) and Page Putnam Miller as the then-director of the National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History (NCC) met with the deputy director of the National Park Service, Dennis Galvin to press for the inclusion of more women represented in the National Historic Landmark program. The National Park Service agreed to work with the OAH and NCC to increase the representation of women. However, no resources or staff were assigned to the task.

Representative Bruce Vento, the Chair of the House subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands had been publicly noting the scarcity of sites associated with women and had urged the National Park service and other federal preservation programs to take action to remedy the inequalities, which the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands oversee. In 1988 during a House of Representatives hearing by the subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands chaired by Representative Bruce Vento, committee members discussed the National Historic Landmark Program and inquired about the potential of landmark theme studies. Their comments on the 1989 Fiscal Year budget include the recommendation that the

National Park Service... “establish an ongoing and substantial cooperative effort with the major professional and scholarly societies to research and publish National Historic Landmark Theme studies,” the idea being that these theme studies would direct future NPS priorities, and stretch research dollars. In the 1989 Fiscal Year a modest fund was earmarked for a study on landmarks of women’s history.”<sup>36</sup>

While previously NHL theme studies included published volumes and modern theme studies are available online, this was not done for Page Putnam Miller’s theme study due to lack of funding and support on the side of the National Park Service.<sup>37</sup> Getting the information out as quickly as possible was critical, as many of these sites were in danger of being demolished, with many already having been so. Miller published *Landmarks of American Women’s History*- a series of essays on landmarks that came up during the theme study she completed in the early 1990s. In the greater Philadelphia area, this book included the M. Carey Thomas Library in Bryn Mawr, which was one of the first university libraries that in both architectural grandeur and educational resources paralleled those of male-driven institutions.<sup>38</sup>

In 2012, a conference was held at the then Sewall Belmont House which focused on identifying new NHL properties associated with women rather than update the original theme study. The conference recommended the creation of a marker program for sites that lacked the historic integrity necessary to qualify for NHL designations.

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36. Ibid., 15-16.

37. Ibid., 21.

38. Miller 2004, 79-92.

There have been no updates on the progress of this program since 2013.<sup>39</sup> This conference led to cooperative agreement with the National Collaborative for Women's History Sites, and resulted in a number of sites which are in the progress of becoming NHLs. Gaining the cooperation of property owners and adequate funding for nominations has been a challenge, but thus far four NHL sites have resulted from the conference's recommendations, including sites associated with Margery Stoneman Douglas and Pauli Murray, and the Casa Dra. Concha Meléndez Ramírez in San Juan, Puerto Rico, which was listed in 2013. Stepping Stones in the Village of Katonah, New York was listed as a NHL in 2012 for its association with Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). It was the home of Louis Burnham Wilson, one of the cofounders of alcoholics anonymous. The addition of four more sites are in progress, including the Lydia Pinkham house, the Frances Perkins House in Maine, and Rachel Avery's house designed by Minerva Parker Nichols in Philadelphia. The listing of a site associated with Annie Weneutka, a Navajo woman known for her work in healthcare for native women, is in progress.<sup>40</sup>

### **The National Register of Historic Places and Women's History**

The National Register Information System (NRIS) has made it particularly difficult to research individual sites and larger patterns women's history directly. Women's history is not included as an area of significance, while Ethnic Heritage as an area of

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39. "NHL Women's History Initiative, 2011-2013."

40. From email correspondence with Stephanie Toothman, former keeper of the National Register of Historic Places.

significance offers Asian, Black, European, Hispanic, Native American Pacific Islander, and Other as subcategories. This makes it impossible to nominate a property for its significance to women's history.

This further makes clear that our national framework does not consider the fact of gender in the evaluation, or often in the research of historic places.<sup>41</sup> There is a necessity for preservationists, and particularly women practitioners to of a "unified interpretative model that will help us ask fruitful questions of the landscape and built environment that lead to enlightening answers about women's experiences."<sup>42</sup> The National Register process of understanding women's history resources is further marred by the lack of infrastructure for women's history built into the National Register Information Service (NRIS) which makes all National Register data, including nominations available to the public. Women's history is not searchable, nor are any other gender distinctions.<sup>43</sup>

In 1996, analysis was completed on the NRIS to assess how many women were represented. At that time, 9,820 listings were associated with significant people (about 15% of the total listings). Of those listings associated with significant people, about 360, or less than 4% were women. A similar query of the database of 25,000 architects and builders identified, 90 were women.<sup>44</sup>

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41. Sharp 2003, 275.

42. Ibid., 275.

43. Shull 2003, 303.

44. Ibid., 307.

**Key Players: Antoinette J. Lee**

A conversation with Toni Lee, who spent 30 years with the National Park Service creating a better representation for minority groups and who now works as an independent historian in Washington DC helps illuminate the reasons why preservation efforts on the national level have been unable to appropriately address women's history.

The biggest source of the problem, in her opinion, is the gap between the academic world- who is doing significant work on women's history and has built up a substantial understanding of women's contributions and the places associated with them, and with mainstream preservation. Gail Dubrow engages with this same separation between academics and preservationists by calling for a larger historical presence for women that goes beyond the textbooks into the public sphere and into cultural landmarks.<sup>45</sup> Page Putnam Miller identifies a similar issue in highlights the ways in which preservation can better serve historians and visa-versa in a way that is mutually beneficial.<sup>46</sup>

Another issue she highlights is the inability to deal with the massive scale of women's history, particularly in completing theme studies. Theme studies have become the accepted way in which underrepresented groups from history enter the National

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45. Dubrow 1992, 111.

46. Miller 1992, 7.

Parks Canon, but women's history has been hard to pin down. After years of trying to get a women's history theme study together, the park service has still struggled with identifying study areas- what types of structures and patterns should be sought out?

### **National Efforts: Private and Non-Profit**

There are a number of private organization and non-profits that have a national presence and mission to promote women's sites of women's history and their preservation. These vary in mission, size, and scope, but have all made significant advancements in the field of women's history. The following listed are not all-inclusive, but include some of the most successful and wide-spread programs in the United States.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation has a series called "Our Heritage" which focuses in on diverse pasts, including explorations on African-American History, Asian and Pacific Islander American History, Native American History, LGBT History, Latino and Hispanic American History, and Women's History.<sup>47</sup> These explorations weave together collections of first person narratives, photo essays, and articles on sites and individuals of significance, and then overlay these onto a map of the united states.

The Our Heritage: Women's History series includes 53 stories on diverse women and sites<sup>48</sup>, including Minerva Parker Nichols' work in Philadelphia. This collection weaves in stories of significant women with modern discussion of women's place in society and the world today, creating an engaging and politically powerful message

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47. "Our History", National Trust for Historic Preservation

48. "Women's History", National Trust for Historic Preservation

about the role of women in history and the role of women in the future. The sites and women highlighted span the country, racial, ethnic, and religious boundaries, and expand the discourse on how to best integrate women into preservation. With articles such as “The First Step for Putting Women Back in History” and “One-Half the People, One-Half the History: The National Women’s Hall of Fame and its Quest to Preserve Women’s History”, highlight the issues in the preservation of women’s history, and hold up successful examples while discussing best practices. This type of web-based, interactive, and growing collection of women’s history has a reach that is much greater and more publicly accessible than efforts like those of the National Park Service have been, and may allow a gateway for women to interact with their history in a less strict and monitored way.

The National Collaborative for Women’s History Sites “supports and promotes the preservation of sites and locales that bear witness to women’s participation in American life.”<sup>49</sup> The mission includes advocacy work for the inclusion of women in existing historical sites, and a partnership with the National Historic Landmark program to write nominations on sites of women’s history, including the Marjorie Stoneman Douglas House in Florida and the Annie Dodge Wauneka House in Arizona. The collaborative is also spearheading an effort to develop a national Votes for Women trail by 2020, the centennial of the nineteenth amendment, giving (white) women suffrage in the United States. The collaborative shares information on including women in history

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49. “National Collaborative for Women’s History Sites”

and in preservation practices. Historic sites can join the collaborative for partnership opportunities.

The National Women's History Project provides information services and educational and promotional materials to help promote the accomplishments of women throughout history. The project was founded in 1980 and began by successfully lobbying congress to designate March as National Women's History Month. Yearly, the project celebrates Women's History Month is celebrated with a unique theme and leaders within that theme are honored. 2017 was the year of "Trailblazing women in Labor and Business" during which women both living and dead were honored for their contributions. The National Women's History Project approach is a very direct one- if women aren't celebrated and talked about in our schools and in history, it becomes easy to devalue the contributions of women.

### **Effects of National Efforts on Philadelphia**

Below is a table of National Register and National Historic Landmark properties associated with women in the city Philadelphia. Of the 561 properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, 13 tell stories that are primarily about women (2.3%). If you include a number of schools named after women that were designated for their architectural value in the late 1980s, that number increases to 24 (4.2%). As the national average hovers around 4%, this isn't out of the ordinary, but is never the less frustrating. There is not one site associated with a woman in West Philadelphia.



The list does capture several key women in Philadelphia's history, but misses many more. It does a good job of representing the strong legacy of women's education in the city, but misses many other opportunities for telling a more complete story. There are a number of Philadelphia factories and centers of production listed on the National Register, which are particularly good (and often rare) resources to interpret the role that women played in that part of America's history.

**Table 1: National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmark Properties  
Associated with Women in Philadelphia**

Planning District	Name	Location	Dedicated
CENTER CITY	Arch Street Meeting House	302-338 Arch St	1971 (NRHP), 2011 (NHL)
	New Century Guild	1307 Locust St	1992 (NHL)
	Race Street Friends Meetinghouse	1515 Cherry St	1993 (NHL)
NORTH	Clara Barton School	300 E. Wyoming Ave	1988 (NRHP)
	Lydia Darrah School	708-732 N. 17 <sup>th</sup> St	1986 (NRHP)
	Elizabeth Duane Gillespie School	3901-3961 N. 18 <sup>th</sup> St	1989 (NRHP)
	Hellen Fleisher Vocational School	540 N. 13 <sup>th</sup> St	1986 (NRHP)
	William Penn High School for Girls	1501 Wallace Street	1986 (NRHP)
	Philadelphia High School for Girls	17 <sup>th</sup> and Spring Garden Streets	1986 (NRHP)
	Philadelphia School of Design for Women	1346 N Broad St	1993 (NHL)
	Mary Channing Wister School	843-855 N 8 <sup>th</sup> St	1988 (NRHP)
NORTHEAST	Laura H. Carnell School	6101 Summerdale Ave	1988 (NRHP)
	Mary Disston School	4521 Longshore Ave	1988 (NRHP)
	Kensington High School for Girls	2075 E Cumberland St	1988 (NRHP)
	Mill-Rae	13475 Proctor Rd	2017 (NRHP)
NORTHWEST	Eleanor Cope Emlen School of Practice	6501 Chew St	1988 (NRHP)
	Violet Oakley Studio	627 St. George's Rd	1977 (NRHP)
	Sally Watson House	5128 Wayne Ave	1982 (NRHP)
	Women's Medical College of Philadelphia	3300 Henry Ave	2008 (NRHP)
SOUTH	Marian Anderson House	762 South Martin St	2011 (NRHP)
	Frances Ellen Watkins Harper House	1006 Bainbridge St	1976 (NHL)
	Eliza Butler Kirkbride School	626 Dickinson St	1988 (NRHP)
	Abigail Vare School	Morris St and Moyamensing Ave	1986 (NRHP)
SOUTHWEST	Anna Howard Shaw Junior High School	5401 Warrington St	1988 (NRHP)

Notes:

 = Schools named for women

\*There are no listings associated with women in West Philadelphia

### **SECTION III.**

#### **STATE PRESERVATION ASSESSMENT**

Often, the failings of the national framework for women's history has led states to fill the gaps, and create their own programmatic interpretations and organizations that serve the assets in their states. This has taken a variety of forms, and varies significantly from state to state. The Wisconsin and Georgia State Historic Preservation Offices have taken on state-wide assessments of women's history, taking place in the mid-1980s and mid-1990s, respectively. Our state's largest undertaking on representing women's history comes through the state historical markers program administered by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC). The program has been operating since 1914, and has made a strong presence in Philadelphia.

#### **Pennsylvania State Historical Markers**

Across the state of Pennsylvania, more than 2,000 large blue and gold signs call attention to a wide range of historical figures, events, and places. The sites typically highlighted come from the National Register of Historic Places or National Historic Landmark program, the information displayed comes from these nominations. Philadelphia county is the home to 303 such markers, 39 (~13%) of which are listed as having women as one of their focuses. Of the more than 2,000 markers statewide, 127 ( $\leq 6\%$ ) are about women.<sup>50</sup> This program offers a unique opportunity to engage a modern city in its history every day, and is one of the most significant ways that history

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50. Numbers current as of June 2017

interfaces with day-to-day life in Philadelphia. This program has both the capacity and responsibility to take on a more robust telling of women's stories.

The Pennsylvania State Historical Marker program has a strong presence in the city of Philadelphia. They are listed under different categories, one of which is listed as 'women.' The State Historical Markers Associated with Women as a theme are as follows.<sup>51</sup>

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51. This data comes from the Philadelphia Historical Marker Program's online list of approved markers, available here: <http://www.phmc.pa.gov/Preservation/Historical-Markers/Pages/Approved-Markers.aspx>. A more user-friendly searching tool is available here: <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/apps/historical-markers.html>.

**Table 2: Pennsylvania State Historical Markers Associated with Women in Philadelphia**

Name (years of life)	Location	Dedicated	Categories
<b>Dr. Mary Davis Ridgway</b> (1873-1927)	Wissahickon Ave., between Lincoln Dr. and Walnut Ln.	2001	Civil Rights, Science & Medicine, Professions & Vocations, Women
Marker Text: A leader in the women's rights movement and a homeopathic physician and surgeon. She was founder of Providence General Hospital (chartered 1913), the principal officers of which were women. From 1914 to 1917 it served the community from nearby Abraham Rittenhouse Home. Political pressure then forced the hospital to move from this site, and it closed shortly after Dr. Ridgway's death.			
<b>Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield</b> (1809-1876)	1013 Rodman St.	1992	African American, Music & Theater, Performers, Women
Marker Text: Greenfield, who lived here, was one of the 19th century's leading singers, known as the "Black Swan" because of her great vocal range. Her performances were hailed in the U.S. and in England where she sang before the Queen.			
<b>Frances E.W. Harper</b> (1825-1911)	1006 Bainbridge St.	1992	African American, Civil Rights, Education, Underground Railroad, Women, Writers
Marker Text: An author, lecturer, and social activist, Harper lived here and devoted her life to championing the rights of slaves and free Blacks. She advocated education as a way of advancement for Black Americans.			
<b>Billie Holiday</b> (1915-1959)	1409 Lombard St.	1993	African American, Music & Theater, Performers, Women
Marker Text: Known as "Lady Day," she was called the greatest jazz vocalist of her time. Starting in 1933, she recorded with Benny Goodman, Teddy Wilson, and others. Notable songs include "Lover Man," "Strange Fruit." In this city, she often lived here.			
<b>Salvation Army, The</b>	N 4th & Oxford Sts.	1998	Religion, Women
Marker Text: The first U.S. corps was opened here on Oxford St. by 17-year-old Eliza Shirley in 1879. She came from England, assigned by the founder, William Booth. This organization would become the largest private charity in the U.S., giving spiritual and social help to the needy.			

<b>Laura Wheeler Waring</b> (1887-1948)	756 N 43rd St.	1992	African American, Artists, Education, Women
Marker Text: A Black portraitist who lived here, Waring studied art in this city and in France. She headed the Art Department, Cheyney State College, and her works are part of the National Portrait Gallery and other major collections.			
<b>Anne Brancato Wood</b> (1903-1972)	SW corner, Broad & Chestnut Sts.	1994	Ethnic & Immigration, Government & Politics, Government & Politics 20th Century, Women
Marker Text: A child of Italian immigrants, Brancato entered Democratic city politics in 1928. One of few women in the state assembly (1932-41), she sponsored pioneering social reform legislation. Her business offices were located here.			
<b>Mother's Day</b>	Traffic island, Market & Juniper Sts. (E side of City Hall)	1998	Women
Marker Text: Founded by Anna Jarvis of Philadelphia. First officially observed in 1908, it honored motherhood & family life at a time of rising feminist activism. An early supporter was John Wanamaker, whose store stood opposite. Mother's Day was given federal recognition, 1914.			
<b>Violet Oakley</b> (1874-1961)	615 St. George's Rd., off McCallum St.	1998	Artists, Glass, Government & Politics, Women
Marker Text: Artist famed for her murals in Pennsylvania's State Capitol, reflecting Penn's ideals of justice & peace. Also noted for her work in stained glass; book & magazine illustrations. One of three women artists who moved in 1906 to "Cogslea," she lived & worked here until 1961.			
<b>Meta V.W. Fuller</b> (1877-1968)	254 S 12th St.	1992	African American, Artists, Women
Marker Text: One of the leading Black female sculptors in America. She lived here, studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, later with Auguste Rodin in Paris. Her sculpture depicted human suffering.			

<b>Church of the Advocate</b>	N 18th & Diamond Sts.	1999	African American, Buildings & Architecture, Government & Politics 20th Century, Religion, Women
Marker Text: Here in the 1974 the first eleven women Episcopal priests were ordained. This noted Gothic Revival church, built 1887-97, served a growing African American community after 1930. Host to major Black Power events of the 1960s and '70s. National Historic Landmark.			
<b>C. DeLores Tucker</b> (1927-2005)	6700 Lincoln Dr.	2006	African American, Civil Rights, Government & Politics 20th Century, Women
Marker Text: Civil rights leader and activist for women. She was the first African American Secretary of State in the nation. Lived here for 47 years. Spearheaded Commission on the Status of Women and championed the PA Equal Rights Amendment, policies on affirmative action, voter registration by mail and lowering the voting age to 18. Led a successful crusade critical of the music industry and lyrics demeaning to women, African Americans, and children.			
<b>Philadelphia General Hospital</b>	Curie Blvd. & Osler Circle, Penn campus	2007	Buildings & Architecture, Science & Medicine, Professions & Vocations, Women
Marker Text: Founded in 1729, PGH was the nation's longest operating public health care institution. Originally an almshouse, the hospital moved to this location in 1871. PGH implemented innovative medical care and education under Dr. William Osler, and the work of Florence Nightingale protégée Alice Fisher advanced nursing as a profession. Pioneering methods of cancer diagnosis and radiation therapy were applied. The hospital closed in 1977.			
<b>Crystal Bird Fauset</b>	5403 Vine St.	1991	African American, Civil Rights, Government & Politics, Women
Marker Text: The first Black woman elected to a state legislature in the U.S. Fauset, who lived here, won her seat in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, 1938. She later served as a Civil Defense race relations advisor under Franklin D. Roosevelt.			

<b>Jessie Redmon Fauset</b>	1853 N 17th St.	1993	African American, Women, Writers
Marker Text: Born to one of Philadelphia's old families. Literary editor, "The Crisis," 1919-26. A prolific writer of New Negro Renaissance fiction, she produced four full-length novels in addition to her poems and critical essays. She died here in 1961.			
<b>Female Medical College of Pennsylvania</b>	2900 W Queen Ln., at Drexel College of Med. entrance	1996	Education, Science & Medicine, Women
Marker Text: First degree-granting women's medical school in nation, founded 1850. Renamed (1867) Woman's Medical College of Pa. by Ann Preston, Dean. Coeducational, 1969. Became Medical College of Pa., 1970; Allegheny University of the Health Sciences, 1996.			
<b>Ora Washington</b> (1899-1971)	6128 Germantown Ave.	2004	African American, Sports & Recreation, Women
Marker Text: African American athlete who dominated black women's tennis, 1929-1937. She won eight national singles titles from American Tennis Association; starred with Philadelphia Tribunes, women's basketball team, 1932-1942; played and taught here at YWCA.			
<b>Louisa May Alcott</b> (1832-1888)	5427 Germantown Ave.	1996	Women, Writers
Marker Text: The author of "Little Women" was born here at "Pine Place," Nov. 29, 1832, to educator Bronson Alcott & his wife Abigail. An abolitionist, Civil War nurse, and suffragist, she wrote children's books and gothic thrillers. The Alcotts lived in this county, 1830-34.			
<b>Sadie T.M. Alexander</b> (1898-1989)	700 Westview St.	1993	African American, Civil Rights, Government & Politics, Government & Politics 20th Century, Women
Marker Text: The first Black woman to be admitted to the bar in Pennsylvania, she lived here in her later years. Active in the Urban League, she was appointed, 1946, to the President's Committee on Civil Rights.			



<b>Marian Anderson</b> (1897-1993)	At Union Baptist Church, 1910 Fitzwater St.	1993	African American, Performers, Women
Marker Text: World-renowned contralto. As a child she sang in this church. Toured Europe & U.S. starting in the 1930s. Her concert at the Lincoln Memorial, 1939, drew 75,000 people. First African-American in Metropolitan Opera, 1955. Delegate to UN, 1958. Died 1993.			
<b>Pearl Bailey</b> (1919-1990)	1946 N 23rd St.	1992	African American, Performers, Women
Marker Text: Bailey, who lived here as a youth, became one of America's most prominent entertainers. She sang with the big bands during the 1940s and gained her greatest fame in the 1967 Broadway production of "Hello, Dolly!"			
<b>Hannah Callowhill Penn</b> (1671-1726)	S 2nd St. & Sansom St. Walkway (Welcome Park)	2000	Government & Politics, William Penn, Women
Marker Text: Born in 1671, she married William Penn, 1696. They lived at Pennsbury, and in the Slate Roof House here, 1699-1701. During his final illness, 1712-18, and until her death, 1726, she was Pennsylvania's acting proprietor. She was the only woman to control a British proprietary colony for so long.			
<b>Girl Scout Cookies</b>	1401 Arch St.	2001	Business & Industry, Women
Marker Text: On November 11, 1932, Girl Scouts baked & sold cookies for the first time in the windows of the Philadelphia Gas & Electric Co. here. This endeavor soon became a Philadelphia tradition. In 1936 the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. adopted the annual cookie sale as a national program.			
<b>Jack and Jill of America Foundation</b>	1605 Christian St.	1993	African American, Education, Women
Marker Text: Founded 1938 by Marion Turner Stubbs, Lela Jones, and nine other African-American mothers of middle-class families to provide activities for their children despite racial segregation. The local chapter - first in the U.S. - formerly met here			
<b>Mother Jones</b> (1830-1930)	N Broad St. & JFK Blvd., N side of City Hall.	1994	Labor, Women
Marker Text: Mary Harris Jones began the March of the Factory Children here, July 1903, to dramatize the need for child labor legislation. Born in Ireland, Jones was an organizer and inspiring presence in the U.S. coal, steel, and textile labor movements.			

<b>Gertrude E.H. Bustill Mossell</b> (1855-1948)	1423 Lombard St.	1993	Women, Writers
Marker Text: Teacher and journalist lived here. Wrote for many publications on race and feminism. Her books included "The Work of the Afro-American Woman." Fundraiser for Frederick Douglass Hospital; her husband was its founder.			
<b>New Century Guild</b>	1307 Locust St.	1997	Labor, Women
Marker Text: Founded 1882 by Eliza S. Turner. One of the oldest and largest organizations created to advance the interests of women in the labor force. Originally located on Girard St., the Guild moved to Arch St. in 1893 and to this location in 1906.			
<b>Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society</b>	N 5th & Arch Sts. (at US Mint).	1992	African American, Government & Politics, Underground Railroad, Women
Marker Text: Organized in 1833 by Quaker abolitionist Lucretia Mott, this society, headquartered here, originally consisted of sixty women who sought to end slavery. After the Civil War, the society supported the cause of the freed slaves.			
<b>Betsy Ross</b> (1752-1836)	239 Arch St.	2009	American Revolution, Professions & Vocations, Women
Marker Text: Credited with making the first stars and stripes flag, Ross was a successful upholsterer. She produced flags for the government for over 50 years. As a skilled artisan, Ross represents the many women who supported their families during the Revolution and early Republic.			

<b>Liberation of Jane Johnson, The</b>	211 S Columbus Blvd., Penn's Landing near Walnut St. pedestrian walkway and entrance to Independence Seaport Museum	2009	African American, Government & Politics 19th Century, Women
Marker Text: In 1855, an enslaved woman and her two sons found freedom, aided by abolitionists William Still, Passmore Williamson, and other Underground Railroad activists. They escaped from their Southern owner while being transported through Philadelphia and settled later in Boston. The incident, which occurred nearby, and Williamson's subsequent imprisonment and famous trial attracted national attention, further intensifying the North-South conflict.			
<b>Sister Rosetta Tharpe</b> (1915-1973)	1102 Master St.	2011	African American, Music & Theater, Performers, Religion, Women
Marker Text: One of gospel musician's first crossover super-stars, she popularized the genre by including secular music elements. A guitar virtuoso and charismatic performer throughout America and Europe, she toured with Count Basie, Cab Calloway, and Benny Goodman. Her home was here.			
<b>US Sanitary Commission Great Central Fair</b>	Logan Square, 19 <sup>th</sup> and Benjamin Franklin Parkway, near Swann Fountain	2012	Abraham Lincoln, Civil War, Government & Politics 19th Century, Military, Women
Marker Text: Held at Logan Square from June 7-28, 1864, this event raised more than one million dollars for the Union cause during the Civil War. Formed to coordinate efforts of women volunteering to support the war effort, the Commission gave relief and comfort to soldiers and their families. In his only official public appearance in Philadelphia, President Abraham Lincoln addressed the crowd on June 16, praising the important work of the organization.			

<b>Kelly Family, The</b>	At the corner of W Coulter St. & Henry Ave.	2012	Government & Politics 20th Century, Motion Pictures & Television, Performers, Sports & Recreation, Women
Marker Text: This famous family lived in the home built here by John B. Kelly. A successful businessman active in city politics, Jack was a 3-time Olympic gold medal winner in the 1920s for rowing. Son John Jr. ("Kell") won the Diamond Scull at the 1947 British Henley Regatta and a bronze medal at the 1956 Olympics. Both father and son were named to US Rowing and Olympic Halls of Fame. Daughter Grace was an Academy Award-winning actress and Princess of Monaco.			
<b>William Penn Charter School</b>	Left side of main entrance, 300 W Schoolhouse Ln.	2015	African American, Education, Religion, William Penn, Women
Marker Text: Founded by Philadelphia Quakers in 1689 and first chartered by Penn in 1701, it was Pennsylvania's first public school and is the oldest continuously operating Friends school in the world. Pioneering educational initiatives were based on public charity and inclusion: free tuition to the poor, education for both genders, and acceptance of all races. Quaker roots and Penn's vision have been maintained. It moved to the present site in 1925.			
<b>Medical Library Association</b>	1420-22 Chestnut St.	2015	Education, Science & Medicine, Women
Marker Text: World's oldest medical library association founded here in 1898 to facilitate access to reliable medical literature for the improvement of health care. Among the US and Canadian founders were George M. Gould, MD; Sir William Osler, MD; and Margaret R. Charlton, librarian.			
<b>Sarah Josepha Hale</b> (1788-1879)	922 Spruce St.	2015	Abraham Lincoln, Civil Rights, Government & Politics 19th Century, Professions & Vocations, Publishing & Journalism, Women, Writers
Marker Text: One of America's first woman editors, Hale greatly increased subscriptions to Godey's Lady's Book in her four decades as editor. She successfully promoted a national Thanksgiving Day to President Lincoln. The author and women's rights advocate lived here.			

<b>Anthony Benezet</b> (1713-1784)	325 Chestnut St.	2016	African American, Education, Religion, Women, Writers
Marker Text: Leading abolitionist in the 18th century, his writings influenced the antislavery movement worldwide and federal abolition legislation. A teacher and Quaker, he educated blacks in his home, 1750-70, and opened a secondary school for girls in 1754. He lived here.			
<b>Booth Maternity Center</b>	St. Joseph's University- Moore Hall, 6051 Overbrook Dr.	2017	Science & Medicine, Professions & Vocations, Women
Marker Text: Established in 1971, Booth revolutionized women's health care by offering expectant mothers natural, family-centered childbirth options. It became a national model for its midwife training and for its promotion of midwife/doctor collaboration to improve care. The hospital pioneered the nationwide practice of permitting family members to support women during labor and delivery and advocated birth center accreditation. It closed in 1989.			

### **Trends seen in Historical Markers**

Looking closer at the 12% of Pennsylvania State Historical Markers associated with women in Philadelphia, some clear themes emerge that help inform how and why these women are being recognized. As compared to the fuller list of state historical markers, more than individuals than events represented. Compared with the larger list, there is much more diversity, with 19 out of the 36 markers to do with women focusing on African-American women (~53%). We also see LGBT women, women scholars, women labor leaders, women artists and performers, and women writers. However, the fact that individuals rather than broader historic events or places are highlighted is problematic. While the Pennsylvania State Historic Marker Program does place a slight emphasis on individuals over sites or events, this is especially apparent in the sites associated with women. They are not yet to the point of what feminist historian Gerda Lerner defined as “contributory history,” and are instead stuck in “compensatory history” which focuses only on elite or groundbreaking women, rather than the larger patterns of history and place that women fully inhabit.

### **Other Approaches**

Looking into efforts made by other states, alternate solutions to better addressing women’s history have been tested in the field. In the mid 1990s, the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation office in an effort to preserve places associated with social history created a new framework of survey that specifically included women’s history as

a component. This plan targeted the period from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and focused on women's organizations, particularly with women's reform and suffrage.

A cultural resource management plan operated upon the assumption that many sites included in the inventory remain obscure and 'threatened by their virtual lack of identification and appreciation.' A preliminary study showed that women's organizations rarely owned the buildings they operated out of, and that because of this these important functions performed by women's organizations have been largely forgotten by preservationists and historians alike. This thoughtful approach ended up creating a replicable inventory strategy, but has thus far not elicited any statewide study on women's history sites.<sup>52</sup>

Other states have addressed sites of Women's History more intentionally. The Georgia State Historic Preservation Office undertook a Women's History initiative starting in 1995 to address the topic of women's history, and directly related these efforts to identifying sites, documenting and evaluating, and ultimately formal preservation of these sites.<sup>53</sup>

Larger universities also have the potential to push statewide change in how women's history is presented. In 1986 The Humanities Foundation of West Virginia presented the Public History Program of West Virginia University a grant to identify sites associated with West Virginia women. These sites would be put together into a

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52. Wyatt 1986, 1-4.

53. Sharp 2003, 263.

brochure that could be used at visitor's centers around the state. The brochure was completed in 1988, and included 27 sites associated with historically significant women in West Virginia, and included a state map to encourage tourism.

The initial strategy was to begin from a list of significant women in the state's history, and to attempt to find a building to associate with each. This proved to be impossible, as many had been destroyed and as locating information on even well-known women proved difficult. The brochure made note of women for whom there were no associated sites, and offers a persuasive argument for better inventory and survey of sites associated with women. Additionally, the condition of many of the buildings was so poor that they would not qualify for the National Register of Historic Places or the National Historic Landmark Program on the basis of integrity.<sup>54</sup>

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54. Roth 1980, 680 + 685.



## **SECTION IV.**

### **LOCAL PRESERVATION EFFORTS**

On the local level in Philadelphia, there are a number of sites of women's history that are dutifully cared for and interpreted by non-profits and neighbors. However a much greater number have been lost, demolished, and ultimately forgotten. Some are locally protected by the Philadelphia Historical Commission as entries on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, but few nominations to the register include women's narratives. Aside from a few notable cases, if a site significant to women's history has been preserved in Philadelphia it has been by accident.

#### **Nomination and Local Historical Register**

The Philadelphia Register of Historic Places plays an extremely prominent role in how preservation is undertaken in the city of Philadelphia. While the National Register of Historic Places makes the section 106 process and tax credits possible, locally very little protection is offered to buildings not on the local register. To say it plays a critical role is an understatement, but the Philadelphia Historical Commission has not made nominations publicly available online. The only publicly available information is a complete list of addresses that are protected, which makes deeper research into the nature of the nominations difficult. In the case of women's history, the Philadelphia

Register has been slow to act in cases of emergency demolitions, such as the 2015 demolition of Marion Anderson's childhood church, where she first learned to sing.<sup>55</sup>

### **Private and Non-Profit Efforts in Philadelphia**

A number of organizations play a significant role in promoting, preserving, and interpreting the role of women in Philadelphia's legacy. They do so using a variety of tactics and to very different ends, but they all help tell a part of the story. Women's history has become an increasingly important conversation recently. The Philadelphia History Museum recently hosted a panel on women's history. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania has amassed a collection of primary historical sources that speak to the breadth of women's experiences in Philadelphia's history. The Betsy Ross House plays host to exhibits not just on the life of Betsy Ross as the creator of the first American flag, but on Betsy Ross as an early woman in the workforce. It analyzes the unique role and played and the unique spaces she inhabited as a widowed woman working in the textile industry, and links her experiences to other women's experiences.

On a public art front, Philadelphia's successful Mural Arts program features over a dozen murals that pay tribute to historical female figures, from Florence Nightingale to Harriet Tubman, Marian Anderson to Ann Moss (a local Democratic Ward Leader who served her district for over 55 years). Perhaps the most significant is the mural

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55. "Demolition In The Works For Marian Anderson Church," Hidden City Philadelphia, August 18, 2015. <http://hiddencityphila.org/2015/08/demolition-in-the-works-for-marian-anderson-church/>.

*Pioneering Women A to Z* by Shira Walknsky, at Health Center #44 at 44<sup>th</sup> Street and Haverford Avenue.

On the more current activism front, The Preservation Women of Action, a group of about 70 women associated with the University of Pennsylvania's Historic Preservation Program began in November 2017. The group began as a way for women to support one another, educate one another on issues of intersectional feminism, build leadership skills, and encourage and hold one another accountable to activism as practitioners but also as members of the Philadelphia community. March 2017 the group undertook two projects, Women's History PHL and City of Sisterly Love, the first of which is a Facebook and Instagram page dedicated to sharing and celebrating stories of significant women and larger events concerning women in the city of Philadelphia. The second, City of Sisterly Love, was a celebration of Women's History Month. To celebrate, ten historic women were chosen, most of whom already had historic places associated with them commemorated with Pennsylvania State Historical Markers. These 10 sites were decorated with balloons, and letters of love and gratitude to these historical figures written by the members of the group.<sup>56</sup>

History and activism come together at the New Century Trust, a NHL property that interprets the history of the New Century Guild, an early women's support organization focused on women in the workforce while opening up their space, networking opportunities, and grant making opportunities to support local girls and

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56. The author is a founder of the Preservation Women of Action.

women.<sup>57</sup> This model successfully keeps not just the building intact but the spirit of the organization's mission.

Molly Lester is a recent graduate from the University of Pennsylvania's Historic Preservation program who has been working to bring more attention to an early female architect- Minerva Parker Nichols, who worked in Philadelphia. Because of her advocacy, Mill-Rae was added to the NRHP this year.<sup>58</sup>

### **Demolished Sites**

Demolition is a constant issue faced by advocates of sites of women's history. Lack of recognition until often it is too late results in a loss of significant buildings. In an inventory of sites associated with Atlanta in the 1980s, researcher Darlene Roth found" none of the philanthropic structures that women built in Atlanta in the period 1880 to 1920 remained intact in their original form and location. What remained was knowledge of the location of the buildings, and a general sense of character of the structures. 'The relocation, transformation, and ultimate disappearance of the buildings associated with the early women's charities...speak eloquently of the fundamental changes which occurred in women's public activities at this time, in Atlanta as elsewhere.' The professionalization of social services made the lady philanthropists obsolete. The women who had administered charity organizations, became, as Roth puts it, 'mere

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57 "New Century Trust"

58. Interview with Molly Lester. For news on the nomination see "Mill-Rae: A Monument of Women's History Hidden in Plain Sight" and "Notable women honored at Mill-Rae, new to National Register"

supports, its gray ladies and fundraisers;' the structures forgotten but Roth affirms that 'if these buildings and structures lack significance as individual architectural statements, they do not lack significance as a collective social statements... to the fragile viability of separate female institutions.'<sup>59</sup> Such is the problem with unrecognized sites of women's history, preservationists don't learn of their significance until it is too late. It is clear that Philadelphia's traditional means of preservation hasn't been able to adequately address the problem of representing women's history, and haven't addressed the problems we face on a local level as our treasures are being lost. Our communities cannot stand by for more losses like Marian Anderson's childhood church where she learned to sing, or like the ongoing Jeweler's Row debacle, which highlights the flaws in Philadelphia's preservation machine.<sup>60</sup>

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59. Roth 1980, 680.

60. A local blog on the ongoing preservation battle at Jeweler's Row:  
<https://savejewelersrow.wordpress.com/>

**SECTION V.**  
**RECOMMENDED RE-INTERPRETATION OF**  
**PHILADELPHIA'S SITES OF WOMEN'S HISTORY**

It is clear that traditional preservation efforts have missed the wealth of opportunities Philadelphia presents in articulating the story of both nationally and locally significant women. While the disparity on the National Register of Historic Places, the National Historic Landmarks, the State Historical Markers, and on the Local Historical Register are troubling, without action on the local level nothing will change. Non-traditional, grassroots efforts are the best option that we have to advance women's stories and to bring attention to sites of women's history, particularly those where historic preservation has failed. Bringing in a larger and more diverse crowd than preservation typically attracts, aligning preservation efforts with a larger political and artistic movement has the potential to create a new preservation that is more concretely tied to today's needs.

**Thematic Study of Women's History in Philadelphia**

The ideal theme study, completed on the scale of a city would break women's history into 10-15 themes, sub-themes or chapters, which makes it much easier to organize material and to start understanding what types of historical assets to look for. Ideally, this type of organization would help to bridge the link between the academic and the preservationists by making the historical analyses on women's history more directly applicable to historic sites identified.

An early analysis of the types of sites that are associated with women are women of high social status who act as philanthropists, women in education, and women social workers. However work cannot stop there; "...the project of identifying sites represents only an initial step towards the final goal of using historic structures to enrich an understanding of women's past. While it is hoped that new federal, state, or private programs may evolve from this effort, which will support additional historic sites associated with women, until such support occurs there will be few public interpretative programs associated with these sites. Yet one should not undervalue the essential role of a survey and the importance of the identification as a building block for the future."<sup>61</sup>

### **The Issue of Integrity**

With women's history, as with many histories of non-dominant groups are less likely to be fully in-tact or well maintained. As Page Putnam Miller puts it; "The search for pristine originals of women's past is frustrating and near impossible, yet the need for identifying and landmarking sites that can connect us to women's struggles, experiences, and accomplishments is great."<sup>62</sup> Many preservationists have critiqued the current understanding of architectural integrity as defined by the NRHP's seven aspects of integrity (Location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association).<sup>63</sup> Toni Lee in *The American Mosaic: Preserving a National's Heritage*,

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61. Miller 1992, 16.

62. Ibid., 21

63. "National Register Bulletin: Integrity"

written during her time at National Register of Historic Places, critiques architectural historians and preservationists of ethnic and women's history for not designating sites that don't fulfill unrealistic expectations of architectural integrity. Lee argues that "sites cannot be evaluated on the same basis as sites associated with the dominant culture."<sup>64</sup>

### **A Model for Success: Gail Dubrow and Boston Women's History**

The efforts that have been the most successful in starting to address the discrepancy between women's history and history that is traditionally preserved has used fewer traditional preservation methods. They have typically been achieved by grassroots, non-profit driven organizations.

In *Claiming Public Space for Women's History in Boston: A Proposal for Preservation, Public Art, and Public Historical Interpretation* (1992)<sup>65</sup> Gail Dubrow explores the potentials of public art as a visible method on the urban landscape of showing women's histories in a way that engages people. By using several historic sites associated with women in Boston as case studies, Dubrow explores the wealth of potential interpretation options that are viable and appropriate, creating a process that is replicable in other cities.

Public art, along with preservation, and public historical interpretation offer the most complete way to claim public space for women's history on a city-wide scale. She assesses the ways in which large-scale national efforts failed to illuminate Boston's

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64. Miller 1992, 18.

65. Dubrow 1992.



unique sites of women's history, and emphasizes the significance of grass roots efforts in gaining recognition and public awareness. Several projects in particular are outlined, including the Boston Women's Heritage Trail project which was supported in part by public school teachers in Boston's school district.<sup>66</sup> By leveraging the support of the public school system, support was built for the trail and public enthusiasm.

Dubrow outlines her own proposals in increasing the "public visibility of places significant in Boston women's history"<sup>67</sup> which stemmed from a survey she completed in a year from 1987-1988- the first in the city and the first of its type in the US. Her methodology had to be nothing like a traditional preservation theme study, which depended on historical research before fieldwork. Her process began by uncovering significant women, organizations, events and experiences in Boston, using both existing research and archival research. From this research came an inventory of nearly 200 properties, which were then surveyed to document the existing physical condition of prospective landmarks of women's history.<sup>68</sup> Those who had the most integrity, she proposed the Women's Freedom Trail to link seventeen of these significant sites. Second, these existing monuments were "Reinterpreted to provide a more accurate and complete portrayal of women's history"<sup>69</sup> Third, appropriate historic sites were integrated into already-existing historical itineraries and interpretations. Fourth, she

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66. Mayo 2003, 114.

67. Ibid., 116.

68. Ibid., 117.

69. Ibid.

makes a motion to include bronze plaques or other similar markings on the sites. Lastly, she explores ways in which public art can increase visibility.

### **Guidebooks, Itineraries, and Trails**

Many sites that are found to be associated with women's history struggle with being disparate from the larger historical interpretation of the city, and struggle with the fact that they are often thematically disparate despite being part of a larger "theme" of women's history. The field has offered two solutions to this problem. The first of these which came to prevalence in the 1980s is the creation of guidebooks or itineraries, on the scale of the country to a city or even to a specific neighborhood. These have met varying success, and have brought up other critiques. A more recent trend has been the creation of trails- both urban and rural that geographically link together sites associated with women more generally or a specific era of history that women were particularly influential. These trails have largely been lauded as a success, but pose some problems when they fail to integrate the sites into the larger male-dominated historical narrative.

Two national guidebooks worth noting are *Women Remembered* by Marion Tinling and *Susan B Anthony Slept Here* by Lynn Sherr and Jurate Kazickas. Some smaller cities have self-published guides that have a much more robust understanding of women's history, and use a deep understanding of the local themes and intricacies to bring up interesting research. However these guides have been criticized for not often translating into on-the-ground preservation action- like designation or more permanent

interpretation.<sup>70</sup> These efforts haven't been enough to valorize sites of women's history. These guidebooks and itineraries have also often struggled to distinguish between the

### **Recommendations for a City-Wide Reinterpretation of Women's History Sites**

By looking at other successes in other cities, as well as the needs of Philadelphia and its citizens, there are several problems that a new interpretative scheme of the sites of women's history in Philadelphia needs to address to be successful. This list is by no means exhaustive, but can start as a framework to start addressing the problems that Philadelphia faces:

1. A theme study must be completed

To fully understand the wealth of resources that Philadelphia possesses, it is necessary to complete a city-wide inventory of sites associated with significant moments of women's history. This will ultimately be broken down into smaller subjects. This would need to be funded likely by a SHPO grant requested by the Philadelphia Historical Commission. Philadelphia is in the unique position to become a leader in this type of analysis, as few cities have completed this type of study. Philadelphia has a large enough number and large enough variety to serve as an example for other local efforts or even larger state or eventually nationwide efforts.

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70. Dubrow 2003, 9.

## 2. Link grassroots efforts with traditional preservation protections

Unfortunately many efforts that have effectively valorized sites of women's history in public perception and memory have failed to follow up and protect these sites by traditional preservation methods (i.e. local designation, national recognition). These two sides need to become more engaged with one another to prevent failures.

## 3. Utilize the web and social media as a tool

The reason for failure of many attempts at getting women's history into the public realm has been a lack of continued funding. Publishing guidebooks and itineraries isn't free, and few cities have the organizations and processes in place to continue the funding of these types of projects. By relying on the web not only is a guide more cost-effective, but it allows the guide to evolve and grow, while offering built-in advertisement opportunities through social media links, shares, and likes. Creating a web-based platform communicates to a wider audience than a guidebook ever could, and makes it easier to transfer that information to the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.

## 4. Capitalize on subversion and link to current political activism

Preservation's response to women's history has thus far been to make it part of the mainstream- an approach which has been met with significant backlash as women's history is often seen as subversive. This subversion has led to questions about the

legitimacy of women's history, which is not the history of a special interest group and represents the experience of half of our population.<sup>71</sup>

#### 5. Tourism isn't the goal

Philadelphia is a city that thrives on a decent amount of tourism activity, with our historical assets being the main draw. While better integrating sites of women's history into these systems the goal must not be tourism. These types of efforts when made for the purpose of furthering tourism goals are often shallow and don't fully address the wealth of resources available. When the background research is set up and correctly interpreted however, integrating more women into our existing tourism infrastructure can only help bring in a larger and more diverse group of people.

#### 6. Harness the power of public art

Public art holds a unique place within any city, but particularly in Philadelphia. In other cities, public art has served to commemorate lost places. Dolores Hayden's work in Los Angeles associated with Biddy Mason, a former slave and midwife.<sup>72</sup>

#### 7. Use temporary markers to encourage long-term historic markers

The success of the Pennsylvania State Historic Markers program is an encouraging potential solution for the problem of visibility of sites of women's history. By creating

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71. Mayo 2003. 126.

72. Gillette 1990, 44.

low-cost, temporary markers with an event around them, a place can gain some necessary attention and press to become historic in its own right.

### **Women's History as a Political Agent**

Women's history began as a serious point of study in the 1830s<sup>73</sup> as a way to demand the right of suffrage. In 1854, Elizabeth Cady Stanton claimed women's right to suffrage before the New York legislature, arguing "We have every qualification required by the constitution necessary to the legal voter, but the one of sex... [women had] governed nations, led armies, filled the professor's chair, taught philosophy and mathematics to the savants of our age, discovered planets [and] piloted ships across the sea."<sup>74</sup> It was during this period that the women's elite- royal women in particular- were the subject of study and interested. During the 1960s, as a sexual revolution took place, interest in women's history was again renewed, and showed the political power of taking charge of ones histories and ones stories. In 2017, women's rights and place in society are still being challenged, and by taking ownership of our history, some parts of this may be renewed.

For preservation to fully function for women's history, I propose a policy change on the local level that dictate a minimum of 50% of new listings on the Philadelphia

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73. Murphy 2013, 9.

74. Ibid., 103.

Register of Historic Places explicitly include women in their historic narratives.

Preservation is the best tool that we have to protect these resources, and we have already lost too many significant sites to demolition and neglect. Creating this policy is unlikely to influence the sites that are nominated to the Philadelphia register, but it does put pressure on the creation of a more holistic historic research process that includes non-dominant voices and stories. Women's History shouldn't be put into a box or limited one type of site. Most sites could and should include women in their historical narratives.

## **SECTION VI. CONCLUSION**

Women's history is critical to preservation, not just as a means to fill in holes in the national narrative, but as a new framework for understanding how marginalized groups belong in the national narrative. Philadelphia as a city has a wealth of sites associated with women's lives that fill places in relevant social histories today, and mainstream preservation efforts have largely missed these opportunities. A political reframing of women's history along with compensatory reframing of designation and interpretation criteria is a necessary next-step, and an effective method of raising awareness, gathering political momentum, and putting pressure where pressure is needed to get recognition for significant sites. Public art has made strides in highlighting women's history, and the political and social climate of Philadelphia makes this type of advocacy possible in the city of sisterly love.

By analyzing the National efforts made by the National Historic Landmarks program as well as a number of national non-profits, we can understand that the tide has been turning on women's history for some time, despite years of discrepancies. By looking at the successes of state-wide preservation programs and of the Pennsylvania State Historic Markers program, we see what a large role something as simple as a sign can play in creating visibility and stakeholders. By looking at the local situation in Philadelphia and suggesting new changes to the current preservation system, a new discourse is opened as to how our field may approach women's history in the future.



Women's stories deserve to be heard. Minority stories deserve to be heard.

Without a significant shock to our current system of historical thinking and research, these stories will continue to be lost to time. Preservation as a field must take it upon themselves to make sure this is not the case.

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