Boston HerStory

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“Remember the Ladies”
— Abigail Adams

“Remember the Ladies,” wrote Abigail Adams to husband John in 1776, “and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors!” In the nearly two and a half centuries since Abigail’s oft-quoted note, however, neither John nor the generations of men that followed did much to remember, credit, or commemorate the numerous women who helped mold and maintain the New Republic. Even in Boston, the acknowledged “Cradle of Liberty,” the accomplishments of women were generally footnotes and afterthoughts, rather than the stuff of biographies, annual celebrations, and public statues.

Introduction to bwht.org, BWHT Guidebook, Susan Wilson
Abigail Smith Adams
letter writer
First Lady
businesswoman
Abigail Smith was born on November 22, 1744 in Weymouth, Massachusetts. She was the daughter of the Reverend William Smith Jr. and Elizabeth Quincy. Abigail had two sisters and a brother. She was educated at home and became a well-read, intelligent adult.
When Abigail was a teenager, she met John Adams. He was studying law at Harvard University. The couple began to exchange letters. Their correspondences continued throughout their lives. The Adams married and moved to Braintree (now Quincy) and began their family.
John would often be in Boston working on his law business as well as political issues of the time. The Adams lived in the Brattle Street area of Boston until political unrest brought them back to their home in Braintree.
Abigail cared for the children and managed the farm and household, as John spent more and more time away from home in the service of the young country. The couple spent many years apart as John assumed many political positions in the beginning of the birth of the United States.
More than 1,100 letters of John and Abigail still survive. These exchanges provide a view of President John Adams and his first lady, Abigail Smith Adams. Abigail predeceased her husband on October 28, 1818.
Abigail and John

Son, John Quincy Adams
“Learning is not attained by chance, it must be sought for with ardor and diligence.”

--Abigail Adams
Phillis Wheatley
poet
Over two hundred years ago, a girl from the west coast of Africa was kidnapped from her home and taken aboard the ship, Phillis. She crossed the Atlantic and was sold to the Wheatley family in Boston.
The child was seven years old. The Wheatley family named her Phillis after the ship which carried her to the bonds of slavery. She was given the name Wheatley after the family who bought her.
Phillis learned to speak, read and write English in only sixteen months. By the time she was eleven, she had written her first poem. Her poems were published in a book. It was the first book of poetry published by an African-American.
Phillis visited England and became even more famous. By the time she returned to Boston, the colonies were on the verge of war with England. When John Wheatley died in 1778, Phillis was manumitted. She was left with little financial support.
Phillis married John Peters and they had three children. All of her children died in infancy. At the age of thirty-one, Phillis became very ill and died.

Boston Marriages, 1752–1809.

Names.                             Date.
Abijah Hammond & Hannah Fairservice Mar. 29, 1778
Robert Boston & Elizabeth Taff     Mar. 30, 1778
John Peters & Phillis Wheatley, free negroes Apr. 1, 1778
“In every human Breast, God has implanted a Principle, which we call Love of Freedom; it is impatient of Oppression, and pants for Deliverance.”

--Phillis Wheatley
Phillis Wheatley

Boston Women’s Memorial - Sculptor: Meredith Bergmann
Meditations
From the Pen of
MRS. MARIA W. STEWART,
(Widow of the Late James W. Stewart)
Now Matron of the Freedman's Hospital,
And Presented in 1832 to the First African
Baptist Church and Society of Boston, Mass.
First Published by W. Lloyd Garrison & Enos.

Now most respectfully Dedicated to the Church Militant
of Washington, D. C.

Maria W. Stewart
teacher
journalist
lecturer
abolitionist
women’s rights activist
Maria Miller was born free in 1803 in Hartford, Connecticut. When she was five, she was left an orphan. Maria became an indentured servant to a minister until she was about fifteen. Maria moved to Boston and became a domestic servant.
Maria attended Sunday school classes in reading and religion. In 1826 Maria married James W. Stewart, a veteran of the War of 1812. The Stewarts were part of Boston’s free Black community in Beacon Hill. They attended the African Baptist Church. The couple moved into 8 Belknap Street, home of David Walker, an abolitionist.
In 1829, Maria’s husband died and Maria was left broke because her inheritance had been swindled by the executors of his estate. A year later, her friend, David Walker, died. Maria found the need to vocalize her thoughts and feelings. To earn a living, she wrote and lectured.

8 Belknap St. is now 81 Joy St.
Maria wrote a manuscript, which she delivered to *The Liberator* in 1831 and she published an essay. These writings caused her to launch a short but significant public speaking career. Stewart gave four public lectures between 1831 and 1833. Her speech in 1832 at Franklin Hall was the first recorded instance of an American woman speaking in public.
In 1834, Maria left Boston and went to New York. She joined the Black Female Literary Society and began to teach. Maria also worked in Baltimore and Washington D.C. Maria became the Matron of the Freedmen’s Hospital in Washington D.C.
About fifty years after her husband’s death, Stewart became eligible to collect a pension from his military service in the War of 1812. Maria used the money to publish a new edition of her speeches and writings. Maria W. Stewart died on December 17, 1879.
“All the nations of the earth are crying out for liberty and equality. Away, away with tyranny and oppression!”

-- Maria W. Stewart
Maria W. Stewart
1803 - December 17, 1879
Ellen Craft

abolitionist

educator
Ellen was born in 1826 in Clinton, Georgia. Her parents were Maria, a mixed-race enslaved woman, and her enslaver, Major James Smith. Ellen was very fair-skinned and resembled her white half-siblings. Because Ellen was a slave, she was not taught to read or write.
When Ellen was twenty, she married William Craft, who was also a slave. William Craft was a carpenter and was able to save some money from his carpentry jobs. The couple did not want to raise a family as slaves, so they planned their escape to freedom.
On December 21, 1848, they disguised themselves as a slave owner and slave. Ellen was the slave owner since she was very light and often mistaken for a member of her owners' family. William was to tend to his "master's needs on the trip to Philadelphia. Although the trip was not without worries, the couple successfully made it to Philadelphia and then a few weeks later to Boston.
They recounted their escape in public lectures to abolitionist circles of New England. Ellen also worked as a seamstress and William opened a used furniture store. The Crafts lived on the north side of Beacon Hill for two years until slave hunters became a threat.
With abolitionists' help, they moved to England to avoid recapture under the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. In England, the Crafts raised their five children. Ellen learned to read and write. Nineteen years later, the couple returned to the United States with three of their children and settled in Georgia. Ellen died around 1891.
“I had much rather starve in England, a free woman, than be a slave for the best man that ever breathed upon the American continent.”

--Ellen Craft
Ellen Craft
1826 - 1891
Dorothea Lynde Dix
social reformer
nurse
teacher
author
Dorothea Lynde Dix was born on April 4, 1802 in Hampden, Maine. The oldest of three children, she had a difficult early life. Her father was an itinerant Methodist preacher. He was also an alcoholic and her mother suffered from mental illness. Dorothea had no childhood since she often had to take care of her siblings.
When Dorothea was twelve, she left her family to live with her grandmother in Boston and her aunt in Worcester. At the age of fourteen, Dorothea began teaching. Dix opened a school in Boston in 1821 but had to cease operations when her health began to fail. Dorothea had tuberculosis. She became a governess for William Ellery Channing and traveled with the Channing family to St. Croix.
Dorothea wrote several books for children. She opened another school in 1831. This school operated until 1836. When she suffered a breakdown, to recover her health, Dorothea traveled to Europe. In Europe, Dix was exposed to the reform movement for the care of the mentally ill. The movement was doing investigations of mental institutions and asylums.
When Dorothea returned home to Massachusetts, she conducted a statewide investigation of care for the poor mentally ill. Her published report stated: "I proceed, Gentlemen, briefly to call your attention to the present state of Insane Persons confined within this Commonwealth, in cages, stalls, pens, chained, naked, beaten with rods, and lashed into obedience."
Dorothea continued her investigations to other states and Europe. She encouraged ethical treatment for the mentally ill. This treatment consisted of modesty, chastity, and delicacy.
During the Civil War, Dorothea was named "Superintendent of Army Nurses" by the Union Army. She implemented the Federal Army nursing program of over 3,000 women. However, she resigned from her position after four years because she felt that this part of her life was a failure.
Following the war, Dorothea continued her crusade to improve the plight of the mentally ill and prisoners.

Dorothea Dix died on July 17, 1887, in Trenton, New Jersey.
“I come to present the strong claims of suffering humanity. I come to place before the Legislature of Massachusetts the condition of the miserable, the desolate, the outcast. I come as the advocate of helpless, forgotten, insane men and women; of beings sunk to a condition from which the unconcerned world would start with real horror.”

-- Dorothea Dix
Dorothea Lynde Dix
April 4, 1802 - July 17, 1887
Lucy Stone
orator
abolitionist
suffragist
editor
Lucy Stone was born on August 13, 1818, on her family's farm in West Brookfield, Massachusetts. She grew up with three brothers and three sisters.
Lucy recalled that "There was only one will in our family, and that was my father's." She learned that women were at the mercy of their husbands' good will. Resolving to "call no man my master", she determined to keep control over her own life by never marrying, obtaining the highest education she could, and earning her own money.
When she was 16, Lucy began to teach in the district schools. Her pay was one dollar a day, although male teachers were paid more. Lucy was trying to save money so that she could continue her education.
In 1839, Lucy enrolled in Mount Holyoke Female Seminary. She found that the school was not tolerant of antislavery and women’s rights. She only attended for one term.
Lucy then enrolled at Wesleyan Academy. She found that other students felt "that ladies ought to mingle in politics, go to Congress, etc. etc." These were ideas with which Stone agreed. Lucy discovered that Oberlin Collegiate Institute in Ohio would allow women to earn a college degree.
When Lucy was twenty-five, she entered Oberlin. She continued to believe that women should be able to speak their minds in a public forum. Oberlin College did not share all of these ideas. By 1846, Lucy decided that she wanted to be a lecturer for women's rights. Since the college would not allow the women to take classes in public speaking, Lucy and some other women students debated each other for experience.
Stone gave her first public speeches on women's rights in the fall of 1847. In 1848, she joined the American Anti-Slavery Society and traveled across the North, urging people to oppose slavery.

During the late 1840s and early 1850s, Lucy traveled across the United States trying to garner support for abolition and women's rights.
Lucy met Henry Blackwell and the couple married in 1855. Stone did not take her husband's last name. Two years later, Lucy Stone retired from public speaking so that she could take care of her infant daughter, Alice.
Lucy Stone remained out of the women's rights debate until the late 1860s, when she again began to give lectures. Stone helped found the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), which lobbied for women to have the right to vote.
In 1873, Lucy Stone and her husband became editors of The Women's Journal, a weekly newspaper that supported the quest for women's rights. Preferring to edit rather than lecture, Lucy remained at home with her family. Her commitment to women's rights never did waver.
Lucy Stone died on October 18, 1893.
Her husband, Henry Blackwell, and her daughter, Alice, continued Lucy’s campaign for women’s suffrage.
"Make the world better."

--Lucy Stone
Lucy Stone

August 13, 1818 - October 18, 1893

Boston Women’s Memorial - Sculptor: Meredith Bergmann
Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin

civil rights activist
community activist
writer
editor
Josephine St. Pierre was born in Boston on August 31, 1842. She attended public schools in Charlestown but her father objected to the segregated schools in Boston so he sent her to Salem for school. Josephine also attended a private school in New York City.
In 1858, Josephine married George Lewis Ruffin. He became the first African-American to graduate from Harvard Law School and later a judge of the Municipal Court, Charlestown district. Josephine and her husband were active in the struggle against slavery.
The Ruffins helped recruit African American soldiers for the 54th and 55th regiments during the Civil War. They also worked to provide aid for the care of soldiers in the war zones.

After the war, Josephine helped by collecting money and clothes for the southern Blacks resettling in Kansas.
Josephine supported women's suffrage. She worked with Julia Ward Howe and Lucy Stone to create the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) in 1869.
A weekly contributor to *The Boston Courant*, she became a member of the New England Woman's Press Association. When her husband died, Josephine began to publish *The Woman's Era*. 
The Woman's Era was the country's first journal published by and for African-American women. Josephine's daughter, Florida Ruffin, was the editor. The monthly magazine advocated women's suffrage and equal civil rights. During the seven years of publication, Ruffin called on African American women to demand increased race rights.
Ruffin was the organizer of the Woman's Era Club. Holding at least two meetings a month, the Woman’s Era Club gathered to discuss civics, domestic science, literature, public improvements, or issues that directly affected the Black community. They also worked within the community, organizing fundraising events.
In 1910, Ruffin helped form the Boston branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin died in Boston on March 13, 1924.
“Too long have we been silent under unjust and unholy charges; we cannot expect to have them removed until we disprove them through ourselves.”

--Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin
Mary Eliza Mahoney
nurse
humanitarian
Mary Eliza Mahoney was born in the spring of 1845 in Boston, Massachusetts. Her parents were freed slaves. They had moved to Boston from North Carolina. Mary Eliza was educated at Phillips School in Boston, which had been one of the first integrated schools in the country after 1855.
When she was eighteen, Mary Eliza knew that she wanted to become a nurse, so she began working at the New England Hospital for Women and Children. The hospital was dedicated to providing healthcare only to women and their children. It was also exceptional because it had an all-women staff of physicians.
Here Mahoney worked for fifteen years in a variety of roles. She worked as janitor, cook, and washerwoman. She also had the opportunity to work as a nurse’s aide, enabling her to learn a great deal about the nursing profession. At the age of thirty-three, Mahoney was admitted to the hospital’s professional graduate school for nursing. Only four of the 42 students graduated. Eliza Mahoney was one of the four.
Because of overwhelming discrimination, Mary Eliza pursued a career as a private nurse to focus on the care needs of individual clients. Her patients were mostly from wealthy white families, who lived up and down the east coast. She was known for her efficiency, patience, and caring bedside manner.
In 1896, she joined the Nurses Associated Alumnae of the United States and Canada (NAAUSC), later known as the American Nurses Association (ANA). The NAAUSC consisted mainly of white members and did not always welcome black nurses. Mahoney felt that a group was needed which advocated for the equality of African American nurses. In 1908, she co-founded the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses (NACGN).
The following year, at the NACGN’s (National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses) first national convention, Mary Eliza gave the opening speech. At the convention, the organization’s members elected Mahoney to be the national chaplain and gave her a life membership.
After decades as a private nurse, Mahoney became the director of the Howard Orphanage Asylum for black children in Kings Park, Long Island in New York City. She served as the director from 1911 until 1912.
She finally retired from nursing after 40 years in the profession. However, she continued to champion women’s rights. After the 19th Amendment was ratified in August 1920, Mary Eliza Mahoney was among the first women who registered to vote in Boston.
After a three year battle with breast cancer, Mary Eliza died on January 4, 1926. She is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in Everett, Massachusetts.
“Today’s minority nurses stand on the shoulders of Mary Mahoney. She was a true pioneer in nursing. And we owe a debt of gratitude for her being a determined role model.”

--Mary Wykle, RN, PhD. Dean and professor of nursing Recipient of ANA Mary Mahoney Award
Mary Eliza Mahoney
May 7, 1845 - January 4, 1926
Mary Baker Eddy

lecturer

teacher

writer

religious leader
Mary Morse Baker was born on July 21, 1821, in Bow, New Hampshire. She was one of six children. The family was intensely religious. Mary was often sickly as a child. Her brother, Albert, was her mentor and teacher, but he died in 1841.
Mary and George Washington Glover married in December 1843. Six months later, George was dead from yellow fever contracted in the Carolinas. Mary had to return home to give birth to her only child, George Washington Glover II.
Physically and mentally exhausted, Mary ended up bedridden for months. She tried to earn a living by writing articles for the New Hampshire Patriot and various Odd Fellows and Masonic publications. In 1846, Mary worked as a substitute teacher in the New Hampshire Conference Seminary and ran a kindergarten for a few months.
Mary's son was sent to live with relatives. Although Daniel Patterson, her second husband, agreed to become his legal guardian, Mary did not see her son again until he was a grown man.
In October 1862, Eddy became a patient of Phineas Quimby, a mental healer from Maine. From 1862 to 1865, Quimby and Eddy engaged in lengthy discussions about Quimby’s and others' healing methods. The extent to which he influenced her is much debated. Initially, Eddy gave Quimby much credit for his hypnotic treatments of her nervous and physical conditions.
Mary divorced Daniel Patterson in 1873. She published her work in 1875 in a book entitled *Science and Health*. She called this the textbook of Christian Science. Mary made numerous revisions to her book from its first publication until shortly before her death.
In 1877, she married Asa Gilbert Eddy. Five years later, they moved to Boston. Asa Eddy died that year.
Eddy devoted the rest of her life to establishing a church, writing its bylaws, *The Manual of The Mother Church*, and revising *Science and Health*. In 1879, she and her students established the Church of Christ, Scientist, "to commemorate the word and works of our Master [Jesus], which should reinstate primitive Christianity and its lost element of healing."
In 1881, she founded the Massachusetts Metaphysical College, where she taught approximately 800 students between the years 1882 and 1889.
Her students spread across the country, practicing healing and instructing others. Eddy authorized these students to list themselves as Christian Science Practitioners in the church's periodical, *The Christian Science Journal*. She also founded *The Christian Science Sentinel*, a weekly magazine with articles about healing and testimonies of healing.
Eddy founded *The Christian Science Journal* in 1883. In 1888, a reading room selling Bibles, her writings, and other publications opened in Boston. Today, there are more than 1,200 Christian Science Reading Rooms.
In 1894, an edifice for The First Church of Christ, Scientist was completed in Boston (The Mother Church). Eddy served as pastor during the early years.
Eddy founded The Christian Science Publishing Society in 1898. When she was 87 years old, Eddy founded *The Christian Science Monitor*, a daily newspaper.
On December 3, 1910, Mary Baker Eddy died in Newton, Massachusetts. Eddy was buried at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts.
“I would no more quarrel with a man because of his religion than I would because of his art.”

--Mary Baker Eddy
Mary Baker Eddy
July 16, 1821 - December 3, 1910
Chew Shee Chin
immigrant
labor organizer
Chew Shee was born in a small southern China village around 1899. When she was eighteen, there was an arrangement for her to meet with a matchmaker. She was asked to choose one man out of many photos. She chose a man who lived in America.
They married by proxy. Chew Shee left her home in China and headed to meet her husband in America.
She and several other women stopped at Hong Kong before they bordered a boat to cross the Pacific Ocean. Sad, frightened but excited, Chew Shee left for “gam saan”, or "gold mountain".
Chew Shee entered the United States through Angel Island. She and all Chinese immigrants were required to take a difficult test to enter the country. At the time, America wanted to discourage any Chinese people from entering the United States.
Chew Shee had memorized answers to many questions and was able to pass the test given to her. She boarded a train which would take her across America to Boston, Massachusetts.
In 1918, Chew Shee met her husband, Fuke Wah Chin, in Boston and settled in an unheated apartment with no running water. The couple had eight children.
Chew Shee found work in the garment industry. Understanding the difficulty in moving to a place that was different from home, Chew Shee knew that she needed to help any new neighbors who moved into Chinatown.
In 1942, Chew Shee Chin and several other women formed the New England Chinese Women’s Association.
The association was designed for women to mobilize themselves, develop leadership skills, and find some degree of independence.
Today, the association’s mission has not changed, and its members gather to enjoy each other’s company and foster a sense of female empowerment.
This is the Chinatown Community Mural co-designed by Wen-ti-Tsen and David Fichter in 1986, with support of many members of the Chinatown community. It was torn down in 2002. A replica can be seen at the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center.
“...her dreams had been fulfilled: all 23 of her grandchildren graduated from college and had the education she did not have.”

--by Stephanie Wong Fan, granddaughter
Chew Shee Chin

1899 - 1985
Anne Sullivan Macy
teacher
writer
Johanna Mansfield Sullivan (Anne Sullivan) was born on April 14, 1866 in Feeding Hills, Massachusetts. When Anne was five, she contracted an illness and was left partially blind with no reading or writing skills.
Her mother died when she was ten. Her father deserted Anne and her brother, Jimmy. Nearly blind, Anne Sullivan and her brother ended up in the Tewksbury Almshouse.
Anne’s brother, Jimmy died a few months after they were placed in the Almshouse. Anne later wrote: “I doubt if life, or eternity for that matter is long enough to erase the errors and ugly blots scored upon my brain during those dismal years.”
Four years later, Anne entered Perkins School for the Blind. It was a totally different world from the Almshouse. Some of the other students made fun of her not being able to do things that they could. This made her determined to succeed.
While at Perkins, she had several eye operations and her sight improved.

Anne graduated at the head of her class.
In 1887, she went to Alabama to work with Helen Keller. Helen was six years old and was blind and deaf. Anne became Helen’s governess and teacher. Anne taught her the manual alphabet within a month. The previously undisciplined, willful, and ill-tempered girl showed that she was extremely smart and eager to learn.
Keller and Sullivan gained a national reputation as Helen mastered a full vocabulary and displayed a gifted intelligence. Anne accompanied Keller to Perkins and Radcliffe. Anne would have to spell out the lectures.
In 1905, Anne married John A. Macy, a Harvard professor. The marriage was an unhappy one and ended in 1913.
Anne became Helen’s constant companion. They toured on worldwide lectures. Anne’s health declined by 1935 and she became completely blind before her death.
Anne Sullivan Macy died on October 20, 1936.
“Children require guidance and sympathy far more than instruction.”

--Anne Sullivan Macy
Anne Sullivan Macy

April 14, 1866 - October 20, 1936
Mother Mary Joseph Rogers
founder of the Maryknoll Sisters
Mary Josephine Rogers (Mollie) was born on October 27, 1882 in Roxbury, Massachusetts. She was one of eight children and the first born daughter.
Mollie attended Boston Public Schools. In 1901, she finished West Roxbury High at the top of her class. Rogers went to Smith College and graduated in 1905 with a degree in zoology. While at Smith, she became interested in volunteerism and service of the student body.
After graduating, Smith College invited Rogers back with a position in the Zoology department. She planned to work as well as study and get her Masters degree. While taking classes at Smith College, she received a teaching certificate from Boston Normal School.
In Rome, Pope Pius X wanted the American Catholic Church to work with overseas missions. In 1911, Father Walsh helped to establish the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America. Today, this group is known as the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers.
Rogers was chosen by Father Walsh in 1912 to take the lead of the women who had come forward to help in his foreign mission society. Many steps to create this group had to be followed.
In 1920, the Maryknoll Sisters began mission work in Los Angeles, California, then Seattle, Washington, to serve Japanese immigrants. By 1921, the Sisters set out for Hong Kong and China. By the end of the 1920’s, the Maryknoll Sisters were serving in Hong Kong, South China, Manchuria, Philippines, and the Hawaiian Islands.
In February 1920, a group of 35 women was approved by the church as a Diocletian congregation. Their title was The Foreign Mission Sisters of St. Dominic. The name was later changed to the Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic. Mollie was voted official leader in 1925, and took the name Mother Mary Joseph.
Mother Mary Joseph retired as head of the Maryknolls in 1946. She continued to mentor new sisters.

Mother Mary Joseph died in New York on October 9, 1955.
“Love, tenderness, consideration and thoughtfulness for others, that is what should characterize us.”

--Mother Mary Joseph Rogers
Mother Mary Joseph Rogers
October 27, 1882 - October 9, 1955
Amy Cheney Beach
composer
pianist
Amy Marcy Cheney was born in Henniker, New Hampshire on September 5, 1867. Amy had every sign of being a child prodigy. She was able to sing forty songs accurately by age one; she was capable of improvising counter-melody by age two; she taught herself to read at age three.
At four, she composed three waltzes for piano. Amy did this in her head because there was no piano available, but they actually could be played. She played music by ear, including four-part hymns.
When Amy was six, she began formal piano lessons with her mother. Amy soon gave public recitals of works by Handel, Beethoven, and Chopin, as well as her own pieces.
The Cheney family moved to Chelsea, Massachusetts in 1875. Fourteen-year-old Amy studied harmony and counterpoint with a teacher. This would be her only formal instruction as a composer. After that, Amy collected every book that she could find on theory, composition, and orchestration and taught herself.
When Amy was sixteen, she made her concert debut at Boston’s Music Hall. She also performed at Chickering Hall. Amy starred at the final performance of the Boston Symphony's 1884–1885 season.
Amy married Dr. Henry Harris Aubrey Beach in 1885. He was a Boston surgeon. She was eighteen. It was expected that she would live as a society matron and patron of the arts. She was expected never to teach piano again and limit her public performances to twice a year. All profits were to be donated to charity.
When her work, *Mass in E-flat Major*, was performed in 1892 by the Handel and Haydn Society orchestra, it was considered a great achievement. The orchestra had never presented a musical composition created by a woman. Amy was declared to be one of America's foremost composers.
On October 30, 1896, Beach’s *Gaelic Symphony* was performed by the Boston Symphony. It was the first symphony composed and published by an American woman.
In 1910, Dr. Beach died, leaving Amy a widow. She went to Europe to rest. Amy resumed giving concerts in Germany in 1912. She was greeted as the first American woman "able to compose music of a European quality of excellence."

Amy returned to America in 1914.
In 1915, the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco commemorated the opening of the Panama Canal and the city’s recovery from the 1906 earthquake. Amy Beach was honored by concerts of her music and receptions. Her *Panama Hymn* was commissioned for the occasion.
Amy Beach used her status as the top female American composer to further the careers of young musicians. While she had agreed not to give private music lessons while married, Beach was able to work as a music educator during the early 20th century. She served as President of the Board of Councilors of the New England Conservatory of Music.
Amy also worked to create "Beach Clubs," which helped teach and educate children in music. She served as leader of some organizations focused on music education and women. Amy was selected as the first president of the Society of American Women Composers.
The Blackbird is a song for voice and piano. It was composed in 1893 by Amy Beach.
Heart disease caused Amy to retire in 1940. She died on December 27, 1944. Amy Beach’s name was placed on the granite wall of the Hatch Shell on the Charles River Esplanade in 2000. Amy Beach is the only woman whose name is on the Shell joining eighty-six other composers.
“If you feel deeply and know how to express what you feel, you make others feel.”

--Amy Cheney Beach
Amy Cheney Beach

September 5, 1867 - December 27, 1944
Julia Ward Howe
writer
publisher
anti-war activist
women’s rights advocate
Julia Ward Howe was born on May 27, 1819 in New York. She was the fourth of seven children. Her mother died when Julia was five. Julia was educated by private tutors and at schools for young ladies until she was sixteen.
Julia’s oldest brother traveled in Europe and brought home a private library. Julia became well-read. She also had a social life and knew Charles Dickens, Charles Sumner, and Margaret Fuller.
In 1841, Julia met Samuel Gridley Howe, a physician. Dr. Howe had founded the Perkins School for the Blind. The couple married in 1843. They had six children. The Howes were abolitionists.
The marriage was troubled from the start. Howe enjoyed writing and socializing while her husband wanted her to be content with homemaking. However, Julia attended lectures, studied foreign languages, and wrote plays and dramas.
Howe had published essays in the New York Review and Theological Review before her marriage. In 1853, she had her book of personal poems, *Passion-Flowers*, published anonymously without her husband’s knowledge.

It was a success. Dr. Howe did not like that his wife was a published author. The couple separated in 1852, and he took complete control of her income.
When Julia and her husband visited Abraham Lincoln in 1861, she wrote the words of *Battle Hymn of the Republic*. It was published in the February, 1862 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*. The song became one of the most popular songs of the Union.
Now that Howe was in the public eye, she produced eleven issues of the literary magazine, *Northern Lights*, in 1867. That same year, she wrote about her travels to Europe in *From the Oak to the Olive*. After the war, she focused her activities on the causes of pacifism and women's suffrage.
By 1868, Julia's husband no longer opposed her involvement in public life, so Julia decided to become active in reform. She helped found the New England Women's Club and the New England Woman Suffrage Association.

In 1869, she became co-leader with Lucy Stone of the American Woman Suffrage Association. Then, in 1870, she became president of the New England Women's Club.
After the American Civil War and the Franco-Prussian War, Howe felt that women should encourage Pacifism. In 1872 she asked for the celebration of a "Mother's Day for Peace" on 2 June of every year, but she was unsuccessful.

"Arise, then, women of this day! Arise all women who have hearts, whether our baptism be that of water or of tears!...

We women of one country will be too tender of those of another country to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs. From the bosom of the devastated earth a voice goes up with our own. It says "Disarm, Disarm!"

The sword of murder is not the balance of justice.

Julia Ward Howe, 1870

From her Mother's Day Proclamation for Peace
In 1872, Julia became the editor of Woman's Journal, a widely-read suffragist magazine founded in 1870 by Lucy Stone and Henry B. Blackwell. She contributed to it for twenty years.
Her husband died in 1876. Julia devoted herself more to her interests in reform. It was at this time that Julia discovered that through a series of his bad investments, most of her money had been lost.
Along with writing and editing, Julia continued her role in social activism. She helped found the *Women’s Educational and Industrial Union* in Boston. Julia founded and was the president of the *Association of American Women*. 
In 1881, Howe was elected president of the Association for the Advancement of Women. She helped found the General Federation of Women's Clubs.
Julia Ward Howe became the first woman elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1907.
On October 17, 1910, Julia Ward Howe died of pneumonia.

She was 91 years old.
“I shall stick to my resolution of writing always what I think no matter whom it offends.”

--Julia Ward Howe
Julia Ward Howe
May 27, 1819 - October 17, 1910
Isabella Stewart Gardner
patron of the arts
philanthropist
world traveler
Isabella Stewart was born on April 14, 1840, in New York. She attended private schools. Her family moved to Paris when Isabella was 16 years old.
While in Europe, Isabella met and became friends with Julia Gardner of Boston. In 1857 Isabella traveled to Italy and viewed a collection of Renaissance art. The Stewart family returned to New York in 1858.
Julia invited Isabella to visit her in Boston. It was here that she met John Lowell Gardner, Julia’s brother. Isabella and Jack married on April 10, 1860. Her father gifted them with a home at 152 Beacon Street.
The couple had a son but he died before his third birthday. Isabella experienced a miscarriage a year later and suffered the loss of her beloved sister in law. She became depressed. Jack took her to Europe where they traveled for a year. They visited Scandinavia, Russia, Italy, and France. It was on this trip that the Gardners began to collect works of art.
Back home in Boston, Isabella (who was often referred to as “Mrs. Jack”) was attracting attention as a woman who was “eccentric,” “original,” the “leader of the smart set,” and “one of the seven wonders of Boston” — not at all what was expected of a proper Victorian Boston lady. She was drawn into intellectual and artistic elite circles with the likes of Julia Ward Howe, Sarah Orne Jewett, Henry James, James McNeill Whistler, and F. Marion Crawford.
When Jack’s brother, Joseph, died in 1875, Isabella and Jack adopted and raised his three sons. Isabella held dinner parties, salons, and lectures in her Beacon Street home. They continued their world travels, exploring different cultures and collecting art.
The Gardners visited China, India, and Egypt and befriended local artists. Their return visit to Venice in 1884 introduced Isabella to more artists. The artists urged her to collect art pieces and advised her on what was important. Their home became a place to showcase their collections.
The Gardners realized that their Beacon Street home was too small to display all of their finds. They decided to move. They chose The Fenway for its remote location, natural light, and for the new, beautifully landscaped park system created by Frederick Law Olmsted.
They would create a Venetian palace, like those they had visited in Italy, with grand public rooms, an interior courtyard, including a private apartment for their use.

Suddenly on December 10, 1898, Jack Gardner died.
Isabella directed every detail. She worked on room displays and garden plantings. On the evening of January 1, 1903, guests were invited to a private opening of Fenway Court, complete with a concert by members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.
Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum opened to the public a month later in February.
Isabella Stewart Gardner suffered the first of a series of strokes in 1919.

She died on July 17, 1924.
"Years ago I decided that the greatest need in our Country was Art... We were a very young country and had very few opportunities of seeing beautiful things, works of art... So, I determined to make it my life's work if I could."

--Isabella Stewart Gardner
Isabella Stewart Gardner
April 14, 1840 - July 17, 1924
Julia O’Connor Parker
telephone operator
labor organizer
Julia Sarsfield O'Connor was born in Woburn, Massachusetts on September 9, 1890. Both of her parents, John and Sarah Conneally O’Connor, had immigrated from Ireland. Julia was one of four children.
When she graduated from high school in 1908, she became a telephone operator in Boston. Telephone operating was considered a “woman’s” job because women were willing to work for low wages. There was no dialing system on telephones, so in order to make a call, you had to speak directly with an operator.
In 1912, Julia joined the newly formed Boston Telephone Operators’ Union. She became part of the executive board of the Boston office of the National Women's Trade Union League (WTUL). Julia was elected president of the Boston WTUL from 1915 to 1918.
The National Women’s Trade Union League (WTUL), recognizing Julia’s strong leadership abilities, sent her on a scholarship to study in Chicago at the WTUL Training School. In Boston, the WTUL sponsored educational and social activities for working class women and encouraged them to take a role in fighting for women’s suffrage.
On August 1, 1918, after the United States entered World War I, the U.S. government took control of the nation's telephone and telegraph industries. A commission was set up under the leadership of Post Office official William S. Ryan to handle labor relations.
The Ryan Commission consisted of five members – two from the telephone industry, two from the government, and one labor representative. Julia O'Connor was appointed to represent labor on the commission. However, after only a few months, O'Connor resigned because the commission had demonstrated a hostile attitude toward the telephone and telegraph workers.
While serving on the Ryan Commission, O'Connor was discharged from her position as operator for the New England Telephone Company, which claimed that her absences were excessive. Julia devoted more time to union activities as president of Local 1A of the IBEW Telephone Operators' Department.
In April 1919, members of the Telephone Operators' Department who worked for the New England Telephone Company went out on strike because the Ryan Commission had failed to act on demands for wage adjustments. The strike, called by O'Connor on April 15, caused disruption in telephone service across the New England area.
After five days, negotiations led to an agreement between the union and the telephone company. The result was an increase in pay for the operators and recognition of the right to bargain collectively.
In July 1921, Julia sailed to Europe to do an industrial study and research.
In 1923, The New England Council of Telephone Operators' Unions called for a strike against the New England Telephone Company. They demanded pay increases and reduction of hours. Support for the strike was weak because of disputes between O'Connor as head of the National Telephone Operators' Department and the leadership of the Boston Local 1A. The result was the expulsion of the Boston local from the national union. The strike was called off after less than a month and did not achieve any of its goals.
With the introduction of dial telephones, membership in the Telephone Operators' Department of the IBEW declined. The National Telephone Operators' Department was finally disbanded in 1938.
Julia O'Connor married Charles Austin Parker, a reporter for the Boston Herald, in 1925. When the first child of their two children was born, Julia resigned her position on the executive board of the WTUL. However, she remained active in WTUL activities in Boston during the 1930s.
Julia became an organizer for the American Federation of Labor in 1939. She moved to New York City to help organize Western Union workers. Julia returned to Boston and continued to work as a labor organizer for the next ten years. She retired in 1957.
Julia had spent forty-five years in the labor movement.

Julia O’Connor Parker died on August 28, 1972
“I should like to see the National League eternally concentrating on one objective, trade union organizing among women... we are not being wholly true to our heritage and tradition while we fail to make it the major purpose of our organization's existence.”

--Julia O’Connor Parker
Julia O’Connor Parker

September 9, 1890 - 1972
Jennie Loitman Barron
lawyer
women’s rights activist
judge
Boston School Committee member
Jennie Loitman was born on October 12, 1891 in the West End of Boston. Her parents were Jewish immigrants from Russia. They often told her and her sisters how wonderful it was to be in America.
After graduating from Girls’ High School in Boston, she attended Boston University. In 1914, she received her master of law degree from Boston University. While at college, she organized and became the first president of the Boston University Equal Suffrage League.
In 1918, Jennie married a lawyer named Samuel Barron. They had three children and opened a law firm together which they named after themselves: *Barron and Barron*. 
When Jennie became a lawyer, there were very few women in that profession. At that time, women could not serve on juries. Jennie worked as a member of the Massachusetts Association of Women Lawyers.
Jennie Barron was such a skilled lawyer that she was appointed a judge in 1934. Barron was the first woman to become a full time judge in Massachusetts. She was Associate Justice of Boston Municipal Court from 1938 to 1959, and then Associate Justice of Massachusetts Superior Court from 1959 until her death.
When Jennie Barron had to hand down a guilty sentence, she tried to look for special ways to help people reform their lives. She assigned people to programs which would help train them for jobs when they left prison. She worked to bring families back together to help each other. Sometimes, instead of sending a person to prison, she ordered them to do work to help their community.
As a mother, Jennie Barron wanted the Boston Public Schools to be run well, so she ran for the Boston School Committee. Her campaign slogan was "Put a Mother on the Boston School Committee." She won. Judge Barron was the only woman on the School Committee from 1926 to 1929.
Boston University presented honorary doctoral degrees to both Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Judge Jennie Loitman Barron. Dr. King was recognized as a compelling voice for equity, justice, and peace. Judge Jennie Loitman Barron was remembered as an American suffragist, accomplished lawyer, and judge.
Jennie Loitman Barron was a woman of firsts....

*first woman to try a major criminal case in her state
*first woman to serve as a full-time justice in Massachusetts
*first mother on the Boston School Committee
*first female United States delegate to the United Nations Congress on Crime and Juvenile Delinquency
Jennie and Samuel Barron were honored by hundreds of friends and public officials at their golden wedding anniversary. One week later, Samuel Barron died.

Jennie Loitman Barron died the following year, on March 28, 1969.
“America... This was a haven for many races who had been oppressed in their native lands.”

-- Jennie Loitman Barron
Jennie Loitman Barron

October 12, 1891 - March 28, 1969
Clementina Poto Langone
community organizer
political campaign worker
immigration and poverty activist
Clementina Maria Anna Poto was born on May 30, 1896. Tina Poto was born in a house near the Paul Revere House in Boston’s North End. On the first floor of her house was her family’s grocery store. Clementina attended Boston Public Schools and worked in her parents’ grocery store at 33 North Square.
Clementina went to Burdett College to learn more about running a business. She fell in love and married a young man she knew from her neighborhood, Joseph A. Langone Jr. They married in 1920 and moved into the house next door at 190 North Street. The Langones had six children.
The Great Depression began in 1929. At that time, factories slowed down or closed, banks failed, stores went out of business, and many people lost their jobs. Families couldn’t pay the rent and were put out onto the streets. These were difficult years for many people. In 1932, Tina Langone helped her husband run for State Senator. She wanted him to introduce laws that would help people who were suffering during the Depression. She was a good organizer. People liked her, and her husband won the election.
Tina Langone was bilingual; she was fluent in Italian and in English. She used her bilingual skills to help the Italian immigrants in Boston who were without jobs and money. Mrs. Langone collected clothes and food from people who were not poor and kept supplies in her living room to give out to people who needed them.
She especially encouraged immigrants to become American citizens so that they would be eligible for the help that President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his wife Eleanor were encouraging the federal government in Washington, D.C., to offer.
The Mayor of Boston, the Governor of Massachusetts, and the Massachusetts United States Senators praised her hard work. Tina Langone worked to get Franklin D. Roosevelt elected President of the United States in 1936. She also worked for Harry Truman in the 1944 campaign. For twenty years, Ms. Langone worked on the Massachusetts Immigration and Education Commission to help people become citizens.
Clementina Poto Langone died at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston on April 20, 1964.

Her husband had died four years earlier.
Langone Park was established in 1973. It is dedicated to the memory of Massachusetts state senator Joseph A. Langone, Jr. and his wife Clementina Poto Langone.
"Don't forget the people."

According to her son, Frederick, these were her last words.
Clementina Poto Langone
May 30, 1896 - April 20, 1964
Muriel Sutherland Snowden
community organizer
education advocate
banker
writer
Muriel Sophronia Sutherland was born on July 14, 1916. She spent her childhood in Glen Ridge, New Jersey. When she graduated high school in 1934, she was the valedictorian.
Muriel attended Radcliffe College and graduated in 1938. She worked as an investigator for the Essex County Welfare Board, and a volunteer for a settlement house in Newark.
From 1943-1945, Muriel studied at the New York School of Social Work. She had received a fellowship from the National Urban League to pay for her education. She married Otto P. Snowden in 1944. The couple moved to Boston. Their only child, Gail, was born in 1945.
Snowden served as executive director of the Cambridge Civic Unity Committee from 1948 to 1950. However, she left to dedicate her time to Freedom House.
The Snowdens founded Freedom House, an organization that advocated for self-help and integration for African Americans in Boston's Roxbury neighborhood in 1949. In the beginning, they operated Freedom House out of their home.
Three years later, the Snowdens purchased a building that previously housed the Hebrew Teachers College on Crawford Street in Roxbury. Freedom House became a well-known and active advocacy organization in Upper Roxbury. It was the major meeting spot for Boston's African-American activist community.
The Snowdens were committed to living in the Roxbury neighborhood in an era when it suffered from blight, arson, and other crimes. Muriel Snowden said, "We decided long ago we weren't going anywhere, and we were going to stay here ... This is a commitment. You have a direction, a feeling about where you're going."
Muriel taught community organization at the Simmons College School of Social Work as an adjunct instructor from 1958 to 1970.
When Muriel and Otto retired from active involvement in Freedom House in 1984, their daughter Gail became chair of the Foundation's board.

On September 30, 1988, Muriel Snowden died.
The Muriel Sutherland Snowden International School in Boston was named after Snowden in 1988. Its international-themed curriculum was introduced by Muriel S. Snowden, in 1983.
“I would hope that the so-called women’s movement would gain acceptance for what it really is: the effort to achieve human dignity and justice and equality for all of God’s children.

--Muriel Sutherland Snowden
Muriel Sutherland Snowden
July 14, 1916 - September 30, 1988
Myrna Leticia Vásquez
actress
human rights activist
TV host
Myrna Leticia Vásquez Diaz was born in Cidra, Puerto Rico on February 4, 1935. She had six siblings. Myrna had polio as a child. She had heart problems and doctors did not think that she would survive childhood.
Her family moved to San Juan. As a child, she loved performing. She would often give recitals for family and friends. During her teenage years Vásquez was part of a comedy troupe. Myrna studied theater at the University of Puerto Rico.
Myrna participated in many professional productions. During the 1960s, she co-founded the Teatro El Cemi.
Myrna founded the Cooperative Theater Arts (COOPARTE). They offered theater arts classes to young people and hosted the first Festival of Latin American Theater.
Vázquez suffered from a congenital heart condition. She had a series of surgeries starting in her twenties. Despite the medical danger, she had three sons with her husband, the actor Félix Monclova.
When her marriage ended in 1974, Vásquez moved to Boston in search of employment. Two of her sons remained in Puerto Rico with her mother and the third moved to Boston with her. While living in the South End, Myrna joined a group of Latina community activists, who among other things, founded a women’s shelter.
Though Myrna Vázquez did not live in Boston for long, she had a lasting influence on the South End community. She was a charismatic activist who helped found the Villa Victoria Center for the Arts.
Myrna was instrumental in establishing the Puerto Rican Festival.
Myrna Vásquez died of a heart condition on February 17, 1975.

A group of activists decided to honor her by naming the shelter, Casa Myrna.
Her hometown of Cidra celebrates the life of Myrna Vázquez each February. A play written in her honor was presented at the Cultural Center in Cidra in 1979. Another tribute premiered at the Jorge Hernández Cultural Center in Villa Victoria in July, 1995.
"She was a very determined woman that would not allow the adversities of life and poverty to interfere with the way she lived...she lived life to the fullest."

--According to her son, René Monclova
Myrna Leticia Vásquez
February 4, 1935 - February 17, 1975
Melnea Agnes Jones Cass
community leader
civil rights activist
advocate
Melnea Agnes Jones was born on June 16, 1896. When she was five, her family moved to Boston’s South End. Her mother died when she was eight. She was raised by her father and Aunt Ella. Aunt Ella moved them to Newburyport, Massachusetts.
Melnea attended Boston Public Schools and then St. Francis Convent School in Rock Castle, Virginia. When she graduated in 1914, she was the class valedictorian. She returned to Boston to Aunt Ella’s home.
Melnea looked for work in retail but there were few opportunities for Blacks in Boston. She had to work as a domestic. As a young woman, Melnea attended William Monroe Trotter's lectures and protest meetings. She was a faithful reader of *The Boston Guardian*, an African-American newspaper.
In December of 1917, she married Marshall Cass. The couple had three children, Marshall, Marianne, and Melanie. Melnea became involved in community projects. She helped to organize people to register to vote after the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified.
In the 1930s, Melnea Cass began a lifetime of volunteer work on the local, state, and national level.

In 1933, William Monroe Trotter organized a demonstration urging African-American employers to hire African-American workers. Melnea Cass participated; it was her first demonstration.
Melnea contributed her services to the Robert Gould Shaw House, a settlement house and community center. She was the founder of the Kindergarten Mothers.
Melnea was engaged in numerous and varied activities over the years: Pansy Embroidery Club, Harriet Tubman Mothers’ Club, and the Sojourner Truth Club. She worked in the Northeastern Region of the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs as a secretary.
Melnea helped form the Boston local of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters to name a few. During World War II she was one of the organizers of Women In Community Service, which later became Boston's sponsor of the Job Corps.

Tina Allen's statue of labor and civil rights leader A. Philip Randolph, who helped organize the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in 1925, for Back Bay Station in Boston.
In 1949 she was a founder and charter member of Freedom House, which was conceived by Muriel and Otto Snowden. A year later, Boston Mayor John Collins appointed her as the only female charter member to Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD). This organization assisted people who lost their homes to urban renewal.
From 1962 to 1964, Cass was president of the Boston branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

From 1975 to 1976, Cass was chairperson for the Massachusetts Advisory Committee for the Elderly.
Melnea received honorary doctorates from Northeastern University (June 15, 1969), Simmons College (May 15, 1971), and Boston College (1975).
Some of the recognitions of Melnea’s contributions to Roxbury and Boston are:

Melnea Cass Boulevard, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR), Melnea A. Cass Swimming Pool and Indoor Recreation Arena dedicated by Gov. John Volpe. May 22, 1966 was declared Melnea Cass Day.
Melnea Cass, the First Lady of Roxbury, died on December 16, 1978.

_The Bay State Banner_ wrote, “The most important lesson Mrs. Cass taught us was love. Her abiding goodwill permeated everything she did. Even her adversaries would come away feeling good. Problems and hostilities would melt when faced with the force of her love.”
"You never give up hope, never, because just when you think you are gonna give up, that's when you could really gain the victory — if you just kept on going, just a little bit more."

--Melnea Cass
Melnea Agnes Jones Cass

June 16, 1896 - December 16, 1978
The Boston Women's Memorial was dedicated on October 25, 2003 at the Commonwealth Avenue Mall. It honors Abigail Adams, Lucy Stone, and Phillis Wheatley.

Mayor of Boston: Thomas Michael Menino
Sculptor: Meredith Bergmann
BWHT
Boston Women’s Heritage Trail

“Righting” Women
Back into their Place in Boston’s Story

BWHT.org