

# I. Study Purpose and Background

## Legislation

The Omnibus Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 1999 (P.L. 105-277) provided \$100,000 for a trail study relating to Women's Rights National Historical Park. Congresswoman Louise Slaughter had previously introduced legislation, H.R. 3240, which, if passed, would have directed the National Park Service to conduct the necessary studies to evaluate the suitability and feasibility of designating a women's rights national historic trail between Boston, Massachusetts, and Buffalo, New York. Although that bill was unsuccessful on its own, language in the Omnibus Appropriation Act accomplished that purpose.

## Current Efforts to Preserve and Interpret Properties Associated with the Women's Rights Movement.

These Congressional initiatives were part of a wave of local, state, and national efforts to commemorate the 1998 sesquicentennial of the first Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. In the years before and since the sesquicentennial, organizations engaged in recognizing and preserving women's history properties have expressed concern that properties associated with the women's rights movement remain undocumented, unrecognized, and are inadequately protected.

Below is a sampling of initiatives. A more extensive list of women's history trails and tourism initiatives identified during the study process is included in Appendix F.

## Federal Commissions

### President's Commission on the Celebration of Women in American History

The President's Commission on the Celebration of Women in American History was established by Executive Order 13090 (July 1998) to recommend ways America should recognize the contributions of women to our nation's history. In its final report, published in March 1999, the Commission recommended a series of actions to recognize American women and to preserve properties associated with women's history at the national as well as the local level. Among its national recommendations were: write and distribute a "How-To Community Handbook" (which the Commission undertook); build a national women's history umbrella website, and develop a traveling women's history exhibit. To address local preservation, the Commission developed a series of recommendations based on the theme

"Women's History is Everywhere – 10 Ideas for Celebrating in Communities." Among the celebration suggestions were "Women win the right to vote: Tell the Story of Suffrage in Local Communities," "Discover/Preserve Women's History: Establish State-wide Women's History Initiatives," and "Create Community Women's History Trails: Develop a Map of Local Women's History Sites."

### Women's Progress Commemoration Commission

The Women's Progress Commemoration Commission was established by Congress in October 1998 to



Source: Lowell National Historical Park

Residents of Boott Mill Boarding House, c. 1880, Lowell, MA

Resolved, that woman has too long rested satisfied in the circumscribed limits... and that it is time she should move in the enlarged sphere which her great Creator has assigned her.

*-Declaration of Sentiments, 1848*

commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention and to further protect important properties associated with the historic efforts to secure equal rights for women. The Commission convened in July 2000. Its final report was delivered in July 2001.

The Commission invited the National Park Service to present the Women's Rights National History Trail Feasibility Study on two separate occasions: At the inaugural meeting of the Commission in July 2000, the National Park Service was invited to describe the scope and early findings of the study to Commission members, and in June 2001, the National Park Service was asked to update Commission members on the study findings and proposals. In its final report, the Women's Progress Commemoration Commission reflected many of the findings of the Women's Rights National History Trail Feasibility Study and many of the Commission's recommendations for national, state, and local action are represented in the partnership concepts presented in this study.

## **National Park Service**

### **Women's Rights National Historical Park**

Women's Rights National Historical Park commemorates the first Women's Rights Convention and the early leaders of the women's rights movement in the United States. Historic properties within the park boundary include the 1840s Greek Revival home of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, organizer and leader of the women's rights movement; the Wesleyan Chapel, site of the First Women's Rights Convention; Declaration Park, with a 100 foot long waterwall engraved with the Declaration of Sentiments and the names of the signers of the Declaration; the Hunt House, home of Jane and Richard Hunt, where the idea for the First Women's Rights Convention was conceived; and the M'Clintock House, home of MaryAnn and Thomas M'Clintock, where the Declaration of Sentiments was drafted.

Women's Rights National Historical Park preserves and interprets for the education, inspiration, and benefit of present and future generations the nationally significant historical and cultural sites, structures, and events associated with the struggle for equal rights for women, and cooperates with national, state, and local entities to preserve the character and historic setting of such sites, structures, and events.

### **Susan B. Anthony House Special Resource Reconnaissance Study**

In 2001 the National Park Service published the findings of the Susan B. Anthony House Special Resource Reconnaissance Study. The study evaluated the property for possible inclusion in the National Park System and reported the results of this evaluation to Congress. In order to be considered eligible for inclusion, a proposed unit must meet federally established criteria for national significance, as well as the suitability and feasibility of including it in the National Park System. The National Park Service determined on the basis of this study that the Susan B. Anthony House meets the criteria of significance, but because it is successfully managed by the Susan B. Anthony House, Inc., it does not meet the criteria of suitability and thus there is no need to incorporate the house in the National Park System at this time.

### **Civil Rights Study**

In partnership with the Organization of American Historians, the National Park Service's National History Landmark Survey program prepared a civil rights framework to support the identification, preservation, and interpretation of properties associated with the history of civil rights in the United States. The study recommends the preparation of a series of National Historic Landmark theme studies addressing the provisions of major 1960's civil rights legislation.

## National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. It is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archeological resources. The National Register has undertaken a number of efforts to recognize properties associated with women's history. They include:

### *Places Where Women Made History*

The National Register of Historic Places, in partnership with the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NCSHPO) and a number of public and private partners and communities throughout the country, has developed a series of print and web-based travel itineraries called *Discover Our Shared Heritage*. The itineraries help travelers plan trips linking a variety of registered historic places, from National Parks and National Historic Landmarks to state and locally significant historic places.

The National Park Service developed the "Places Where Women Made History" travel itinerary as part of the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the first Women's Rights Convention held in Seneca Falls, New York. This National Register travel itinerary focuses on 74 historic places in New York and Massachusetts associated with aspects of women's history including but not limited to: education, government, medicine, the arts, commerce, women's suffrage and the early civil rights movement.

The "Places Where Women Made History" website offers several ways to discover women's contributions to the development of New York and Massachusetts. The page for each property features a brief description of the property's significance, and contemporary and historic photographs. At the bottom of each page, the visitor will also find links to five essays: *Women and Historic Preservation*, *Women in Art and Literature*, *Women and the Progressive Era*, *Women Professionals* and *Women and the Equal Rights Movement*. These provide historical background for many of the properties included on the web page. Finally, travelers can print copies of maps and property descriptions and visit the properties open to the public.

### *Teaching with Historic Places*

The Teaching with Historic Places (TwHP) program uses properties listed in the National Register to enliven the teaching of history, social studies, geography, civics, and other subjects. It offers a variety of products and activities, including professional development materials and a series of classroom-ready lesson plans. Many of the lesson plans are available for free on the National Register website.

Through its Teaching with Historic Places program, the National Register has published four women's rights history lesson plans. They include "The M'Clintock House: A Home to the Women's Rights Movement," "First Lady of the World: Eleanor Roosevelt at Val-Kill," "Clara Barton House: Home of the American Red Cross," and "Adele Hornbeck and the Homestead Act: A Colorado Success Story."

## National Landmark Program – Women's History Theme Study

National historic landmarks (NHLs) are exceptional places that form a common bond among all Americans. National historic landmarks can be found in our national parks and in communities in every state and territory. Through the National Historic Landmarks Program, the National Park Service oversees the designation of these special places and helps to preserve them.

Theme studies are the most effective way of identifying and nominating properties because they provide a comparative analysis of properties associated with a specific area of American history, such as the fur trade, earliest Americans,

women's history, Greek Revival architecture, "Man in Space," or labor history. A theme study provides the necessary national historic context so that national significance may be judged for a number of related properties.

Congress funded a National Historic Landmark theme study for women's history in fiscal year 1989. The study was undertaken by the National Park Service in cooperation with the Organization of American Historians and the National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History. Page Putnam Miller, former director of the National Coordinating Committee, coordinated the effort. This effort resulted in National Historic Landmark nominations for 23 women's history properties.

### **National Park Service History Division**

In 1996, the National Park Service's history division spearheaded the development of a document guiding interpretation of women's history entitled "Exploring a Common Past – Interpreting Women's History in the National Park Service."

The booklet was the product of a joint effort between the National Park Service and the Organization of American Historians. Page Putnam Miller coordinated the effort. The project incorporated the contributions of numerous members of the academic community as well as National Park Service historians and interpretive specialists.

## **National (Non-governmental) Initiatives**

### **Conference on Women and Historic Preservation**

The University of Washington's Preservation Program, in concert with the National Park Service and the Organization of American Historians, sponsors a regularly scheduled conference on Women and Historic Preservation. The conference addresses many issues including recognizing and preserving the work of women architects and preservationists, as well as properties associated with significant women or events in women's history.

The conference promotes the exchange of knowledge related to the identification, documentation, interpretation, and protection of places significant in the history of women; and provides an opportunity for women in preservation and their allies to address shared concerns and interests. The last conference took place in Washington DC in May 2000. The Women's Rights National History Trail Feasibility Study was presented as part of a panel on existing women's history trail initiatives.

### **National Museum of Women's History**

The National Museum of Women's History is currently a virtual museum and has posted changing exhibits on its World Wide Website ([www.nmwh.org](http://www.nmwh.org)). The museum is currently raising funds to support the development of a physical site. Based in Alexandria, Virginia, the museum is a nonpartisan, nonprofit educational institution dedicated to preserving, displaying, interpreting, and celebrating the historic contributions and rich, diverse experiences of women, and restoring this heritage to the cultural mainstream.

### **National Women's History Project**

The National Women's History Project is a non-profit organization dedicated to recognizing and celebrating the diverse and historic accomplishments of women by providing information and educational material and programs.

Founded in 1980, the National Women's History Project started by leading a coalition that successfully lobbied Congress to designate March as National Women's History Month, now celebrated across the country. Today, the National Women's History Project is known nationally as the only clearinghouse providing information and training in multicultural women's history for educators, community organizations, and parents—for anyone wanting to expand their understanding of women's contributions to U. S. history. The enduring goal of the National Women's History Project is to make history accurate by continuing to recognize and celebrate women's contributions.

### **National Women's Hall of Fame**

The National Women's Hall of Fame is a national membership organization that recognizes and celebrates the achievements of individual American women. The Hall was founded in 1969 in Seneca Falls, New York, the site of the first Women's Rights Convention in 1848. A non-profit educational organization, its programs include inductions of distinguished American women, educational activities, special exhibits, and events for the enrichment of public understanding and appreciation of the diverse contributions women make to society. The Hall has inducted 176 women since its founding.

### **National Collaborative for Women's History Sites**

Formed in 1998, the National Collaborative for Women's History Sites supports and promotes the preservation and interpretation of sites and locales that bear witness to women's participation in American life. The Collaborative makes women's contributions to history visible so that all women's experiences and potential are fully valued. The Collaborative is composed of site and museum administrators representing a range of women's history sites, representatives of the academic community, and other advocates for the recognition, interpretation, and preservation of American women's history sites. The National Collaborative for Women's History Sites has received limited financial and administrative support from the National Park Service to support its organizational development.

The collaborative's steering committee is composed of representatives from: Alice Paul Centennial Foundation; Arizona State University, Women's Studies Program (Tempe, AZ); National Park Service (multiple locations); National Women's History Project (Santa Rosa, CA); New Century Guild (Philadelphia, PA); Susan B. Anthony House (Rochester, NY); and Women in Military Service for America Memorial (Arlington, VA).

### **State and Local Initiatives**

Efforts in the Northeast include but are not limited to the following:

#### **Central New York Freedom Trail**

The Preservation Association of Central New York currently works with local governments and historical societies, churches, tourism authorities, and local communities to develop and preserve historical records and assets of Central New York related to the Underground Railroad and the Women's Rights movement of the 19th century. Toward that end, the Association is seeking partnerships to create the Central New York Freedom Trail Project. The project is intended to focus primarily on the counties of Cayuga, Onondaga and Madison, with additional attention to properties in Oneida, Oswego, and Cortland counties. The project will identify significant properties and events that are appropriate for preservation and interpretation, and will establish a uniform system of interpretive markers that will be compatible with systems to be developed statewide and nationally.

The Central New York Freedom Trail Project involves four key areas of activity, to be carried out simultaneously over a multi-year period. These include: survey of historical records and properties related to abolition and women's rights; development of online, continually updated finding aids for related historical records; placement of interpretive markers for Underground Railroad and Women's Rights Freedom Trails; and preservation of properties of significant value, including registration of landmarks and historic properties.

#### **New Jersey's Women's Heritage Trail**

The New Jersey State Legislature provided funds for the study, identification, and documentation of women's history properties of significance in New Jersey's history by the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office and for development of a tourism guide entitled "New Jersey Women's Heritage Trail." The inventory effort is currently underway.

### **Worcester (Massachusetts) Women's History Project**

The Worcester Women's History Project is a non-profit volunteer organization founded in 1994 to raise awareness of the importance of the first National Women's Rights Convention in 1850 and to highlight the role of Worcester in the early women's rights movement.

The Worcester Women's History Project held its first conference in October 2000 commemorating the 150th anniversary of the first national women's rights convention. The Women's Rights National History Trail Feasibility Study was presented as part of a panel discussion at the conference.

### **Boston Women's Heritage Trail (Massachusetts)**

The Boston Women's Heritage Trail is a nonprofit membership organization founded in 1989 as a program of the Boston Public Schools. Through educational programs, publications, and outreach initiatives, the Boston Women's Heritage Trail is dedicated to weaving the lives and work of women into the story of the city of Boston.

The Trail publishes a guidebook, brochures for self-guided walks, a regular newsletter and teaching materials, presents programs and guided tours, hosts events, and supports the work of independent scholars.

### **Portland Women's History Trail (Maine)**

Sponsored by the Maine Humanities Council and the University of Southern Maine, the proponents of a Portland Women's History Trail developed a guidebook outlining four walking tours which highlight different aspects of women's history within the city of Portland. Similar women's history tour guides were prepared for the Maine communities of Brunswick and Farmington.

## **Study Process**

### **Project Scope:**

In November 1999, a group of National Park Service planning, interpretation, and history professionals assembled to define the scope of the project. A member of Congresswoman Louise Slaughter's staff participated by conference call and offered insights into the congresswoman's intent. In addition, the group also considered the content of an earlier bill filed by the congresswoman, which called for a study to consider the designation of a women's rights national historic trail in a corridor reaching from Boston, Massachusetts, to Buffalo, New York. This discussion determined the following aspects of the project's scope:

### **Project Objectives**

- ♦ To assemble existing information on historic properties that are related to the multiple facets of women's rights as articulated in the 1848 Declaration of Sentiments adopted at the Seneca Falls Convention and that are of great national consequence.
- ♦ To evaluate the feasibility of defining and designating a women's rights history trail as a national historic trail.
- ♦ To define a range of alternatives that would support the recognition, interpretation, and preservation of women's rights history properties based upon the project findings.

### **Establishing the Study Area**

In order to understand the broad context for designating a trail between Boston, Massachusetts and Buffalo, New York, the National Park Service study team looked at the distribution of women's rights history properties across a greater geographic area. The study team established a study area that included the northeastern United States, reaching from Maine to Virginia and including the District of Columbia.

### **Defining the Women's Rights Movement**

Early in the process, National Park Service planners, historians, and interpretive staff worked to define the scope of women's rights to be addressed by this study. Using the goals expressed in the 1848 Declaration of Sentiments adopted at the Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention, the study team developed a framework composed of five categories: Politics, Education, Economics, Religion, and Family and Society.

The National Park Service contracted with Dr. Ellen C. DuBois, an eminent women's history scholar at the University of California at Los Angeles, to prepare an historical overview placing the women's rights movement in the context of U.S. history. Her work serves as a Statement of Significance for the women's rights movement in the United States. (The complete text of her essay can be found in Appendix C of this report.)

For purposes of this project, the planning team employed a period of significance beginning in 1848 – the beginning of the formal women's rights movement as marked by the Seneca Falls Convention – and ending with 1953 (the present less 50 years) to acknowledge the fact that the women's rights movement continues and for consistency with standards established by the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register generally requires that a property be at least 50 years old to be considered eligible for listing. However, the National Register does offer guidelines for nominating properties that are less than 50 years old and possess exceptional importance as a result of their association with an event or an individual.

### **Identifying Women's Rights History Properties**

In order to identify women's rights history properties in the study area, the study team relied on secondary sources such as the National Historic Landmark's Women's History Theme Study, popular women's history travel guides, women's heritage trail guides, reports and articles prepared by the academic community, contacts with state historic preservation offices, as well as personal communication at workshops and conferences.

### **Defining A Range Of Partnership Concepts**

After evaluating the initial proposal, a designated Women's Rights National Historic Trail, the National Park Service study team developed a range of partnership concepts that would support the recognition, protection, interpretation and promotion of women's rights history properties.



Resolved, that the same amount of virtue, delicacy, and refinement of behavior that is required of woman in the social state also be required of man, and the same transgressions should be visited with equal severity on both man and woman.

*-Declaration of Sentiments, 1848*