**Worcester Women’s History Project**

“WE REMEMBER OUR PAST TO BETTER SHAPE OUR FUTURE.”

**Volume 9, No. 2, Fall 2009**

**“Yours for Humanity—Abby” to be performed at the State House**

Worcester Women’s History Project extends its thanks to the Hon. Harriette L. Chandler for championing the performance of "Yours for Humanity—Abby" at the annual meeting of the Women’s Legislative Caucus, State House, Boston, January 27, 2010. No doubt Abby would be thinking, if not saying, to the Legislators the quote from her 1851 speech at the Second National Woman’s Rights Convention held in Worcester, "Bloody feet, sisters, have worn smooth the path by which you have come up hither."

For almost six years I have been honored and humbled to bring to life one of Worcester’s greatest women, Abby Kelley Foster. She is an inspiration to me and I hope to the people who see the performance. One person can make a difference in the lives of many with hard work, dedication, perseverance and empathy.

**Lynne McKenney Lydick**


- Premiered January 17, 2004

- "Yours for Humanity—Abby," a one-woman play based on Abby Kelley Foster’s letters and speeches, portrays a week in Abby’s life in 1854 as she lectures in Indiana against slavery. Abby frequently closes her letters with the words that form the title of the play. ...The play demonstrates how an ordinary person, like Abby, can affect extraordinary changes in society.

**Abby Kelley Foster** (1811-1887) spent her childhood in the countryside around Worcester, and later lived in Millbury. Born near Amherst, Massachusetts, she was a crusader for the abolition of slavery and for women’s suffrage. Foster was one of the first women to deliver speeches before sexually mixed audiences. She married a radical abolitionist, Stephen S. Foster. After the birth of their daughter, they bought and settled on a farm in Worcester, from where they continued their activities on behalf of slaves and women.... Her home, still standing on Mower Street in Worcester, was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1973. **Charlotte Wharton** painted the portrait [left] of Abby Kelley Foster [commissioned by the Worcester Women’s History Project] which hangs in Mechanics Hall. Born in Independence, Kansas, Ms. Wharton received her Bachelor’s degree in Fine Arts from Clark University and studied at the National Academy of Design in New York City. Her work is well known throughout New England. Her many awards include the Copley Society of Boston’s Margaret Fitzhugh Browne Award for Excellence in Portraiture in 1994. She was named a Copley Master (1992) and was awarded the Grumbacher Gold Medal Award in 1991. Her works appear in several books on oil painting and pastels by Rockport Publishers. Ms. Wharton’s studio is in Worcester.  

(from WWHP website)

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A performance of “Yours for Humanity—Abby” may be booked by emailing info@wwhp.org.
President’s Corner

Another season begins! All the busyness of children returning to school, activities of fall swirling into the holiday season, and soon another year ends ... all too quickly ... and so much to do!

In the midst of the busyness of their lives certain women of WWHP individually and collectively have made time to assure that Worcester women of all ages are honored, celebrated, remembered! How do we say “thank you” to all who have believed in the mission of WWHP to launch it, celebrate Women 2000, mark WWHP@10 and keep on going ... and going ... and going ... taking us towards 2010 and WWHP at 15!! Who knew?

I am humbled to serve as President through this 2009-2010. A season which precedes Abby Kelley Foster’s 200th birthday, January 15, 2011!! So-o-o, what do you think? What’s next? How would you build the WWHP framework for this season ahead? Would you like to be part of it? I hope you say “YES!”

Please write WWHP events on your calendar NOW!! Along with being part of Worcester’s fabulous history both past and present, one of the best reasons for being a WWHP member is meeting Worcester’s remarkable women! I wish I could remember the exact words of one of our SC members at a meeting last spring. As we were discussing why people should join WWHP she made a comment about having the opportunity to hang out with a bunch of really great, fascinating, incredible women … (humble too!!) But, seriously, where else could you meet the first two women to be elected to the Worcester City Council? (That would be Barbara Kohin and Barbara Sinnott). They have great stories to tell. They inspire me, as do the younger women on our intergenerational Steering Committee who are committed to WWHP in the midst of demands of career and families. They certainly must feel WWHP is worth their time and effort. Every woman has her story and they are ALL wonderful and engaging. What’s yours? Won’t you come and share it with us? Tell us how you see WWHP growing into the future. See you in December!! Happy “Season”!

Fran
Fran Langille
President

NEWS! Worcester Community Action Council has received Federal ARRA funds to open a job and education center for education programs for youth ages 16-24 who have not been able to complete the traditional high school program of studies. Judy Finkel has been hired as the Project Director. Judy is a member of the WWHP Steering Committee and chair of the Events Committee. Congratulations, Judy!
Markers, Monuments and Heritage Trail subcommittee is being reformed to look into what should be done for 2011. WWHP will be celebrating the anniversary of the 200th birthday of Abby Kelley Foster. Email info@wwhp.org of your interest.

"Yours for Humanity—Abby" upcoming performance schedule: December 18, 11:30am, at the Shrewsbury Senior Center, 98 Maple Ave., Shrewsbury, free and open to the public; and January 30, 2010, at the Public Library in Bangor, Maine. The performance noted on the front page of this newsletter at the State House is private.

And... Lynne McKenney Lydick has performed "Yours for Humanity—Abby" before over 10,000 people of all ages since its premiere January 17, 2004.

Check out the Oral History Project section of our website www.wwhp.org to see the signed interviews conducted by Judy Fask’s students at Holy Cross. Go to “Higher Education Collaborative” and you will see the link that brings you to the Holy Cross American Sign Language and Deaf Studies page where there are several videos of these signed interviews. Our thanks again to Judy Fask for including oral history in her courses.

The 18-member WWHP Steering Committee is meeting quarterly with sub-committees meeting monthly. The sub-committees are Events, Abby, Newsletter, Oral History Project, Membership, Finance and the reformed Markers, Monuments and Heritage Trail. If you would like to help on one of the sub-committees, please contact the office.
Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe
Is New Repository for WWOHP Histories

By Maureen Ryan Doyle, Co-chair of the
Oral History Project (with Charlene Martin)

The Worcester Women’s Oral History Project (WWOHP) is privileged to announce that the Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute of Harvard University is the new repository for its 150 oral histories of Worcester’s women. The Schlesinger Library maintains collections relating to a wide range of American women’s activities, providing rich material for researchers and historians from around the world. Charlene Martin and Maureen Ryan Doyle, Co-chairs of WWOHP, hand-delivered the documents to the Schlesinger Library in October. Upon receipt of these files, Kathryn Allamong Jacob, Curator of Manuscripts at the Library, offered these words.

“The Schlesinger Library is honored to be chosen as the repository for the documentation of the remarkable Worcester Women’s Oral History Project. These interviews with 150+ Worcester women cover broad topics of work, education, health, politics and community involvement, and family, and help to tell a piece of the story of the history of women in America, which is the Library’s mission. An Auschwitz survivor, a minister born in Nigeria, a business owner, a homemaker, a nun, a professor, an activist, these and all of the other voices included in the project tell warm and funny, frightening and bitter stories of the detail of individual women’s lives. Together they help to tell the story of post-World War II America.”

The work of WWOHP is ongoing as it continues to create an inventory of oral history projects; collaborate with institutions of higher education; hold community workshops to instruct others about oral history; and ensure the preservation of these histories at their permanent site at the Schlesinger Library.

Many transcripts are available for viewing on the WWHP website, and more are being added on a regular basis. Please visit this site, and read the stories of Worcester’s women. Their voices give a richer and fuller understanding to the past, allowing readers to appreciate history from a deeply personal, and often profound, perspective.

[Photo above is of Charlene L. Martin, OHP Co-chair; Kathryn Allamong Jacob, Curator, Schlesinger Library; Maureen Ryan Doyle, OHP Co-chair on October 1, 2009.]

Oral History Program scheduled for December 10:
“Reagan, Bush, and Clinton: An Oral History Perspective”

Dr. Stephen Knott, Associate Professor of National Security Studies at the U.S. Naval War College and former Co-Chair of the Presidential Oral History Program at the Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia, will be the main speaker at the Worcester Women’s Oral History Program on December 10 at 4:00 p.m. in Hagan Center Hall at Assumption College. Dr. Knott will discuss the value of oral history as it relates to presidential history.

Dr. Knott’s most recent book, At Reagan’s Side: Insiders’ Recollections from Sacramento to the White House, is the culmination of his work overseeing the Reagan Oral History Project. He has also been involved in the Edward M. Kennedy, George H.W. Bush, and William J. Clinton Oral History Projects. His career includes six years at the JFK Library, and teaching positions in Political Science at the University of New Hampshire, Boston College, Quinnipiac University, and the U.S. Air Force Academy. Dr. Knott’s other publications include The Reagan Years; Alexander Hamilton and the Persistence of Myth; and Secret and Sanctioned: Covert Operations and the American Presidency.

This event will also feature student presentations of oral histories collected this semester using the WWOHP template. The public is cordially invited to attend and there is no charge for admission. Signed copies of Dr. Knott’s book will be available for purchase. For more information, please contact the Oral History Project Co-chairs, Charlene L. Martin, chmartin@townisp.com, or Maureen Ryan Doyle, mryandoyle@aol.com
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

PRESENTS

Reagan, Bush, and Clinton: An Oral History Perspective
by
Stephen Knott, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of National Security Studies,
U.S. Naval War College,
Former Co-Chair of the Presidential Oral History Program at the
Miller Center of Public Affairs,
University of Virginia

and

Student Presentations of Oral Histories
Conducted for the
Worcester Women's Oral History Project

Thursday, December 10, 2009
4:00 p.m.
Hagan Center Hall, Assumption College

Free and Open to the Public
Refreshments and Booksigning

Dr. Knott will discuss the value of oral history as it relates to presidential history. His most recent book, At Reagan's Side: Insiders' Recollections from Sacramento to the White House, is the culmination of his work overseeing the Reagan Oral History Project. He has also been involved in the Edward M. Kennedy, George H.W. Bush, and William J. Clinton Oral History Projects. His career includes six years at the JFK Library, and teaching Political Science at the University of New Hampshire, Boston College, Quinnipiac University, and the U.S. Air Force Academy. Other books include: The Reagan Years; Alexander Hamilton and the Persistence of Myth; and Secret and Sanctioned: Covert Operations and the American Presidency. He earned his B.A. from Assumption College and his Ph.D. from Boston College.

For More Information Contact Oral History Project Co-Chairs:
Maureen Ryan Doyle mryan Doyle@aol.com Charlene L. Martin cimartin@townisp.com

Worcester Women's History Project · 30 Elm Street · Worcester, MA 01609 · www.wwhp.org
“Women Through Their Letters and Poems”

The WWHP Events Committee is planning our next annual WOMEN IN PRINT program. Three Worcester-area authors will be featured. Mark your calendars for Wednesday, February 10, 2010, 5:30pm, in the Saxe Room at the Worcester Public Library. Free and open to the public. Snow date will be February 24.

“Beyond Witchcraft: Discovering Salem Through Women’s Stories”

By Karen Folkes

Through the efforts of the Events Committee of the Worcester Women’s History Project, we had another successful bus trip this year. On a beautiful June Saturday, we departed from the YWCA and headed for historic Salem, Massachusetts. To set the mood, we watched “The Crucible” on board, a fine way to prepare us for our day.

WWHP was fortunate enough to be able to engage Bonnie Hurd Smith, who met our bus and directed us to the Salem Visitors Center. Ms. Smith is an expert on Salem history and had also researched for us the link between Salem and Worcester. Her first order of business was to hand us copies of a letter written in 1790 from Judith Sargent Murray to her parents, describing her trip to and through Worcester. “It wears the face of industry, and is probably the Embryo of a great City—Its situation is truly pleasing, and its present appearance authorizes the most sanguine hopes.”

With her guidance, we visited the Salem Witch Museum, the House of the Seven Gables, and after a lunch at Brother’s Deli, we ended our day at The Peabody Essex Museum. Whether we were walking or riding in the bus, Ms. Smith continuously pointed out houses or areas of interest to women’s history. She was a wonderful docent for the day and all in attendance thoroughly enjoyed her expertise.

At The Peabody Essex Museum, we were split into two groups and traveled the beautiful facility with docents that had been arranged to receive us. We were given a very diverse tour specific to women’s history, through paintings, works of art, and collections, such as several decades’ worth of footwear. It made for an interesting and thought-provoking end of day. WWHP is most thankful to Bonnie Hurd Smith, The Peabody Essex, and all our Salem guides, for making this trip so informative, fun, and inspirational.

Thanks to our Events Committee for organizing this fantastic day! Members presently are Judy Finkel (Chair), Paulette Bluemel, Dianne Bruce, Kathleen Comer, Carolyn Dik, Vi Massad, Judy Nelson, Hannah Solska.

(Bullet Fact: Like the Women’s Heritage Trail and accompanying book WWHP developed and created, Salem also has a trail and a guidebook!)

Bonnie Hurd Smith is an author of multiple books and has done extensive research on women in the Salem area and beyond. Her work includes some women that have had extraordinary accomplishments, though you probably have never heard of them. We highlight just two:

Judith Sargent Murray 1751-1820
- First to claim female equality in the public prints
- Co-founder of a female academy
- Earliest known American Universalist author

Sarah Parker Remond 1826-94
- African American and member of Salem Female Anti-Slavery Society
- Professional lecturer and fundraiser for the American Anti-Slavery Society
- 1859 Traveled to Great Britain to speak and attend schooling denied her in America
- Became a med student in Italy and practiced medicine in Florence for twenty years
- Source: www.salemwomenshistory.com

Judy Finkel, Bonnie Hurd Smith, CJ Posk
“The Fairest of Them All…” Dr. Sylvia Yount Teaches about Cecilia Beaux

By Kara Wilson


Yount began her lecture with crediting Jim Welu of the Worcester Art Museum with informing her of the Merriman portrait just before the opening of the Cecilia Beaux retrospective Yount organized at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta. Yount mentioned that her intention of the talk was to discuss Beaux and her work in the context of several of her contemporaries: Thomas Aikens, John Singer Sargeant, Winslow Homer, and particularly Mary Cassatt. According to Yount, Beaux was viewed in the late-19th/early-20th century as the “best woman artist”, but she hadn’t been lauded in that way since her death in 1942. Beaux was a native of Philadelphia and studied under Thomas Aikens at the Pennsylvania Academy of Art, as did Mary Cassatt. Prior to Cassatt’s move to France, she and Beaux painted many of the same subjects in Philadelphia. However, Yount claims that Beaux’s work is more often compared to that of Whistler and John Singer Sargeant, as opposed to Cassatt, although Cassatt and Beaux are often compared because of being female artists. The relationship between the two women was antagonistic and competitive, according to Yount. Beaux is said to focus on the more feminine side of American women, showing a softer, more flattering side than Cassatt in her portraits. Beaux liked being called “a figure painter more than a portrait painter.”

The portrait of Helen Bigelow Merriman was painted in 1908. Merriman was chosen as a subject because she was a woman of society, and also an artist herself. Yount mentioned that Merriman was ten years Beaux’s senior and withdrew from the Boston art world after her marriage in 1874 and birth of her child in 1876 and focused on writing. Beaux, on the other hand, could not reconcile her career with marriage and motherhood, and therefore chose to remain single. Yount reminded us that the need to choose between career or marriage was a frequent hurdle for women artists in the 1870’s.

According to Yount, at the turn of the 21st century, Cecilia Beaux has “been given a permanent place in the annals of history as a woman artist.” Worcester Art Museum’s acquisition of the Merriman portrait, the first work by Beaux in its collection, is an indication of this.

Following Yount’s talk, WWHP hosted a reception in Salisbury Hall, where we had the chance to admire the portrait of Helen Bigelow Merriman and celebrate its homecoming to Worcester. The Worcester Women’s History Project was pleased to be a part of this important celebration of both of the women involved in this portrait: the artist and the subject.

Answer to question “Who was...?” is Karen Board Moran.

Women of WWHP: Kara Wilson

Kara Wilson grew up in Southborough, Massachusetts, and has had a lifelong interest in history, particularly local history and women’s history. She attended Women 2000. After spending a few years in Vermont and Arizona, she became involved in WWHP’s Marketing Committee in 2005. Kara served on the Steering Committee from 2006-2009. She was a wonderful addition to the Executive Committee in her role as Treasurer and then Vice President. She contributed greatly to our newsletter and created our flyers for events. A champion for all causes WWHP, her enthusiastic attitude and charming personality will be missed around the Steering Committee table. We are pleased she continues to work on our newsletter and wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

Are you thinking about learning more about WWHP? Think about volunteering.
“As Abby I stand here…”  By Lynne McKenney Lydick

As Abby I stand here
To provide a quick peek
To the venues and places “she’s” visited
To perform or to speak,
As MC or tour guide
She has made her rounds
At symposiums and meetings
Her visits abound

From classrooms galore
And nursing homes too
From councils on aging
Abby IS GIVEN her due

From girls’ groups and women’s
Quaker Meetinghouses, too.
In cemeteries and cafeterias
Her message comes through

In seminars and conferences
Museums and such
Abby’s words have been heard
And have taught the folks much

By the altars in churches
And senior centers, too
In libraries and outside
Where some wild winds blew
To Maine and Vermont
Outside in a tent
On lake fronts and lawns
Many hours being spent

As a lyceum participant
To Seneca Falls for an event
At Arts Council meetings
Private schools of the affluent

New Hampshire and Conn
I have taken her there
And spoken to teachers
Who truly do care.

Historical societies
And Diversity Training around
In workshops and at colleges
Abby is found

In corridors and gyms
In cavernous halls as well
Audiences of 500
Or 6, if I must tell

From kindergarteners who draw her
With wild hair on her head
And in skin of all colors
Yet they heard what “she” said

A fourth grader asked
How could it be?
That Abby got into trouble
When we can speak free

To tough questions from High Schoolers
About race relations today
And how they might differ
From back in Abby’s day

Does one stand up to a person
Who just spoke a slur?
Or try to ignore it
Pretend it didn’t occur

I say She would confront them
Saying if you stay silent
You give your approval
Thereby being compliant

At tea parties and Mansions
Lock-up facilities too
Her words have meaning
Persevere and stay true

Perhaps holding a banner
Marching in a parade
Or speaking for a club
Abby’s presence is made

Her words have rung out
In all of these places
Equality and justice for all
Regardless of the faces

But no matter how far
“She” has traveled around
I couldn’t possibly cover
All of “her” ground

So if you know places
That Abby should go
Please call them
Then tell me
So that I will know

For my purpose is true
And my longing’s to do
Great justice to Abby
And the Worcester Women’s History Project too.
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Thurs., Dec. 10, 4pm, Hagan Center, Assumption College**—

**Wed., Feb. 10, 5:30pm, Saxe Room, Worcester Public Library**—

**March 2010** “The Abolitionist Family of Worcester: Abby Kelley Foster, Stephen Foster and Alla Foster: a dramatic presentation of family letters” Day & Venue TBD

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**Our Dearest Abby**

*By Karen Folkes*

WWHP is thrilled to have the “Yours for Humanity—Abby” play slated for performance at the State House. The performer, Lynne McKenney Lydick, is tremendously passionate about Abby and the play. On stage she seems to channel the very spirit of Abby Kelley Foster. Her dedication through the years to WWHP has been inspiring to all who have worked with her.

Abby Kelley Foster and her unfailing spirit traveled to Boston and beyond many times. In May, 1838, The New England Anti-Slavery Society held its Convention with more than 500 people in attendance. Women had only recently been admitted after William Lloyd Garrison had helped pass a resolution. However, the motion had passed because the more conservative abolitionists had yet to arrive. Later these conservatives would attempt to reverse the decision. Abby was named to a working group charged with creating an abolitionist call to churches. Even though Abby was told it would be disreputable for her personally and the document they produced would be ‘unscriptural’, Abby held her ground and convinced them that she did belong. When the ministers lost the vote to discharge the committee and to reconsider the admission of women, many left the convention in protest. Abby went on to be one of the most successful and enthralling lecturers for the American Anti-Slavery Society, captivating audiences across the nation.

Decades later on December 20, 1873 (the 100th anniversary of the Boston Tea Party), Abby, still fighting and still working for her causes, along with Lucy Stone organized an American Woman Suffrage Association rally. Their suffrage slogan for the day was, “Taxation without Representation is Tyranny.” Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass joined the female speakers on the platform. It was a tremendous success, with attendance counted in the thousands.

Abby desperately wanted people to see that women’s rights and Negroes rights were one in the same—human rights. She was a tireless worker, organizer, fundraiser, writer and lecturer. As she told William Lloyd Garrison back in her early days, in terms of the ‘woman question’, the abolition movement would have to take “a decided stand for all truths, under the conviction that the whole are necessary to the permanent establishment of any single one.”

Throughout decades of being attacked sometimes in person, sometimes in the press, Abby’s bravery and faithfulness never wavered and it is truly inspiring!