

National Historic Landmarks Women's History Initiative



Progress Report
2011-2013

Cover Images

Left: Dra. Concha Meléndez Ramírez

Right: Casa Dra. Concha Meléndez Ramírez, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Designated a National Historic Landmark, 2013



Lyda Burton Conley and the Huron Indian Cemetery

A nomination for National Historic Landmark designation is being prepared and will, pending peer review, be presented to the Landmarks Committee in 2014.

Introduction

During the past four years, the National Historic Landmarks Program has engaged in a dramatic effort to extend its reach to reflect a full spectrum of people and events that participated in building the nation. While the more traditional subjects of prominent leaders, monumental architecture, and the military and its conflicts continue to be honored with additional listings, the Program also recognized many other aspects of the past.

Beginning in May 2012, a new Secretarial initiative focusing on women's history was introduced, joining two other Secretarial initiatives (the Latino American Heritage Initiative and the Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Initiative).

Taken together, these new initiatives have resulted in the designation of thirty-one new National Historic Landmarks, all of which reflect and tell complex stories regarding the diversity of the American experience. These thirty-one National Historic Landmarks represent 70.06 percent of the new properties presented to the Secretary of the Interior for designation as National Historic Landmarks since May 2011.

Women's stories can be found in diverse places, ranging from Camp Nelson, Kentucky (designated 2012) to which thousands of African American women fled with their families during the Civil War to the Harriet Beecher Stowe House, Connecticut (designated 2012), the site where Stowe played a crucial role in the women's rights movement and the battle to abolish polygamy (The Harriet Beecher Stowe House in Maine was designated more than fifty years ago in 1962 for its association with the writing and publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*).

The documentation, preservation, and protection of these important sites associated with women's history enriches and enhances understanding of our shared history as a nation.



Yaddo, New York,
Katrina Trask

Designated a National Historic Landmark, 2012 1

Telling All American Stories



Sewall-Belmont House,
Washington DC

Site of Telling All American
Stories, December, 2012

Designated a National Historic
Landmark, 1974

On December 10th and 11th, 2012, the National Park Service in-conjunction with the National Collaborative for Women's History Sites and the Sewall-Belmont House Museum brought together scholars of women's history from both within and without the National Park Service. This two-day event resulted in multiple recommendations, with the foremost of these being the creation of a marker program which would allow for the commemoration of sites which lack the historic integrity to qualify for National Historic Landmark designation.

Over the past eight months, National Historic Landmark staff have assessed how a program of this type can be created and maintained under existing legislation and staff are currently engaged in developing regulations and guidelines for a program of this type. Concerns regarding funding and staffing for such a program are paramount as the National Historic Landmark Program moves forward with this. Approval for this program would need to be given at the highest levels of the Department of the Interior.

Following this meeting, the National Collaborative for Women's History Sites was tasked with conducting a survey of scholars and preservationists to determine possible sites that may qualify for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and/or designation as National Historic Landmarks.

Because owner consent is required for any property to be listed in the National Register or designated as a National Historic Landmark, the compiled list can only be a study list at this time. However, staff from the National Historic Landmark Program are actively engaged in discussions with property owners of several sites that relate to topics that are known to be under-represented in the National Historic Landmarks Program (i.e. LGBTQ history and Asian American history). Negotiations can take some time and usually require at least a year. Consent, however, is only the preliminary first step in the nomination process.

2011-2012



Left: Meadowbrook Hall, Michigan
Designated a National Historic
Landmark, 2012
Matilda Dodge

Below: Humpback Bridge,
Covington, Virginia
Designated a National Historic
Landmark, 2012

Between 2011 and 2013, new initiatives have increased the number of stories the National Historic Landmarks Program tells about women's history.

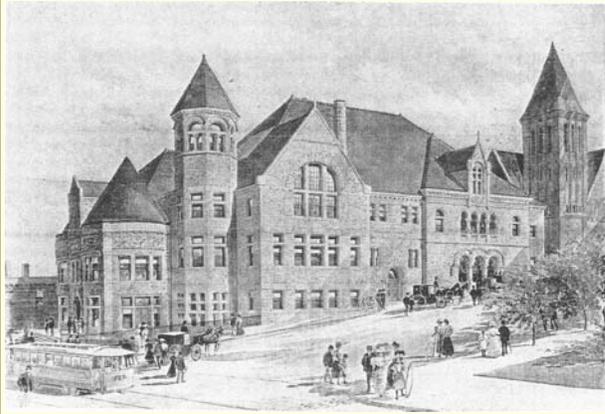
While some National Historic Landmarks such as Meadowbrook Hall (designated 2012) tell stories specifically related to women's history within the United States, most, such as the Humpback Bridge (designated 2012), cannot and do not fit into a specific category relating to any specific gender, race, or class within the American population overall. As a result, discussions about the percentages of National Historic Landmarks which tell stories relating to women's history may be misleading as many National Historic Landmarks cannot be easily categorized.

Further complicating this is the fact that no studies have been done that assess the existing 2,540 National Historic Landmarks by gender (or by race or ethnicity).



In Fall, 2013, the National Historic Landmark Program will begin a comprehensive assessment of all existing National Historic Landmarks in an attempt to determine where gaps exist in the program. Given the complexity and scale of this project, this assessment is estimated to take at least two years to complete.

Complex Stories, Complex Histories



Upper Left and Center: Braddock Carnegie Library, Braddock, Pennsylvania

Lower Left: Workers' Housing, ca. 1900 Braddock, Pennsylvania

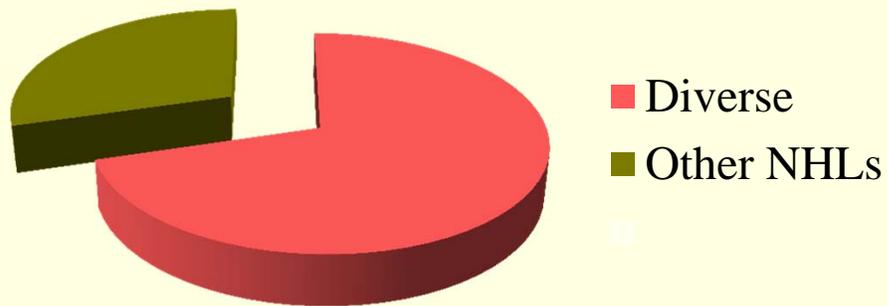
Funding the Braddock Carnegie Library (designated 2012) led Andrew Carnegie to develop a comprehensive plan to fund and promote the building of libraries across the United States. Ultimately, these libraries came to serve a diverse population throughout the country.

Although originally built to serve a white immigrant working-class population, the Braddock Carnegie Library serves a predominantly African American community today as the population of this small town has changed over time. Throughout its history, the Braddock Carnegie Library has been a center for this community and a place where women have played an important role.

Because the overwhelming majority of National Historic Landmarks are privately owned, the National Park Service cannot direct sites to interpret women's history. However, documentation of a site which includes a discussion of women's history can help ensure that women's stories are preserved.

2011-2012

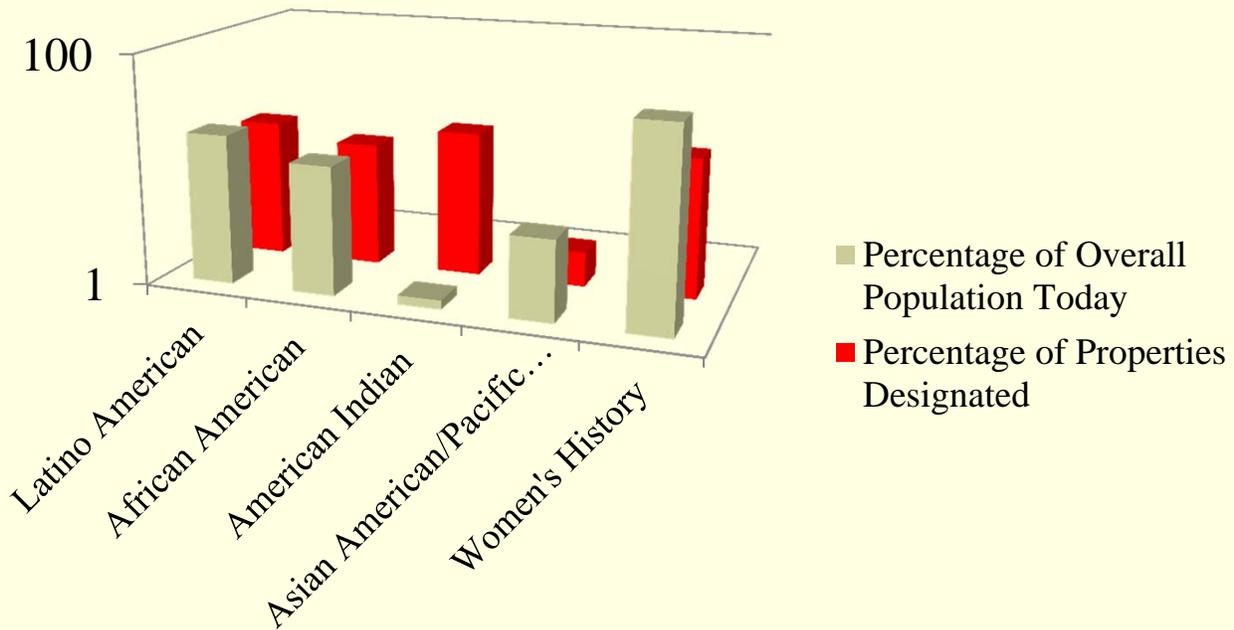
Percentage of Diverse Properties Designated as National Historic Landmarks



The number of nominations presented at each Landmarks Committee varies.

Over the last two years, a total of 51 properties were presented to the Secretary of the Interior for designation; 31 or 70.06 percent of all the properties presented told diverse stories.

2011-2012



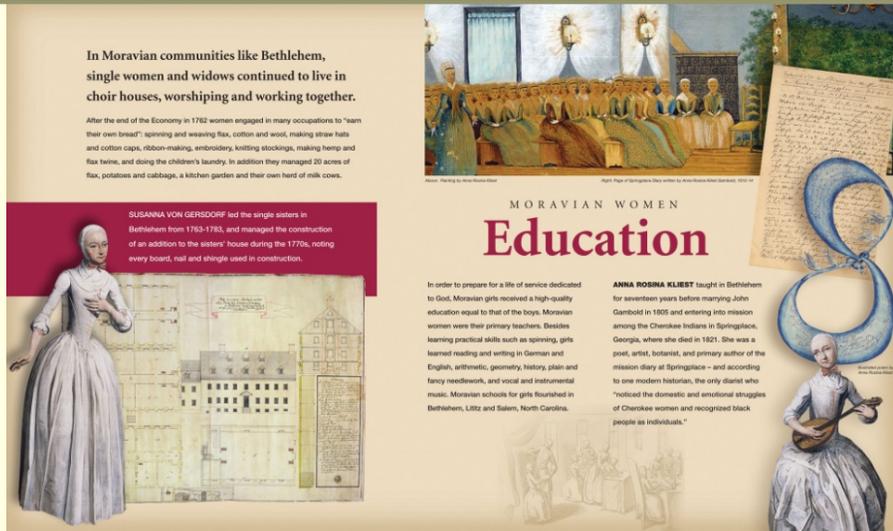
Group	Percentage of the American Population Today	Percentage of New NHLs Nominated Between 2011 and 2012
Latino American	16%	20%
African American	13%	12%
American Indian	2%	5%
Asian American	5%	2%
Women**	52%	30%

See the following page for a full discussion of these figures.

**Assessing percentages of sites relating to women's history is especially misleading as districts and almost all sites have, simply because of the ubiquity of women, stories associated with women's history. This percentage reflects specific stories that relate to women's history.

It should also be noted that many sites cannot be said to be associated with "men's history" as many sites defy simple categorization of this type.

Women's History Initiative



Since May 2011, the National Historic Landmarks has forwarded 9 sites that reflect and tell important stories about women's history in America or about the construction of gender roles in American culture.

Even before this event was held, the National Historic Landmarks Program worked to locate, research, and nominate properties relating to women's history.

Between 2011 and 2012, sites ranging from Yaddo to Historic Moravian Bethlehem were nominated and/or designated as National Historic Landmarks. Yaddo, often regarded as the nation's premier arts colony, was founded in part by the poet and philanthropist Katrina Trask. It has sponsored writers such as Gwendolyn Brooks, Sylvia Plath, Patricia Highsmith, and others. Historic Moravian Bethlehem sheds light on the complexity of gender roles both within this unique community and in eighteenth-century America as a whole.



Top: Image Courtesy of Moravian Archives

Below: Sister's House, Historic Moravian Bethlehem Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Moravian Bethlehem Historic District, Pennsylvania Designated a National Historic Landmark, 2012

Highlighted Property: American Latino Heritage Initiative



Casa Dra. Concha Meléndez Ramírez San Juan, Puerto Rico National Historic Landmark Designated 2013



Left: Dra. Concha Meléndez Ramírez
Right: Casa Dra. Concha Meléndez Ramírez, San Juan, Puerto Rico

The Casa Dra. Concha Meléndez Ramírez is nationally significant under NHL Criterion 1 for its association with major trends in Puerto Rican literature, in particular the legacy of the *Generación del Treinta* (Generation of 1930), a 1930s middle-class creole literary movement that, in response to American control over the island, shaped Puerto Rico's twentieth-century cultural identity.

This property is also significant under NHL Criterion 2 because it served for forty-three years as the residence and workspace of Dra. Concha Meléndez Ramírez (1895-1983), a prolific literary critic and one of the most prominent female voices in the *Generación del Treinta* and subsequent twentieth-century Puerto Rican literary criticism.

This property was presented to the

Landmarks Committee in November 2012 and recommended to the National Park System Advisory Board. The National Park System Advisory Board then recommended the property to the Secretary of the Interior in November 2012 and it was designated in February 2013.

The property is owned by the Puerto Rican government and the nomination is strongly supported by the Puerto Rican State Historic Preservation Office.

The nomination was written by Antonio Ramírez, a doctoral student in history at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and a past intern in the National Historic Landmarks Program. The American Latino Heritage Fund of the National Park Foundation provided funding for this nomination.

Highlighted Property: Women's History Initiative



Above: Lois Burnham Wilson
Right: Stepping Stones

Stepping Stones Town of Bedford, Village of Katonah, New York National Historic Landmark Designated 2012



Stepping Stones is nationally significant under NHL Criterion 1 for its association with Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Al-Anon, and Alateen, groups whose mission is to assist alcoholics and their families in the struggle for sobriety, and under NHL Criterion 2 for its association with Lois Burnham Wilson and William "Bill" Wilson, one of the co-founders of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Lois Wilson, with Anne Smith, was the co-founder of Al-Anon Family Groups, the self-help group for family members of alcoholics, and the founder of Alateen, a group for the children of alcoholics. Like AA, Al-Anon and Alateen have also grown to include an international membership with chapters in 115 countries.

This property was presented to the Landmarks Committee in November 2011 and recommended to the

National Park System Advisory Board. The National Park System Advisory Board reviewed this nomination and recommended it to the Secretary of the Interior who designated this site in October 2012.

The property is owned by the Stepping Stones Foundation and the nomination was strongly supported by the New York State Historic Preservation Office.

The nomination was written by Annah Perch, the Executive Director of the Stepping Stones Foundation, with assistance from the National Historic Landmarks Program.

Forthcoming



Left: Lydia Pinkham House, Massachusetts

A nomination for National Historic Landmark designation is being prepared for presentation at the Fall 2013 Landmarks Committee Meeting



Typically, it takes between 2 to 3 years for a property to be nominated and designated as a National Historic Landmark. Because the NHL Program is a grassroots program, owner consent is required for all nominations, even those sites being nominated under Secretarial initiatives. Obtaining owner consent can add up to a year to the time required to complete and process a nomination.

NHL staff are in negotiations with a variety of different property owners across the country. Property owners also generally hire their own consultants to write an NHL nomination. Although NHL Program resources are sharply limited, the Program's desire to initiate this project has led to staff writing some NHL nominations relating to women's history, such as the Lydia E. Pinkham House (Massachusetts) nomination and the Frances Perkins House (Maine) nomination (the house in Maine, as opposed to the Frances Perkins National Historic Landmark in Washington DC [Designated 1991], represents Perkins' overall career). This approach is, however, unsustainable in an era of limited budgetary resources. As a result, the NHL

Program is working to increase its outreach in an attempt to persuade property owners to consider locating funding for researching and writing nominations relating to women's history.

Through a cooperative agreement, the National Historic Landmark Program has provided some funding to the National Collaborative for Women's History sites. This funding will be used to write three National Historic Landmark nominations for sites associated with women's history. A Request for Proposals was released for the first of these nominations in July and these applications are currently being reviewed. The first site being nominated using these funds is the Marjorie Stoneman Douglas House in Florida. Other sites under consideration, pending owner approval, deal with Asian American history and LGBTQ history.

2011-2012



Mary Louise Curtis Bok was the visionary patron behind the creation of the Camden Amphitheatre in Camden, Maine



Camden Amphitheatre
Designated a National Historic Landmark, 2012

Between 2011 and 2013, new initiatives have dramatically increased the diverse stories which new National Historic Landmarks tell about the American experience. New theme studies will help ensure that the National Historic Landmarks Program will continue to work with diverse communities to locate, research, and nominate sites that tell stories important to all Americans.

The National Historic Landmarks Program also seeks to ensure that existing National Historic Landmarks accurately reflect the complex stories associated with our diverse history. To this end, the Program also seeks to use its new database to track and better understand the ways in which existing National Historic Landmarks already tell diverse stories.

Complex Stories, Complex Histories

The Ludlow Tent Colony Site (designated 2009) reflects the complex history associated with one of the most important strikes in American history. The site illustrates not only the strike but also the ways in which the diverse ethnic groups interacted with one another.

Although the striking miners were men, their families joined them at this tent colony. Archeological studies conducted here have provided insight into gender roles in these diverse communities.

Image (above): Striker at the tent colony after the fire and violent deaths of numerous strikers and their family members, 1914

Image (below): Cover depicting the strike, *The Masses*, June 1914, by J. F. Sloan



National Historic Landmarks Heritage Initiatives



Information regarding the National Historic Landmarks Program can be found here: <http://www.nps.gov/history/nhl/>

Information regarding Latino American Heritage Initiative Projects can be found here: <http://www.nps.gov/latino/latinolinks.html>

Information regarding Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Initiative Projects can be found here: <http://www.nps.gov/aapi>