

Virginia Women's Legacies

From its start as a colony, Virginia's women have left their mark. Their legacies to us began with survival in the wilderness and continue with today's achievements.

The first marriage in English continental America took place in 1608 in Jamestown when lady's maid **Anne Burrass**, 14, wed carpenter John Laydon, 24. They would have four daughters and prosper in the new colony.

Lured by cheap and plentiful land, German-born **Anna Maria Merckle Hite** with husband Jost moved to the northern Shenandoah Valley in 1732. That same year, Quaker **Ann Robinson Hollingsworth** and her husband Abraham began settling what is now Winchester. Migration to Virginia's Great Valley was encouraged to create a barrier between the Indians and the English settled to the east.

Captured by Indians in 1755, **Mary Draper Ingles** walked hundreds of miles through wilderness from the Ohio Valley to her home in what is now Blacksburg.

Virginia's first chartered woman's college was Hollins in Roanoke in 1842. The state's first female college president, **Matty Cocke**, took the helm 59 years later in 1901.

Ida Stover, mother of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, was born in Augusta County, 1862.

First American-born black woman to obtain a medical degree was **Rebecca Lee** in 1864. A Richmond native, she graduated from the New England Woman's Medical College in Boston.

Initial meetings of the Virginia Equal Suffrage League (ESL) took place in 1909 at the Richmond home of **Anne Clay Crenshaw**. After women won the vote in 1920, the ESL became the Virginia League of Women Voters.

Of the five Albemarle County **Langhorne** sisters, who included Lady Nancy Astor, **Irene** was the dazzling beauty. She married Charles Dana Gibson in 1895 and became famous as *The Gibson Girl* in his drawings which influenced a change to less constricting women's garments.

The nation's first state appointed home demonstration agent was **Ella G. Agnew** of Richmond. In 1910, she established model programs in Nottaway and Halifax Counties.

Internationally recognized black poet, **Anne Spencer** of Henry County, established her well-known Lynchburg home in the early 1900s.

Richmond's first public library opened in 1924 in a Victorian mansion. A \$500,000 bequest in 1925 from **Sally May Dooley** funded the (James H.) Dooley Memorial Library building.

Virginia Tech's first female engineering graduate was **Ruth Louise Terrett Earle** in 1925. Two years earlier, she had helped create and then captained Tech's first women's basketball team.

The first American woman to win the Nobel Prize for literature was **Pearl S. Buck** in 1938. She graduated from Lynchburg's Randolph-Macon Woman's College in 1914.

Lillian Baumbach Jacobs of Arlington made international news in 1951, at age 21, as the first woman

licensed as a master plumber. A local paper dubbed her "the pretty plumber."

Supervisor of the WWII Army Nurse Corps and the first woman to hold a permanent commission in the U.S. Army (1947) was **Florence Aby Blanchfield** from Warren County.

In 1958 **Mavis Cobb** became the first Fairfax woman to practice law full-time. She lived in what is now the City of Fairfax.

The first female solo artist elected to the Country Music Hall of Fame (1973) was Winchester's **Patsy Cline**.

Virginia's first black woman legislator, **Yvonne Bond Miller** of Norfolk, was elected to the House in 1984, the Senate in 1988.

Widely known and respected, **Dorothy Height**, born in Richmond in 1912, served four decades (1957-1997) as president of the National Council of Negro Women.

Leslie L. Byrne, former Fairfax local League of Women Voters president, became Virginia's first U.S. Congresswoman (1993).

Three Virginia jurisdictions have had female sheriffs: Richmond, **Michelle B. Mitchell** (1994); Charlottesville, **Cornelia D. Johnson** (1999); Arlington, **Beth Arthur** (2000).

The first woman named an honorary Virginian was former British Prime Minister **Margaret Thatcher** in 1998.

In 1999, **June Boyle**, first Fairfax female homicide detective, became the first woman to win Virginia's "Top Homicide Investigator of the Year" award.

Directed by **JoAnn Falletta**, the Virginia Symphony's debut at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall in January 2000 was well received. The Norfolk-area based ensemble is unusually youthful and over half of its personnel are women

In the 2000 General Assembly session, Senator **Mary Margaret Whipple** of Arlington became chairman of the Senate Democratic Caucus, the first woman to hold a senate leadership position. **Frances P. Datig** of Henrico was the first woman elected House Sergeant-at-Arms. Duties include carrying the ceremonial mace to begin the day's proceedings.

The first black woman elected to the Alexandria City Council was **Joyce Woodson** in May, 2000.

Each of us can make a difference.



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The League of Women Voters of Virginia

Presents

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