

# Women of the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area



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## Historical Overview

This curriculum packet is intended to provide fourth-grade educators with resources and classroom activities on women's history in northwest Alabama. The packet serves to make the connection between Alabama Course of Study requirements and local history.

The Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area (MSNHA) was designated by Congress in 2009 and consists of the six counties that historically were connected to the over-forty-mile stretch of the Tennessee River known as the Muscle Shoals. Those counties are Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Morgan, Franklin, and Colbert.

This area of the river has been home to Native Americans for over 12,000 years. Native people first moved through the area as nomadic hunters, staying in rock shelters during their time in the valley. As communities became more settled and began to practice agriculture, they built their own structures along the river. The mussels of the Tennessee River provided a ready and stable food source; huge piles of shells, known as shell middens, dotted the edge of the river. During the historic period, the Cherokee and Chickasaw both called the region home. Both tribes are historically matriarchal societies, showing high respect towards women and looking to women for leadership.<sup>1</sup>

While European explorers and traders had traveled through the area as early as the sixteenth century, it wasn't until the late eighteenth century that white settlers from the United States began to come to the area in substantial numbers. Initially, they squatted illegally on native lands. Beginning in the early nineteenth century, a series of treaties eroded native-controlled areas. This time in Alabama's history is known as the Frontier Period. "Frontier" in this context refers to the settled or unsettled land not yet surveyed and declared a state by the federal government. While men often traveled to the area initially on their own to trade, when they came to settle, women and children came with them. One of the main domestic responsibilities women had during the frontier period was cooking. Until Cedar Creek Furnace, located near Russellville, Alabama, opened in 1818, women cooked on large rock fireplaces.<sup>2</sup> When families moved, they may have taken some of the best rocks with them. They would have also brought pots and pans for cooking with them, but they may have had problems replacing them in frontier Alabama. After the furnace began smelting iron, women had access to locally produced skillets with three legs often called, "spiders."<sup>3</sup> Along with skillets, women now were

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<sup>1</sup>Cherokee Nation News, "Cherokee Nation appoints new Supreme Court Justice." Dec. 14, 2012. [https://cherokee.org/News/Stories/Archive\\_2012/33296](https://cherokee.org/News/Stories/Archive_2012/33296). Accessed Jan. 30, 2019. Andrea Bahner, "Matriarchs in a Business World." Accessed Jan. 30, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> James Norwood, "An Early History of the Bear Creek Watershed Area of Northwest Alabama," (*Bear Creek Development Authority*, 1971), 15.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

able to acquire iron utensils such as forks, ladles, and gridirons locally.<sup>4</sup> Journalist Anne Royall wrote a series of letters to her lawyer documenting the life of frontier Alabama. These letters would be published later titled, “Letters from Alabama on Various Subjects.” Royall describes everyday occurrences, weather, and interactions with people while she lived in Moulton, Alabama. One particular passage within one of her letters seems to perfectly summarize the beauty of the landscape of the Shoals area.<sup>5</sup>

But what struck me with most wonder was, that I always appeared to occupy the highest ground; and, all from that point, seemed to descend; and when I gained the extreme boundary of view from a given point, it was the same thing as before—this appeared the highest; that which I had left, the lowest. A warm hospitality seemed to breathe among the trees: they have something cheering in their aspect. They do not terrify by their gigantic looks—they open on all sides, throws a shining lustre [sic] over them. How unlike the cold, dreary, hard frozen hills of Monroe, or in fact anything in our country.

This quote from her letters helps researchers understand the landscape during the early nineteenth-century. Letters and descriptions like Royall’s led to an influx of people to Alabama coming to see the beautiful land. By 1819, when Alabama became state, Alabama Fever was in full swing, with settlers and the enslaved people many brought with them pouring into the state.

As the population grew, settlers took more and more land from Native Americans. Across the then-northwest and southwest, tensions escalated even as tribes sought to adapt to the new ways of life settlers brought with them. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 resulted in the organized removal of those Native Americans to Indian Territory, now Oklahoma. Locally, one of the Cherokee Trail of Tears routes, which used both the Tennessee River and the Tuscumbia, Courtland & Decatur Railroad to move people, passed right through the MSNHA. Thousands of men, women, and children were displaced during the Trail of Tears, and many died on route to the west. Other tribes, including the Chickasaw, Creek and Choctaw also were also forced to leave Alabama and our western neighbor, Mississippi. Mary Hipp, a Native American from Lauderdale County was one of the women affected by President Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal Act. Hipp belonged to the Yuchi tribe, which referred to the Tennessee River as the “singing river.” Hipp recalled having dreams where her grandmother called her back to the river.

During the antebellum period in Alabama, which begins with Alabama’s statehood and ends with the Civil War, women’s lives in the MSNHA were impacted by their race and class. The small percentage of white women who lived on plantations helped run their homes and the plantations, as well as care for the children. Sometimes, when their husbands traveled, women oversaw the operation of the plantation. Plantation mistresses were often tasked with overseeing feeding their families as well as the enslaved people the family owned. Some would give weekly rations for the enslaved people to cook on their own, while others would oversee the making and delivering the food.<sup>6</sup> Enslaved women cooked, cleaned, planted and harvested crops, and cared

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Anne Royall, *Letters from Alabama on Various Subjects* (Washington, D.C.: 1830), 55.

<sup>6</sup>Norwood, 100.

for children – among other duties. Yeoman farming women, whose families farmed on their own without slaves, worked in the gardens and fields, as well as did the household duties of cooking and managing a home. As the period progressed, debates over the institution of slavery grew more intense. Southern women, like their northern counterparts, participated in the debate. For example, in 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe published, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a novel depicting the horrors of slavery. Florence, Alabama resident and novelist Caroline Lee Hentz published *The Northern Planter's Bride* in 1854 in response. In the novel, Hentz's main character Eulalina starts as an abolitionist but changes her mind about slavery when she moves to her husband's plantation. These two novels help to show just how divided the country was as the Civil War drew nearer.

During the Civil War, fighting erupted across the south. While there were few large battles in the MSNHA, there were many skirmishes between Union and Confederate forces. To make things more challenging for the other side, both armies burned and destroyed buildings, bridges, supplies, and more. Women, no matter their race or class, faced many serious issues, including food shortages, violence, and destruction of property. Many women were left on their own to care for their families when their husbands enlisted as soldiers. Women had to manage family farms and plantations, and often had to do so with few resources. Southern white plantation-owning-women often stayed with the plantation and kept it running in the absence of their husbands. When the President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863, many enslaved people across the south left plantations, meaning no one was left to plant and harvest crops. Many women helped nurse wounded men back to health in multiple historic buildings that served as war hospitals, including Pope's Tavern in Florence. Some African American women followed their husbands on the Union side to the front lines. Those women found jobs doing the laundry or cooking for the troops.<sup>7</sup> Occasionally, southern women would act as spies. Sometimes they would invite enemy soldiers to dinner at their home and gain secrets to report back to the other army. Sallie Independence Foster, a girl who lived in what is now Rogers Hall at UNA, wrote about her life during the Civil War and the movement of troops seen from her window. Another young girl who witnessed the war, Mary Coffee O'Neal Campbell shared her memories in her memoir. Campbell writes that she clearly remembered a speech given by Alabama politician William Lowndes Yancey on secession in downtown Florence. Campbell was eight years old when the war broke out.

After the Civil War, southern women had increased access to higher education. The State Normal School at Florence (now the University of North Alabama) became a co-educational school in 1874. The first co-ed class of students graduated three years later, with three of the four graduates being female.<sup>8</sup> The State Normal School trained women to join the workforce as teachers. Florence also had a female college, Florence Synodical Female College, which operated from 1847 to 1895. This was a school where young women learned social skills, language, and the arts.<sup>9</sup> In Limestone County, the Athens Female Institute became the Athens

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<sup>7</sup> Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family, From Slavery to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), 50.

<sup>8</sup> Alex Lindley, "University of North Alabama (UNA)."

<sup>9</sup> Kayla Scott, "Florence Synodical Female College."

Female College in 1889. It remained a women's college until 1931 when men began attending school there as well. Because of the expansion of public education after the war, it became normalized for white women to have an education regardless of class in the post war era. Mary Coffee O'Neal Campbell wrote in her memoirs about her education at Florence Synodical College. Campbell remembers the impact her teachers had on her and the lesson topics such as geography, music, art, and Christianity during her time at the college. Another female college in the MSNHA at the time was Athens Female Academy (now Athens State University). Athens Female Academy opened in 1822, and the goal was "to provide elementary, secondary, and college-level instruction to girls and young women."<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, African American women's access to these schools was prohibited because of segregation laws. However, there were many more educational opportunities available for African American women than there had been before the Civil War, when teaching African Americans to read and write was illegal. African American children attended segregated schools across the MSNHA. In Limestone County, Mary Fletcher Wells opened the Trinity School for African American children in 1865.

Industrialization came to the region in the 1880s and 1890s. The mills and textile industry gave jobs to hundreds of people in Florence and Sheffield, Alabama. The river allowed both cities to industrialize. As more products were shipped using the Tennessee River and the railroads, other towns in the MSNHA also saw industrial development. The railroad that connected Tusculumbia, Courtland, and Decatur gave factories and mills the ability to ship more goods. The largest mills in Decatur were the Cooper Wells Mills, Connecticut Fabric Mills, and Alabama Hosiery Mills. In the twentieth century, more industry came to the region when Wilson Dam and Wheeler Dam began generating electricity. The new industries and the problems they posed led to legal reforms. Women were behind many of these efforts. Their work during the Progressive Era, which began in the 1890s and stretched into the twentieth century, resulted in the successful passage of laws restricting child labor, including the 1938 Fair Labor and Standards Act. This law stated that children could no longer work in the factories. Even before this law was passed, women in Florence had worked hard to help educate the children of factory workers. Lulie Jones, who was instrumental in the founding of the Florence Free Kindergarten, believed that giving children access to education was one of the biggest steps toward keeping children out of harsh labor conditions. Jones' family owned mills in Florence and so she knew first-hand the problems that poverty and a lack of education created for children.

It was not until 1920 that the Nineteenth Amendment was passed, giving women the right to vote. All men had earned the right to vote fifty years earlier with the passing of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870. Before 1870, only white men could vote. Women from all over the world participated in rallies and other means of peaceful protest to bring attention to the issue of women's suffrage. Women were often seen by men as incapable of having a clear enough mind to vote. Ella Hildreth worked alongside other suffragists to secure the vote for women around the country. Hildreth settled in Decatur, Alabama after spending the early part of her life in

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<sup>10</sup> Burkhardt, Robert, Sean Busick, Ronald Fritze, Sara Love, "Athens State University" in *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, Last modified December 18, 2017.

Colorado. Hildreth worked alongside famous suffragist Susan B. Anthony for equal voting rights.

While some women marched for voting rights, others were marching to prohibit the sale of alcohol. The temperance movement was another part of the Progressive Era. Some women across the United States saw their husbands wasting money on alcohol in saloons and becoming violent and acting immoral. Abstinence groups began forming in Florence and the surrounding cities. The most well-known national organization group was the Women's Christian Temperance Union, chapters of which emerged out of churches.<sup>11</sup> The influence of the church fueled the movement's beliefs that alcohol led to bad morals and behavior. Women in the Shoals began fighting to make alcohol illegal 1869. In 1901, women were able to help limit the sale of alcohol to only two places in Florence.<sup>12</sup> The two locations were near downtown Florence and in East Florence. On the national level, it wouldn't be until 1917, with the passage of the Volstead Act that prohibition became the law of the land. It remained in effect until 1933 with the passage of the Twenty-first Amendment.

Even after women secured the right to vote and had better access to higher education, they still struggled to find true equality with men. By the mid-twentieth century, women across the country and in the MSNHA had more opportunities to work outside of the home, but the jobs they held as teachers, secretaries, and nurses paid less than opportunities open to men. When women married and/or became pregnant, many were forced out of their jobs. However, some women in the MSNHA pushed the envelope by operating their own businesses. One example of these businesses is Bessie Rapier Foster's hairdresser shop and her entertainment venue for other African-Americans in Florence, Alabama. Some women in the MSNHA operated sewing businesses out of their homes. Sam and Rebecca Phillips, of Sheffield, Alabama, opened a radio station entirely ran by women in Memphis, Tennessee. As a result, women were able to learn how to work in the radio business without needing to attend the broadcasting academy that Sam Phillips attended.

As the twentieth century progressed, tensions over race grew. In Alabama, this was especially true. In 1955, an Alabama woman, Rosa Parks, helped to launch the Civil Rights Movement. Both black and white women would play an important role in the movement. Throughout Alabama women such as Rosa Parks paved the way for other women to find their voices within the movement. Parks famously took a stand against segregation by refusing to give up her bus seat in December 1955. While men often assumed leadership roles in the movement, women were arrested and abused alongside their male friends and family.<sup>13</sup> One big step in the direction toward inclusion of opportunity for women is Title VII in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This act declared discrimination based on race, color, religion, gender, or national origin.<sup>14</sup> Title VII created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in 1965. During the Civil Rights Movement, African-American women often had different roles than men. Women fed

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<sup>11</sup> Lee Freeman.

<sup>12</sup> Lee Freeman.

<sup>13</sup> Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 275-299.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, 301.



protesters and leaders who came to town and volunteered for the protests, while continuing to hold their jobs. Many of the female Civil Rights activists worked in education. During integration, Colbert County teacher Louise Hyler was transferred from the African American Trenholm High School to the white R.E. Thompson in 1966. Hyler was one of the first African-American teachers to integrate into teaching at a white school. Although some parents and students created problems for Hyler, she happily taught at R.E. Thompson for thirty-six-years.

In the 1930s (well before the organized civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s), Ruth Clement Bond, wife of a Tennessee Valley Authority manager in Colbert County, used her quilt designs to show her civil rights support. The best example of her activism support is in her design, “Black Power.”



Ruth Clement Bond (designer) and Rosa Marie Thomas (maker)  
*“Black Power,”* 1934.

Image property of Museum of Arts and Design

The history of women in the United States has been a history of struggle, of opportunity, and of successes. Here in the MSNHA women have contributed in many ways to the development of our culture and heritage. The Shoals has been home to educators, actors, nurses, astronauts, businesswomen, and women who worked in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Sometimes defying social norms while at other times upholding them, the stories of the women of the MSNHA are certainly fascinating! Let’s explore some of the women who have contributed to our history.



## Curriculum Standards

**Objective 4.10.1:** Identify major advances in education in Alabama from 1870 to 1920.

**Objective 4.10.2:** Explain developments that lead to populism and to the revision of voting rights in Alabama.

**Objective 4.10.2 Additional:** Identifying Alabamians who made contributions in the fields of science, education, the arts, the military, politics, and business during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



Decatur native Mae Jemison on board the Spacelab. Image courtesy of NASA

## Biographies of Notable Women of the MSNHA

### Colbert

#### **Ruth Clement Bond (1904–2005)**

Ruth Clement Bond was born in Kentucky in 1904. Bond received bachelors and master's degrees in English literature from Northwestern University and afterward was the head of the English department at Kentucky State College. She moved to the MSNHA in 1934 with her husband, whose job was overseeing the African-American workers who were helping to build Wheeler Dam.<sup>15</sup> Her quilting project started as a way to inspire other women in the community to beautify their homes through crafts. Bond created her patterns using scraps of colored fabric and avoided the traditional style of floral and geometric shapes.<sup>16</sup> The wives of the African-Americans working for TVA sewed Bond's designs onto the quilts.<sup>17</sup> Some of Bond's quilt designs had political messages, such as the 1934 quilt "Black Power."

#### **Helen Keller (1880-1968)**

Helen Keller was a deaf and blind woman who defied the odds to become an activist, public speaker, and author. Born in Tuscumbia, Alabama, Keller contracted an illness at nineteen months that left her deaf and blind. Anne Sullivan came to Alabama to teach Helen when Helen was seven. Sullivan encouraged Keller to attend Perkins School for the Blind located in Boston, Massachusetts, which she began attending in 1888. By 1892, Keller and Sullivan left Perkins and were thinking about college. In 1898, Keller started at the Cambridge School for Young Ladies in preparation for her college years. Keller began attending Radcliffe College, Harvard's women college in 1900, graduating cum laude in 1904. Keller, being a pacifist, opposed both world wars. She joined the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) in 1924, giving her a platform to begin implementing change.<sup>18</sup> Keller traveled around the United States advocating for those with vision problems.<sup>19</sup> After success in the United States, Keller traveled internationally advocating for disability rights. Along with a team of other advocates such as Jane Addams, Keller helped found the American Civil Liberties Union in 1920. Keller became a member of the Socialist Party in 1909.<sup>20</sup> She began identifying as a socialist after working with people with disabilities. Keller saw how the ideals of socialism could positively impact the lives of disabled persons.<sup>21</sup> Keller passed away on June 1, 1968 in Easton, Connecticut. Keller's ashes reside next to Sullivan's in the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. In 1968, a biographical film "The Miracle Worker," which documented Keller's life, was released. In the United States Capital in Washington D.C., there is a statue of Keller representing the state of Alabama. The statue was

<sup>15</sup>Margalit Fox, "Ruth Clement Bond, 101, Quilter and Civic Leader, Is Dead"

<sup>16</sup>Vizcarrondo-Laboy, Angelik. "Fabric of Change: The Quilt Art of Ruth Clement Bond- The Museum of Art and Design (MAD)."

<sup>17</sup>"TVA-The TVA Quilt."

<sup>18</sup>"Helen Keller Biography- American Federation for the Blind."

<sup>19</sup>"What You Don't Know About Helen Keller- ACLU of Montana."

<sup>20</sup>"The Socialist Legacy of Helen Keller."

<sup>21</sup>Keller, Helen. "How I Became a Socialist." *Monthly Review: An Independent Socialist Magazine* 54 (4): 45, 2002.

created by Edward Hlavka. The statue shows Keller as a child with the water pump where she learned the word associated with water. Keller's statue is the only statue depicting a child as well as a person with disabilities. The statue was donated to the statuary hall in 2009.

### **Nina Leftwich (1881-1968)**

Nina Leftwich was born in Sheffield, Alabama, on November 16, 1881. Leftwich attended the University of Alabama and George Peabody College, receiving her master's degree in 1929. Leftwich taught at Coffee High School, Florence State Teachers College, and Howard College. Leftwich was also a member of the Tennessee Valley Historical Society. Leftwich wrote "Two Hundred Years at Muscle Shoals: Being an Authentic History of Colbert County 1700-1900" in 1935. She passed away March 1, 1968.<sup>22</sup>

### **Earline Bowling McClanahan (1925-2019)**

Earline McClanahan was a successful businesswoman in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. Bowling was born in 1925 and devoted her life to fashion and retail. In 1965, McClanahan and her husband opened the Village Shoppe, Inc. in Muscle Shoals. The McClanahans branched out and opened seven stores in Alabama and South Carolina. The city of Muscle Shoals declared September 8, 2015, "James and Earline McClanahan Day" and she was presented a proclamation recognizing fifty years of retail business. A staple of the business community, McClanahan was approached by members of the community for advice and counsel. McClanahan passed away February 24, 2019.<sup>23</sup>

### **Rebecca "Becky" Phillips (1925-2012)**

Rebecca Phillips was born in Sheffield, Alabama in 1925. Phillips was the wife of Sam Phillips, founder of Sun Records in Memphis, Tennessee. In October of 1955, the couple founded the woman-operated radio station WHER in Memphis. Rebecca Phillips and her female co-workers ran every part of the station.<sup>24</sup> Women handling everything all aspects of the station from interviews and spinning the disks to reading the daily news and weather reports was an unheard-of concept in radio at the time. Women were not allowed to go to broadcasting academies, so Sam Phillips opened the studio so that other women might be afforded others the opportunity that his wife had. Sam Phillips opened Big River Broadcasting in 1973 and left it to Rebecca when he passed away in 2003. Rebecca Phillips ran the station until her passing in 2012, leaving Big River Broadcasting to her family.<sup>25</sup>

### **Ella Winston Henry Thornton (1840-1904)**

Ella Winston inherited the Belle Mont estate in Tuscumbia, Alabama from her parents, Isaac and Catherine Winston, who had purchased the property in 1833. Ella Winston was married twice. Both of her husbands were named Gustavus. She married Col. Gustavus A. Henry on Oct 25,

<sup>22</sup> "Alabama Authors- Blog Archive- Leftwich, Nina, 1881-1968."

<sup>23</sup> "Earline Bowling McClanahan-Obituaries-timesdaily.com."

<sup>24</sup> Natalie Chanin, "The Heart: Becky Burns Phillips."

<sup>25</sup> Peter Guralnick, "Rebecca Burns Phillips."

1866, and Dr. Gustavus B. Thornton on April 14, 1887. Ella Winston did not have any children of her own. However, when her sister Catherine “Kate” Winston Burt passed away, Thornton raised her niece and nephew. She died in Memphis, Tennessee, on July 23, 1904.<sup>26</sup>

### **Franklin**

#### **Chamintney Thomas (1899-1979)**

Chamintney "Mittie" Stovall Thomas was born in St. Clair County, Alabama, in 1899. She was a gifted musician, educator, and author who devoted her life to helping others. Thomas published a historical novel, “Hear the Lambs a-Cryin,” a collection of oral histories conducted in African American communities during the Great Depression. Thomas worked with churches for most of her life and established ten libraries in churches in the Russellville area. She helped establish missions that created churches in underprivileged neighborhoods.<sup>27</sup> Thomas was named "Woman of the Year" by Delta Kappa Gamma and the Pilot Club of Russellville in 1957, "Woman of Achievement" by the Russellville Business and Professional Women's Club in 1967, and "Citizen of the Year" by the Russellville Junior Chamber of Commerce in 1975. She passed away in 1979 in Russellville, Alabama.

### **Lauderdale**

#### **Eliza Coffee (1879- 1904)**

Born August 18, 1879, Elizabeth Coffee was an important member of the Florence, Alabama community. She was the granddaughter of General John Coffee, who served in the War of 1812 alongside his friend President Andrew Jackson. Coffee was a land surveyor and bought the land where Florence sits today along with other investors such as President Jackson, future-Governor Thomas Bibb, and future associate justice of the United States Supreme Court John McKinley.<sup>28</sup> Eliza Coffee graduated from Florence Synodical School.<sup>29</sup> She taught Sunday school at First Presbyterian Church, and also served as a town historian. Coffee struggled with ill health for most of her life. The town newspaper, “The Florence Gazette,” even noted her illness when she was seven years old. Eliza Coffee passed away at the age of twenty-five. When the city of Florence wanted to open a hospital, Eliza Coffee’s mother, Camilla Coffee, donated the land the hospital would be built on. Along with the donation, Camilla Coffee asked that the hospital be named after her daughter. The Eliza Coffee Memorial Hospital opened on August 9, 1919, and remained open until December 6, 2018.<sup>30</sup>

#### **Bessie Rapier Foster (1882-1963)**

Granddaughter of free African-American barber of Florence, Alabama, John H. Rapier Sr., Bessie Rapier Foster is believed to be Florence’s first African-American businesswoman. Following in the footsteps of her grandfather, Foster was a hairdresser. In 1916, she also opened

<sup>26</sup> Belle Mont Mansion staff.

<sup>27</sup> “Alabama’s Women Hall of Fame- Chamintney Stovall Thomas

<sup>28</sup> Kayla Scott, “Alexander Donelson Coffee.”

<sup>29</sup> William McDonald, “Hospital’s Name Tribute to Coffee,” in *Times Daily*, July 6, 2000.

<sup>30</sup> William McDonald, “Coffee was Benefactor Many Times,” *Times Daily* July, 27, 2000.

the Pastime Theater for Negroes on Sweetwater Avenue. By 1960, she was the owner of the Improved Pool Room in Florence. Married four times, Bessie had four daughters, two of whom were adopted. A convert from the African Methodist Episcopal Church to Roman Catholicism, Foster was instrumental in the founding of Blessed Martin De Porres Catholic Mission on West College Street in Florence in the late 1940s. The community valued her industry, thrift, entrepreneurial spirit, and generosity. She died in 1963 and is buried in the Florence City Cemetery next to her second husband.<sup>31</sup>

### **Sallie Independence Foster (1848- 1897)**

Sallie Independence Foster was born on October 28, 1848, in Nashville, Tennessee, and moved to Florence, Alabama with her family when she was eight years old. Her first diary entry begins in June of 1861, when Foster was twelve years old. When the Civil War came through north Alabama, Foster wrote of the movement of both Confederate and Union troops around Florence.<sup>32</sup> Now within Florence's Sannoner Historical District, then Courtview, today Rogers Hall, is home to UNA's Office the Alumni Relations. Foster graduated from Florence Synodical in 1867.<sup>33</sup> Foster married Sterling McDonald on February 9, 1870. She passed away December 2, 1897.<sup>34</sup>

### **Caroline Lee Hentz (1800-1856)**

Caroline Lee Whiting Hentz was born July 1, 1800 in Lancaster, Massachusetts. She married French educator and entomologist Prof. Nicholas Marcellus Hentz on September 30, 1824. Caroline Hentz began writing novels, short stories and plays after the two married. Hentz published a pro-slavery book, "The Northern Planter's Bride," in 1854 in response to Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 anti-slavery work, "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Hentz also wrote a novel, "Love After Marriage" in 1857 and a play called "De Lara," or "The Moorish Bride: A Tragedy, in Five Acts" in 1843. Between 1834 and 1844, Caroline and Marcellus Hentz operated Locust Dell Academy, a school for girls in Florence, Alabama. Today, Willingham Hall on the University of North Alabama campus stands on the location of the Hentz' school. After the success of the Locust Dell Academy in Florence, the Hentzes opened multiple schools for young girls throughout Alabama and one in Georgia.<sup>35</sup> Hentz and her husband moved to Florida, where Caroline Hentz became sick from pneumonia and died on February 11, 1856.<sup>36</sup>

### **Mary Hipp (aka Te-lah-nay) (?-?)**

Mary Hipp was a Yuchi tribe woman who was sent from Lauderdale County to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) in the late 1830s during Indian Removal along with her sister and grandmother. Te-lah-nay means "woman with dancing eyes" in the Yuchi tribal language. After spending some time in Indian Territory, Te-lah-nay walked back to Florence, Alabama, a journey which took approximately two years. During her trip, Te-lah-nay encountered both dangerous animals and

<sup>31</sup> Freeman.

<sup>32</sup> Scott, Kayla. "Courtview and the Foster Family."

<sup>33</sup> Kayla Scott, "Florence Synodical Female College."

<sup>34</sup> Sallie Independence Foster Collection, University of North Alabama Archives and Special Collections

<sup>35</sup> Ron Rindo, "Caroline Lee Hentz."

<sup>36</sup> Freeman.



welcoming families that took her in, such as the Johnson family in Arkansas. While in the Arkansas-Tennessee border area, Te-lah-nay broke her leg in two places, causing her trip to be delayed months until she recovered. She met Johnathan Hipp, who would become her husband, in Arkansas on her way back to the MSNHA. Hipp was one of the people who helped care for Te-lah-nay while her leg healed. Te-lah-nay and Hipp made it back to the “river that sings” and married along the bank of the river.<sup>37</sup> Her great-great grandson Tom Hendrix built a memorial wall in her honor and wrote “If the Legends Fade,” a book based on her journey back to the Shoals. Hendrix worked on the memorial for over thirty years, until his death in 2017.<sup>38</sup> The wall is the largest un-mortared stone wall in the United States and the largest memorial to a Native American Woman.

### **Ellen Dorrit Hoffleit (1907-2007)**

The daughter of German immigrants, Ellen Hoffleit was born at her family’s farm in Lauderdale County. Due to the family farm not being successful, the family relocated to New Castle, Pennsylvania.<sup>39</sup> Eventually, Hoffleit moved to Boston with her mother and brother so her brother could attend Harvard. From an early age, Hoffleit was fascinated by the stars. This led to her first degree in mathematics from Radcliffe College, which Hoffleit received in 1928. She graduated from Radcliff in 1932 with a master’s degree in astronomy, researching light curves of meteor showers for her thesis.<sup>40</sup> Hoffleit was said to work “at least 40 hours per week on whatever the current boss thought she should be doing, and another 20 or so on other astronomical research that interested her.”<sup>41</sup> Hoffleit’s professors and bosses urged her to pursue a Ph.D. Hoffleit completed her doctorate in 1938 at Radcliffe and stayed on at Harvard as a fellow until 1956. She went on to work at Yale while also serving as director for Maria Mitchell Observatory on Nantucket Island in Massachusetts, named for America’s first female astronomer. Hoffleit’s work was so influential to the astronomy community that an asteroid (3416) was named after her.<sup>42</sup> Hoffleit was also honored by American Astrological Society and the University of Arizona, receiving the George van Biesbroeck Prize from the in 1988.<sup>43</sup> She retired in 1975. Hoffleit passed away one week after her one-hundredth birthday.

### **Lulie Jones (1888-1923)**

Born in 1888 to Dr. Albert H. Jones and Rebecca Boddie, Lulie Jones was instrumental in the creation of the Florence Free Kindergarten. Her father was president of Cypress Cotton Mill and the Florence Wagon Works, and since the Jones family worked in industrial development, Jones realized that many mill working families did not have the time to teach their children. Jones believed that a good education was a step in a positive direction away from child labor and poverty. Jones graduated from Florence Normal School and the Teachers’ College of New York.

<sup>37</sup> Tom Hendrix, *If the Legends Fade*, (Florence, AL: Country Lane Printing, 2000), 200.

<sup>38</sup> Freeman.

<sup>39</sup> Virginia Trimble, “E. Dorrit Hoffleit (1907-2007),” University of California-Irvine.

<sup>40</sup> Kristine Larsen, “Ellen Dorrit Hoffleit.”

<sup>41</sup> Tremble.

<sup>42</sup> Tremble.

<sup>43</sup> Tremble.

In September 1898, Jones, assisted by several others, founded the Florence Free Kindergarten (later the Maud Lindsay Free Kindergarten) at the home of Mrs. John R. Price. Jones also served as president of the Free Kindergarten Association in Florence.<sup>44</sup> She was instrumental in the founding of the Associated Charities, Florence chapter of the American Red Cross, and the Lauderdale County Anti-Tuberculosis Association. Jones worked to end child labor laws by promoting education for young children. Jones passed away September 22, 1923, in Florence, Alabama.<sup>45</sup>

### **Susan Watson Leigh (1813-1874)**

Susan Watson was born in North Carolina in 1813. She married Baptist pastor Reverend William Leigh in North Carolina. The Leigh family came to the rural town of Crossroads, Alabama, from North Carolina in 1826. Crossroads was renamed Leighton in honor of Reverend Leigh's work as the local post master in 1824.<sup>46</sup> Eventually the family moved to Florence, where Susan Leigh served for seventeen years as the head at the Presbyterian Female Synodical School. In July of 1872, Leigh founded the Maternal School in her home on North Market Street in Florence. The school was for orphaned young girls and girls who did not have other means of education. The Maternal School also offered boarding accommodations to students. The school operated until Leigh's death in July of 1874.<sup>47</sup>

### **Maud Lindsay (1874-1941)**

Maud Lindsay was born in Tuscumbia, Alabama, in 1874 to Alabama Governor Robert Lindsay and Sarah Winston. Along with fellow Shoals-area educator Lulie Jones, Lindsay established the Florence Free Kindergarten in 1898, where she remained principal for over forty years. The Florence Free Kindergarten, later the Maud Lindsay Free Kindergarten, was located near the mills of East Florence so that the working-class children could attend. Lindsay was also able to invite children from other neighborhoods to attend her kindergarten, allowing children of all income levels to go to school.<sup>48</sup> When the kindergarten struggled during the early years, Lindsay went without pay a few times so that the school never had to close. In order to supplement her income from teaching, Lindsay authored sixteen popular children's books including "Mother Stories" and "More Mother Stories."<sup>49</sup> Lindsay was childhood friends with Helen Keller. The friendship Lindsay had with Keller led Lindsay to translate one of her books, "The Toy Shop," into Braille. She continued writing and teaching until her death in 1941.

### **Ida Mathis (1857-1925)**

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<sup>44</sup> Barske, Carolyn, Carrie Keener, Joy Caitlin Monroe, and Brian Murphy. "Florence Free Kindergarten/ Maud Lindsey Free Kindergarten," National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination Form. Alabama Historic Commission, Montgomery, January 31, 2018.

<sup>45</sup> Lee Freeman, email to author.

<sup>46</sup> James Kaetz, "Leighton- Encyclopedia of Alabama."

<sup>47</sup> Freeman.

<sup>48</sup> "Alabama Women's Hall of Fame- Maud McKnight Lindsay."

<sup>49</sup> Briggs, Kristen Tippet. "The Ties That Bind: The Educational and Literary Journeys of Caroline Lee Hentz and Maud Lindsay." December 2013. University of North Alabama, 59.



Born in Florence, Alabama, in 1857, Ida Brandon Mathis always had an interest in farming. Her father was a farmer, and she learned to appreciate agriculture while she was growing up. Mathis became a successful farmer in her adult life. Around 1915, Mathis was hired by Alabama Governors Henderson and Kilby to speak at agricultural and educational conferences.<sup>50</sup> She began travelling both within and outside Alabama speaking about the importance of crop rotation and crop changes each season.<sup>51</sup> The speeches Mathis gave came at a time of agricultural economic difficulties caused by the cotton market collapse in 1914. Women in the early 1900s normally did not travel for speaking engagements, much less speak in front of male audiences comprised of mainly male audience members. Mathis was able to speak on crop rotations, banking practices, and effective management because she how these practices worked for herself. The speech that Mathis gave to the Farm Mortgage Bankers Association of America was so moving and helpful for southern farmers that a copy was sent to President Woodrow Wilson. She also spoke at the first meeting of the Alabama Chamber of Commerce on October 26, 1916. In 1912, Mathis bought an onyx cave which would later be called Desoto Cavern. Desoto Cavern is located in Childersburg, Alabama. Mathis had plans to mine the caves, but the onyx market was saturated. Instead, Mathis choose to open the caverns to the public so everyone could enjoy the beauty.<sup>52</sup> Mathis passed away in 1925.

### **Fran McKee (1926-2002)**

Fran McKee was born in Florence, Alabama, on September 13, 1926. In 1950, McKee received her bachelor's degree in chemistry from the University of Alabama. Upon graduation, McKee became a commissioned officer in the United States Navy. McKee went on to receive her master's in international affairs from George Washington University and an honorary doctorate in public administration from the Massachusetts Maritime Academy. McKee was one of the first two women to graduate from the Naval War College in 1970. On June 1, 1976, McKee became the first female rear admiral in the United States Navy. She passed away on March 3, 2002. McKee was buried at Arlington National Cemetery with full honors.<sup>53</sup>

### **Mary Letitia "Miss Mary" Milner (1861-1946)**

Mary Milner was born in 1861 in Florence, Alabama, to Joseph and Margaret Milner. She graduated from the Presbyterian Female Synodical School and Florence State Normal College. Her love of learning lead Milner to take courses from the George Peabody College in Nashville, a school in Chicago, Illinois, and the University of New York. For fifty years, "Miss Mary" taught in the Florence city schools, serving as principal of the Brandon Elementary School for twenty of those years and also as a librarian. She was a member of the Firenze Club and the Maud Lindsay Free Kindergarten Club. She never married and taught Sunday school at First

<sup>50</sup> "Alabama Women's Hall of Fame- Ida Elizabeth Brandon Mathis."

<sup>51</sup> "Alabama Women's Hall of Fame- Ida Elizabeth Brandon Mathis."

<sup>52</sup>Rebecca Montgomery, "The Crusade of "Mrs. Moses:" Ida Mathis and the Cotton Crisis of 1914," *Alabama Heritage*, 115 (Winter 2015): 59.

<sup>53</sup>"Alabama's Women Hall of Fame- Chamintney Stovall Thomas."

Presbyterian Church for many years. As a sign of respect for the one hour of her funeral, all the members of the Florence Retail Merchants Association closed their stores.<sup>54</sup>

### **Josephine “Miss Josie” Milner (1869-1956)**

Josephine Milner was born in Florence, Alabama. She was one of two daughters of English immigrant and local druggist Joseph Milner and Margaret Ann Woodell. Milner was a teacher and later principal of the Gilbert Elementary School from 1913-1921. She stepped down as principal and worked as a teacher at Gilbert Elementary until her retirement in 1942. She was voted Woman of the Year in 1953 by the Florence Business and Professional Women's Club. She was a charter member of the Firenzi Literary Society, the Maud Lindsay Kindergarten, the Gilbert School PTA, and the League of Women Voters in Florence. Milner was also director of the Primary Department of the Sunday school at First Presbyterian Church.<sup>55</sup>

### **Susan Jones Price (1858-1935)**

Susan Jones Price was born in Florence, Alabama, in 1858 to Dr. Albert H. Jones and Rebecca Boddie. Jones graduated from Florence’s women’s college, the Florence Synodical School, in the first class of female students at Florence Normal College, in 1872. She began teaching geography at Florence Normal College in 1879 and married John Price in 1883. During her time at Florence Normal College, Price taught classes in geography, Latin, mathematics, and biology. The Veteran’s Memorial Amphitheater on the current University of North Alabama’s campus was Price’s idea as a way to honor the students from Florence Normal School who fought and died for their country. The amphitheater was completed in 1934 with donations from the class of 1934.<sup>56</sup> Price died in Florida on January 27, 1935, and is buried in Florence.

### **Susan Kirkman Vaughn (1861-1944)**

Susan Kirkman was born September 15, 1861, in Florence, Alabama. Kirkman married David E. Vaughn, a professor at Florence State Teachers College, in 1892. She was a teacher at Kilby School, and professor of history, dean of women, and curator of the university archives while working at Florence State. Vaughn was a local historian as well. Vaughn authored a textbook on Alabama history called “Life in Alabama.” She also wrote a history of the State Normal School and Florence State Teachers College.<sup>57</sup>

### **Samuella Jemima Hargraves "Miss Jem" Weakley (1855-1951)**

“Miss Jem” was one of six children of Samuel D. Weakley and Eliza Bedford born in Florence, Alabama. Weakley graduated from the Presbyterian Synodical Female School in Florence. She also served as an enrolling clerk for the Alabama State Legislature—one of the first women of the state to hold such a position. She married former Huntsville, Alabama, newspaper editor

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<sup>54</sup> Freeman.

<sup>55</sup> Freeman.

<sup>56</sup> Bryan Rachel, “University of North Alabama Memorial Amphitheater Honors Heroes of the Past,” November 6, 2018.

<sup>57</sup> Freeman.

Charles G. Figures in 1848 at Trinity Episcopal Church. She was also a local social correspondent for the Nashville Banner.<sup>58</sup>

### **Lawrence**

#### **Mary Lee Cagle (1864-1955)**

Mary Lee (Wesson) Cagle was born on September 21, 1864, near Moulton, Alabama. When Cagle was fifteen years old, she was called to preach. However, in 1879, women did not commonly preach, so Cagle declined the call until later in life. In 1909, she helped found the Church of the Nazarene, where she preached. Cagle helped create twenty-eight congregations from the revivals she held in New Mexico and western Texas. Cagle continued to preach even in her old age, and spent her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday preaching to her congregation. She passed away on March 27, 1955.<sup>59</sup>

#### **Bettye Ruth Ligon (1943-1970)**

Bettye Ligon was born in 1943 in Lawrence County, Alabama. Wheelchair-bound after contracting polio at age nine, Ligon opened a kindergarten in her backyard. For those with disabilities such as Ligon, it was difficult to find work outside the home. Ligon chose to overcome her obstacles to provide an education to others. Hoping to make a difference in education, Ligon ran for a seat on the board of education but she passed away a week after she submitted her name for the race.<sup>60</sup>

#### **Anne Royall (1769-1854)**

Anne Royall was born on June 11, 1769 in Baltimore, Maryland. She is considered one of the first female American journalists.<sup>61</sup> She wrote a nine-volume work, "Letters from Alabama on Various Subjects," as well as numerous newspaper articles.<sup>62</sup> The book is about the Decatur, Alabama area and her time there. Each of the letters is addressed to Matthew Dunbar, her friend and lawyer.<sup>63</sup> When her husband passed, a jury nullified his will. The nullification left Royall completely bankrupt. In 1823, Royall petitioned then-Secretary of State John Quincy Adams to gain her late husband's pension so that she would be able to be financially secure. Not only did Adams grant her the pension, he also subscribed to two of her travel books she was then writing. Royall rented a home for a few months in Moulton, Alabama, after her husband passed, where she wrote many of her letters. Royall was one of many trendsetting women who was convicted of being a common scold. A common scold is a female at the time who argued or disturbed the peace by fighting with people whenever possible. Unlike many crimes against women of the day, being a common scold was a federal crime. However, for Royall, this accusation was a result of her skill as a journalist, her wit, and her free speech. During her time here in the MSNHA in

<sup>58</sup> Freeman.

<sup>59</sup> Stan Ingerson, "Mary Lee Cagle- Encyclopedia of Alabama."

<sup>60</sup> Lawrence County Archives.

<sup>61</sup> Sarah H. Porter, *The Life and Times of Anne Royall* (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press Book Shop, 1909), 18.

<sup>62</sup> "Anne Royall-Encyclopedia of Alabama."

<sup>63</sup> Katherine Abernathy, "Anne Royall," Encyclopedia of AL.

1818, Royall wrote about Brown's Ferry and interviewed Cherokee Native Americans. Royall is buried in the Congressional Cemetery in Washington, D.C.<sup>64</sup>

### **Annie Wheeler (1868-1955)**

Annie Wheeler was born on the Wheeler Plantation, now called Pond Spring, in 1868. When General Joseph Wheeler was stationed in Cuba during the Spanish-American War, Annie Wheeler, feeling it was her duty, followed her father to Cuba to be a war nurse. Wheeler's patients often referred to her as "Miss Sunshine." Wheeler served as home secretary of the Red Cross during the war.<sup>65</sup> Pond Spring looks the same as when the Wheeler family lived there and is kept as a memorial to her father, Gen. Wheeler.<sup>66</sup> All made possible when the Wheeler family left the state of Alabama Pond Spring. The state opened the home to the public in 1994.

### **Limestone**

### **Louise Allyn (?-1951)**

Louise Allyn was born in Brooklyn, New York, and grew up in Connecticut. She moved to the South through a connection with the American Missionary Association. Allyn served as principal of Trinity High School from 1909 to 1940.<sup>67</sup> After retirement in 1940, she moved back to Connecticut. Allyn returned to Trinity for a final time in 1949 to give the commencement address. Allyn passed away in 1951 in Connecticut.<sup>68</sup>

### **Patti Malone (1855- 1897)**

Patti Malone was born into slavery in Athens, Alabama, in 1855. After the Civil War, Malone enrolled at Trinity High School in Athens. Malone went on to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, where she joined an acapella group, the Fisk Jubilee Singers. The school formed the group in 1871 to help raise funds for the school. After enough money was raised, the university attempted to disband the group with little success. The university felt that with the money being raised, there was no reason for the group to continue. To the school, the singers were just a money making concept and not an important part of the community. The Fisk Jubilee Singers went on three more tours with members of the original group. Malone was a member of the group that toured January 1875-July 1878.<sup>69</sup>

### **Mary Moore McCoy (?-?)**

Mary McCoy was the second female president of Athens College, serving from 1904 to 1916 and again 1925 to 1930. McCoy changed the way the university was run, with several of her

<sup>64</sup> Phil Wirey, "The Founding Women of Decatur," PowerPoint presentation.

<sup>65</sup> Laura Coleman, "Experiences of the Justice Hospital Group, Base Hospital 51," *American Journal of Nursing* vol. XIX no. 7 (April 1919), 938.

<sup>66</sup> Lawrence County Archives.

<sup>67</sup> "News and Events: Visit Athens Alabama."

<sup>68</sup> Rebekah Davis, "Driving Forces: Allyn was "a Saint According to any Yardstick," *The Valley Star*.

<sup>69</sup> Andrew Ward, *Dark Midnight When I Rise: The Story of the Jubilee Singers, Who Introduced the World to the Music of Black America* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2000), 64.

improvements still in use today. McCoy stopped cows from grazing on campus, added electric lights in Founders Hall, and oversaw the construction of McCandless Hall.<sup>70</sup> McCoy also rescued the original bell that rang at Lagrange College in Leighton, Alabama, and gave it a home in the campus library.<sup>71</sup> The bell was functional and was used until the university implemented an automated bell system that indicates when to begin and end classes.<sup>72</sup>

### **Mary Fletcher Wells (?-?)**

Originally from Ann Arbor, Michigan, Mary Fletcher Wells came to Alabama with her husband, a chaplain in the Union army. After the war ended in 1865, then missionary Mary Wells established Trinity School to educate former slaves. The school started in a church and then moved to its own building before a fire in 1879.<sup>73</sup> Throughout the school's history, the school burned at least three times, racist community members stole books from students, and the KKK made threats toward the students.<sup>74</sup> The school educated black students from 1865 through the 1970s and was the first school in the northern half of the state to provide kindergarten instruction for African-Americans. Wells retired from Trinity in 1892.<sup>75</sup>

### **Morgan**

#### **Athelyne Banks (1907-2006)**

Born on September 25, 1907, Athelyne Banks devoted her life to education. She spent twenty-nine out of her forty-two working years in the Decatur City school system. Banks was the first female principal of George Washington Carver Elementary School, serving until it closed in 1967. Then she became supervisor for reading and math for the Decatur City Schools until her retirement in 1974. Banks passed away on February 7, 2006. She was ninety-eight-years old.<sup>76</sup>

#### **Patti Cashin (1892-1978)**

Patti Cashin Sykes was born in Decatur, Alabama, in 1892. She was the first principal of the Rosenwald School at Cedar Lake in Morgan County. Rosenwald schools were started by Julius Rosenwald and Booker T. Washington, as the first public schools for African-Americans in the South. Sykes attended Fisk University but from graduated Alabama A&M in 1911. Patti Cashin married Leo Sykes in October of 1918. Patti Sykes was buried at Sykes Cemetery, located in Decatur in 1978.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Rebekah Davis, "Mary McCoy: Athens College's Salvation in an age of Crisis," in *The Valley Star*.

<sup>71</sup> "Collections-Athens State University."

<sup>72</sup> Beth Savoy, "Searching for a President: Could '36' be our Next Female President?"

<sup>73</sup> "Trinity School (Athens, Ala.) | Amistad Research Center."

<sup>74</sup> "Trinity School, Athens, Alabama: Dare to Make a Difference."

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Phil Wirey, "The Founding Women of Decatur," PowerPoint presentation.

<sup>77</sup> Phil Wirey, "The Founding Women of Decatur," PowerPoint presentation.

**Ellen “Ella” Hildreth (1845-1916)**

Born in Colorado in 1845, Ellen Hildreth settled in Decatur, Alabama, in the late 1880s. Hildreth became involved in the women’s suffrage movement in 1890. She founded the first kindergarten and women’s club in Decatur in 1892. In 1893, she became the first president of the State Women Suffrage Association. Hildreth worked with Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton in 1896 at the National American Suffrage Association meeting held in Washington, D.C. Hildreth passed away in 1916.<sup>78</sup>

**Mildred Nungester Wolfe (1912-2009)**

Mildred Nungester was born in Ohio in 1912. In 1916, as a small child, Nungester and her family moved to Decatur, Alabama. She graduated from Alabama College in Montevallo in 1932. Nungester was an artist. She met her future husband, Karl Wolfe, at the Dixie Art Colony in 1937 and they married in 1944. Shortly after beginning their life together in Jackson, Mississippi, the two opened an art studio. Often overshadowed by her husband, many of Wolfe’s paintings were not praised until after his death in 1984. Most of Wolfe’s painting were landscapes and portraits. Wolfe’s most noted painting is of Eudora Welty in 1988. The painting hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. In 2000, the National Museum of Women in the Arts named Wolfe the Distinguished Mississippi Woman Artist.<sup>79</sup> Wolfe passed away in 2009 and is buried in Jackson, Mississippi.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Wayne Flint, *Alabama in the Twentieth Century*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 257-265.

<sup>79</sup> Steve Cook, “Mildred Nungester Wolfe,” Mississippi Encyclopedia.

<sup>80</sup> Phil Wirey, “The Founding Women of Decatur,” PowerPoint presentation.

## Female Role Models of the MSNHA Today

### Tori Bailey

Tori Bailey is the owner of WZZA Radio in Tuscumbia, Alabama—the only African-American owned-and-operated radio station in north Alabama.<sup>81</sup> Bailey is the chairwoman of the W.C. Handy Music Festival and president of the Tri-County Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.<sup>82</sup> In 2018, Bailey became the first woman to serve as Colbert County Commissioner representing district four.<sup>83</sup> Bailey’s love for her community and its people truly lives up to her father’s motto, “Not for me, but for us.”

### Natalie Chanin

Natalie Chanin was born in Florence, Alabama. She graduated from North Carolina State University with a degree in environmental design in 1987, focusing on both industrial textiles and design theory. Chanin moved to Vienna, Austria, in the 1980s, to become a costume designer and stylist.<sup>84</sup> In 2013, Chanin won the CFDA/ Lexus Eco-Fashion Challenge for her work in sustainable fashion.<sup>85</sup> Chanin won the 2017 Positive Impact Award for Preserving Heritage & Craft.<sup>86</sup> Today, Chanin serves as the creative director of Alabama Chanin, which is headquartered in Florence. Alabama Chanin is well-known nationally for the company’s dedication to craft, local production, sustainability, and community. Project Threadways, which examines the past, present and future of textile production in the South, has grown out of Chanin’s work.

### Deborah Ford

Deborah Ford grew up in Elkmont, Alabama. She went to the University of North Alabama. While attending UNA, Ford was a cheerleader and was elected homecoming queen. Actor George Lindsey was at the homecoming game and crowned Ford with a flower crown upon the announcement. Ford majored in Health, Physical Education, and Recreation. As a graduate, Ford won the Alumni of the Year Award. While teaching special education at Mountain Brook High School, Ford also coached volleyball. Every season, she would give the girls a motivational saying to help them get excited. One year, she chose GRITS, Girls Raised in the South. Ford did not expect the “Girls Raised in the South” shirts to become a hit, but soon parents and other teams began requesting shirts of their own. Ford began selling the shirts out of her car and soon after the business took off into books and other merchandise. Her first book, “The Grits Guide to Life,” was on the “New York Times” best seller list and was named Southeastern Book Sellers Association book of the year. In 2006, Ford was awarded the title of “Woman of Southern

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<sup>81</sup> McKean, Matt. “Tori Bailey to be honored at ADC caucus”

<sup>82</sup> Tori, Bailey. “Tori Bailey.”

<sup>83</sup> Russ Corey, “Bailey becomes first woman on Colbert County Commission,” in *Times Daily*, November 7, 2018.

<sup>84</sup> Katie, Shelly, “Made by Hand: Alabama Chanin.”

<sup>85</sup> “Natalie Chanin-Members- CFDA.”

<sup>86</sup> Amy DuFault, “Alabama Chanin Wins Positive Impact Award for Preserving Heritage & Craft,” October 24, 2017.



Distinction” by the magazine of the same name. “Grits: The Musical” opened in 2008 and toured the southern United States.<sup>87</sup> GRITS was named by “Entrepreneur Magazine” as number thirty-seven of the fastest growing companies in America.

### **Brittany Howard**

Brittany Howard was born October 2, 1988, in Athens, Alabama. She began playing the guitar at age thirteen. She later attended East Limestone High School, where she met future Alabama Shakes bassist Zac Cockrell. She worked for the United States Postal Service until becoming a full-time musician as lead singer of Alabama Shakes. The band was nominated for two Grammy Awards in 2013. Since 2013, Alabama Shakes has headlined its own international tour and received four Grammys.<sup>88</sup>

### **Pearl Jackson-Greene**

Pearl Jackson was the first black woman from Lawrence County to attend Alabama State College in Montgomery. On her bus ride home one day, a white man offered her his seat. The bus driver harassed Jackson until she got off the bus. The white man whispered that someone would come pick her up if she waited there. Several hours later, another bus arrived and Jackson got on the bus as if the previous altercation did not happen. After graduating, Jackson returned to Lawrence County and attempted to register to vote. Like many people of color, Jackson was initially prevented from registering. Many court clerks would find ways to keep people of color away from voting. The clerk asked Jackson to recite different parts of the US Constitution and then guess the number of marbles in a jar. When Jackson successfully recited the amendments, and guessed the marbles, the clerk gave her a piece of paper that required three white men’s signatures for her to be able to register to vote. A white man happened to be registering to vote near her and witnessed the situation. He then took the paper away from the registrar and signed his name on all three spots allowing Jackson to register to vote. Jackson went on to become a teacher in the public school system, teaching in Courtland. Jackson was one of the only African Americans and females on staff in the county. Jackson later became principal of Somerville Road Elementary while at the same time serving on the Electrical Membership Co-op Board. She was president of the board from 1994 to 2009.<sup>89</sup>

### **Mae Jemison**

Mae Jemison was born on October 17, 1956, in Decatur, Alabama. She was the first African-American woman to travel to space when she went into orbit on the space shuttle Endeavor on September 12, 1992. Jemison received a scholarship to start her bachelor’s degree at the age of sixteen in chemical engineering from Stanford in 1972.<sup>90</sup> She received her M.D. from Cornell Medical University in 1981. Jemison worked with the Peace Corps from 1985 to 1987, until she

<sup>87</sup> Ford, Deborah, phone call, October 24, 2018.

<sup>88</sup> “Brittany Howard Biography.”

<sup>89</sup> Gillespie, Loretta. “Ms. Pearl Jackson Green; a true account of tumultuous times,” The Moulton Advisor, February 22, 2018.

<sup>90</sup>“Mae Jemison: Biography –Space”

was recruited by NASA in 1987.<sup>91</sup> Jemison founded the Dorothy Jemison Foundation for Excellence, a non-profit foundation that places special emphasis on building critical thinking skills, experiential teaching methods, science literacy, and integrated approaches to learning and individual responsibility in achieving excellence. Another foundation Jemison founded is The Jemison Group, Inc., a technology consulting firm that combines critical social and cultural issues into the design of engineering and science projects.<sup>92</sup>

### **Tasia Malakasis**

Tasia Malakasis was born in Huntsville, Alabama. She graduated from Grissom High School in 1988. After high school, Malakasis attended the University of Alabama in Huntsville. Malakasis spent the next fifteen years working at technological startups in New York and Silicon Valley.<sup>93</sup> Malakasis took a class at the Culinary Institute of America on career exploration in food. After the class, Malakasis discovered Belle Chevre, an Alabama goat cheese factory located in Elkmont, Alabama. Malakasis started apprenticing at Belle Chevre in 2001 and became CEO in 2007.<sup>94</sup>

### **Sonequa Martin-Green**

Sonequa Martin-Green was born on March 21, 1985, in Russellville, Alabama. Martin-Green graduated from Russellville High School in 2003, and the University of Alabama in 2007 with a degree in theater. Martin-Green has starred in TV shows such as “The Walking Dead” and “Star Trek: Discovery.”<sup>95</sup> In April 2016, Martin-Green became an ambassador for Stand Up to Cancer to raise awareness and spread diversity within clinical trials. Both Martin-Green’s mother and sister are breast cancer survivors.<sup>96</sup>

### **Peggy Allen Towns**

Born in Decatur, Alabama, Peggy Towns is a local historian and genealogist. Towns worked for the U.S. House of Representatives with Congressman Bud Cramer for twenty years. As a local historian, Towns has helped add numerous sites within Decatur to the National Register for Historic Places and the Alabama Historic Cemetery Register.<sup>97</sup> She has written books on north Alabama history, including “Duty Driven. The Plight of North Alabama’s African-Americans during the Civil War” and “Scottsboro Unmasked: Decatur’s Story.”<sup>98</sup> Towns also helped create a historic walking tour in Decatur focused on the Scottsboro Boys re-trial in 1933.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Monique M. Chism, "Jemison, Mae Carol." In *Black Women in America*. : Oxford University Press, 2005.

<sup>92</sup> "Mae C. Jemison." Biography.com.

<sup>93</sup> Helmer, Lauren. "Tasia Malakasis: Faces of Birmingham."

<sup>94</sup> "How Tasia Malakasis Quit a Job in Tech to Make Cheese- Southern Recipes to Summer."

<sup>95</sup> Flanagan, Ben. "UA alum Sonequa Martin-Green upgraded to 'Walking Dead' series regular." AL.com.

<sup>96</sup> Robertson, Regina. "Sonequa Martin-Green Is Honoring Her Mother, A Three-Time Cancer Survivor, With This Campaign."

<sup>97</sup> "Peggy Towns"

<sup>98</sup> "Towns, Peggy Allen."

<sup>99</sup> "Peggy Towns"

**Rachel Wammack**

A native of Muscle Shoals, Alabama, Rachel Wammack is a county music singer with chart-topping-hits. Some of her songs include “Hard to Believe,” “Closure,” “My Boyfriend Doesn't Speak for Me Anymore,” and “Damage.” Wammack attended the University of North Alabama and was Miss UNA in 2015. She graduated in 2016 and moved to Nashville to pursue her music.<sup>100</sup> She has performed on the Grand Ole Opry Stage and at different music festivals.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Rachel Wammack, “10 Things about Me.”

<sup>101</sup> Mark Deming, “Rachel Wammack.”

## Primary Source Activity



Susan Price and her Florence Normal students are headed out on a field trip for a nature study.

Women traditionally were not allowed to wear shorts in public!

1. What do you think are some reasons that they may have been allowed to wear shorts on this field trip?
2. How do the women's clothes differ from clothes you wear? How are they similar?
3. What do you think women would have normally been wearing?

## Notable Women of the Shoals

T	E	N	O	L	A	M	I	T	T	A	P	O	L
E	M	L	S	L	D	M	T	W	T	A	A	E	W
E	F	L	O	W	D	E	R	D	L	I	M	S	F
E	L	S	N	E	M	A	R	Y	W	E	L	L	S
E	F	F	E	C	I	D	T	E	Q	M	R	M	K
K	E	A	Q	T	S	F	M	A	A	U	O	N	P
C	M	E	U	N	M	W	O	O	T	N	E	E	S
M	E	Q	A	A	D	L	L	H	M	A	D	M	C
N	E	Y	G	L	I	A	B	P	S	G	S	U	M
A	E	C	R	I	N	O	K	O	N	Q	E	R	K
R	W	A	E	L	N	A	I	U	A	E	T	W	A
F	E	E	E	D	H	E	F	E	D	B	O	E	F
A	U	R	N	A	Y	D	D	S	A	E	D	N	N
N	D	A	E	W	E	N	A	D	O	N	A	E	F

SONEQUA GREEN

FRAN MCKEE

PATTI MALONE

MILDRED WOLFE

RUTH BOND

MARY WELLS



## Notable Women of the Shoals



SONEQUA GREEN

FRAN MCKEE

PATTI MALONE

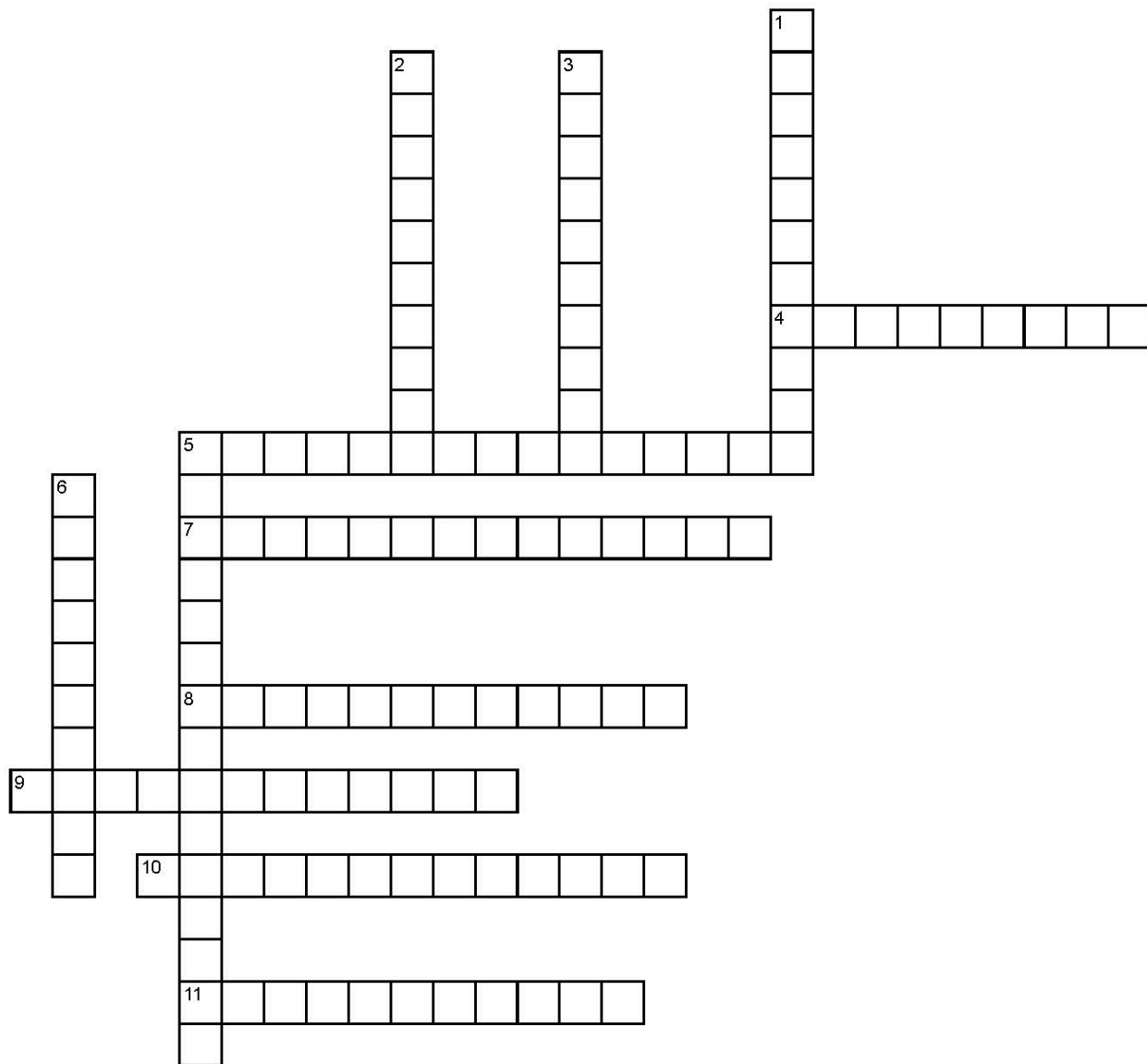
MILDRED WOLFE

RUTH BOND

MARY WELLS

## Women of the MSNHA

Read the clues carefully to find where each woman fits inside the puzzle.



### Across

- 4 \_\_\_\_ was the first female rear admiral in the US Navy.
- 5 \_\_\_\_ used quilts to help beautify the homes around Wilson Dam.
- 7 \_\_\_\_ is the guitarist for a Grammy award winning band.
- 8 \_\_\_\_ was nicknamed 'Miss Sunshine' by her patients.
- 9 \_\_\_\_ was a part of the women's suffrage movement.
- 10 \_\_\_\_ was born with a love of stars.
- 11 \_\_\_\_ was a member of the Fisk Jubilee Singers.

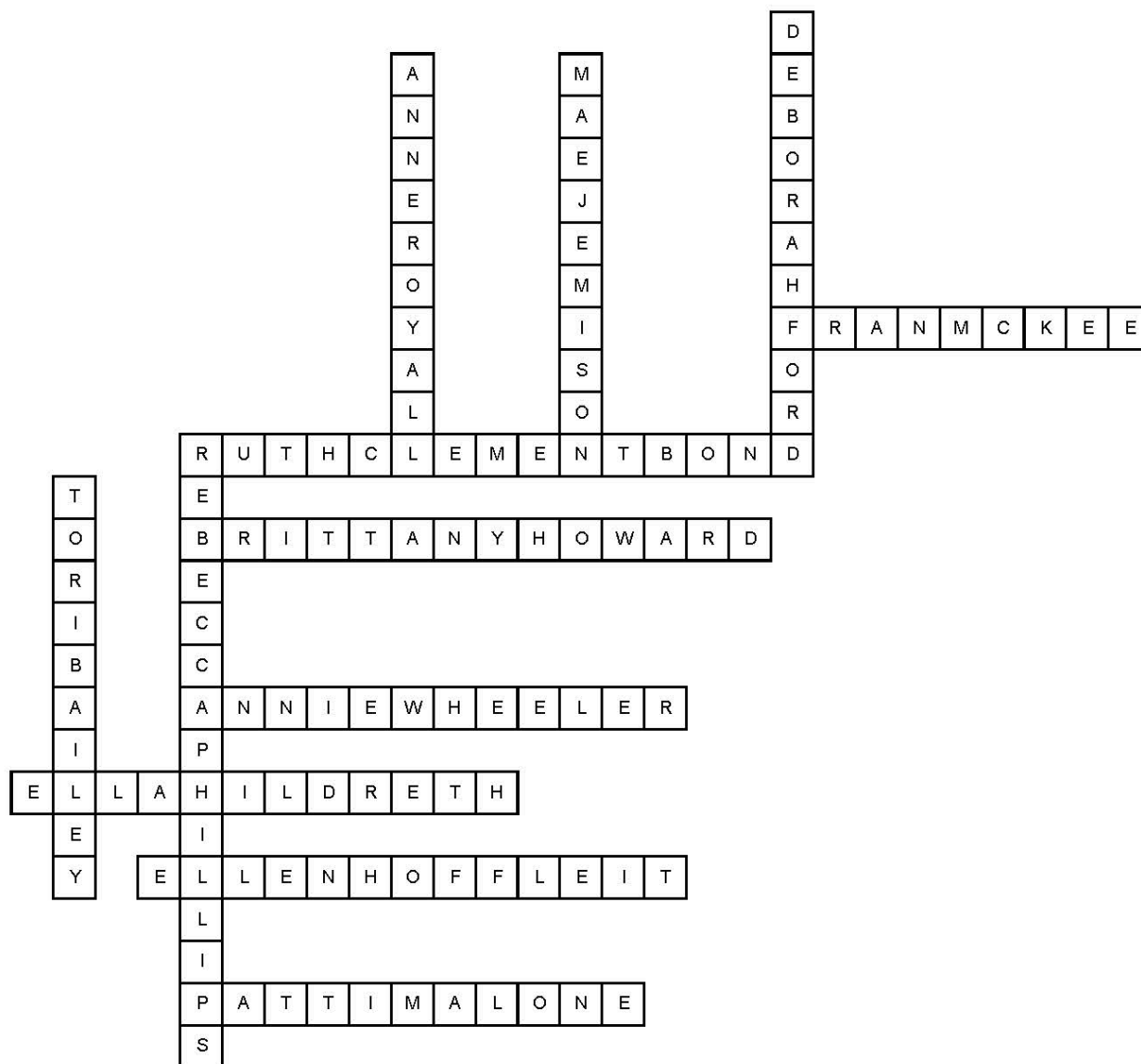
### Down

- 1 \_\_\_\_ founded GRITS and is a best selling author.
- 2 \_\_\_\_ was accused of being a common scold.
- 3 \_\_\_\_ was the first African-American woman in space.
- 5 \_\_\_\_ was a part of an all woman radio station.
- 6 \_\_\_\_ is the owner the first African-American radio station in the MSNHA.



# Women of the MSNHA

Read the clues carefully to find where each woman fits inside the puzzle.



## Across

- 4 \_\_\_\_ was the first female rear admiral in the US Navy.
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## Bingo Instructions

1. Make a template for the Bingo card by using a ruler to divide a sheet of paper into 25 squares (Five squares across by five squares down). Write "Free Space" in the center square.
2. Make one copy of the template for each student in your class.
3. Write one-person name in each square (except for the "Free Space" center square). See the Word Search and Crossword activities in this resource packet for suggested terms. The terms should be ordered differently on each Bingo card so that no two students have identical cards.
4. Write a definition or clue for each term on an index card, with one definition or clue per card. Fold the index cards in half so that the definitions/clues cannot be seen.
5. Choose an index card, unfold it, and read the definition/clue aloud. Have each student mark the square on his/her Bingo card where the corresponding term appears. The first student to correctly mark five squares in a row and yell "Bingo!" is the winner.

## Poster Project

Objective: Students will select a person of interest from the women included in the packet and research that topic using two internet resources approved by the teacher (see “Additional Resources” for a list of suggestions). They will then create posters illustrating what they have learned and share these with the class.

Materials:

- Poster board
- Scissors
- Glue
- Images (e.g. photographs, drawings, maps)
- Internet resources

Topics:

- Any of the women included in the packet

Posters should include a pictorial representation of the person if available along with the following information:

- Biographical or geographical information
- Connection to one of the MSNHA’s six counties
- Historical significance

## Primary Source Activity: Sallie Independence Foster Diary

1. What is the date of this diary entry?
2. Pick one line to copy in print handwriting.
3. How has handwriting changed from 1861 to today?
4. What is the diary entry about?
5. How does this girl's life differ from your own? How is it similar?

53

Friday Morning July 12<sup>th</sup> 1861

I got up this morning at five o'clock walked about with Madgie untill breakfast after breakfast Madgie played untill dinner after dinner we read then went down on the hill to get some apricots then went up stairs and laid down then went down stairs and fried the starch then walked about then Mrs Walker Margret Miss Lizzie Rowell and Jennie came to see Cousin Connie. Margret Madgie and myself played in the swing then Madgie and myself walked and help to take the starch up stairs then we walked about untill supper after supper I read my bible prayed and went to bed

## Writing Prompts<sup>102</sup>

Choose from one of the following prompts:

1. Who is the most influential woman you learned about? How does she inspire you?
2. What are some of the biggest challenges women still face today?
3. What are some of the important gains women have made throughout history?
4. Why do you think it was such a struggle for women to gain the right to vote?
5. How can women's equality help everyone?
6. Mae Jemison (from Decatur, Alabama), once said "Never limit yourself because of others' limited imagination; never limit others because of your own limited imagination." What does Jemison mean here?
7. Write a letter to a woman you find inspiring. Share with her why you find her inspiring and why you see her as a role model. This woman can be someone you know, someone from history or someone you find inspirational.

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<sup>102</sup>Based on prompts found at: [https://www.journalbuddies.com/journal\\_prompts\\_journal\\_topics/womens-history-month-writing-prompts/](https://www.journalbuddies.com/journal_prompts_journal_topics/womens-history-month-writing-prompts/) & <https://www.educationworld.com/teachers/10-writing-prompts-womens-history-month> (both accessed 11.4.2019)

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