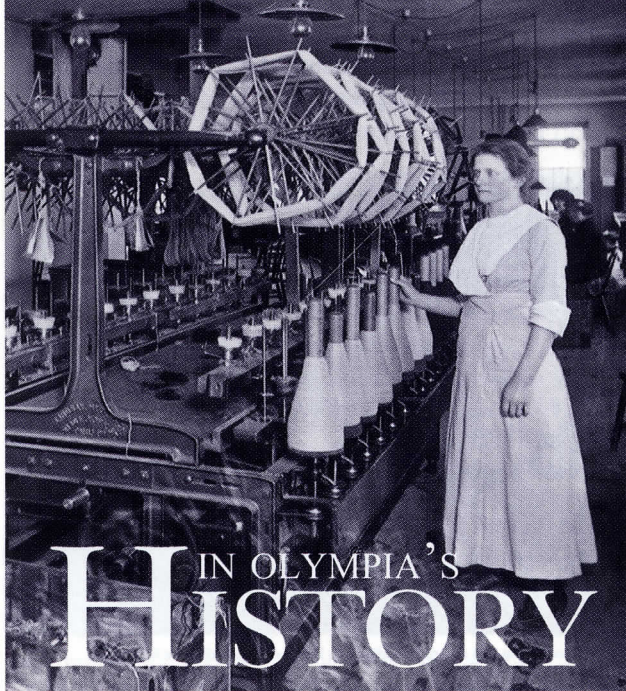


WOMEN



Although women have always been part of the history of our area, their contributions have not always been evident in written accounts. Women's roles in their homes or behind the scenes are often overlooked when communities write their histories. It is important to understand that whatever the event or time period, women were always there, but finding them sometimes requires taking a different perspective. The following sites are representative of the importance of women in many ways to the history of our area, but it is by no means comprehensive. Look closely for women, you will find them everywhere making history.



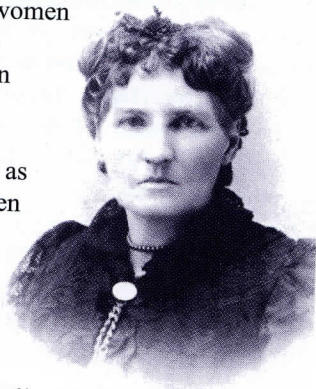
Many Indian women worked in early Olympia households. Nisqually woman with Master McElroy, 1868. Photo courtesy of the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, catalog L4233.

Olympia was known as "Stehchass" by the first women in Olympia, members of bands of the South Coast Salish Indians. Salish women had important roles in their society as food gatherers and processors. They were often expert basketmakers and weavers.

Earliest Euro-Americans to settle in Olympia in 1846 were single men, but they quickly welcomed women. Often their

reminiscences make a point of recalling the non-Native women that were in Olympia when they arrived here. The 1850 census records only three women in Olympia-- Susan Simmons Rider, Catherine Simmons Broshears, and Rebecca Ebey. However, more women quickly followed and they immediately made their presence felt by organizing fund raisers for the first school and church in Olympia. Not only were women important in establishing the community, but the Donation Land Claim Law of 1850 provided that each married woman could claim as much as 320 acres of free land--women were in great demand.

Women worked as wives and mothers but they also lead the way in educating area children, helping to establish churches and in providing the social and cultural fabric of the community.



Clara Pottle Sylvester came to Olympia in 1854 after she married the city's founder, Edmund Sylvester. She hosted the first meeting of the Woman's Club of Olympia in 1883. Photo courtesy of the Washington State Historical Society/State Capital Museum Collection.

As time went on women carved out both private and public roles for themselves in the development of the city. Some women worked outside their homes as photographers, secretaries, milliners, midwives, nurses and doctors, ministers, skilled laborers, laundresses and business owners. They joined together in clubs and

service groups to improve schools, social conditions, and city spaces. During the World Wars, women actively supported the war effort and provided valuable homefront support as well as active service. Some have left their marks on the community through their architecture, preservation of buildings and the environment, or political achievements. The contributions of other women are less evident but of no less importance to the generations of families who have made Olympia history.

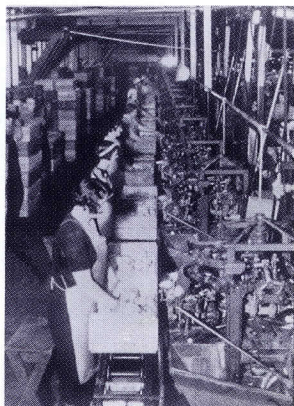


Women at the Star Hand Laundry, Main Street (now Capitol Way). Photo courtesy of the Washington State Historical Society/State Capital Museum Collection.

1 *Olympia Canning Company*

both sides of Capitol Way between A and B Streets

Many women worked at the cannery, which began its operations about 1912 and continued through 1959. Here the finest quality of peaches, berries, apples, plums, pears, clams and vegetables were processed and shipped to premium grocers throughout the United States and Europe. Women sorted and peeled fruit in the cannery. Many women also worked at the Cannery Ranch near Gull Harbor where some of the fruit was grown.



Olympia Cannery workers. Photo courtesy of the Susan Parish Collection at Shadow Catchers, Olympia, Washington.

2

Tenderloin District

both sides of Capitol Way north of State Street

Houses of prostitution and gambling were allowed north of Third Street (present day State Street) on Main Street (Capitol Way). Early maps show them as “female boarding houses.” In the 1910s civic improvement reformers, including many women of the community, worked to clear out this element.

3

Pacific House Site

Capitol Way and State Street

Rebecca Howard, an African-American woman, operated a hotel and restaurant at Main and Third Streets (present day Capitol Way and State Street) from the 1860s until her death in 1881. She was renowned as a fine cook and hotelier.



Japanese men and women workers opening oysters on Olympia's waterfront. Photo courtesy of the Thurston County Historic Commission/Bower Collection.

4

Tacoma Hall Site

4th Avenue and Columbia Street

This was the site of the lecture by Susan B. Anthony in 1871 during her visit to Olympia to campaign for Women's Suffrage. Later the building was the Good Templar's Hall where the Women's Christian Temperance Union met. The public library of Olympia was housed here for a time. The present building dates from ca. 1914.

5

Martin Building

113 5th Avenue E.

During World War I, the Thurston County Council of Defense operated from an office here. The Minute Women also operated from this location. Part of the home front war effort, these women distributed

literature, collected funds for war bonds, and helped with the campaign to save sugar, flour and cereals for the war effort.



Ida B. Smith in her Photography Studio at 523 Main Street (Capitol Way). She was a well known photographer in Olympia around the turn of the century. Photo courtesy of the Washington State Historical Society/State Capital Museum Collection.

6

Olympia Knitting Mills

514 Jefferson Street S.

Begun in 1909 and continuing through the 1930s, the mills produced knitted scarfs, swimsuits, sweaters and coats which were shipped nationally. The claim was made that the moist climate of Olympia was ideal for knitting. Much of the work was done by local women who operated the knitting machines (see cover photo).

7

Carnegie Library

620 Franklin Street S.E.

Library service in Olympia began in 1869. The Woman's Club of Olympia began a free reading room in 1896. The Club maintained service until 1909, when the City took over its collection of 900 books. A Carnegie grant of \$25,000 enabled the City to construct this building in 1914, which was used by the City until 1978. Early head librarians were primarily women, including: Mabel Smith, 1914-1917; Elizabeth Satterthwaite, 1917-1926; Mrs. Bess B. Gressman, 1926-1928; Dorothy Alvord, 1928-1932; Claire E. Angel, 1932-1933; and Lillian Collins, 1933-1956. Listed on the National and Olympia Historic Registers.

Old Capitol Building

600 Washington Street S.E.

Because of Olympia's title as the county seat and territorial and state capital, many women have been employed in government. Built in 1892 as the Thurston County Courthouse, the building was enlarged and became the State Capitol in 1901. Currently the Superintendent of Public Instruction offices are located here. Women Superintendents of Public Instruction include: Josephine Preston, 1913-1929; Pearl Wanamaker, 1941-1957; and contemporary women Judith Billings, 1989-1997, and Teresa Bergeson, 1997 - present. Listed on the National and Olympia Historic Registers.



Women at work at the State Capitol. Photo courtesy of the Washington State Historical Society/State Capital Museum Collection.

Sylvester Park

Capitol Way between Legion Way and 7th Avenue

The town square of Olympia was designated when Edmund Sylvester platted the town in 1850. Here were celebrated many events which highlighted women, including the May festival, band concerts and dances. Two memorials are also in the park. In 1913, the Daughters of the American Revolution, Sacajawea Chapter, placed the marker commemorating the Oregon Trail in the park. The fountain in the park is dedicated to Emma Page, a champion of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and friend of animals. Listed on the National and Olympia Historic Registers.



Emma Page. Photo courtesy of the Page Family Collection.

10

Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Building

119 7th Avenue N.E.

Telephone service in Olympia commenced in 1889 under a franchise granted to the Sunset Telephone Company by the City of Olympia. By 1909, it was known as the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company. The Company built this building in 1936. Many women worked here as operators, seated at a large switchboard. Listed on the Olympia Heritage Register.

11

St. John's Episcopal Church

900 9th Avenue S.W. (now First Baptist Church)

Women were often deeply involved in the establishment and support of local churches. St. John's Episcopal Church ladies gave a fair in December 1863 to raise funds for a church building. The "Sewing Society" of the church was supplemented by the "Busy Bees" group among the girls of the parish and "The Dime Reading Society." Women's groups paid for re-fitting of a stained glass window for the new church as well as carpet and pew cushions. The large rose window of the church was a gift from a group of women in the church. Women were also among the early organists at the church. Listed on the Olympia Heritage Register.

12

Woman's Club of Olympia

1002 Washington Street S.E.

The club was founded in 1883, the oldest woman's club in the west. A group of nine women first met in the Edmund & Clara Sylvester House. Mary Shelton, daughter of the city's founder, returned from a trip to San Francisco with the idea of the club. She and her

compatriots, including Mrs. Pamela Hale, County School

Superintendent, Mrs. Phoebe Moore, wife of the first State Librarian, Rev. Sarah Whitney, Mrs. Mehitabel Elder, Mrs. Abbie Hunt Stuart, Mrs. Mary Bricker Hartsuck, Mrs. Ella T.

Stork, and Miss Janet Moore were the founding members.

They met in member's homes and focused first on social and literary subjects. Later, the members campaigned for women's and children's rights. They met in rooms in Mrs. Stuart's Building at the corner of Capitol Way and Legion



Mrs. Abby Hunt Stuart, Woman's Club of Olympia founder. Photo courtesy of the Washington State Historical Society/State Capital Museum Collection.

Way and later purchased a clubhouse, the Hartsuck House. When that burned, they determined to build their own clubhouse in 1908 on the same site as the rented structure, at a cost of \$6,000. The architecture fit in with the surrounding homes. The club continues its philanthropic work today. Listed on the National and Olympia Register of Historic Places.

13

YWCA

220 Union Avenue S.E.

This house was built ca. 1907 by Emma and J. F. Kearney, a local grocer. In 1948-49, a group of active community women who had founded a YWCA in Olympia at the site of the United Churches, purchased the Kearney House for use as a clubhouse. Miss Mildred Lemon was especially instrumental in gaining the benefits of a larger building, which was used as a residence for working women and center for a host of women-oriented activities. The YWCA continues to work to assist women at this location. Listed on the Olympia Heritage Register.

14

Mowell House

200 Union Avenue S.E.

An Idaho native who grew up in Tumwater, Ada Sprague Mowell was a long-time teacher in public schools in King County, Skagit City, Littlerock, Hoquiam, Tumwater and Olympia, as well as principal of Lincoln School. After her marriage to Dr. John Mowell in 1898, they built this house in 1907.



Ada Sprague Mowell. Photo courtesy of John Mowell.

One of her biggest contributions was during World War I when she was the only woman member of the Thurston County Council of Defense. She actively worked with the Red Cross and organized and headed the Minute Women who assisted in the war effort. Mrs. Mowell was a long-time member of the Woman's Club of Olympia and helped get the Carnegie Library built in Olympia. She also lead the effort to clean up the Union/Pioneer Calvary Cemetery in Tumwater during the 1920s. She continued to serve the community until her death in 1953.

15

Washington Equal Suffrage Office Site

S.E. corner of Union Avenue and Capitol Way

The Washington Equal Suffrage Association rented a house at this location in 1909 for their headquarters during that legislative session. An active lobby was waged on behalf of the constitutional amendment to the legislature providing for Woman's Suffrage. The amendment, which was submitted to the people on a referendum, passed in 1910, giving women in Washington State the right to vote.

16

Gibbons House

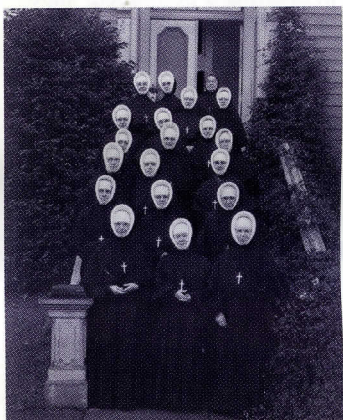
1017 Capitol Way S.

The house was originally built in 1918 as a rooming house with 18 rooms by E. B. Crews, a local contractor, for his daughter Jesse Crews Gibbons. Mrs. Gibbons operated the boarding house until 1962. She hosted Supreme Court Judges, legislators and others during her long tenure. The building was later made into apartments. Mrs. Gibbons died in 1972. Listed on the Olympia Heritage Register.

17/
18

Providence Academy and Old St. Peter Hospital Sites

The Sisters of Charity of Providence, a French Catholic order, were first called to Washington in 1856



Sisters of Charity of Providence. Photo courtesy of the Susan Parish Collection at Shadow Catchers.

where they began their ministry to educate and care for the sick and infirm. In 1881, they started a boarding school in Olympia, St. Amable's, which later became Providence Academy in Olympia (site #17) and eventually became St. Michael's Catholic School. In 1887, they established St. Peter Hospital (site #18). St. Peter Hospital moved from this site to west

Olympia (S.E. corner of Sherman Street and 4th Avenue) in 1924 and eventually to northeast Olympia in 1971, where it continues as a Providence facility.

As Territorial and State Capital, Olympia has seen generations of elected officials, including women, who have shaped the history of the state. The first woman to work for the legislature was Libbie Peebles, in 1868. She was one of the famed

“Mercer Girls,” a group of young women who came to Washington from New England in the 1860s to satisfy the shortage of marriageable women in the Territory. The first women legislators, elected in 1912, were Frances C. Axtell from Whatcom County and Nena J. Croake, from Pierce

County. Since that time, 190 women have served in the legislature. Olympia women legislators include: Jennifer Belcher, 1983-1991; Karen Fraser, 1989-present; Lela Kreidler, 1991; Mary Stuart Lux, 1965-1968; Sandra Romero, 1993-present;

Jolene Unsoeld, 1985-1988; and Cathy Wolfe, 1993-present. Other elected women include: Belle Reeves, who was Secretary of State from 1938-1948, and Dixie Lee Ray, who was this State’s only woman Governor from 1977-1981. Women Supreme Court Justices include: Carolyn Dimmick, 1981-1985; Rosselle Pekelis, 1995-1996; Barbara Durham, 1985 - present; and Barbara Madsen, 1993 - present.

Other state-wide elected women include: Deborah Senn, Insurance Commissioner, 1993-present; Jennifer Belcher, Commissioner of Public Lands, 1993-present; and Christine Gregoire, Attorney General, 1993- present.

Many of the wives of the state’s governors served active roles, including: Mary Alma Lister who helped organize the Red Cross in Olympia in 1917; Jean Gardner, who co-chaired the state’s centennial in 1989; Nancy Evans, who fought for the preservation of the Governor’s Mansion; and Lois Spellman, who promoted Washington arts and crafts. First Ladies also served as hostesses and received dignitaries on behalf of the state.



Julia Waldrip Ker was Olympia’s first licensed attorney. A native of Iowa, she came to Olympia in 1891. She was admitted to the Washington Bar in 1912. She was elected as city treasurer and served three terms. She became Olympia’s police judge in 1926, reputedly the first to hold that position in the U.S. She died in 1949. Photo courtesy of the Susan Parish Collection at Shadow Catchers, Olympia, Washington.

20

Blankenship House

205 15th Avenue S.W.

Georgiana Mitchell Smith Blankenship was a longtime librarian in Spokane and came to Olympia in 1892. Mrs. Blankenship was the author of Tillicum Tales, which was a compilation of reminiscences of Thurston County pioneers. She was also President of the Thurston County Historical Society and a member of the Woman's Club of Olympia. She died in 1936.

21

Burford House

1517 Columbia Street S.W.



Ida Yeager Burford. Photo courtesy of the Washington State Historical Society/State Capital Museum Collection.

Ida Yeager Burford, a native Olympian, was the organizer and founder of a wide variety of civic and educational projects in the capital city and Thurston County, including: the Daughters of Washington Pioneers; Girl Scouting in Thurston County and the Thurston County Pioneer Association. She was also a founding member of the Olympia branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW).

She was one of the leaders in creating a permanent state historical museum at the C. J. and Elizabeth Lord Mansion. She also helped form the State Capitol Museum Historical Association (SCMA) and promoted legislation to have the association named official trustee for the museum in 1941. When the museum opened in March 1942, she was its first curator-director, a position she held for more than 10 years. In this capacity, along with the Daughters of Washington Pioneers and the SCMA, she helped secure many of the manuscripts, furnishings, artifacts and wardrobes that make up the museum's basic collection. She died in 1964.

23

Flo Brodie House

1821 Water Street S.W.

As a transplanted Easterner, Mrs. Brodie formed a lasting friendship with noted environmentalist, Miss Margaret McKenny. This friendship helped turn her major interest to the preservation of the Nisqually Delta. Flo Brodie served as president of the Nisqually Delta Association (NDA) from its inception in 1965 through 1980, continuing in an emeritus capacity until her death on May 30, 1992.

Continuous efforts of the NDA and its supporters contributed much toward the designation of over 1,300 acres of the Nisqually Delta as a National Wildlife Refuge in 1974. The following year, Flo Brodie was named Environmentalist of the Year by the Washington Environmental Council. Her home served as the focal point for Nisqually preservation efforts and as a research center for students from The Evergreen State College. The house was originally part of the Chamber's Packing Company.

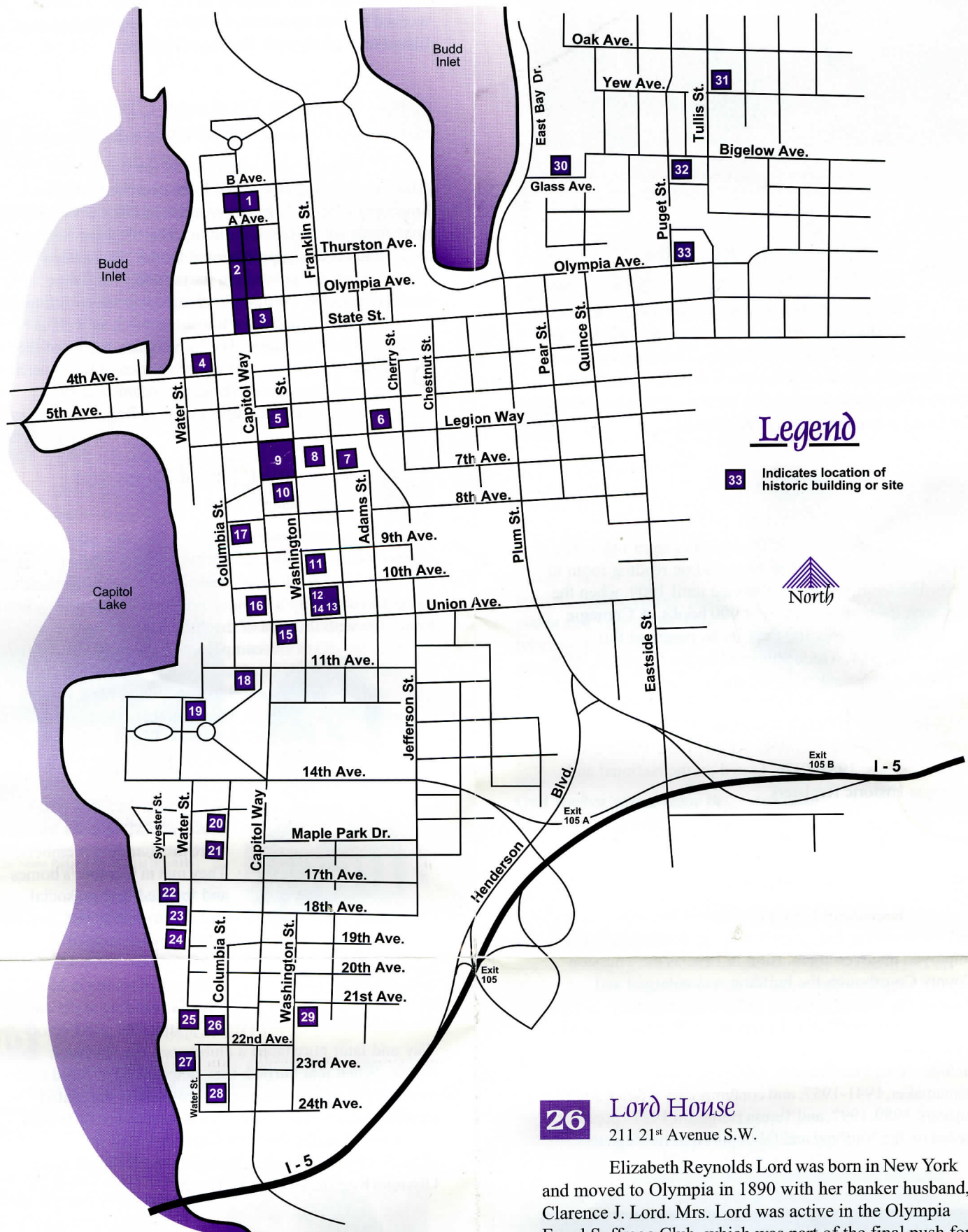
24

Eugley House

1825 Water Street S.W.

The house was built ca. 1908 by M. C. and Bertha Eugley. Bertha Eugley was one of Olympia's earliest businesswomen. She established a millinery store in Olympia in 1878 and continued in business for 35 years. Listed on the Olympia Heritage Register.

Women in Olympia's History



25

Bridges House

301 21st Avenue S.W.

One of the most distinctive and finest homes in Olympia, the Bridges House was built in 1923 in a design by native Olympian Elizabeth Ayer for Supreme Court Justice Jesse B. and Mary Bridges.

Miss Ayer has the distinction of being the first woman graduate of the University of Washington School of Architecture in 1921. After traveling to New York and later to Europe, she joined Edwin J. Ivey in an architecture firm in Seattle. She went on to design many notable, traditional style residences in Seattle, Olympia and throughout Washington. She later continued her firm as Ayer & Lamping, specializing in classically designed homes. Miss Ayer retired from her architectural practice in 1970 and moved to Panorama City in Lacey where she died in 1987.



Elizabeth Ayer. Photo courtesy of the Lacey Museum.

26

Lord House

211 21st Avenue S.W.

Elizabeth Reynolds Lord was born in New York and moved to Olympia in 1890 with her banker husband, Clarence J. Lord. Mrs. Lord was active in the Olympia Equal Suffrage Club, which was part of the final push for Woman's Suffrage in Washington in 1910. During World War I, Mrs. Lord was very active in the Red Cross as chairman of the membership committee and working with soldiers at Camp Lewis. She also knitted many garments for the war effort. C. J. and Elizabeth Lord built this home in 1923-1924. In 1939, she donated her home to the state as the State Capitol Museum. Mrs. Lord died in 1947. Listed on the National and Olympia Historic Registers.

27

Margaret McKenny House

2201 Water Street S.W.

The McKenny House was built ca. 1921 for Margaret McKenny by her parents, General T. I. and Cynthia McKenny and was used by her for her work with kindergarten students. Miss McKenny was born in 1885 in Olympia. She attended the Lowthrop School of Landscape Architecture in Groton, Massachusetts. She was the author of more than 15 books on various nature subjects and was an ardent conservationist and nature lover. She was founder of the local Audubon Society and an expert on local mushrooms. A campsite was named in her honor in the Capitol Forest in 1967. She was also the recipient of a national conservation award. Before her death in 1969, she lead the campaigns to save Sylvester Park, Watershed Park, and the Nisqually Delta from development. Many local Olympians remember her fondly as a teacher and friend. An elementary school in the Olympia School District is named in her honor.



Margaret McKenny and friends. Photo courtesy of the Washington State Historical Society/State Capitol Museum Collection.

28

Amanda Benek Smith House

2317 Columbia Street S.W.

Amanda Benek Smith was Olympia's first woman mayor and the first woman mayor of a capital city in the United States. She served as Mayor and Commissioner of Police and Fire from 1953 to 1960. She presided over the construction of the freeway through Olympia and believed in "doing things for the little people." She died in 1996.

Holly Gadbaw was mayor from 1988-1990 and a council member from 1982-present. Other women city council members include: Mary Stuart Lux, 1982-1996; Joan Kelly, 1982-1988; Cora Pinson, 1988-1992, who was Olympia's first black council member; Sandra Romero, 1990-1993; Nina Carter, 1990-1994; Margaret McPhee, 1993-present; Jeanette Hawkins, 1994-present; and Laura Ware, 1996-present.

29

Lincoln School

213 21st Avenue S.E.

Women have played a leading role in education in Olympia since the 1850s. The majority of the teachers in the public and private schools have been women. Lincoln School, built in 1922, has had several outstanding teachers, including Janet Moore, Amelia Dittman and Ada Mowell. Listed on the Olympia Heritage Register.

30

Bigelow House

918 Glass Avenue N.E.

The home of Daniel and Ann Elizabeth White Bigelow, it was the setting for a dinner given for Susan B. Anthony on her visit to Olympia in 1871. Daniel Bigelow, a member of the Washington Territorial Legislature, proposed a woman's suffrage bill to the legislature that year and spoke eloquently in favor of suffrage. Ann Elizabeth Bigelow was an organizing member of the Washington Woman's Suffrage Association in 1871 and presided over a committee at their convention in Olympia that year. The Bigelow's daughters, Tirzah, Eva and Margaret were all area school teachers. Listed on the National and Olympia Historic Registers.



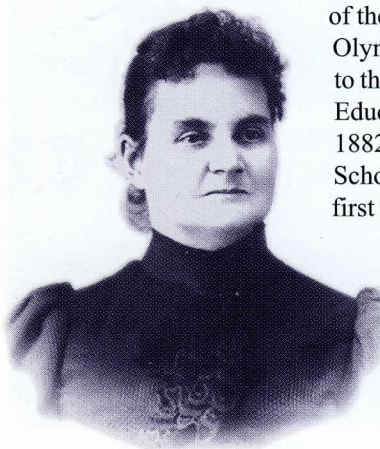
Ann Elizabeth White Bigelow. Photo courtesy of the Bigelow House Collection.

Pamela Case Hale came to Olympia in 1871 and immediately opened a private school. She married Captain Calvin Hale in 1872. She taught at the Union Academy and became superintendent of Olympia School District No. 2 in 1879. She was active in forming a Woman's Suffrage

organization in Olympia and was one of the founding members of the Woman's Club of Olympia. She was appointed to the Territorial Board of Education in 1881 and in 1882 was elected County School Superintendent, the first woman elected to

public office in Thurston County. She worked with the State Teachers' Association. She was actively involved in local businesses and built her own block of apartments and stores in downtown. She also conducted

lay services in the Unitarian Church. She later left Olympia and died sometime after 1917. Listed on the National and Olympia Historic Registers.



Pamela Case Hale, first woman Superintendent of Schools in Thurston County and Woman's Club Founder. Photo courtesy of the Washington State Historical Society/State Capital Museum Collection.

Assembly of God Church Site

618 Puget Street N.E.

Harriet Humphrey Henderson Noble was active in the emergence of the Pentecostal Church movement and provided land for Olympia's first Assembly of God church at this site. The current building was built by the Seventh Day Adventist Congregation.



Harriet Henderson and daughter Katherine. Photo courtesy of June Sturdevant.

Funk House

1202 Olympia Avenue E.

Goldie Robertson Funk was born in Iowa and came to Olympia in 1889. She taught school in a number of districts and was assistant principal of an elementary school. She married George Funk in 1899. She was an accomplished writer, her work published in several national magazines, including *McCalls* and *Ladies Home Journal*. She was an active clubwoman receiving statewide recognition. As a prominent member of the Woman's Club of Olympia, Mrs. Funk participated widely in local social and civic life. The Funks purchased this house in 1906, shortly after it was built, and lived there until Mr. Funk's death in 1955. Listed on the National and Olympia Historic Registers.

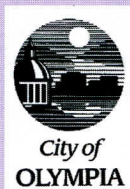


Goldie Robertson Funk with her husband George and their children Clara and Norman. Photo courtesy of Norma J. Kinney.



This brochure has been financed in part with Federal funds from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior administered by the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (DCTED) Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP) and the City of Olympia. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Interior, DCTED, or OAHP.

This brochure received Federal funds from the National Park Service. Regulations of the U.S. Department of Interior strictly prohibit unlawful discrimination in departmental Federally Assisted Programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, age or handicap. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility operated by a recipient of Federal assistance should write to Director, Equal Opportunity Program, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-7127.



For more information contact City of Olympia
Historic Preservation staff at (360) 786-5745.