

New Digital Exhibition: Women’s Work to Celebrate the Persistence and Influence of Arlington Women

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- *New exhibition to showcase Arlington's women pioneers (c. 1900-1975)*
- *Ongoing release of additional stories over the next year*
- Visit <http://arlingtonwomenshistory.org>

Arlington Public Library’s new online exhibition of Arlington women and their achievements is culled from the Center for Local History’s (CLH) Community Archives which contains many collections pertaining to women’s history and consequently the history of Arlington County.

Defying gender biases and societal stereotypes, the exhibition highlights the accomplishments of several Arlington women including political activist Gertrude Crocker, real estate entrepreneur Margarite Syphax, the interracial church group United Church Women of Arlington and science educator Dr. Phoebe Hall Knipling as well as the many civic-minded women who worked tirelessly to organize independent libraries in their neighborhoods which eventually became the nucleus of the Arlington Public Library.

Many of these women were unknown and their work hidden from the public but nonetheless became groundbreakers, trailblazers and important forces locally and nationally dedicating their life’s work for better education, civil rights, conservation, health care and community services.

“All these women were active in almost every aspect of civic life and their contributions were instrumental in influencing the character of Arlington and beyond,” said Library Director Diane Kresh.

Crocker, who had joined the Congressional Union for Woman’s Suffrage in 1914, participated in the “Silent Sentinels” demonstrations and stood at the forefront of a national movement that ultimately won women the right to vote in every state.

The United Church Women of Arlington, founded by 46 Arlington women from various churches and denominations during World War II, worked together across racial and religious lines to serve both their friends and neighbors and people in need around the world through community social services and programs.

Syphax turned her dream to create affordable housing for African-American residents in Arlington into a multi-million-dollar enterprise that propelled her company into becoming one of the top 100 African-American led firms in the country during the early 1970s.

Knipling founded the Outdoor Laboratory, an experiential outdoor learning project dedicated to engage Arlington urban youth to enjoy and observe nature outside the classroom.

The story of the Arlington's Public Libraries begins long before the County had a Library Department. Five neighborhood libraries - Glencarlyn, Cherrydale, Clarendon, Aurora Hills and Arlington/Columbia Pike - began to form in the early part of the 20th Century, organized and run by civic-minded women who recognized the need for libraries in their respective communities and took it upon themselves to make that vision a reality.

Over the next year, the CLH will hold a series of community exhibitions and events, and publish additional stories of early women pioneers as a celebration of their accomplishments.

This digital access project will be completed using FY2018 funding in the Department of Libraries budget dedicated to increasing public access to government records and archival materials.

The Center for Local History at Arlington Public Library is committed to collecting, preserving, and sharing the history of Arlington County. To learn more about the Center for Local History, visit <http://library.arlingtonva.us/center-for-local-history>. To see the new online exhibition, visit <http://arlingtonwomenshistory.org>.

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*Arlington Public Library is the heart of a thoughtful, inclusive and dynamic community
where people and ideas connect.*

Everyone has a story.
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