

## *Women's Histories Extend their Reach...*

**Eric Wilson, RHS Executive Director**

**March 2021**

In a closing salute to Women's History Month, the Rockbridge Historical Society shares a menu of links, resources, and museum exhibits to spotlight the lives and legacies of women of Rockbridge, Virginia, and America.



Across that continuity and reach, these portals seek to illuminate, amplify, and engage audiences through different cultural arenas and across chronological eras. The media and messaging of history-making inevitably evolve, just like the life-arcs they recurrently figure and re-visit.

While museums gradually re-open, these inviting chords broadly resonate with current curiosities and challenges. Their gateways frame both pride and prejudice, and they can also spur more nuanced empathy, and enabling opportunity.

Last year, the first public program RHS had to cancel was its expanded community-tour: ['Walk With the Women of Rockbridge History'](#) (a 2021 variation may again be possible this summer, with a careful eye to group gatherings). In the year since, Rockbridge and the nation have witnessed the centennial of women's suffrage, the inaugural election of a female Vice President, and the resilience of women who've individually, collectively, and creatively met the challenges of our historic moment.

Here, a sampler for girls and women of all ages – no less than for the boys and men who live and love and study and work with them – to explore leadership, distinction, and the everyday stitchings of local, state, national life

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**Girlhood (It's Complicated)**: Not just for girls, the Smithsonian Museum of American History's hybrid installation-online exhibit is framed around authentic, creatively curated themes such as Work, Wellness, Education, Fashion, Politics. Multimedia galleries and videos, distinctive and representative artifacts bring "A Girl's Life" to light in sincere, colorful ways. [AmericanHistory.si.edu/girlhood](http://AmericanHistory.si.edu/girlhood)

### *Why Women's History?*

Women's contributions and accomplishments have largely been overlooked and consequently omitted from mainstream culture. The National Women's History Museum helps fill that void. To this end, the Museum serves to place women's history within current historical narratives because inclusive history is good history.

### Articles



Making a Difference: The U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps

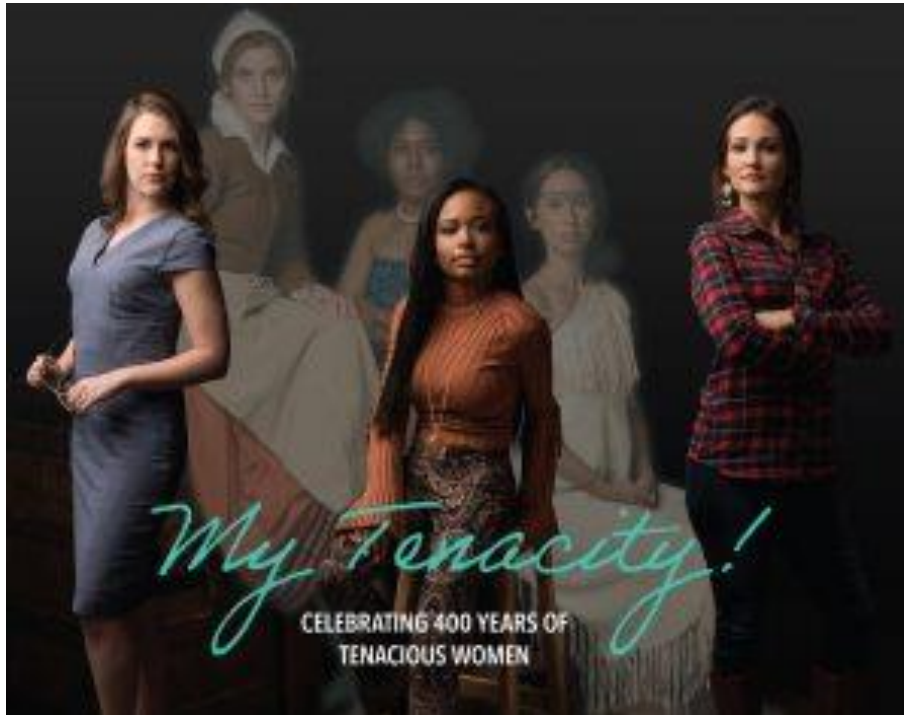


Mankiller: Activist, Feminist, Cherokee Chief.



Mountains Have No Ceilings

**National Women's History Museum**: Still awaiting final approval for its long-awaited building on the National Mall, NWHM's standing treasury of online content provides centuries worth of (inter)national riches. Their sleek, sophisticated digital pathways frame many familiar icons, while voicing and spotlighting the cultural range and diverse experiences of women who've constituted the American experiment, now nearing its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, while drawing on centuries before. [WomensHistory.org](http://WomensHistory.org)



**My Tenacity:** This signature exhibit and program series emerged from Virginia’s recent 400th-Anniversary tributes, “American Evolution: Virginia to America, 1619-2019: Diversity, Freedom, Opportunity.” Its themes and archives call to “Celebrate 400 Years of Tenacious Women” of indigenous, Euro-American, and African-American descent who’ve represented and shaped this state and the nation through time. [LegacyWall.historyisfun.org/Tenacity](http://LegacyWall.historyisfun.org/Tenacity)



**Agents of Change – Female Activism in Virginia:** This interactive, 360-degree digital tour of the Virginia Museum of History and Culture’s exhibit features landmark contributions and more common experiences of women across the Commonwealth, as they continue to evolve: coupling contemporary women with their predecessors. You can also access a range of primary resources, artifact images, conversational prompts, and creatively-leveled lesson plans to engage the thinking of schoolchildren, their parents, and teachers (as well as seniors who can share their longer arcs of perspective). [VirginiaHistory.org/exhibitions/past-exhibitions](http://VirginiaHistory.org/exhibitions/past-exhibitions)



**Stonewall Jackson House:** Its newly opened gallery and lively media resources have increasingly fronted the experiences of the women, free and enslaved, who lived on Washington Street: as parents, and children, as laborers and as owners of land and human property. These portraits vitally complement the experiences between 1858-1861 at the home of Mary Anna and Major Thomas J. Jackson, bringing new texture to his own achievements as a local deacon, businessman and slave-owner, VMI Professor and former U.S. Army Officer.

Together, they ground thoughtful domestic contexts, before the military, memorial traditions heralding Jackson as “Stonewall” centered on Lexington. Accounts of the determined, widowed, and emancipated lives of Amy, ‘Hetty,’ and Mary Anna - even her infant, Julia - also point toward new needs, freedoms, and gender conventions beyond the Civil War, when Mrs. Jackson later sold the house to the United Daughters of the Confederacy to establish a hospital in 1906. [Above, Harriet ‘Hetty’ Jackson, formerly enslaved, drawn by Anna Jackson’s niece for a Virginia newspaper article, ca. 1904] [vmi.edu/museums-and-archives/stonewall-jackson-house](http://vmi.edu/museums-and-archives/stonewall-jackson-house)

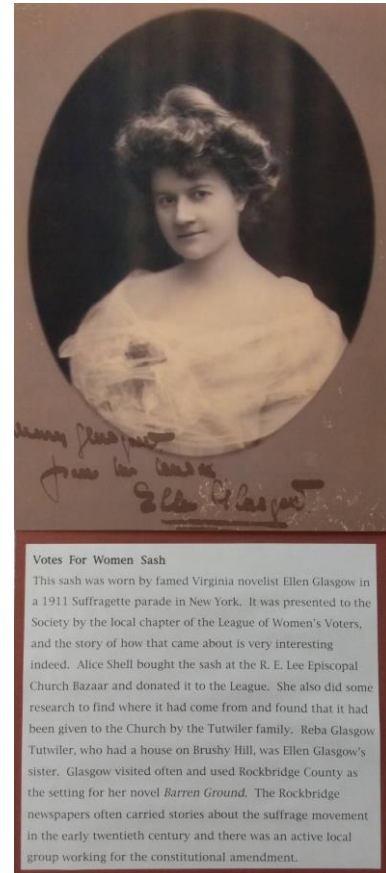
To the Public:  
**The Colored Soldier's Appeal**  
HELP THE SUFFERING OF OUR RACE

Buy a Memorial Block and Help us to Take Care of the Colored Old Folks and Needy Orphan Children. We are Asking Someone to Educate Little Violet.


MEMORIAL BLOCK

Violet      Mrs. H. L. Walker      Virginia      Annie  
An Orphan Freak      Pres. of Lexington's Old      Cannot Walk      Cannot Talk  
Born without Hands      Folks Home and Orphanage

**Rockbridge Women:** RHS continues to enrich and expand its general mission in local history by fronting often-obscured dimensions of gender, in varied contexts. Its new YouTube channel, school resources, slideshows, and recorded lectures newly spotlight the activism, artistic achievements, and charitable work of Lexington pioneers like [Eliza Bannister Walker](#) and [Coralie Franklin Cook](#). There you can learn about their strategic use of poetry, the performing arts, and the community-based and nationally-connected organizations they led.



Both here and in Washington D.C., Walker and Cook front-lined social reform and racial equity, while forging partnerships with iconic Black and white American leaders. Alongside three-centuries of Rockbridge women who preceded and followed them, their early-20th century stories are also coupled and counterpointed with contributions by their contemporary white author and suffrage advocate, [Ellen Glasgow](#). Together and variously, they all used their literary talents, financial acumen, and social networks to shape local, regional, American identities.

Explore a range of local lives and legacies at [Rockbridge Historical Society YouTube](#); [RockbridgeHistory.org/rhs-essays](#); [RRRockbridge.org](#) for your own self-guided tour through downtown Lexington.

