

WOMEN'S HISTORY AT PARKS CANADA

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Parks Canada has been busy over the last ten to fifteen years highlighting some of the under-represented voices in Canadian history. The government of Canada each year designates a number of sites, persons and events as nationally significant and Parks Canada, with the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada are working hard to increase the number of these that relate directly to women's history.



this remote region of the province of Québec and speaks to similar themes elsewhere in Québec. *

Events have also been designated as nationally significant. For example a plaque will soon be placed to commemorate the contribution of the Canadian Home and School Federation. Established in 1927 to bring local, regional and provincial associations together, the Federation helped shape

Women's History Workshops: To this end Parks has engaged in a dialogue with historians and heritage experts interested in seeing women's historic accomplishments commemorated. For example, consultations conducted in the early 1990s, led to the writing of framework studies on five key subjects in women's history: women and power, women and health care, women and work, women and education and women-science and technology. These reports identified numerous potential designations of sites, events and persons, many of which have now been designated, with plaques marking their significance. The reports also identified major themes that are intended to guide future public nominations in these areas, as nominations from the public still initiate the majority of new designations

Some recent designations of persons, sites and events of national historic significance: One of a number of exciting new national historic sites relating to women's history, Wilberforce Red Cross Outpost (Museum) in Wilberforce, Ontario, exemplifies the important role outpost nurses played in providing an extensive range of health care services and health education in isolated sections of the country. Like many aspects of women's history, it speaks to the larger role women played in nation-building. The Canadian Red Cross's outpost program strengthened colonization efforts, demonstrated the acute need for medical services in isolated areas, thus indirectly contributing to the advent of the social welfare state. Through their nurses, the Red Cross also contributed to the education of public health nurses, and set an important model emulated by other countries. The "Dispensaire de la Garde" at La Corne, (Abitibi region) represents the extensive network of dispensary-residences established by, "Le service médicale aux colons (SMC)," in

the Canadian system of education. The association worked to enhance childhood well-being through charitable activities, public awareness campaigns, and support for progressive school reforms. It fostered acceptance of the public education system by Canadians, and facilitated a key role for mothers and female teachers in the school and throughout the community.

Numerous individuals have also been designated, including Margaret Ridley Charlton, co-founder of the Medical Library Association in 1898, a leading international association that set standards in specialized and academic librarianship. As a librarian at two major medical research libraries from 1895 to 1922, Charlton also innovated library practices at a time when most medical librarians were male doctors and librarianship was not yet recognized as a profession. Like Charlton, educational pioneer Mary Electa Adams demonstrated that women could be leaders in their communities. Adams was at the forefront of reforms to the traditional approach to women's education in Canada, insisting on a rigorous academic curriculum and pioneering an innovative study of Modern Languages and Literature. She pushed for the acceptance of women into universities, challenged the assumptions of gender-segregated education and was a mentor to hundreds of young women and a role model for female leadership in the field of education.

Broadening the focus: A workshop was held in Ottawa on January 18, 2004 to discuss ways to broaden Parks Canada's approach to women's history to include women of ethnocultural and aboriginal backgrounds. Invited experts included women heritage activists such as Frances Wright of the Famous Five Foundation and Beth Acheson, the Cool Women

website and historians Peter Gossage, Margaret Conrad, Sylvia Hamilton, Julie Cruikshank, Heather Harris and Franca Iacovetta. The participants recommended including more Aboriginal and ethnocultural women in the commemorative programs, as well as developing communications tools to increase public participation.

In its efforts to reach out to Canadians interested in the role of women in history, Parks Canada has added two new website features devoted to explaining and celebrating the role of women in Canadian history: a women's history page, and a series of 3D tours of sites devoted to aspects of women's history. These features were launched during Women's History Month in October 2004.

"Women's History – Be Proud of It, Be Part of It" is under "Spotlights" on the National Historic Sites page of Parks Canada's website, www.pc.gc.ca, and brings together numerous sources on women's history found throughout the Parks Canada website. The site is easily accessible and celebrates milestones in women's history, such as achieving the vote, gaining access to educational institutions and improving women's legal status in the home, workplace and community. This new webpage lists all 97 designations that relate directly to women's role in Canadian history, providing links to stories about them in Parks Canada's press backgrounders and "This Week in History" stories. The site also encourages readers to participate in the process of historic commemoration, teaching individuals and groups how to nominate a person, site or event. It is hoped that similar webpages, devoted to the other two strategic priorities, Aboriginal and ethnocultural history, will soon be added to this spotlight on under represented areas of historic commemoration.

Explore a 3D Women's History Site!! Parks Canada's second new web feature on women's history, a series of 3D site tours, is part of the ongoing Canadian Content Online Project in conjunction with the Department of Canadian Heritage. Under this theme, Parks Canada has included six 3-dimensional tours of historic sites, with each tour exploring an area in which women made a significant contribution to Canadian history. The viewer has the option of taking the 3D tour or a

static text tour. There is also a "Learn More" section providing more information about the site and the topic it explores.

The Sisters of Sainte Anne came to Victoria, British Columbia from the province of Québec in 1858 and established St. Ann's Academy, now a national historic site. The reader can tour this leading girls' school and learn how the sisters played a pivotal role in the B.C.'s educational history. Browsers can also tour the Walker Theatre in Winnipeg, where a group of suffragists, led by Nellie McClung and Harriet Walker, staged an influential mock Parliament in which men were forced to petition women for the vote. Turning anti-suffrage arguments on their head, the event is seen as a turning point in the campaign to gain the vote and subsequent political rights for women. In Ontario, 3D tours of two homes explore the themes of science-technology and women's work. Adelaide Hoodless's childhood home in St. George, Ontario, the Adelaide Hunter Hoodless Homestead, celebrates the domestic science reformer's career in technical and scientific reform centered on the home. The Erland Lee Home in Stoney Creek (Hamilton), former home of Janet Lee and her husband Erland, who established the first Women's Institute, an important rural women's organization, highlights the theme of women's domestic and agricultural work. A 3D tour of the Hôtel-Dieu in Quebec City explores the history of the Augustine nuns who built a tradition of excellence in health-care dating back to 1639. In Halifax, the tour takes the reader through the immigration facility at Pier 21, with an overview of women and immigration as seen through the eyes of the newly arrived female immigrant.

Parks Canada will continue to explore ways to enhance the representation of women in its programs, and welcomes input from the average Canadian and historian alike.

***NDLR : For more on the SMC see :** Johanne Daigle et Nicole Rousseau, « Le service médical aux colons : gestation et implantation d'un service infirmier au Québec (1932-1943) » *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, vol. 52, n° 1, été 1998.