



National Trust for Historic Preservation  
**Preservation  
Leadership Forum**

Women Are Essential  
New Ways of Seeing Women in Every Historic Place  
June 24, 2021

**Handouts and Bibliography for Part 1**

**Finding Essential Women: A Place-Based Approach for the Histories of American Women**

There are many ways to approach the history of American women. This approach seeks to be inclusive of women in wildly different circumstances and eras, from the indigenous woman 15,000 years ago who knew when and where a patch of edible roots was ripe, to a Black Lives Matter organizer on her social media yesterday. All women's lives are deeply influenced by the culture they affect and that affects them, whether colonial religious beliefs or that most married women were legally prevented from owning their own property or controlling their bodies (such as the [Comstock Act](#)). Most women are deeply shaped by their race, ethnicity, sexuality, region, etc.

Below are two different frameworks—further outlined in *Doing Women's History in Public* by Dr. Heather Huyck—on how to approach telling women's stories at historic sites. Remember, however, that change is uneven and not one direction. These aspects are NOT exclusive. For example, reproduction/care includes both physical bearing of children and “having” children by adoption. They are designed to help identify, understand, and appreciate the different histories of women (and girls!) at historic places.

**Primary Aspects in Lives of American Women**

**Note:** Historians have used a framework of Reproduction and Production, but this omits women's many efforts to connect with each other and to create change. So here, a third category of Social Infrastructure, recognizes the many ways women have organized themselves and others—everything from the American Red Cross to Pride Marches.

- Reproduction/care: Bearing and caring for the next generations, elder care, education
- Production/consumption: From “subsistence” agriculture to pre-industrial to industrial to post-industrial economy. Includes gathering, “stretching,” selling, and acquiring material goods.
- Social infrastructure: Networks, religion, politics, organizations; connecting groups of women of all kinds.

**Primary elements for “Doing Women's History” at historic sites.** These three elements are essential to illuminating the lives of women at historic sites.

- Significance: Why a place is considered important. This can change dramatically and affects the likelihood a place will be preserved
- Knowledge Base: Research sources for the history of women, their lives, accomplishments, and challenges. This includes primary, secondary, and tertiary sources such as written, visual and oral histories.



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- Tangible Resources: Physical elements include landscapes, architecture (buildings and structures), and objects, which require preservation. Distinguish historic places from other kinds of historic sources, such as archives and libraries.

It is also important to consider **visitors and audiences**—both in person and virtual, and how these frameworks and elements are used to create programs, products, and services to tell women’s stories at historic sites for those who come to see them.

**Key questions for this webinar:**

- How do we find the history of all women at sites—especially at unexpected places and poorly recognized women, i.e. those from various underrepresented communities? How do we disentangle men’s legal ownership and historic frame from women’s actual presence and accomplishments?
- How do we use the tangible resources of landscapes, architecture and objects to research and interpret the history of women?
- How to center our interpretation on women’s lives, recognizing their complexity, overlaps and many varieties?
- What key principles should we follow to “do” the history of these women?



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## Principles for Doing Women's History

- 1. Assume women and girls were there. Find them. Look for all kinds. Center their stories.** Women's history is necessary to tell the full American story and provide history with full explanatory power. Use all available sources and especially look for non-elite women. Omissions can distort the history we tell.
- 2. Recognize the essential labor of women and girls as half of humanity.** Women were NOT a small slice of our history pie, but *half* of it.
- 3. Recognize the essential labors of women: Reproduction/Care, Production/Consumption, and Social Infrastructure.** Do not underestimate the accomplishments of women and girls—paid and unpaid—both inside and outside their homes, including occupations and consumption patterns. Also don't discount their organizing in the form of protests, clubs, religious institutions, farm women's markets, garden groups, etc.
- 4. Respect their perspectives and worldviews. Study their context.** Women and girls lived in different worlds and eras from ours. They often had very different perspectives from each other and from us. We need to understand them *on their terms*. For example: Seventeenth century women believed in witches, nineteenth century in spiritualism.
- 5. Assume women and girls had agency—and limitations both legal and social.** They found ways to shape their lives and world as they could.
- 6. Recognize the barriers women faced and the support they found and gave.** For example, college and professional education has only been open to most women for one to three generations. Pioneering women struggled mightily to "enter" new fields.
- 7. Recognize distinctions among prescriptive, descriptive, and analytical works.** People often confuse prescriptive works which call for their ideal behaviors with descriptive ones which discuss women's actual behaviors. Analytic works often depend heavily on quantitative data.
- 8. Places where women seem to be absent still affected their lives, and they affected the lives of others.** For example, male prisons had wardens' families, prisoners' accomplices/families, and prisoners' victims. Before 1964, US juries generally excluded females, which had a great impact on women who went on trial.
- 9. Respect that women and girls both share and have distinctive experiences and attitudes with each other and with males.** Women share deep biology and cultural expectations even as they differ by race, class, orientation, region, technology, etc. Historians increasingly use the concept of intersectionality—[a term coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw](#)—to understand the complexity of their lives and identities.
- 10. Key elements of Historic Places all require our ongoing attention.** As described in the first part of this document the key elements—Tangible Resources, Knowledge Base, and Significance—all require a level of attention as they are used to tell women's stories. Each has meaning that shifts and changes depending on additional information. For example, our knowledge base needs to be refreshed to answer new questions. Primary sources were created at a particular point in time by historical actors; secondary sources such as biographies are analyses and syntheses of primary sources and written later; tertiary sources, reference works (encyclopedias) and historic place management documents (reports and plans) are also written later.



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## Women Are Essential: New Ways of Seeing Women in Every Historic Place Site Specific Resources

### **SALEM MARITIME NHS (NARBONNE HOUSE): EMILY MURPHY, PHD, CURATOR**

#### **“Maritime Female Economy/Single Mothers in Architecture and Archeological objects”**

71 Essex Street, Salem Massachusetts, built 1675. See [www.nps.gov/sama](http://www.nps.gov/sama)

- Robin Maloney, “[NPS Research Pickled Fish and Salted Provisions: Historical Musings from Salem Maritime NHS: The Narbonne House.](#)” NPS, 2000. Vol. II, Number 10 October 2000.
- Sara T. Damiano, *To Her Credit: Women, Finance, and the Law in Eighteenth-Century New England Cities* (Johns Hopkins Press, 2021).
- Elaine Forman Crane, *Ebb Tide in New England: Women, Seaports and Social Change, 1630-1800*. Boston MA: Northeastern University Press, 1998.
- Wendy Gamber. *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930 (Women in American History)*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1997.
- [Narbonne House, Photographs, Historic American Building Survey \(HABS MA-802\)](#). Library of Congress (loc.gov). High quality Photographs, 1930s.
- [Narbonne House, 71 Essex Street, Salem, Essex County, MA - Drawings from Survey](#) (HABS MA-802). Library of Congress (loc.gov). Architectural drawings.
- “[More Than Just A Witch City: A Look at Life in Salem, MA](#)”. NMSC Archeology and Museum Blog (wordpress.com). Discusses all the families who lived in the Narbonne House.

### **FREDERICK DOUGLASS NHS, JOHN FOWLER, MA, PARK RANGER**

#### **“Women’s Memorial to A Woman-Made Man”**

1411 W Street SE, Washington, DC 20020; (202) 426-5961; [www.nps.gov/frdo](http://www.nps.gov/frdo)

- Frederick Douglass, 1818-1895; Anna Murray Douglass, 1813-1882; Helen Pitts Douglass, 1838-1903.
- David Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom*. Simon & Schuster, 2018.
- Leigh Fought, *Women in the World of Frederick Douglass*. Oxford University Press, 2017.
- [National Park Service: Frederick Douglass](#)
- [National Park Service: Women’s rights](#)
- [Frederick Douglass Virtual Exhibition](#)
- Sharon Harley, “A Study of the Preservation and Administration of ‘Cedar Hill’: The Home of Frederick Douglass.” Study. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, 1989.
- Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. 1845.
- Frederick Douglass. *My Bondage and My Freedom*. 1855.
- Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. 1892.
- [Frederick Douglass House, 1411 W Street, Southeast, Washington, District of Columbia, DC-Photographs](#) (HABS DC, WASH-166). Library of Congress. (loc.gov).
- “[Anna Murray Douglass, My Mother As I Recall Her,](#)” by Rosetta Douglass Sprague | Library of Congress (loc.gov)



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**PAULI MURRAY CENTER FOR HISTORY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE,  
BARBARA LAU, DIRECTOR**

**“Finding and Living the Roots of Many Facets: The Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray”**

[The Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice](#), 906 Carroll St., Durham, NC 27701.

- Pauli Murray, 1910-1985.
- Pauli Murray, *Proud Shoes: The Story of an American Family*. Beacon Press, 1999.
- Pauli Murray, *Song in a Weary Throat: An American Pilgrimage*. Harper & Row, 1987.
- Patricia Bell-Scott, *The Firebrand and the First Lady: Portrait of a Friendship, Pauli Murray: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Struggle for Social Justice*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2016.
- Rosalind Rosenberg, *Jane Crow: The Life of Pauli Murray*. Oxford University Press, 2017.
- [Pauli Murray House](#) | National Trust for Historic Preservation (savingplaces.org)
- [A Song of Hope: The Making of the Documentary "My Name is Pauli Murray"](#) | National Trust for Historic Preservation (savingplaces.org)
- National Historic Landmark Nomination, [PauliMurrayFamilyHome.pdf, 2016.02.01](#)

#### **Additional Resources**

- Heather Huyck, *Doing Women's History in Public: A Handbook for Interpretation at Museums and Historic Sites*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers / AASLH, 2020. | [Interview on Preservation Leadership Forum](#).
- Forum Journal: "[Every Story Told](#)": Centering Women's History (Vol. 32, No. 2)
- Forum Blog Series: [Blog Series: Women's History and Historic Preservation](#)
- Forum Webinar: [Including Women in the Sequel: Re-Interpretation and Telling the Full History at Historic Sites](#)

#### **Key Websites**

- National Trust for Historic Preservation: [Where Women Made History](#)
- [Women's History - Telling All Americans' Stories \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#). Includes National Parks, National Historic Sites, National Historic Landmarks, and National Register of Historic Places. See also
- National Park Foundation, "[Illuminating Women's Histories](#)"
- Because of Her Story, Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative, [Because of Her Story](#). Object-focused; can explore by theme.
- [Library of Congress](#): Personal and organizational documents, books, etc.
- [National Archives \(NARA\): Topic, Women's History](#)," US government documents.

This handout has been developed to supplement the Forum Webinar Series: Women are Essential (June and August 2021). If you share any of these materials credit the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Heather Huyck, Ph.D., Public historian. Co-Chair, Research and Interpretation Committee, National Collaborative for Women's History Sites.