

New Rochelle
Council on the Arts

**A Celebration of
Women in
New Rochelle History**



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by June Schetterer

SUSAN B. ANTHONY

"Failure is impossible" was something Susan B. Anthony believed all her life. The woman, who became one of the greatest women reformers in American history, was faced with many difficulties all her life, yet never gave up. Her chief interests were the abolition of slavery, the promotion of temperance, and campaigning for woman suffrage.

Miss Anthony's early life is interesting to New Rochelle residents because she came here in 1839 to teach when she was only 19. She came as an assistant in Eunice Kenyon's Boarding School. The principal was ill most of the time and Miss Anthony had to take entire charge.

In Harper's "Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony," Miss Anthony spoke of "watching night after night with only such rest as I get lying on the floor" and described the medical treatment of those days: "The doctor came and gave her a dose of calomel and bled her freely, telling me not to faint as I held the bowl. Her arm commenced bleeding in the night and she lost so much blood she fainted. Next day the doctor came, applied a blister, and gave her another dose of calomel."

Brought up a Quaker with strong anti-slavery feelings, Miss Anthony attended the Friends meeting in New Rochelle, but wrote home that "the people here are anti-abolitionist and anti-everything else that is good. The Friends raised quite a fuss about a colored man sitting in the meeting house, and some left on account of it. The man was rich, well dressed, and very polite, but still the meek followers of Christ could not worship their God and have this sable companion with them...There are three colored girls here who have been in the habit of attending Friends meeting where they have lived, but here they are not even allowed to sit on the back seat. One long-faced elder dusted off a seat in the gallery and told them to sit there."

Miss Anthony taught at the Kenyon School from May 23 to September 6, 1839, a period of 15 weeks, for which she received \$30, and after having to spend

most of that on necessary clothing, she had barely enough to pay her way home.

When she died at age 86 in 1906, newspaper editorials admitted that a great woman had passed, but a few wrote that her peculiar views on woman suffrage would soon be forgotten. Nothing was further from the truth.

In 1936, the United States government issued a Susan B. Anthony postage stamp commemorating the 16th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th amendment to the federal Constitution which granted women the right to vote.

FAITH BALDWIN

Faith Baldwin, one of America's most prolific and popular authors of novels, was born in New Rochelle in 1893. Her parents had moved here because they wanted their baby to be born in the country and in those days New Rochelle was still considered "country."

Many of Miss Baldwin's novels were serialized in the popular women's magazines of the day and many of them illustrated by well known illustrators who had made New Rochelle an artist colony in the 1920s and 30s. Her first book, "Mavis of Green Hill," was published in 1921.

According to newspaper critics, she caught the atmosphere of her time with amazing accuracy - the problems, the language, and the lifestyle were captured in detail in her writing. When she wrote "Weekend Marriage" about a wife who continues to work to help her husband succeed and finds that she is the one who is successful while the husband is not, a Chicago News critic wrote it was "as realistic and up to date as a hot dog stand."

About "The Puritan Strain," the New York Sun claimed, "There are few practitioners of her craft who excel her in the fluency with which she writes of ordinary everyday problems as encountered by ordinary everyday humans."

The popular author of more than 75 books, mainly romantic and light fiction, lived in Brooklyn for many years before moving to Fable Farm near New Canaan, Connecticut. She died March 18, 1978 at the age of 85.

ANNA JONES BERNARD

Anna Jones Bernard, a retired Westchester County Community College trustee and the first black woman to be admitted to the New York State bar, grew up in New Rochelle and graduated from New Rochelle High School in 1915.

Mrs. Bernard developed two careers in her lifetime...education and law. She began her law practice in 1960 after she retired from a 40-year career with the New York City public school system. She taught English at Frederick Douglass Junior High School in Harlem most of her career. Author James Baldwin was one of her students there. Other years she taught on the elementary and high school levels. She had graduated from Hunter College in New York City in 1919 and began her first teaching job that fall.

She enrolled in New York University Law School in 1920, attending classes after her day's teaching was done. She once explained that she had waited decades to launch her law career because earlier there were too few opportunities for black women lawyers. Mrs. Bernard said she discovered that even her law school professors had little interest in her career when she and Enid Thorpe became the first black women to enroll in the law school.

"No particular attention was paid to us as women or as blacks," she said in an interview with Gannett Westchester Newspapers in 1978. "We were just not taken very seriously." Twice widowed, she had been married to Dr. Woodruff J. Robinson and Lloyd Bernard. She is remembered in her adopted home town of Greenburgh, where she died on September 14, 1983 at home at age 83, as a person who for decades had devoted herself wholeheartedly to causes including housing for the poor and neighborhood beautification. She was a former vice chairman of the Greenburgh Housing Authority, a member of the Greenburgh Victory Gardens and Town Beautification committees, and other civic groups. She was a trustee of Westchester Community College from 1969 until 1978.

Mrs. Bernard was said to have set an example for young professionals in terms of growing and developing themselves so that they could give back to the community. Some of her family still live in New Rochelle.

SOPHIA BREWSTER

On the grounds of the Thomas Paine Cottage in New Rochelle, stands a small white frame building bearing a worn sign: Sophia Brewster School House. Moss grows on the roof and yet on certain days the echo of children's laughter of nearly 150 years ago is heard as children of today sit at the tiny desks and listen to stories of Dave Clark tickling the girls' necks with dried corn cobs.

Over the door the name of Sophia Brewster is fading away, but children are still told about this school marm who guided the minds of pupils from 1836 until 1861.

Simeon Lester and his young wife came to live in New Rochelle on a farm which he had purchased on North Avenue just above Paine Avenue in the early 19th century. When the time came for his children to receive instruction, a former school, called the School on the Rocks, had been torn down. Lester felt that the Middle District School that had opened in 1809 at North Avenue and Eastchester Road was too far for them to go, so he converted a small farm building into the one-room school house which opened its doors as a private school in 1836.

Mrs. Lester's sister, Sophia Brewster, who made her home with the family, became the teacher. There were 12 to 15 children in attendance during the winter months. The rest of the year the older children worked on their parents' farms. Both very young and older children were taught in the same room.

A pious lady, Miss Brewster opened and closed each school session with prayer. It was her custom to carry a basket of dried corn cobs to school each morning in the winter which she used to start a fire in the old iron stove in the center of the room.

According to Elizabeth S. Lough, who wrote a brief history of the school in 1959, a year after she was instrumental in having it restored by the Daughters of the American Revolution, it was David Clark, who would tiptoe up to the basket, sneak a corn cob and tickle the girls to make them squeal. For this David would "get the ruler" from Miss Brewster, but it is said

she never made him cry. Not only the Lester children, but also neighborhood children, some from as far away as Cooper's Corners at the end of North Avenue and as far south as Eastchester Road, were students of Miss Brewster.

Magdaline Seacord, one of the older girls attending the school in 1840 was big enough to manage the boys and often stopped fist fights, it is said. She was able to keep the mischievous Dave Clark in order when no one else could. After Miss Brewster retired, the school was closed, and returned to being a farm building for the next 70 years or so.

It was Mr. Lester's grandson, Henry M. Lester, who had inherited the farm, who rescued the Thomas Paine Cottage when it was about to be destroyed and arranged in 1908 for the Huguenot Association to purchase the small park to which the cottage was moved from Paine Avenue and opened in 1910. Two years later, Lester decided to save the old school building, which was moved into the park near the cottage. But it remained little noticed, until through Miss Lough, the DAR made the restoration their 1957-58 project. They saw to it that it was furnished as it might have been when boys and girls heard Miss Brewster ring the school bell to start the day.

NELL BRINKLEY

Nell Brinkley, illustrator and newspaper artist whose romantic and fanciful sketches of curly-headed girls and stalwart men made her world-famous, lived in New Rochelle for more than 30 years.

Her distinctive elaborate pen and ink sketches were syndicated throughout the United States and Europe for years. When she gave up her syndicated work, she devoted herself mostly to book illustration. Miss Brinkley became best known for her work in the Hearst publications and was credited with being the first newspaper artist to do romantic cartoons.

Starting her career at age 15 for \$7 a week on the Denver Post, she did one column sketches of politicians and other personalities to go with the editorials each day and went on to create romantic cartoons for the Denver Times. "My father wanted me to be a school teacher and said I could quit school only if I could prove I could make a living as an artist," Miss Brinkley said.

William Randolph Hearst sent for her to work for his New York Journal when she was only 17. She did drama criticism accompanied by sketches. She interviewed and drew such luminaries as Sarah Bernhardt and Maxine Elliot. She became the featured Journal artist. Teaming up with reporter Dorothy Dix, she covered many news events, including the courtroom trials of murderess Ruth Snyder, Lindbergh kidnapper Bruno Hauptmann, and showgirl Peaches Browning. She also sketched Ziegfeld Follies girls and society leaders.

As a young woman, Miss Brinkley reminded many people of her own "girls." She was petite with blonde curls, a sweet smile and a lilting voice. Her drawings of girls became so well known that in one Ziegfeld's Follies, this song was featured:

"I'm the latest craze on Broadway
Sweet Nell Brinkley girl
Every fellow sighs to kiss me
Fair Nell Brinkley girl
If you ever found one like me
You would have a pearl

So, if you'll be my Nell Brinkley boy
I'll be your Nell Brinkley girl."

(Words by Harry B. Smith. Music by Maurice Levi.
Published by Cohan (George M.) & Harris (Sam) Publishing Co.)

Although she had only one year of art school, Miss Brinkley longed to study more. "I always wanted to work in color," she said in an interview in The Standard-Star. Although all her work was in black and white, she said, "I visualize every detail in color." She did not work from live models although, like many artists, she drew her own hands and feet. "I have a photographic memory for clothes and poses and if I need something special I make my husband pose for me," she said.

Miss Brinkley was married to Bruce MacRae, Jr., son of the famed actor whom Miss Brinkley had met in her home town, Denver, Colorado. "'Nellie,' he said to me 'if you ever go to New York I want you to look up my boy and take him out golfing.' I did," she said, and they were married in 1920. Bruce came from New Rochelle and they settled there.

Miss Brinkley belonged to only one organization - the New Rochelle Art Association - and was one of the few women members at a time when its membership included such well known illustrators as Norman Rockwell and the Leyendeckers. Miss Brinkley collected antiques and rare books. When she died at 56 in New Rochelle in October 1944, she left one son. Her marriage to Bruce MacRae, Jr. had ended in divorce. She was the grandmother of singer-actor Gordon MacRae, who died recently.

IRENE CASTLE

Few women have had as much influence on the change in women's looks in their time as had Irene Castle. The famous dancer set the tone of the pre-World War I look with her bobbed hair and elegant clothes.

Irene Castle was born in New Rochelle on April 3, 1893, the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Hubert Foote, and lived off North Avenue in the Halcyon Park section, when the part of North Avenue that passed their gate was a dirt road. New Rochelle in those days was a popular resort for many theatrical people such as George M. Cohan and Bessie McCoy. The latter, famous for her Yama-Yama song was Irene's idol. Irene started her performing career by doing imitations of Bessie McCoy in local theatricals in New Rochelle.

Always dramatic and adventurous, she wanted to be in the theatre and when she met Vernon Castle at the New Rochelle Rowing Club, she decided to cultivate him as a means to getting into show business. She succeeded so well they were married on May 28, 1911.

The Castles were a handsome couple, slim, well dressed, graceful. It was in France that their dancing career really took off and after their return to the United States their popularity increased. Their photographs appeared constantly in the rotogravure sections of the papers.

In 1913 the country was dance-mad and the Castles became the undisputed leaders with their Castle Walk and other dances. Not only were their dances widely copied, but so were Irene's clothes and hairstyles. The Castle Walk, the Castle Band, and the Castle Bob were all the rage.

After Vernon Castle's death in a plane crash in 1918, Irene continued to make movies and to dance. She spent much of her time in the interest of animal protection, taking after her father, Dr. Foote, who was the founder of the New Rochelle Humane Society. Although she was married three times and had two children, when Irene Castle died in January 1969, she was buried beside her first husband, Vernon Castle.

CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT

Only a few women have displayed extraordinary power to create a mass movement of their own sex and to lead it for years with ever increasing momentum. However rare that is, New Rochelle has had two such women as residents.

Susan B. Anthony, the great crusader in abolition, women's temperance movement, and woman suffrage, taught here as a young girl. Carrie Chapman Catt, one of the greatest leaders in the fight for women's rights, resided in her home on Paine Avenue here from 1928 until her death in 1947.

Mrs. Catt was the first international leader of the political phase of the feminist movement, visiting every continent and bringing the women of all races into a common front in the International Woman Suffrage Alliance. Her charisma helped her in appealing across the barriers of race and language, firing the imagination of youth and inspiring confidence in adults.

While Miss Anthony did not live to see the passage of the 19th amendment granting women the right to vote in the United States, Mrs. Catt lived to see it pass in 1920 and continued to be active in other areas until her death in her 88th year.

Probably the most widely admired woman of her generation, Mrs. Catt possessed throughout her life a distinction of person and manner and also a certain aloofness suitable for "relations on a grand scale." The prototype of the professional career woman, she successfully integrated her private and public lives by the strength of her adaptive intelligence and resolute will. Her study of the theories of Darwin and Spencer in college gave her a belief in evolutionary progress through social change which served as a lifelong "working faith."

Following the death of her first husband, Leo Chapman, in 1886, she became aware of the exploitation of working women and within a year had resolved to devote her life to the emancipation of women - a resolve from which she never deviated.

In 1890 at the historic national convention that

after 20 years reunited the fragments of the suffrage movement into the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Susan B. Anthony recognized the organizational talent and the commanding platform presence in this young widow with the low-pitched voice of rare carrying power. She engaged her to campaign in South Dakota for the approaching suffrage referendum and 10 years later, when she herself retired as NAWSA president in her 80th year, chose Carrie Chapman Catt as her successor.

Mrs. Chapman married George W. Catt on June 10, 1890. He was an engineer who approved of his wife's dedication to reform and signed with her a legal document providing she could spend four months each year in suffrage work. Throughout the rest of his life Catt gave her the practical and psychological support Mrs. Catt needed, and at his death in 1905, he left her financially independent so she could devote the rest of her life to the suffrage movement.

After the 19th amendment was passed, Mrs. Catt noted that "to get that word 'male' out of the Constitution, cost the women of this country 52 years of pauseless campaign; 56 state referendum campaigns; 480 legislative campaigns to get state suffrage amendments submitted; 47 state constitutional convention campaigns; 277 state party convention campaigns to get suffrage planks in the party platforms; 19 campaigns with 19 successive Congresses to get the federal amendment submitted and the final ratification campaign...Young suffragists who helped forge the last links of that chain were not born when it began. Old suffragists who helped forge the first links were dead when it ended."

When at the close of World War I, the leading nations of the world enfranchised women and the League of Nations was organized, she believed that an age of enlightenment had dawned. But when the United States did not enter the League, Mrs. Catt, at age 65, set about organizing American women for international cooperation, peace and disarmament.

It was in 1928 that Mrs. Catt purchased her home on Paine Avenue, across the street from the Thomas Paine cottage (later moved to its present site on Sicard

Avenue). She built on a greenhouse and extended the library, making it the largest room in the house. She used one of the two sunrooms flanking the house entrance as her office. The living room was often used to accommodate meetings of 100 people.

Mrs. Catt became concerned with events happening in Germany and in 1933 was awarded the American Hebrew Medal in recognition of her protest petition against persecution of the Jews. It was presented to her by Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt.

It was in the New Rochelle house that Mrs. Catt became involved with her last project, the Women's Centennial Exposition 1840-1940, held in New York in 1940, honoring distinguished women in a hundred professions not open to women in 1840 (when there were only seven).

In the fall of 1941, while attending a meeting of the New York State League of Women Voters (she had helped found the League in 1920), she spoke out: "I'm sick of all this selfish, cowardly talk about 'defense'! We should stand for the principles on which civilization has evolved. I belong to a generation that has passed, but you are young, and you owe an obligation to women all the world round." The League Bulletin later reported: "You can no more listen to Mrs. Catt without being moved, than you can stand still when a cyclone strikes. The difference is, she moves one in the right direction."

Mrs. Catt died of a heart attack in 1947 at her New Rochelle home and was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx.

ELLABELLE DAVIS

New Rochelle was home for 53 years to one of America's great sopranos, who was a real life Cinderella. Ellabelle Davis, an internationally recognized concert artist, who was discovered when she was working as a seamstress, went on to successful concert tours on three continents and was named "Outstanding American Singer of the Year" in 1946 by the League of Composers.

She lived all her life in New Rochelle at 89 Horton Avenue, where she was the daughter of Samuel and Hattie Davis. Her father was a grocer. By the time she was 15 she was the mainstay of choirs at St. Catherine AME Zion and Bethesda Baptist Churches and the New Rochelle High School Glee Club.

Ellabelle and her sister, Marie, organized three choral groups which performed around Westchester, but in order to earn money for vocal lessons, Ellabelle worked as a seamstress and alteration hand in the Mattie Bowe Dressmaking Establishment, which catered to the wealthy. She had a habit of singing at her work and one day was singing "Depuis le Jour" from the opera "Louise" while working on an evening gown for Miss Louise Crane of the Crane writing paper family. Miss Crane was an amateur musician and also an ardent patron of the musical arts in New York City.

"This is the most wonderful voice I have ever heard," she said to Miss Davis. "You will have a great career. I will take you to the best teachers and finance your lessons." She was true to her word and by 1941 Ellabelle Davis made her formal debut as the lead soprano in the revival of William Boyce's opera, "The Chapel," at the Museum of Modern Art.

Over the years she appeared as soloist with the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, Indianapolis Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, and Columbia and National Broadcasting Symphonies, among others. She gave concerts at Town Hall, Lewisohn Stadium and at Tanglewood, and in many cities across the country.

Miss Davis was even more acclaimed as a concert artist in Mexico, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Paris, Vienna, Copenhagen, Stockholm, and Israel. From 1950 on until her death 10 years later of cancer she made

11 concert tours of Europe. She was the only vocal soloist at the Sibelius Festival in Helsinki, Finland. Signs of Standing Room Only were frequent at her concerts and she often presented premiere performances of composers' works, some of which had been composed just for her.

Miss Davis always maintained close ties with her New Rochelle family and friends and gave concerts to benefit projects for local churches and New Rochelle High School. Five-foot-five inches tall and soft-spoken, she was always modest and seemed unaffected by the sensational success which came her way. She took an active part in many movements for interracial understanding and gave a concert in 1945 in New Rochelle to benefit the Mayor's Interracial Committee.

Miss Davis continued to make her home with her sister, Marie Davis Tillman, on Horton Avenue until her death on November 15, 1960 at age 53.

JEANNE CLAUDET FORBES

In its earliest years as a community, the spoken and written language in New Rochelle was mostly French. The area was settled by Huguenots, French Protestants, who had come up from New York to live on land purchased from John Pell, the Lord of the Manor, through their agent Jacob Leisler in 1688.

Scholars and others interested in the early history as well as the way of life in New Rochelle in the 17th and early 18th centuries, can thank Jeanne A. Claudet Forbes for translating into English the original town records, which were written in a mixture of old French and English. Because of her efforts we are able to know that Hannah Pugsley freed her Negro woman slave Hannah on August 15, 1799. We can also learn that stocks and a flogging post were ordered to be built in 1792, that if you allowed your hog to run loose without a ring in its nose you would be fined four shillings.

A native of Paris, France, Mrs. Forbes came to the United States as a young girl. She became the wife of Robert Lucas Forbes, founder and publisher of the weekly newspaper Paragraph and The Daily Star, a forerunner of The Standard-Star. The translated records were published in a limited edition by Mrs. Forbes in 1916. They are available in bound volumes at the New Rochelle Public Library under the title, "Records of the Town of New Rochelle, 1699-1828."

Mrs. Forbes was active in civic and church affairs and was one of the first women automobile drivers in New Rochelle. During World War I, as a member of the Red Cross Women's Ambulance Corps, she drove wounded soldiers arriving from France to military hospitals in New York City. During World War II she was a member of the War Council, served as a Gray Lady, and later became a member of the Ground Observer Corps conducted by the United States Air Force, spotting aircraft from the roof of New Rochelle Hospital.

Mrs. Forbes was a charter member of the Catholic Cradle Guild and the Catholic Women's Club of New Rochelle. She served on committees planning the 225th,

250th, and 275th anniversaries of the founding of New Rochelle. Her daughter, Jeannette, is the wife of Thomas A. Hactor, City Historian of New Rochelle. Mrs. Forbes died in New Rochelle at age 83 in 1964.

MOTHER IRENE GILL

Lucy Gill, who was to become the Reverend Mother Irene Gill and founder of the College of New Rochelle, the first Catholic woman's college in America, showed even as a child her desire to dedicate her life to Christ. Her favorite pastime was to gather her sisters around her, saying, "Let us play we are nuns."

Born March 25, 1856 in Ireland, she came with her family to New York in 1868. While she had been educated by Sisters of Mercy, she felt it was the golden thread of divine providence which led her to join the Ursuline Community in 1876.

This slim dark-eyed nun showed special capabilities for organization and for carrying through to success any endeavor entrusted to her. She was appointed Superior of St. Teresa's in New York City in 1893 and her first step was to provide an academy for the daughters of families who could afford to pay tuition. She opened the academy on Henry Street. It was to gain the distinction of being the first Catholic high school in New York City to be approved and accredited by the New York State Board of Education and the only Catholic academy where Board classes were held for the training of teachers. Mother Irene soon invited prominent professors to teach college courses after regular school sessions.

As more and more people wanted to register for these courses, she felt there was a real need for a college in New York State where young women could study under Catholic auspices. While directing the Henry Street academy, in 1897, she opened another at Park Avenue and 93rd Street and bought a house for Ursulines in New Rochelle. Finding the half-burned Leland Castle for sale there, she persuaded the owner, Adrian Iselin, to renovate it, and managed to purchase it for \$35,000, trading the Ursuline Locust Avenue house as part payment. On July 1, 1897, the Ursulines took possession of the Castle, where both Charles Dickens and the Prince of Wales had dined with Simeon Leland in 1865. There the Ursuline Seminary for Girls opened in September with Mother Irene as principal.

Although a gentle woman of quiet reserve, she was a very modern woman, recognizing the importance of a thorough education for her own sex. With little money and against the wishes of the Archbishop, she decided to open a college for Catholic women. Adding to her small but gifted group of nuns a faculty of lay men and women, she opened the College of St. Angela in Leland Castle in September 1904.

The first class graduated in 1908 and Archbishop Farley, who had originally opposed the college, paid great tribute to Mother Irene. In 1911 Mother Irene learned that a secular group had applied for a charter to open a college for girls under the title of College of New Rochelle, and arranged to change the college name from St. Angela to the College of New Rochelle.

Mother Irene's memory was excellent and she was not without spirit. With a flash of her dark eyes and a nod of her head, she would easily settle many weighty problems. Her gentle motherly attitude made her beloved by nuns and students alike. With the foresight of a skilled financier, she placed the Province on a firm business basis. It was through her that the present home of the Mother Provincial in Beacon, New York, was purchased in 1923.

Mother Irene served two terms as Provincial of the Northern Province of the United States and was local Superior of the New Rochelle Community for several terms. She was deeply interested in the work of the college and its students to the end of her life. When she made her last appearance before the college assembly in October 1922, she said, "I love you, I love each and every one of you, I pray for you all, for each and every one of you every day. You are all in my heart." She died December 22, 1935 in her 79th year.

LILLIAN GISH

Lillian Gish, the grand lady of theatre and movies, was a familiar figure in the New Rochelle area in the early days of moviemaking. When filming of silent movies was shuttling back and forth between New York and California, D. W. Griffith set up a studio at Orienta Point, Mamaroneck, and Lillian and Dorothy Gish, two of his favorite stars, lived in that area.

It was during this period that Griffith asked Lillian to direct her first film, "Remodeling Her Husband," with her sister Dorothy as star. The Mamaroneck studio was incomplete and without heat, so Lillian found a small studio in New Rochelle and finished the film there in 1920.

The Gish sisters for a time lived in a house on New Rochelle's lower harbor. The house, has for a number of years, been the home of the Huguenot Yacht Club.

Starting on the stage at age five, Lillian's career has spanned eight decades. She was in silent films from their earliest days, made the transition to talkies, and returned to the legitimate theatre in the 1930s. Nor did she hesitate to move into the new medium of television. She is still active and lives in New York City.

Her frail and ethereal appearance is deceptive, for she has proven over and over her endurance and capacity for hard work. It is typical of her that her autobiography is more about D. W. Griffith and others than about herself. Brooks Atkinson, when he was drama critic for the New York Times, attested to this when he said, "She has no vanity. She is not concerned with exploiting or defending her reputation...Work comes first; she comes second."

MOLLY GUION

Molly Guion, a grande dame of portrait artists, lived in New Rochelle for most of her life. A descendant of one of the original Huguenot settlers of New Rochelle, she later lived at Loudon Wood in Rye with her husband, retired U.S. Navy Captain John B. Smyth.

During her long career, Miss Guion painted portraits of social, business and political leaders. Her portraits are in public and private collections in America and abroad. Her portrait of Queen Elizabeth II hangs in the mess hall of the British Royal Navy in Portsmouth. One of her two portraits of Winston Churchill hangs in the British Consulate in New York City and another belongs to the Churchill family. Her portrait of Thomas E. Dewey is in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. She was twice invited to exhibit paintings at Buckingham Palace by the Royal family.

Born in New Rochelle, the daughter of Dr. Clarence C. and Georgia Beardsley Guion, she began painting portraits at age six. Although she had outstanding art training, Miss Guion found she couldn't make her mark in New York City as a portrait painter in her 20s. "I painted a lot of flowers in those days," she said later. She decided to try Europe and was lucky to meet a director of the Cunard Line on board ship and he got her on the queen's garden party list.

From then on, Miss Guion became known for her painting of British dignitaries and pageantry. She was painting lords and dukes and queen's guards and "having a marvelous time as a guest in castles." Her collection of many of these works, entitled "Tradition and Pageantry of Britain," toured the United States and Canada at the time of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1952. While most of her work was done from life, her portraits of Queen Elizabeth and Churchill were done from photographs. "I preferred men subjects to women because I liked their bone structure better," she said.

An erect woman with proud bearing, Miss Guion had a sense of humor. While painting the Earl of

Clarendon, the King's Lord Chamberlain, in his robe as a Knight of the Garter, she persuaded him to leave the robe overnight for safekeeping and then painted herself wearing it. The queen is the only woman allowed to wear the robe, but Miss Guion would laugh and say, "But now there's me."

A history buff all her life and a director emeritus of the Huguenot-Thomas Paine Historical Association of New Rochelle, Miss Guion was proud of her heritage. Through her father she was descended from the Guions who settled New Rochelle and through her mother she was a descendant of Elder Brewster of the Mayflower Pilgrims and Dr. Samuel Johnson, first president of Columbia College (then Kings College.) Her home in Rye was built in 1862 and she believed it was haunted by the daughter of the builder Jared Peck. Miss Guion died in February 1982 at the age of 71.

GEORGINE ISELIN

Georgine Iselin, who was born into a wealthy New York banking family in 1857, maintained a weekend and summer home on Davenport Neck, as did most of her family, for many years. Miss Iselin had a lifetime concern for the poor, the underfed, and uneducated, especially minority children.

From approximately 1890 to 1915, when there was no provision in the local public schools for non-English speaking children, Miss Iselin made outstanding gifts to the Roman Catholic people of New Rochelle, including a church and school for German immigrants (which became St. Gabriel's) and a church and school for the Italian immigrants (which became St. Joseph's).

Miss Iselin also helped rebuild Blessed Sacrament Church on Centre Avenue in New Rochelle and gave generously to nearby St. Catharine's Church in Pelham. She built St. Eleanora's Home in Scarsdale, which she maintained for 50 years, providing two-week vacations to poor New York City mothers and their newborn infants. The food for the home was largely provided from the vast Iselin family farms locally.

New Rochelle Hospital was also a beneficiary of her philanthropy. She gave generously during her lifetime to all its drives and, with others in her family, built Iselin Hall, which was the hospital's first School of Nursing. In 1912 Georgine Iselin was made a Papal Countess by Pope Pius X in recognition of many charities which she and her family had bestowed on the poor in many places.

Miss Iselin lived for many years on Davenport Neck on a 50-acre estate overlooking Long Island Sound. The waterfront property was located at the southwestern end of Davenport Neck and included Pine Island. The high property sloped down to a 2,000 foot shoreline and was landscaped with formal gardens and a collection of old and rare trees. The estate included a century-old mansion of 16 rooms with servants' quarters in a separate wing, a gatekeeper's lodge, gardener's cottage, three greenhouses, both summer and winter barns, stable, chicken houses, and more. A 200-foot tunnel ran from the main house to the shore. The property was developed for homes and apartments in the mid 1950s. Miss Iselin died in New Rochelle in her 97th year on June 30, 1954.

HAGANOUGH KAZANJIAN

For one week in December 1917 New Rochelle played a dramatic and unusual role in the first World War. The city was inundated with nearly 10,000 recruits who were without food or shelter and inadequately clothed for the bitter 10 degree weather.

One woman who played a major role in how the 35,000 citizens coped with this problem was Haganoush Kazanjian, who had founded the first New Rochelle Red Cross Branch in New Rochelle in 1914. Forever after, Mrs. Kazanjian, a Turkish-born woman of Armenian parents, was known in New Rochelle as the "Greatest Mother of Them All."

The incident was brought about when the United States Government set December 15, 1917 as the deadline for all voluntary enlistments. Fort Slocum, on Davids Island off New Rochelle, being one of the largest recruit depots in the country, men from all over the east began pouring into the city on December 10 only to find the fort unable to accommodate any more men. By 7:00 p.m. 700 men were stranded on the dock, many of them poorly clad, having been told to wear few civilian clothes because they would soon be in uniform.

Something had to be done. Soon the Westchester Electric Railroad Company barn, the Republican Club, churches and private homes were opened for the men. Storekeepers were aroused from their beds and bakery shelves emptied. Before the day was out another 500 men had arrived. The Knights of Columbus Hall was turned into a clearing house, from which all of the recruits could be sent to shelter. It was the Red Cross volunteers and others, under the direction of Mrs. Kazanjian, who undertook much of the work of feeding and caring for the men.

Mayor Walter G. Otto in recounting the story of "Recruit Week" in the book, "New Rochelle: Her Part in the Great War," wrote: "No words can begin to tell the efforts, the work, and the sacrifice which was made in those first two or three days of the week by Mrs. Bedros Kazanjian, head of the local chapter of the Red

Cross, and Mrs. Horace F. Howland, who was head of the Canteen Division."

Mrs. Kazanjian and Mrs. Howland bought food and had it distributed where the men were housed. A blinding snowstorm on the third day had stopped all public transportation, yet more recruits continued to pour into the city. Every church, temple, school, fire station, and public building had to be pressed into service. New Rochelle residents turned out in great numbers to offer their services. During that week all business seemed to be at a standstill as if "by common consent the only interest of the New Rochelle citizens was the comfort and welfare of the boys who had descended upon them, anxious to do their bit," the mayor wrote. By the time the crisis had ended the population had managed to house, feed, entertain, and cheer that enormous number of men without serious incident.

One Massachusetts recruit took up a collection at 10 cents apiece among the men to raise a fund for a permanent memorial to the citizens of New Rochelle. He presented \$500 to the city and a bronze tablet was dedicated on March 14, 1919, in the public library. Another plaque was placed in Trinity School from 183 grateful Massachusetts recruits. Four thousand men signed a resolution which was presented before Congress, acknowledging their appreciation. One recruit wrote a postal home: "My dear Percy...Pretty girls, dancing, the best food in the land, ice cream, cigars, cigarettes - anything you can think of. If this is war, then why, oh why, was I not born in the trenches? Sam."

During the Depression, Haganoush Kazanjian was chairwoman of the Workers Exchange, a work relief project operating under the Emergency Work Bureau. And in 1940 this woman showed her tremendous ability for leadership once more by returning to the Red Cross scene and taking over the reins of a handful of volunteers in a war relief headquarters established on Main Street near North Avenue. At the end of the war, Mrs. Kazanjian had 1,500 volunteers on duty under her in all phases of war work: Clothing collection, surgical dressing preparation, knitting and sewing of garments, Motor Corps, Nurses Aides, Canteen, entertainment, home service, safety, and more. She returned in 1946,

but continued to be active for many years in that and other charitable and philanthropic work.

This amazing woman, who spoke six languages fluently, died at her New Rochelle home, "Fair Acres," on Wilmot Road, where she had lived for 71 years. She was 94.

MADAM SARAH KNIGHT

Women today think nothing of traveling off into desolate and far off places alone, yet in 1704 such an adventure was almost unheard of. One woman who had the courage was Madam Sarah Knight, a New Englander who traveled on horseback from Boston to New York in the heart of winter and kept a journal of her journey.

Madam Knight traveled through New Rochelle, which she thought to be "preferred" to the places to the east and west. In her diary of December 22, 1704 she recorded, "We set out for New Rochelle where being come we had good Entertainment and Recruited ourselves very well. This is a very pretty place well compact, and good handsome houses, clean, good and passable roads, and situated on a Navigable River, abundance of land well fined and cleared all along as we passed, which caused in me a Love of the place, which I could have been content to live in it."

"Here we rid over a bridge made of one entire stone of such a breadth that a cart might pass with safety and to spare - it lay over a passage cut through a rock to convey water to a mill not far off. Here are three fine taverns within call of each other, very good provision for travellers."

It was in one of those three taverns that Madam Knight noted she had a "good breakfast in New Rochelle after a most miserable night at Rye," and made a point of stopping in New Rochelle on her return trip as well.

It would not be until June 24, 1772 that the first stage coach between New York and Boston was advertised to improve transportation but it was intrepid women such as Madam Knight who had set the pace for women traveling alone in the 18th century.

LUCRETIA MOTT

Lucretia Mott, one of the great crusaders for abolition of slavery and a promoter of women's rights, was a resident of the New Rochelle area for a short time around 1814. Her first son, Thomas, was born here while she and her husband, James, stayed with his brother, who owned a mill along the Long Island shore in this area.

It was said of Lucretia Mott that "for all her pretty face and sweet ways, she had a mind of her own and the courage of a sergeant of Marines." She was probably the first to champion woman suffrage and braved still more displeasure by founding an anti-slavery society in 1833.

A small and frail-looking woman, Mrs. Mott exemplified her Quaker tradition in her gentle and tolerant ways, but nevertheless earned respect for her courage and unorthodox and independent thinking in a time when women were expected to hold their tongues and stay out of the affairs of men. Throughout her life her husband stood by her side, taking much ridicule and abuse for doing so.

Mrs. Mott made a reputation as a speaker, fulfilling her mother's epithet for her: "Thee of the long tongue." For many years she spoke eloquently around the country in defense of the oppressed. She was to mingle with the famous of the world as well as the downtrodden, yet treated them all with kindness, but firmness.

It was she and Elizabeth Cady Stanton who, taking up the cause of women's rights, called a convention at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 "to discuss the social and religious rights of women." There she met for the first time a young Quaker, Susan B. Anthony, who would join her cause. The convention officially marked the beginning of the organized women's rights movement in the United States.

Although she lived to be 87, Lucretia Mott did not live to see women get the right to vote. That came 40 years after her death in 1880.

SAINT ELIZABETH ANN SETON

The first American born woman to reach sainthood in the Roman Catholic Church was Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton, who spent much of her childhood years in New Rochelle. She was born August 28, 1774 in New York City to a wealthy and socially prominent family, intimates of George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and others. Her father was Dr. Richard Bayley, New York's first health officer. Her mother died when she was three and the following year Dr. Bayley remarried. Elizabeth and her sister, Mary, spent the greater part of their early years from then on with their Uncle William Bayley and his large family in New Rochelle.

The house is still standing at the corner of Pelham Road and Pelhamdale Avenue on the New Rochelle-Pelham Manor border. Elizabeth received an excellent education, spoke French fluently, and said her prayers in that language until her death.

The years spent in New Rochelle were written by her later in a little notebook entitled "Dear Remembrances." "I delighted to sit alone by the waterside or wander for hours on the shore singing and gathering shells," she wrote. "Every little leaf and flower, insect, animal, shades of clouds, or saving trees, were objects of vacant unconnected thoughts of God and Heaven."

The Bayley house was directly opposite the shore, where the New York Athletic Club occupies property on Travers Island. The house was built by Joshua Pell around 1695. His granddaughter married William Bayley, who bought the estate after the Revolution. Elizabeth was raised an Episcopalian and attended Trinity Church with the Bayleys. When she became a Roman Catholic in 1805, her conversion brought an end to her friendship with the New Rochelle relatives.

Elizabeth was married to William M. Seton on January 24, 1794 and they had five children. She was widowed in Italy when their last child was only a year old. They had gone to Italy in hopes the climate would help William's tuberculosis, but he died 38 days after they arrived. Antonio and Amabilia Felicchi opened their home to

the young widow and for the first time she was exposed to Catholic dogma. She found the Felicchis' deep faith one which corresponded to her soul's needs.

When she returned to New York a few months later, she was in much reduced circumstances. Her decision to enter the Catholic faith brought total alienation from all but her dearest friends.

She was confirmed in 1805 and three years later accepted the invitation of the Archbishop to establish a girls' school in Baltimore, Maryland. She assumed the religious habit at St. Mary's Seminary there in June 1809 and a month later, on July 31, founded St. Joseph's in Emmetsburg, Maryland establishing the Sisters of Charity of America. Six religious communities of American Sisters of Charity trace their origin to Mother Seton. The St. Joseph's Freed School and Academy, which Mother Seton opened on February 22, 1810 in Emmetsburg, was the first parochial school in the United States. Mother Seton died at age 46 on January 4, 1821.

Three miracles were attributed to her. Through Mother Seton's intercession, Sister Gertrude Korzendorfer was allegedly cured of cancer of the pancreas in January 1935 and Ann Theresa O'Neill, a 4-year-old Baltimore girl, was reportedly cured of acute leukemia. Both cures were accepted by the Apostolic Tribunals and Mother Seton was beatified at Rome on March 17, 1963. The third miracle was accepted in December 1973 (Carl Eric Kalin was allegedly cured in October 1963 of fulminating meningoencephalitis complicated by primary rubeola). Normally a fourth miracle is required for sainthood, but Pope Paul VI dispensed with this and ordered the canonization of Mother Seton to be held in Rome on September 14, 1975.

CAROLINE LEROY WEBSTER

Where the former Bloomingdale's store stands today on New Rochelle's Main Street, there was once an imposing and popular hotel - the LeRoy House - created from the large home of Capt. Henry Fanning. The owner of the hotel, Herman LeRoy, formerly Dutch Consul at New York and later a business executive, had a daughter, Caroline, who was, at age 33, facing probable spinsterhood.

Into the hotel and into her life walked Daniel Webster, the champion of Liberty and Union, the gallant defender of the Constitution and one of the country's best known orators. Webster's wife had died in January 1828, leaving him with three children and he was seeking a new wife.

On December 12, 1829 after a brief courtship, he married Caroline LeRoy. Although not beautiful, Caroline was slender and graceful with some resemblance to Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Webster described her to a friend as "amiable, discreet, prudent, with enough personal comeliness to satisfy me, and of the most excellent character and principles." It was obviously not a case of romantic passion, but both were lonely and their marriage turned out well.

Caroline LeRoy was a woman of the world, used to dances and formal dinners, and encouraged her husband in his fondness for good living. The Websters traveled to Europe in 1839, where they were wined and dined, often lavishly. Caroline enjoyed visiting all of the important sights in England, Wales, and Scotland and on the Continent, recording everything in a diary which was found in the attic of her niece's home and was published nearly 60 years after her death in 1882. "All the great folks," as Mrs. Webster called them, asked the Websters to breakfasts, dinners and soirees, and they found themselves in a mad whirl of engagements.

The climax came when they were presented to young Queen Victoria at a royal ball and later had the privilege of chatting with her less formally. The New Hampshire farmer's son and his New Rochelle wife had come a long way.

In her diary, Caroline notes that when she dined at the royal palace and was shown to the dressing room,

"I washed my hands to show that I knew the use of the scented water and napkins and then left the room."

On March 7, 1850, Daniel Webster, who later served twice as Secretary of State, delivered his speech in favor of the Great Compromise, which probably averted the Civil War for a decade. He died two years later at age 71 and Caroline was to lead a lonely life afterward. She moved from the Marshfield, Massachusetts estate back to New York and lived on 33rd Street. Soon after the dedication on November 25, 1876 of a statue to her husband in Central Park, she returned to New Rochelle to live with her niece, Mrs. Robert W. Edgar. There this woman, who had met and talked with Dickens, Macaulay, a queen, and three presidents, was known as "Aunty" Webster, rather over-dressed for her age and surroundings, excessively garrulous, and full of interminable reminiscences of her past.

She died of pneumonia on February 26, 1882, having survived her husband almost 30 years. He had provided in his will for her to be buried by his side at Marshfield, but there was no one to carry out his wishes, and she lies buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx.