



NIKE The official publication of New York State Women, Inc.

VOL. 74 ■ ISSUE 3 ■ MARCH 2025

NEW YORK STATE
women, INC.

Our Mission

To connect and build women
personally, professionally,
and politically.

Our Vision

To empower women to use their
voices to create positive change.



Living Links in Our Continuous Chain – Making Women's History

Are YOU a member of NYS Women, Inc. yet?
Time to check us out at nyswomeninc.org

Dated Material – Deliver Promptly





Celebrating Women this March

-Robin Bridson, NYS Women, Inc. President, 2024/2025

Dear Members,

As we step into March, a month dedicated to honoring women's history, I am reminded of the incredible legacy of trailblazing women who have shaped not only New York State but the world. From the historic Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, where Elizabeth Cady Stanton and others boldly declared the need for equality, to the countless women who continue to lead in education, healthcare, arts, and politics, New York has always been at the forefront of progress.

This Women's History Month, let us draw inspiration from these pioneers and channel their courage into our own lives. Whether you are advancing in your career, mentoring others, or overcoming challenges, remember that you are part of this ongoing story of resilience and empowerment.

I encourage you to take advantage of opportunities for professional development and networking within our organization. Programs like mentorship initiatives and leadership workshops can help you grow your skills while connecting with other remarkable women. Together, we can build a stronger community that uplifts and supports one another.

At the same time, let us remain steadfast in advocating for women and women's rights. While we celebrate progress, we must also confront the challenges that persist—such as domestic violence, which continues to affect far too many women across our state and nation. As an organization committed to empowering women, we must amplify awareness, support survivors, and work toward a future where every woman feels safe and valued. By standing together for equity and justice, we honor not only the women who came before us but also those whose voices still need to be heard.

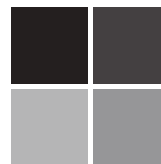
Thank you for your commitment to this mission. I look forward to seeing all that we will accomplish together! 🍷

Warm regards,
Robin Bridson

The planning for Annual Conference is well under way! Stay tuned for more information through the Communicator, the Website, Facebook and Instagram, and through email blasts to your local chapter presidents, regional directors, and more!

Don't forget to submit for the State Awards! The deadline is May 1st. You can find the information at <https://www.nyswomeninc.org/Members/Awards>.

NEW YORK STATE
women, INC.



2025

MONTHLY
5 Communicator deadline

MONTHLY
5 Communicator deadline

MAR
15 JUNE NIKE submissions deadline

JUN
20-22 Annual Conference Binghamton NY

We connect
and build
women
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New York State Women, Inc.

President

Robin Bridson

president@nyswomeninc.org

NIKE Editor, Joyce DeLong

joycedelong55@yahoo.com

Associate Editor, Katharine Smith

White Rabbit Design

173 Audubon Drive, Snyder, NY 14226

PR@nyswomeninc.org

Production, Jen Gattie

Allegra Marketing, Print, Mail

3959 Union Road, Buffalo, NY 14225

jen@allegracheektowaga.com

Business Manager, Sue Mager

3406 McKinley Parkway, Apt C-11

Blasdell, NY 14219

NIKEmgr@nyswomeninc.org

NIKE Advisory Board

Joyce DeLong, Editor

Katharine Smith, Associate Editor

Sue Mager, Business Manager

Robin Bridson, President, ex officio

Alicia Figueroa, Treasurer, ex officio

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From the Editor

Women's History Month

THIS ISSUE OF *NIKE* COMMEMORATES THE stories of women's defiance of the norms of their times, often at their own peril.

These women from New York State – despite the threat of jail, actual bodily violence, and humiliation – fought for the rights we now enjoy: the right of women to vote, own property, go to college and work; the right to safe workplaces and the opportunity to join a union.

Our cover story from Claire Knowles, "Living Links in Our Continuous Chain – Making Women's History" sets the tone for this issue. Please read the sidebars to her article on page 6, "Honoring those who have come before us" and "What can WE do to contribute to women's progress?" which set out clear aims for NYS Women, Inc. members.

"Night of Terror: the radical women of 1917 tortured and beaten for their pursuit of the right to vote" by Katharine Smith, on page 8, details the brave women who came before us.

We've reprinted articles from the late JoAnne Krolak that feature working women who played prominent roles in New York unions (pages 11 and 15). "The extraordinary journey of Sojourner Truth: from enslaved New Yorker to women's advocate," on page 12, is a testament to what a strong woman can achieve despite all the odds.

Women's History Month is a celebration of women's contributions to history, culture and society. In February 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued the first Presidential Proclamation declaring the Week of March 8th 1980 as National Women's History Week. In 1987 Congress passed Public Law 100-9, designating March as "Women's History Month." Between 1988 and 1994, Congress passed additional resolutions requesting and authorizing the President to proclaim March of each year as Women's History Month. Since 1995, every president has issued an annual proclamation designating the month of March as "Women's History Month."

-Joyce DeLong

"We shall some day be heeded, and everybody will think it was always so, just exactly as many young people think all the privileges, all the freedom, all the enjoyments which woman now possesses always were hers.

They have no idea of how every single inch of ground that she stands upon today has been gained by the hard work of some little handful of women of the past."

-Susan B. Anthony



Image ©Tara Bazilian Chang

JUNE 2025 ISSUE DEADLINE: MARCH 15, 2025. Add *NIKE* in your email subject line and send to the attention of Joyce DeLong, *NIKE* editor (joycedelong55@yahoo.com) or Katharine Smith, associate editor (ksmith@whiterabbitdesign.com) at PR@NYSWomeninc.org. Previously published material must be accompanied by a letter from the publisher with permission to republish and credit line to be included with the article.



Living Links in Our Continuous Chain – Making Women's History

- by Claire Knowles

It is Women's History Month. Whether we recognize it or not, each of us is living and breathing it. In fact, every month we, as individuals, are a part of creating women's history. As an organization, New York State Women, Inc. is writing history.

Every generation creates more links. **Where are you as a link in this chain?** From suffragists attaining the right to vote, to the civil rights movement, to achieving financial credit for women, to women in space, women breaking the glass ceiling, and women breaking huge barriers. Think of some names of special women who have made recent history – women's history – for example, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Supreme Court Justice, or Sally Ride who was the first female astronaut in space. Certainly, many famous women's names easily surface that have influenced your life in some way. Who are the modern women that you admire? You, in turn, influence the lives of other women. *You* are on this Women's Journey.

Each of us is living history. Our actions today shape the world we leave

behind, and they contribute to the legacy that future generations will inherit.

Every choice we make, every conversation, and every initiative we take part in, is like adding another layer to the ongoing story of humanity and of women's progress.

The things we stand for, the movements we join, and the change we advocate for, will influence the circumstances, opportunities, and challenges faced by tomorrow's leaders. What we do "today" impacts not just the present, but the future – a reminder that we're part of a much larger, unfolding narrative.

It's empowering to think of ourselves as contributors to that history, knowing that the steps we take are building the foundation for the world that comes after us.

*So that is exactly why we take the time to both recognize and celebrate Women's History Month. It is also the reason we become introspective. We ask: **What am I doing to strengthen the links in this chain for women's progress?***

"Women should be celebrated every day, but a month dedicated to female empowerment is extremely special. It doesn't just honor the iconic women who have changed history, but encourages new generations to dream big and know that anything is possible."

-Molly McCook

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Living Links in Our Continuous Chain – Making Women’s History

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Sidebar

Honoring those who have come before us.

Women leaders today can draw strength and insight from the legacy of the women who fought for equality, justice and freedoms before us. Here are a few important aspects to appreciate about their contributions:

Courage in the face of adversity. Women like the suffragists faced extreme opposition – often from society, government, and even family. They were jailed, ridiculed, and sometimes subjected to violence, yet they persevered. *Recognizing their courage allows us to build resilience, knowing that progress often comes with hardship.*

Visionary commitment to change. The suffragists didn’t just seek voting rights for women – they were fighting for a broader societal shift towards gender equality. Their vision reminds us to *be strategic and think beyond immediate goals, striving for long-term systemic changes* that can reshape future generations’ opportunities.

Solidarity and community. The suffragists knew the power of unity. They formed strong networks of support and advocacy, often working in coalitions to push their cause forward. For us today, it’s essential to *build a community of like-minded people who can support and challenge each other to grow and create lasting impact.*

Defiance of norms. The suffragists defied the expectations of women in their time, asserting their right to be heard. This teaches us that *leadership often requires examining the norms or structures in place, challenging the status quo, and standing up for what is right, even if it’s unpopular.*

The power of collective action. They understood that *change often requires collective effort, not just individual achievement.* Today we can learn from this by fostering environments that encourage collaboration and inclusion, making sure our actions benefit not just ourselves, but the communities we serve.

Understanding these elements helps us maintain perspective and empowers us to be bold, visionary, and compassionate in shaping a future that uplifts others. *By acknowledging and honoring the efforts of those who came before us, we inherit the strength and wisdom to lead with intention and purpose today.*



Sidebar

What can WE do now to contribute to women’s progress?

Women of all ages have so much power to make a difference in our communities, and there are a variety of ways that both young and senior women can collaborate to create positive change. Here are some specific actions women of different generations can take to improve things in our communities.

MENTORSHIP ACROSS GENERATIONS.

What it looks like: Older women can mentor younger women, passing on knowledge and wisdom from our life experiences. We can guide younger women through career choices, relationship challenges, or navigating systemic obstacles. Younger women, in turn, can offer fresh perspectives and help older women embrace new technologies or social movements.

Why it matters: **Building bridges between generations fosters respect, understanding,** and the sharing of diverse ideas. It strengthens both individual growth and collective progress within a community.

ORGANIZING AND LEADING COMMUNITY INITIATIVES.

What it looks like: We can organize events that address specific needs in our communities – whether it’s health clinics, food drives, career workshops, or social justice events. Older women might have the organizational experience, while younger women could provide new, innovative ways to engage and mobilize others.

Why it matters: When women take leadership in organizing, we create direct, tangible change. By combining the experience of older generations with the energy and ideas of younger ones, we can **organize movements that address the unique needs of our communities.**

ACTIVISM AND ADVOCACY.

What it looks like: Women can advocate for policy changes that affect our communities, whether it’s in education, healthcare, or gender

“There never will be complete equality until women themselves help to make laws and elect lawmakers.” -Susan B. Anthony

equality. This can involve speaking out at local council meetings, lobbying for better resources, or raising awareness of important causes on social media. Older women can leverage their experience in activism to mentor and younger women bring their own creative energy and methods to mobilizing the masses.

Why it matters: The political landscape is shaped by active citizens. When women collectively stand up for what we need in our communities, ***we can push for policy changes that benefit everyone***, especially marginalized groups.

SUPPORT FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING.

What it looks like: Women can create spaces for open conversations about mental health and emotional well-being. Older women who may have experienced generational shifts in mental health awareness can offer guidance. Many younger women are already familiar with navigating mental health struggles and can promote mental health resources and initiatives in schools, workplaces, our community, and social circles.

Why it matters: Mental health is a significant issue, especially after the pandemic, and it's essential that we ***support each other in breaking the stigma around mental health***.

SUPPORT FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES AND WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP.

What it looks like: We can support small businesses – especially those run by other women – in our communities by shopping locally, recommending businesses, or mentoring other women interested in starting their own ventures. Older women business owners often have the expertise and networks to help guide younger entrepreneurs, while younger women can bring new approaches to marketing and digital innovation.

Why it matters: Small businesses are the backbone of many communities, and when women support women-led businesses, ***we strengthen the economic independence and vibrancy where we live and work***.

VOLUNTEERING AND WORKING WITH NONPROFITS.

What it looks like: Women can volunteer for local causes such as helping at food banks, tutoring kids, working with shelters, or supporting programs for the elderly or homeless. Older women, with our experience and wisdom, can help train volunteers and create structured systems, while younger women may bring fresh enthusiasm and new ideas, plus social media skills to expand outreach.

Why it matters: Volunteering strengthens the social fabric of communities. It builds empathy, deepens

relationships, and ***ensures that basic needs are met for vulnerable populations***.

PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY.

What it looks like: We can work together to address environmental challenges in our communities by promoting recycling, planting trees, or encouraging sustainable practices in local businesses. Older women may offer strategies and patience in carrying out long-term projects, while younger women could spearhead awareness campaigns and sustainable innovations.

Why it matters: Women's leadership in ***environmental sustainability helps protect the planet for future generations***. Our communities benefit from a more eco-conscious approach that ensures healthier living conditions and a legacy of responsible stewardship.

ENGAGING IN CIVIC AND



POLITICAL PARTICIPATION.

What it looks like: Political participation takes many forms – voting, attending town meetings, activism, running for office – and all generations can bring fresh ideas and activism, advocating for policies that prioritize women's rights, social justice, and equality.

Why it matters: Civic engagement and advocacy leads to better representation and policy decisions. ***Women's voices are vital in shaping the policies*** that affect everything from healthcare to education to workplace equality.

ADVOCATING FOR EQUAL REPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP.

What it looks like: Women of all ages can actively work

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Feature: Silent Sentinels

Night of Terror: the radical women of 1917 tortured and beaten for their pursuit of the right to vote

by Katharine Smith

In their battle for the right to vote some U.S. suffragists suffered more serious repercussions than jeers or harassment. Throughout their two-and-a-half year-long vigil many of the nearly 2,000 women who picketed the White House were harassed, arrested, and unfairly treated by local and U.S. authorities, including the torture and abuse inflicted on them before and during the November 14, 1917 "Night of Terror."

On January 10, 1917 at ten o'clock in the morning, 12 women from the National Woman's Party picketed in silence outside the White House. The "Silent Sentinels" held banners reading "Mr. President, what will you do for woman suffrage?"

This was the beginning of a two-plus year vigil at the gates of Woodrow Wilson's White House – the first time the White House had ever been picketed – planned and executed by suffragists led by Alice Paul and Lucy Burns, the militant founders of the National Woman's Party (NWP).

Initially, Wilson shrugged off the demonstrators, smiling at them as he passed and inviting them in for coffee; they turned him down. They wore gold, purple, and white and carried banners – some of which quoted Wilson:

"We shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts – for democracy, for the right of those



"Picketing in all sorts of weather. N.Y. Day Picket. Jan. 26, 1917." The National Woman's Party organized picketers like this state delegation from New York. They also set up special days for groups, such as, teachers day or nurses day.



"Suffragist arrests." Washington, D.C. 1918

who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments."

"Kaiser Wilson, have you forgotten your sympathy with the poor Germans because they were not self-governed? 20,000,000 American women are not self-governed. Take the beam out of your own eye." (Comparing Wilson to Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, and to a famous quote of Jesus regarding hypocrisy.)

Public reaction varied, with some people even helping hold up the suffragists' banners although others harassed them. Attitudes changed after the United States entered World War I in April 1917, and the NWP insisted on continued picketing of the White House.

The more moderate suffrage movement – led by the National American Woman Suffrage Association – cast its support behind the war effort. But at this point the picketers were considered unpatriotic for their vigil. Onlookers

Images: Unless otherwise noted, the source for all the historic images in this article is the Library of Congress (<https://www.loc.gov>).

sometimes attacked the women; their banners were torn down and some men hurled insults or rotten fruit. The New York Times called the protests “silent, silly, and offensive.”

In June 1917, police began arresting the Silent Sentinels standing on the sidewalk for “obstruction of traffic.” Initially, they were discharged quickly, and without fines, soon however, the courts began sentencing them to three days in jail. But the suffragists continued picketing.

The arrests escalated in August when the Sentinels started carrying banners calling the president “Kaiser Wilson.” Authorities clamped down, sentencing six women to 60-day prison terms, among them Janet Fotheringham of Buffalo, NY (pictured right).

The Sentinels kept coming back, getting arrested, refusing to pay fines in order to bring attention to their issue.

They were sentenced to longer and longer terms and when space ran out at the District of Columbia Jail they were imprisoned in the Occoquan Workhouse, a reformatory in Fairfax



Janet Fotheringham, of Buffalo, NY.

“The Buffalo Six,” as they were called, were a group of women from Buffalo, NY who were among the 500 suffragists who picketed the White House in 1917.

They included Edith Ainge, a worker with the National Women’s Party (the group that organized the picketing); home economics teacher Margaret Fotheringham; student Janet Fotheringham; Amy Jeungling, a teacher from Black Rock; Ada Kendall, a journalist with the Buffalo Express newspaper; and a nurse named Hattie Kreugger.

They marched on the White House, numerous times, knowing that their civil disobedience would likely land them behind bars. They were arrested and were locked up in the Occoquan Workhouse under violent and humiliating conditions.

“Women’s roles, because of these protests, because of WW I, ended up changing the perception of women’s importance in the electorate to the entire country, and importantly to Woodrow Wilson,” according to Anthony Greco, Director of Exhibits & Interpretive Planning at the Buffalo History Museum which has an exhibit on The Buffalo Six.

“It’s incredibly important to show how small acts can contribute to a much larger cause,” says Greco.

The Buffalo Niagara Chapter’s March 5th dinner meeting included a presentation on The Buffalo Six from speaker Lindsey Lauren Visser, a historian and researcher.

County.

Conditions at Occoquan were disgusting; the food contained worms; their water and bedding were filthy. The women also faced harsh treatment from guards: a former night officer, Virginia Bovee, contended that the superintendent and his son beat their prisoners.

Alice Paul was arrested that October, the banner she carried quoted Wilson: “*The time has come to conquer or submit, for us there can be but one choice. We have made it.*” She was sentenced to seven months. Paul along with other demonstrators was sent to the District Jail; some were again sent to the Occoquan Workhouse.

Paul was placed in solitary confinement for two weeks, with nothing to eat except bread and water. Weak and unable to walk, she was moved to the prison hospital. There, she began a hunger strike, and other picketers joined her in an effort to be recognized as political prisoners. In response, prison doctors force fed the women, putting tubes down their throats. Paul was repeatedly force-fed and moved in early November to the District Jail’s psychiatric ward.

On the night of November 14, 1917, during what the women called the “Night of Terror,” Occoquan Superintendent, Whittaker, ordered

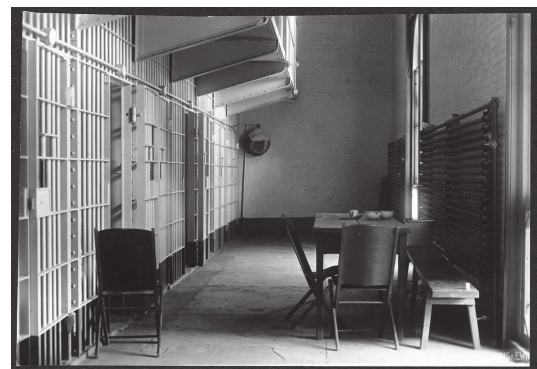
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Pictured far left: “Lucy Burns, of NYC, in Occoquan Workhouse, Washington, Nov. 1917.” Leader of most of the picketing, she served more time in jail than any other U.S. suffragist. Arrested picketing June 1917, sentenced to 3 days; arrested September



Pictured left: Cell at Occoquan Workhouse, ca. 1917. Below: Tier in D.C. prison where suffragists were confined in 1917.



1917, sentenced to 60 days; arrested November 10, 1917, sentenced to 6 months; in January 1919 arrested at watchfire demonstrations, for which she served one 3-day and two 5-day sentences.

“The Night of Terror”

Continued from page 9

his nearly 40 guards to brutalize the 33 suffragists in custody.

Lucy Burns was beaten and had her hands chained to the top of a cell, forcing her to stand all night wearing only a blanket; they threatened her with a straitjacket and a buckle gag. They threw Dora Lewis into a dark cell and smashed her head against an iron bed, knocking her out. Her cellmate, Alice Cosu, who believed Lewis to be dead, suffered a heart attack, and didn't receive medical attention until morning. Guards grabbed, dragged, beat, choked, pinched, and kicked women.

The brutality did not end after that “Night of Terror.” Not to be dissuaded, the women refused to eat for three days. Realizing something urgent needed to be done or he would potentially have dead prisoners on his hands, the warden moved Burns to another jail and told the remaining women that the strike was over. He also ordered Burns to be force fed. From her secret diary: “I was held down by five people at legs, arms, and head. I refused to open mouth. Gannon pushed tube up left nostril. I turned and twisted my head all I could, but he managed to push it up. It hurts nose and throat very much and makes nose bleed freely.” Of the well-known suffragists of the era, Burns spent the most time in jail.

Word got out about the conditions the protestors were being held under and newspapers carried stories about their treatment. The articles angered some Americans and created more support for the suffrage amendment.

On November 27 and 28, all the protesters were released, including Alice Paul, who had spent five weeks in prison. Later, in March 1918, the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that women had been illegally arrested, convicted, and imprisoned. The court held that the information on which the women's convictions were based was overly vague.

Finally, on January 9, 1918, Wilson announced his support for the women's suffrage amendment. The next day, the House of Representatives narrowly passed the amendment but the Senate refused to even debate it until October. When the Senate voted on the amendment in October, it failed by two votes.

Despite the ruling by the Court of Appeals, arrests of White House protesters resumed on August 6, 1918.

In a high pressure move, in December 1918, protesters began burning Wilson's words in watchfires in front of the White House. On February 9, 1919, they burned Wilson's image in effigy at the White House.

May 21, 1919, the House of Representatives passed the 19th amendment; two weeks later on June 4, the Senate finally followed. It was officially ratified on August 26, 1920, after ratification by Tennessee; 36th state to do so.

“The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.”

-19th Amendment, U.S. Constitution

Living Links in Our Continuous Chain – Making Women's History

Continued from page 7

to ensure equal representation of women in leadership roles, whether in politics, business, education, or social justice organizations. This involves supporting female candidates, encouraging other women to pursue leadership roles, or holding institutions accountable for gender equity.

Why it matters: Representation matters because **it allows women to shape the policies and decisions that impact our lives.** When women are in leadership, we create more inclusive, diverse, and thoughtful decisions for the collective good.

THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE ACTION.

Just like the suffragists who picketed Woodrow Wilson at the White House in 1917, our collective action can make a difference. By combining the strengths of our different generations – wisdom and experience from older women with the innovation and energy of younger women – we can create solutions that are both thoughtful and forward-thinking. This intergenerational collaboration nurtures community growth, fosters social

justice, and creates positive change that can endure for generations. Together, we can make lasting impacts in our communities, creating better bolder tomorrows.

Sound overwhelming? While none of us can take on *all* these initiatives, consider what *you* CAN do. Which issues matter the most to you? Where in your own community can you make the most difference? Find what you are most passionate about and take it in small steps. After all, as Margaret Mead said:

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

BNC member Claire Knowles is an author, speaker, and consultant. She works with organizations and businesses, assisting them to move through difficult situations, including reducing the risk of workplace violence. She is certified in mediation and is a certified personal and life coach. Contact her: ClaireEKnowles.com or 716-622-7753.

*Sidebars “Honoring those who have come before us” and “What can WE do now to contribute to women's progress?” created with the assistance of Open AI.

Kate Mullany

by JoAnne Krolak

Kate Mullany is remembered as the leader of the nation's first women's union and the first woman to serve as an officer of a national union.

KATE MULLANY was born in Ireland in 1845 and immigrated to the United States with her family, where they settled in Troy, NY. When Kate was 19, her father died, and Kate took a job in a laundry in Troy to help support the family. Working days were long – 12 to 14 hours. The work week was six days. Working conditions included exposure to harsh chemicals and boiling water. If a girl damaged a shirt or collar, the cost was deducted from her \$3 per week wages.

Almost half of the female workers in Troy were employed in the collar business. Certain classes of laundry workers, such as ironers, were paid very well, compared to factory workers or public laundry workers. Nevertheless, there were the working conditions to be considered. Since new starching machines had been introduced, many women had been badly burned.

Kate had seen what the Iron Moulders Union had done for foundry workers in Troy. In 1864, Kate and her co-worker, Esther Keegan, with the support of the Iron Moulders, organized the Collar Laundry Workers Union to protest their low wages and unsafe working conditions. On February 23rd of that year, 300 members of the Collar Laundry Workers went on strike against 14 commercial laundries. Six days later, the laundry

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Image: Adam Lenhardt

Kate Mullany House This modest three-story brick house is the only surviving building associated with Kate Mullany. Her mother Bridget purchased the land on Eighth Street in 1864, which was completed as a family residence and income-producing property in 1869. Kate returned to the home in 1903 after being widowed and died there in 1906.

"The detachable collar was invented by a woman, Hannah Lord Montague, in Troy in 1829. By the 1860s, Troy produced almost all of the collars and cuffs demanded by fashion in America. The industry employed 3,700 women, almost half of Troy's female work force and by far the single largest employer of women... Fifteen collar manufacturers employed female machine operators in collar factories ranging from 25-550 employees each. Fourteen collar laundries operated in the city, employing about 600 women who worked in small shops in groups of ten to twenty.

Laundering was an essential part of the manufacturing process for shirts and especially for collars and cuffs, easily soiled by the many processes done by hand. Washing, starching and ironing the collars involved boiling water, chloride and sulfuric acid bleaches, layers of starch, drying and finally pressing with hot, heavy irons. The procedure required a special knowledge of the materials and techniques, physical endurance, strength and manual dexterity. An 1865 description of a Troy laundry vividly depicts women standing at wash tubs and ironing tables between furnaces for twelve to fourteen hours a day, steaming wet fabric into shape with the room temperature averaging 100 degrees, for merely two dollars a week, the cost of a pair of shoes.

This was Kate Mullany's world. By 1863 she was the primary wage earner in her family, supporting a widowed mother and at least two sisters...

...In February 1864, Kate Mullany and about 200 of her fellow female workers decided to follow the example of Trojan ironworkers. They organized the Collar Laundry Union and went on strike for better wages and working conditions. After a week, they were able to secure a 25% wage increase. Their union has been cited as the first "bona fide" women's union in the United States, because it did not disband once its demands were met. The Collar Laundry Union continued to function as a force in the collar industry for more than five years."

Excerpt from 2004 testimony to designate the Kate Mullany National Historic Site in Troy, NY from Rachel Bliven, Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor Commission before the Committee on Resources, U.S. House of Representatives.

The extraordinary journey of Sojourner Truth: from enslaved New Yorker to women's advocate

Sojourner Truth would have been an extraordinary figure regardless of the era when she was born. Nearly six feet tall and as strong as most men, Truth was an American abolitionist and activist for African-American civil rights, women's rights, and alcohol temperance. At the White House she met both with President Abraham Lincoln and President Ulysses S. Grant to advocate for formerly enslaved people.

Time enslaved in New York State

Sojourner Truth was born Isabella Baumfree sometime between 1797 and 1800. Truth was one of the 10 or 12 children born to James and Elizabeth Baumfree. Her father was an enslaved man captured from Ghana, while her mother's parents were captured and enslaved from Guinea. Colonel Hardenbergh bought James and Elizabeth Baumfree and kept their family at his estate in a big hilly area called by the Dutch name Swartekill (just north of present-day Rifton, 95 miles north of New York City). Her first language was Dutch, and she continued to speak with a Dutch accent for the rest of her life. Charles Hardenbergh inherited his father's estate and continued to enslave people as a part of that estate's property.

When Charles Hardenbergh died in 1806, nine-year-old Truth (known as Belle), was sold at an auction with a flock of sheep for \$100 to John Neely, near Kingston, NY. Until that time, Truth spoke only Dutch but now learned. She later described Neely as cruel and harsh, relating how he beat her daily and once even with a bundle of rods. In 1808 Neely sold her for \$105 to tavern keeper Martinus Schryver of Port Ewen, NY, who enslaved her for 18 months. Schryver then sold Truth in 1810 to John Dumont who raped her repeatedly.

Around 1815, Truth met and fell in love with an enslaved man named Robert from a neighboring farm. Robert's owner forbade their relationship; he did not want those he enslaved to have children with people he didn't own because he wouldn't own the children. Catton and his son savagely beat Robert sneaked over to

see Truth until Dumont finally intervened. Truth never saw Robert again after that day and he died a few years later. The experience haunted Truth throughout her life. Truth eventually married an older enslaved man named Thomas. She bore five children: James, her firstborn, who died in childhood; Diana, the result of a rape by John Dumont; and Peter, Elizabeth, and Sophia, all born after she and Thomas united.



Freedom at last

In 1799, the New York State began to legislate the abolition of slavery, although the process of emancipation in New York was not complete until 1827. Dumont had promised to grant Truth her freedom a year before the state emancipation, "if she would do well and be faithful." However, he changed his mind, claiming a hand injury had made her less productive.

Late in 1826, Truth escaped to freedom with her infant daughter, Sophia. She had to leave her other children behind because they were not legally freed in the emancipation order until they had served as bound servants into their 20s. She later said, "I did not run off, for I thought that wicked, but I walked off, believing that to be all right."

She became one of the first black women to go to court against a white man and win the case.

She found her way to the home of Isaac and Maria Van Wagenen in New Paltz, who took her and her baby in. Isaac offered to buy her services for the remainder of the year (until the state's emancipation took effect), which Dumont accepted for \$20. She lived there until the New York State Emancipation Act was approved a year later.

Truth learned that her son Peter, then five years old, had been sold by Dumont and then illegally resold to an owner in Alabama. With the help of the Van Wagenens, she took the issue to the New York Supreme Court. She filed a suit against Peter's new owner and in 1828, after months of legal proceedings, she got back her son, who had been abused by his owners.

Truth became one of the first black women to go to

court against a white man and win the case.

A spiritual journey begins

In 1827, she became a Christian and participated in the founding of the Methodist church of Kingston, NY. In 1829, she moved to New York City and joined the John Street Methodist Church. In 1833, she was hired by Robert Matthews, also known as the Prophet Matthias, leader of a sect, went to work for him as a housekeeper in the communal settlement, and became a member of the group. In 1834, Matthews was found guilty of beating his daughter. This event prompted Truth to leave the sect in 1835. Afterwards, she retired to New York City until 1843.

Belle becomes Sojourner Truth

The year 1843 was a turning point for her. On June 1, Pentecost Sunday, she changed her name to Sojourner Truth. She chose the name because she heard the Spirit of God calling on her to preach the truth. She told her friends: "The Spirit calls me, and I must go", and left to make her way traveling and preaching about the abolition of slavery. Taking along only a few possessions, she traveled north, working her way up through the Connecticut River Valley, towards Massachusetts.

Over the next few years Truth followed several Christian sects, including the Millerite Adventists who followed William Miller, who preached that Jesus would appear in 1843–1844, and about the end of the world. In 1844, she joined the Northampton Association of Education and Industry in Massachusetts, which supported women's rights and religious tolerance as well as pacifism. They lived on 470 acres, raising livestock, running a sawmill, a gristmill, and a silk factory. While there, Truth met abolitionist Frederick Douglass. Encouraged by the community, Truth delivered her first anti-slavery speech that year. In 1845, she joined the household of George Benson, the

Continued on page 14

Woman's Rights Convention: Sojourner Truth's Speech

Sojourner Truth delivered this speech on May 29, 1851 at the Woman's Rights Convention in Akron, OH. Marius Robinson, who acted as the convention's recording secretary, printed the speech as he transcribed it in the June 21, 1851, issue of the **Anti-Slavery Bugle**.

"One of the most unique and interesting speeches of the convention was made by Sojourner Truth, an emancipated slave. It is impossible to transfer it to paper, or convey any adequate idea of the effect it produced upon the audience. Those only can appreciate it who saw her powerful form, her whole-souled, earnest gesture, and listened to her strong and truthful tones. She came forward to the platform and addressing the President said with great simplicity: "May I say a few words?" Receiving an affirmative answer, she proceeded:

I want to say a few words about this matter. I am a woman's rights [sic]. I have as much muscle as any man, and can do as much work as any man. I have plowed and reaped and husked and chopped and mowed, and can any man do more than that? I have heard much about the sexes being equal. I can carry as much as any man, and can eat as much too, if I can get it. I am as strong as any man that is now. As for intellect, all I can say is, if a woman have a pint, and a man a quart – why can't she have her little pint full? You need not be afraid to give us our rights for fear we will take too much, – for we can't take more than our pint'll hold. The poor men seems to be all in confusion, and don't know what to do. Why children, if you have woman's rights, give it to her and you will feel better. You will have your own rights, and they won't be so much trouble. I can't read, but I can hear. I have heard the Bible and have learned that Eve caused man to sin. Well, if woman upset the world, do give her a chance to set it right side up again. The Lady has spoken about Jesus, how he never spurned woman from him, and she was right. When Lazarus died, Mary and Martha came to him with faith and love and besought him to raise their brother. And Jesus wept and Lazarus came forth. And how came Jesus into the world? Through God who created him and the woman who bore him. Man, where was your part? But the women are coming up blessed be God and a few of the men are coming up with them. But man is in a tight place, the poor slave is on him, woman is coming on him, he is surely between a hawk and a buzzard."

*The first complete speech transcription was published on June 21, 1851 in the **Anti-Slavery Bugle** by Marius Robinson, an abolitionist and newspaper editor who acted as the convention's recording secretary. He was in the audience during Truth's original speech and the question "Ain't I a Woman?" does not appear in his account.*

Twelve years later, in 1863, Frances Gage (who helped organize the convention) published a different version with Truth speaking in the dialect of Southern slaves. Gage's version of the speech became the historic standard, known as "Ain't I a Woman?" Truth's speaking style was not like that of people enslaved in the South; born and raised in New York, she spoke only Dutch until she was nine years old.

The version known as "Ain't I a Woman" remained the most widely circulated version until the work of historian Nell Irvin Painter, followed up by the Sojourner Truth Project, found strong historical evidence that the Gage speech was likely very inaccurate, and the Robinson speech was the most accurate version.

"I feel that I have the right to have just as much as a man. There is a great stir about colored men getting their rights, but not a word about the colored women; and if colored men get their rights, and colored women not theirs, the colored men will be masters over the women, and it will be just as bad as it was before." - Sojourner Truth

brother-in-law of William Lloyd Garrison.

Truth started dictating her memoirs to her friend Olive Gilbert and in 1850 Garrison privately published her book, *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth: a Northern Slave*. That same year, she purchased a home in Florence for \$300 and spoke at the first National Women's Rights Convention in Worcester, MA. In 1854, with proceeds from sales of the narrative and cartes-de-visite (small photographs the size of a formal visiting card) captioned, "I sell the shadow to support the substance," she paid off the mortgage.

Ain't I a Woman?

In 1851, Truth joined George Thompson, an abolitionist and speaker, on a lecture tour through central and western New York State. In May, she attended the Ohio Women's Rights Convention in Akron, where she delivered her famous extemporaneous speech on women's rights, later known as "Ain't I a Woman?". Her speech demanded equal human rights for all women. She also spoke as a former enslaved woman, combining calls for abolitionism with women's rights, and drawing from her strength as a laborer to make her equal rights claims.

(See the sidebar on page 8 for an exploration of this inspiring speech.)

Truth gave speeches on abolition and suffrage for women

Over the next 10 years, Truth spoke before dozens, perhaps hundreds, of audiences. From 1851 to 1853, Truth worked with Marius Robinson, the editor of the *Ohio Anti-Slavery Bugle*, and traveled around that state speaking. In 1853, she spoke at a suffragist "mob convention" at the Broadway Tabernacle in New York City; that year she also met Harriet Beecher Stowe. In 1856, she traveled to Battle Creek, MI, to speak to a group called the Friends of Human Progress. At the Second Annual Convention of the American Woman Suffrage Association in Boston, 1871: In a brief speech, Truth argued that women's rights were essential, not only to their own well-being, but "for the benefit of the whole creation, not only the women, but all the men on the face of the earth, for they were the mother of them".

Truth dedicated her life to fighting for a more equal society for African Americans and for women, including abolition, voting rights, and property rights. She was

at the vanguard of efforts to address intersecting social justice issues.

In September 1857, she sold all her possessions and moved to Battle Creek, MI, where she rejoined former members of the Millerite movement who had formed the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Here, she also joined the nucleus of the Michigan abolitionists, the Progressive Friends, some who she had already met at national conventions. For ten years Truth lived in the village of Harmonia, MI, a Spiritualist utopia. She then moved into nearby Battle Creek, MI, living there until her death in 1883. According to the 1860 census, her household in Harmonia included her daughter, Elizabeth Banks, and her grandsons James Caldwell and

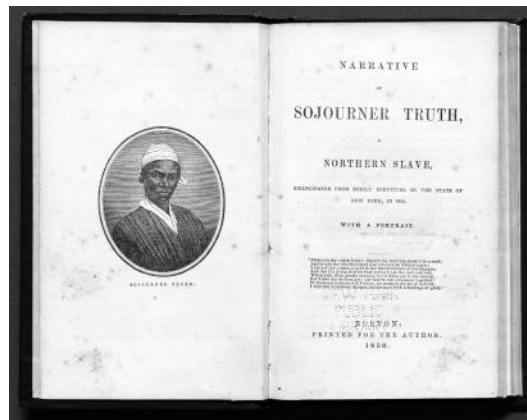
Sammy Banks.

Advocacy in meetings with presidents Lincoln and Grant

Truth helped recruit black troops for the Union Army during the Civil War. Her grandson, James Caldwell, enlisted in the 54th Massachusetts Regiment. In 1864, Truth was employed by the National Freedman's Relief Association in Washington, D.C., where she worked diligently to improve conditions for African-Americans. In October of that year, she was invited to the White House by President Abraham Lincoln. In 1865, while working at the Freedman's Hospital in Washington, Truth rode in the streetcars to help force their desegregation.

In 1870, Truth tried to secure land grants from the federal government to former enslaved people, a project she pursued for seven years without success. While in Washington, D.C., she had a meeting with President Ulysses S. Grant in the White House. In 1872, she returned to Battle Creek, became active in Grant's presidential re-election campaign, and even tried to vote on Election Day, but was turned away at the polling place. Truth spoke about abolition, women's rights, prison reform, and preached to the Michigan Legislature against capital punishment.

Truth died early in the morning on November 26, 1883, at her Battle Creek home. On November 28, 1883, her funeral was held at the Congregational-Presbyterian Church; some of the prominent citizens of Battle Creek acted as pall-bearers and nearly 1,000 people attended the service. She was posthumously inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, NY, in 1981. 🖤





Rose Schneiderman

by JoAnne Krolak

ROSE SCHNEIDERMAN was born in Saven in Poland in 1882. When she was 8, her family left Poland for the United States and eventually made their home in New York City. Two years later,

Rose's father died. Rose dropped out of school at age 13 and took a job as a sales clerk to help support the family. At 16, Rose left her sales job for a better paying job in the garment industry at the Hein & Fox factory.

The hours were long – from 8:00 in the morning to 6:00 at night. The pay was on the piece work basis – 3 1/2 to 10 cents a dozen for cap linings. By working hard, a girl could make an average of \$5 per week. Rose might have taken home more money, but like the other girls, she had to provide her own sewing machine. These were generally purchased on the installment plan at \$5 down and \$1 per month until paid off. Then the factory owners started making reduction in the cap makers' pay.

After three years, Rose and her friend Bessie Brout decided the cap makers needed an organization and they formed the first women's local of the United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers' Union. Bessie got fired when the owners found out, and Rose always said the reason she wasn't fired was because she "was a sample maker and not so easy to replace." In 1905, there was a strike, which started over several shops in the industry attempting to institute an open shop policy. An open shop meant that an employer could hire and fire at will, without regard to the union membership of an individual worker. The members of the Jewish Socialist United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers walked out and stayed out for 13 weeks. In the process, they won the respect of many nonunion workers as well as support from other unions. Rose herself came to the attention of the New York Women's Trade Union League, which lent moral and financial support to women organizers. Three years after the strike, Rose became the League's vice president and left the cap making factory to work for the League.

Within a year, Rose was elected vice-president of the WTUL. Conditions for women in the garment trade were appalling. Unsanitary conditions were widespread. Fire hazards were everywhere. Noise coming from the machines was at a deafening level. Women were required to work overtime, and could be fined for almost anything from

Rose formed the first women's local of the United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers' Union.

talking to oil stains on the fabric to stitching that wasn't the right size. In 1909 the women, with the support of the Women's Trade Union League and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, launched a series of strikes against the two companies best known for these conditions – Leiserson & Co. and the Triangle Waist Company. The action became known as the "Uprising of the 20,000" and for thirteen weeks in winter, the women walked a picket line daily. They faced police clubbing and judges who told

Continued on page 16

Rose Schneiderman Addresses Protest of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire in April 1911

I would be a traitor to these poor burned bodies if I came here to talk good fellowship. We have tried you good people of the public and we have found you wanting. The old Inquisition had its rack and its thumbscrews and its instruments of torture with iron teeth. We know what these things are today; the iron teeth are our necessities, the thumbscrews are the high powered and swift machinery close to which we must work, and the rack is here in the firetrap structures that will destroy us the minute they catch on fire.

This is not the first time girls have been burned alive in the city. Every week I must learn of the untimely death of one of my sister workers. Every year thousands of us are maimed. The life of men and women is so cheap and property is so sacred. There are so many of us for one job it matters little if 146 of us are burned to death.

We have tried you citizens; we are trying you now, and you have a couple of dollars for the sorrowing mothers, brothers and sisters by way of a charity gift. But every time the workers come out in the only way they know to protest against conditions which are unbearable the strong hand of the law is allowed to press down heavily upon us.

Public officials have only words of warning to us – warning that we must be intensely peaceable, and they have the workhouse just back of all their warnings. The strong hand of the law beats us back, when we rise, into the conditions that make life unbearable.

I can't talk fellowship to you who are gathered here. Too much blood has been spilled. I know from my experience it is up to the working people to save themselves. The only way they can save themselves is by a strong working-class movement.

Rose Schneiderman's speech, Metropolitan Opera House meeting to protest the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire April 2, 1911.

them they were on strike “against God and Nature.” The strike fell apart as settlements were made shop by shop, but the women proved they were as capable at labor organizing as their male counterparts.

One year after the strike ended, Triangle still refused to settle with the women and in fact, fired many of the workers known to be union members. Working conditions remained as before, with flammable materials stored throughout the factory, lighting provided by open gas lamps, no fire extinguishers, and so on. Then on March 25, 1911, fire broke out at the Triangle factory. One stairwell was blocked by smoke and flames. Exit doors were kept locked to deter theft. The single fire escape bent double from the weight of young women trying to escape. The one elevator stopped working when other women jumped down the shaft onto the roof of the elevator. Fire department ladders could not reach beyond the sixth floor and so were unable to stop the flames. One hundred forty-six lives were lost – mostly immigrant women between the ages of 13 and 25.

On April 2, 1911, a memorial was held at the Metropolitan Opera House, which was attended by representatives of the WTUL, the ILGWU, and leading members of the community. Dissension broke out between those who saw class solidarity and organization as the solution and others who looked to legal reforms to prevent another Triangle fire. The meeting was on the verge of disorder when Rose Schneiderman walked up to the podium. “I would be a traitor to those poor burned bodies if I came here to talk good fellowship...” she said. “...Every year thousands of us are maimed. The life of men and women is so cheap and property is so sacred...”

In the end, under pressure from the WTUL, the ILGWU and others, the New York Legislature set up a Committee on Safety and also a Factory Investigating Committee. Committee recommendations resulting in safety legislation which became the model for safety legislation across the nation. 🐾

Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, deadliest industrial disaster in NYC history.

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of Manhattan, New York City, on March 25, 1911, was the deadliest industrial disaster in the history of the city, and one of the deadliest in U.S. history. The fire caused the

deaths of 146 garment workers who died from the fire, smoke inhalation, or falling or jumping to their deaths. Most of the victims were recent Italian or Jewish immigrant women and girls; they were ages 14 to 23.

The factory was located on the 8th, 9th, and 10th floors of the Asch Building, at 23–29 Washington Place in Greenwich Village. The 1901 building still stands and is now known as the Brown Building, which is part of and owned by New York University (NYU).

The Triangle Waist Company factory produced women’s blouses, known as “shirtwaists.” The factory normally employed about 500 workers, mostly young Italian and Jewish immigrant women and girls, who worked nine hours a day on weekdays plus seven hours on Saturdays.

At approximately 4:40 PM on Saturday, March 25, 1911, as the workday was ending, a fire flared up in a scrap bin under one of the cutter’s tables at the northeast corner of the 8th floor. The first fire alarm was sent at 4:45 PM by a passerby on Washington Place who saw smoke coming from the 8th floor. Both owners of the factory were in attendance and had invited their children to the factory on that afternoon.

The Fire Marshal concluded that the likely cause of the fire was the disposal of an unextinguished match or cigarette butt in the scrap bin, which held two months’ worth of accumulated cuttings. Beneath the table in the wooden bin were hundreds of pounds of scraps left over from the several thousand shirtwaists that had been cut at that table.

Although the 9th floor had a number of exits, including two freight elevators, a fire escape, and stairways down to Greene Street and Washington Place, flames prevented workers from descending the Greene Street stairway, and the door to the Washington Place stairway was locked to prevent theft by the workers; the locked doors allowed managers to check the women’s purses. Dozens of employees escaped the fire by going up the Greene Street stairway to the roof. Other survivors were able to jam themselves into the elevators while they continued to operate.



Continued on next page

Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, deadliest industrial disaster in NYC history.

Within three minutes, the Greene Street stairway became unusable in both directions. Terrified employees crowded onto the single exterior fire escape – which city officials had allowed Asch to erect instead of the required third staircase – a flimsy and poorly anchored iron structure that may have been broken before the fire. It soon twisted and collapsed from the heat and overload, spilling about 20 victims nearly 100 feet to their deaths on the concrete pavement below. The remainder waited until smoke and fire overcame them.

The fire department arrived quickly but was unable to stop the flames, as their ladders were only long enough to reach as high as the 7th floor. The fallen bodies and falling victims also made it difficult for the fire department to approach the building.

Elevator operators Joseph Zito and Gaspar Mortillaro saved many lives by traveling three times up to the 9th floor for passengers, but Mortillaro was eventually forced to give up when the rails of his elevator buckled under the heat. Some victims pried the elevator doors open and jumped into the empty shaft, trying to slide down the cables or to land on top of the car. The weight and impacts of these bodies warped the elevator car and made it impossible for Zito to make another attempt. William Gunn Shepard, a reporter at the tragedy, would say that “I learned a new sound that day, a sound more horrible than description can picture – the thud of a speeding living body on a stone sidewalk”.

One hundred forty-six people died as a result of the fire: 123 women and girls and 23 men. Most victims died of burns, asphyxiation, blunt impact injuries, or a combination of the three.

Bodies of the victims were taken to Charities Pier (also called Misery Lane), located at 26th street and the East River, for identification by friends and relatives. Victims were interred in 16 different cemeteries. People and horses draped in black walked in procession in memory of the victims.

The company's owners, Max Blanck and Isaac Harris – both Jewish immigrants – who survived the fire by fleeing to the building's roof when it began, were indicted on charges of first- and second-degree manslaughter in mid-April; the pair's trial began on December 4, 1911. The jury acquitted the two men of first- and second-degree manslaughter, but they were found liable of wrongful death during a subsequent civil suit in 1913 in which plaintiffs were awarded compensation in the amount of \$75 per deceased victim.

The insurance company paid Blanck and Harris about \$60,000 more than the reported losses, or about \$400 per casualty. In 1913, Blanck was once again arrested for locking the door in his factory during working hours. He



was fined \$20 which was the minimum amount the fine could be.

In New York City, a Committee on Public Safety was formed, headed by eyewitness Frances Perkins – who 22 years later would be appointed U.S. Secretary of Labor – to identify specific problems and lobby for new legislation, such as the bill to grant workers shorter hours in a work week, known as the “54-hour Bill.”

The New York State Legislature then created the Factory Investigating Commission to “investigate factory conditions in this and other cities and to report remedial measures of legislation to prevent hazard or loss of life among employees through fire, unsanitary conditions, and occupational diseases.” They held a series of widely publicized investigations around the state, interviewing 222 witnesses and taking 3,500 pages of testimony.

They hired field agents to do on-site inspections of factories. They started with the issue of fire safety and moved on to broader issues of the risks of injury in the factory environment. Their findings led to 38 new laws regulating labor in New York state, and gave them a reputation as leading progressive reformers working on behalf of the working class.

New York City's Fire Chief John Kenlon told the investigators that his department had identified more than 200 factories where conditions made a fire like that at the Triangle Factory possible. The State Commission's reports helped modernize the state's labor laws, making New York State “one of the most progressive states in terms of labor reform.”

New laws mandated better building access and egress, fireproofing requirements, the availability of fire extinguishers, the installation of alarm systems and automatic sprinklers, better eating and toilet facilities for workers, and limited the number of hours that women and children could work. In the years from 1911 to 1913, sixty of the sixty-four new laws recommended by the Commission were legislated with the support of Governor William Sulzer.





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owners capitulated and increased wages by twenty-five percent. In 1866, it was the Iron Moulders who received help from the Collar Workers. Kate and her fellow workers contributed financial support, which resulted in an invitation by the Troy Trades Assembly to the Collar Laundry Workers to affiliate with them.

In that same year, William Sylvis of the Iron Moulders convened a congress of national labor leaders in Baltimore. William Sylvis challenged the union members present to fight the prejudice then existing against the employment of women (because it allegedly depreciated the wages of men) and aid in forming labor associations. Kate believed that the women of the Collar Laundry Workers were every bit as competent as male workers and the organization contributed union members to train women from other groups to become organized and pay their expenses while they did so.

Two years later, in 1868, Kate traveled to New York City for the convention of the National Labor Union. Kate was one of four women to serve as a delegate to this convention. In addition to Kate (Collar Laundry Workers), Mary Kellogg Putnam (Working Women's Association #2 of New York City), Mary A. McDonald (Working Women's Protective Labor Union of Mount Vernon, NY #6), and Susan B. Anthony (Working Women's Association #1, New York City) also attended. Kate would go on to be elected Second Vice President of the Organization, but resigned the office

"Kate Mullany was not unknown outside of labor circles. In early 1870 women's rights activist Susan B. Anthony visited the cooperative factory in Troy to meet Mullany for the first time. She spoke of her visit in later speeches and articles. Anthony referred to the dissolved Laundry Union as the best organized women's union she had known and expressed deep sympathy for 'this working-women's venture.'" Mullany wrote to Anthony's publication The Revolution in April 1870 to report on the cooperative factory's plans and their progress in securing the needed capital of \$10,000."

Excerpt from 2004 testimony to designate the Kate Mullany National Historic Site in Troy, NY from Rachel D. Bliven, Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor Commission before the Committee on Resources, United States House of Representatives.

since the First Vice President was also from New York. At the close of the convention, Kate was appointed assistant secretary for the organization, where she would correspond with working women and coordinate national efforts to form working women's associations.

From its founding until 1869, the Collar Laundry Workers Union had held three strikes. However, the strike called in 1869 was unsuccessful because the collar manufacturers and the laundry owners united

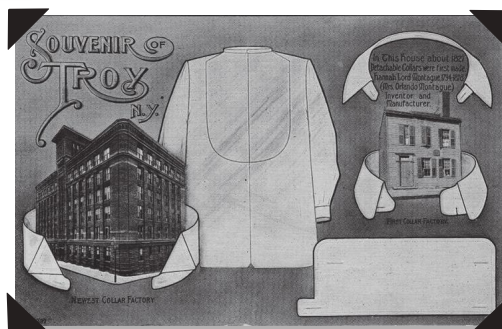
in opposition toward paying a wage increase. The collar manufacturers refused to send their products to any laundry that employed union ironers. They also helped laundry owners train a non-union workforce. The strike collapsed and the laundresses went back to work without a wage increase.

Kate and the Collar Laundry leadership started a laundry cooperative. Their aim was to give the laundry workers greater control over their working conditions. The laundry cooperative lasted about two years, but ultimately failed when local collar manufacturers were able to prevent out-of-town manufacturers from supplying the cooperative with new collars. An attempt to start a manufacturing enterprise also failed when the manufacturers introduced a paper collar.

This proved to be the end of the Collar Laundry Workers. The laundresses were back working at their old wages and the union leadership voted to dissolve the union in February of 1870. Kate herself worked in support of cooperatives for a short time, then later married John Fogarty. She died in 1906 and is buried in St. Peter's

Cemetery in Troy.

Kate Mullany is remembered as the leader of the nation's first women's union and the first woman to serve as an officer of a national union.





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#BuildPowerfulWomen

JOIN A CHAPTER IN
NEW YORK STATE:
WE'D LOVE TO SEE
YOU!

NYC area /Long Island

Richmond County Chapter
Staten Island Chapter

Hudson Valley/Catskills

Professional Women of
Sullivan County
Westchester Chapter

Central New York

Central NY Chapter
Professional Business
Women of Rome
Mohawk Valley Chapter

Central Southern Tier

Susquehanna Chapter
Greater Binghamton Chapter
Walton Chapter
Tri-County Chapter

Finger Lakes

Lake to Lake Women
Professional Women of
the Finger Lakes
Steuben County Women
Yates County Women

Western New York

Buffalo Niagara Chapter
716 Chapter (Clarence area)
Chadwick Bay Chapter

NETWORKING.
RESOURCES.
CONNECTIONS.
FRIENDSHIP.
ADVOCACY.
INSPIRATION.

Empowering women to use their voices to create positive change.