



## Columbus Women of Distinction

Women have shaped Columbus, Ohio from its earliest days. They have served its people, and trail blazed local and national rights and respect for women. These women of distinction represent the many women of courage, conviction, vision, and ability who have built and continue to make contributions to Columbus.

One of the Columbus pioneer mothers was Hannah Schwing Neil (1794-1868). Neil and her husband came to Columbus during its earliest years. She was described by her contemporaries as a “woman devoted to all good works.” Neil was known to store up a large supply of food within her home to give to the poor during the winter and is reported to have given away all of her dresses, except one, to the poor.

Neil also had vision. She was one of the early leaders of organized charity in Columbus. She was a founder of the Columbus Female Benevolent Society. In 1858, Neil founded the Industrial Mission School Association, serving as president for eight years. In 1868, after her death, the school’s name was changed to the Hannah Neil Mission and the Home for the Friendless. The mission is the second oldest Columbus charity, and operates today as the Hannah Neil Center for Children, providing specialized counseling services to young people.

Neil was the most beloved of the early philanthropists. When she died, crowds of poor people came to attend her funeral, filling the church and both sides of the street, waiting to honor her memory.

Another leading Columbus philanthropist was Annie Maud Norton Battelle (1863-1925). She and her husband settled in Columbus in 1909, where she was active in suffrage and education. She was a delegate to the 11th annual conference of the National Child Labor Committee and chairman of the Ohio delegation to the World League Congress against Alcoholism. Battelle was also the first woman member of the board of trustees of the Columbus Public Library and served as its vice president.

Battelle gave approximately two million dollars, supplementing the gift of her son, for the founding and endowing of the Battelle Memorial. In 1925, Battelle was incorporated and is today ranked among the world’s oldest and largest independent research and development organizations. Subsequent Battelle inventions and advancements in science have benefitted not only Columbus, but the world.

Pioneer social worker and business woman, Minnie Goode Jamison (1870 – 1940), provided longstanding service in the suffrage and temperance movements. Jamison was a leader of the national Women’s Temperance Christian Union (WTCU), serving as president and in other offices in the Lucy Thurman Union, the largest African American union in the United States. She was a statewide and national leader within the WTCU, and was admired as an organizer and lecturer.

In the late 1890s, Jamison accepted an invitation to join the Franklin County Columbus Equal Suffrage Association. She became its first black female member, but few other African American women followed. Jamison helped organize the Sojourner Truth Equal Suffrage Association in Columbus to give African American women a suffrage organization of their own.

Jamison's social work included being a reader and leader of Christian services in the workhouse, city prison, and county jail. She gave refuge in her home to a number of friendless women and girls and actively worked for many philanthropic efforts within the city. Columbus sisters, Gillette Hayden (1880 – 1929) and Florence Kenyon Hayden Rector (1882-1973), made professional inroads for women during the early years of the 1900s, as well as contributed to the struggle for suffrage and women's rights.

In 1902, Gillette Hayden was only the third woman to graduate from The Ohio State University (OSU) School of Dentistry. In 1903, she began her practice in Columbus, where she became an expert in the treatment of periodontal diseases. In 1905, she was chosen to introduce in Europe methods of prevention and treatment of periodontal diseases. She remained in Germany until 1908, when she returned to her practice in Columbus. Later, Dr. Hayden started the first national magazine devoted to dentistry. She also helped organize the American Academy of Periodontology in 1914, serving as its President in 1916.

Dr. Hayden was a founder of the National Women's Party. She assisted with research necessary to prepare a digest of laws which discriminated against women and, in 1921, directed the work of changing Ohio laws to provide equal standards for men and women.

In 1918, Dr. Hayden helped organize the Altrusa Club of Columbus, the first professional women's club of Columbus. She served as local president, before being elected to serve as national president in 1925.

Florence Kenyon Hayden Rector was the first woman architect licensed in Ohio. While attending OSU, she became a star student and a favorite of the university architect. When OSU was planning to build its first women's dormitory, Professor Bradford was confident Kenyon could design it better than a man. Her appointment as its architect brought dismay to some trustees, and they insisted on giving her a male associate. After one day of "reasoning" with the associate, she locked him out of the office and proceeded alone. Her project came in under-budget and ahead of schedule. Oxley hall was opened in 1908. The building stands today and houses OSU's International Affairs offices.

By the age of 24, she had designed many buildings in Ohio. She turned her attention to designing an efficient home of her own at 878 Franklin Avenue in Columbus and designing efficient physicians' offices that met the needs of doctors in various specialties. Her designs impressed world-renowned efficiency expert, Frank Gilbreth.

Immigrants added new ideas to our city. Caroline Louisa Frankenberg (1806-1882) is one of many examples. It was in her little house on East Rich Street that history was made in 1858. Frankenberg's home was where she established the first kindergarten in Columbus, which, it is claimed, was also the first one in America.

Frankenberg was born and reared in Germany. She studied with education reformer Friedrich Roebel. She was determined to bring his theories to America, where his ideas might flourish. In 1836, Frankenberg came to Columbus, Ohio, where she had relatives. Her first school did not succeed, and she returned to Germany in 1840 to continue her studies under Roebel. In 1858, Frankenberg returned to Columbus and opened her kindergarten.

Gaining national recognition in the arts was Lida Rose McCabe (1865-1938) and Alice Schille (1869-1955). McCabe, a native of Columbus, was an author and journalist. She had written for several Ohio papers since she was 13 years old, including the Ohio State Journal. In

1889, at the Paris Exposition, she did her first work for the American Press Association. Her reputation increased through this exposure, and she also wrote for popular national magazines, as well as newspapers in Chicago, Washington, and New York. McCabe's first book, *Don't You Remember* (1884), was used at one time as a textbook in the Columbus public schools. This volume of historic sketches told of the earlier days of Ohio's capital, especially at the turn of the century. She also wrote two other books: *American Girl at College* (1893), a comparative analysis of schools for the higher education of women in the United States; and *Ardent Adrienne: The Life of Madame de La Fayette* (1930).

Alice Schille was one of the finest watercolor artists of her time. Schille was adept at landscapes and still lifes, capturing mothers, children, and market and harbor scenes. Schille's work evoked many styles. She remains among the foremost American women watercolorists.

Born in Columbus, Schille attended the Columbus Art School from 1891-1893. She spent several years traveling and painting, as well as attending art schools in New York City. In 1904, she returned to Columbus and began teaching at the Columbus Art School. She continued to live and work in Columbus for the rest of her life, regularly submitting paintings to annual national exhibitions and garnering many awards.

Throughout her long career teaching at the Columbus Art School, Schille spent her summers traveling extensively throughout the United States, Europe, North Africa, and Latin America. Her paintings show her admiration of artistic techniques and every day scenes from the cultures found in her travels.

Prolific columnist, radio and T.V. commentator, Fern Sharp (c. 1899 – 1975), chronicled Columbus happenings and issues. Most people in central Ohio in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s recognized her mile-a-minute voice and her trademark hats.

In 1937, Sharp began her career with the radio program, Round Robin Revue, on WBNS Radio, which she created and produced. It was the first program in the state devoted to women's interests. In 1949, she ventured into television as a commentator on her program, Sharp Comments, also on WBNS-TV. Shortly thereafter, her newspaper column of the same name appeared in the Ohio State Journal.

Native born and new arrivals, Columbus women continue to make contributions in industry, the arts, broadcasting, government, and public service. Andrea Cambern, Yolanda Harris, and Angela Pace are community leaders and local broadcasters. In the arts, Columbus women continue to garner international recognition and acclaim, such as singer/entertainer Nancy Wilson and artist Aminah Robinson.

Serving the public are women such as Gene Harris, superintendent of Columbus City Schools, and Maryellen O'Shaughnessy, Clerk of Franklin County Court of Common Pleas and formerly on Columbus City Council. Breaking barriers are women such as Janet E. Jackson, former Assistant Attorney General for the State of Ohio, the first African American woman to serve as a judge in Franklin County, and the first woman appointed and later elected Columbus City Attorney.

Building upon the leadership of pioneers of philanthropy and advocacy are Abigail Wexner, a founder of The Columbus Coalition against Family Violence, KidsOhio.org, and The Center for Child and Family Advocacy and Stefanie Spielman, national breast cancer advocate.

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