



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senate unveils historical "Women of Distinction" exhibit -- including tribute to Tompkins County, Civil War-era nurse

THOMAS F. O'MARA March 21, 2012



Albany, N.Y., March 21—The State Senate has unveiled its annual tribute to “Women of Distinction” from throughout New York State’s history in Albany today as part of the ongoing celebration of Women’s History Month.

This year’s exhibit includes, for the first time thanks to a local nomination Senator Tom O’Mara (R-C, Big Flats) received last year, a tribute to Susan E. Hall. Hall was raised in the Tompkins County town of Ulysses and is recognized as one of the first women from New York State to be accepted as a nurse in the Civil War. She served in field hospitals on numerous Civil War battlefields, including Bull Run and Gettysburg.

“It’s fantastic local history and I’m grateful that the Senate has this chance to honor it. I’m pleased that the memory of Susan E. Hall’s place in our regional, state and national history will endure for the benefit, the education, and the memory of future generations of New Yorkers,” said O’Mara. “Susan Hall is a worthy reminder of the selflessness, compassion and bravery that distinguish all great New Yorkers.”

Hall’s nomination was submitted to O’Mara last year by the members of the Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3) Civil War Nurses Fund Committee: Carol Kammen, Dr. Janet Morgan, Margaret Munchmeyer, Elizabeth Rawlings and Dr. Alexandra True. The fund was created by the Tompkins County Civil War Sesquicentennial Commemoration and the TC3 Foundation to provide scholarship help to student nurses at TC3 and to aid in the professional development of members of the nursing faculty.

O’Mara first announced Hall’s early induction last year so that it would coincide with the state and national observances surrounding the 150th Anniversary of the start of the Civil War. This year marks the first time, however, that she’s been formally included in the exhibit, which will remain on display in Albany’s Legislative Office Building until the end of the month. It can also be viewed online [HERE](#).

For the past 15 years, the Senate’s has sponsored a two-part celebration of Women’s History Month in March.

The first part is the unveiling of the historical “Women of Distinction” featuring notable New York women, past and present, including Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Eleanor Roosevelt and, since 2007, the career and life of astronaut and Elmira native Eileen M. Collins.

And, now, Susan E. Hall.

Following is the biography of Hall that accompanies her “Woman of Distinction” exhibit panel:

Susan E. Hall was one of the first women from New York State to be accepted as a nurse in the Civil War. Born in Orange County in 1826, Ms. Hall moved with her parents to the Town of Ulysses, Tompkins County. At the age of 32, following her father’s death, she moved to New York City to study medicine and attend medical school at Elizabeth and Emily Blackwell’s Woman and Children’s Hospital. She was to graduate in the spring of 1861. She attended the woman’s mass meeting at Cooper Union following the first shots of the Civil War on Fort Sumter in April 1861 and attended special training to become a war nurse. After passing an examination and receiving additional practical training, Ms. Hall was one of the first women sent south to assist the Union cause. She served in field hospitals on numerous Civil War battlefields, including Bull Run and Gettysburg. Historians note that Civil War field nurses not only tended wounded and dying soldiers and cared for the many physical needs of their patients, but played an equally important emotional and spiritual role as well. Ms. Hall served for the duration of the Civil War,

leaving in 1865 exhausted from her work. She then spent time at a sanitarium in Dansville, New York to recoup her strength. In 1866 she married Robert E. Barry, who had served in the Union Army's famous Chicago Board of Trade Battery, a light artillery battery, and the couple settled in California. Susan Hall Barry received her Civil War pension in 1887, recognizing her four years of work as a hospital nurse during the war. She died in Los Angeles in 1912, at the age of 86.

Part Two of the Senate's annual tribute takes place in late May, when senators honor women from their respective legislative districts making a difference in their communities today. **O'Mara recently began soliciting nominations for this year's local inductee.**

Request a nomination form.

Or download and print the attached form below.