



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senate women's history exhibit paying tribute to Elmira native, astronaut Eileen Collins: Tompkins County native Susan E. Hall also honored as one of New York's first Civil War nurses

THOMAS F. O'MARA March 8, 2019

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Eileen M. Collins (1956—)



Eileen M. Collins used her good grades, flying experience, and a letter of recommendation from her ROTC supervisor to go straight from college into Air Force pilot training and then on to achieve one of the most recognizable accomplishments of our day: Ms. Collins was the first American woman to pilot a spacecraft, the space shuttle *Discovery*.

A native of Elmira, Ms. Collins graduated from Corning Community College in 1976 and Syracuse University in 1978. She learned to fly when she was 20, earning her pilot's license in 1977.

Ms. Collins was hand-picked by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration in 1990 to become an American astronaut. In February 1995 she became the first American woman to pilot a

Eileen Collins and Susan E. Hall are included among a prestigious group of more than 100 notable New York women from throughout state history, including Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth and Eleanor Roosevelt.

Albany, N.Y., March 8—As part of its annual March recognition of Women's History Month and in honor of International Women's Day, State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) and

his Senate colleagues today unveiled an exhibit in the Legislative Office Building in Albany honoring “Women of Distinction” throughout New York State’s history in the arts, sciences, government, military, labor, education, and social reform.

O’Mara said that the Senate exhibit features a tribute to the career and life of astronaut and **Elmira native Eileen M. Collins**. The Senate first included Collins in its historical exhibit in 2007. The historical exhibit also includes Susan E. Hall, who was raised in Tompkins County and is recognized as one of the first women in New York State to be accepted as a nurse in the Civil War. O’Mara sponsored Hall’s induction in 2011.

Collins and Hall are included among a prestigious group of more than 100 notable New York women from throughout state history, including Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth and Eleanor Roosevelt. The exhibit is on display in The Well of the Legislative Office Building in Albany. [See the attached booklet of the exhibit attached above]

“Eileen Collins is an American hero, one of our nation’s most distinguished citizens, and we’re extremely proud of her as a native of Elmira and New York State. It’s a remarkable career and an inspirational life,” said O’Mara.

Collins, who retired from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in 2006, is honored for a long and illustrious career highlighted by her command of the Space Shuttle Columbia in 1999 -- when she became the first female Shuttle Commander -- and the “Return to Flight” Discovery mission in 2005. She became the first American woman to pilot a space shuttle, the Discovery, in 1995.

Collins is a member of the **National Women’s Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls**.

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 Civil War nurse. She served in field

hospitals on numerous Civil War battlefields, including Bull Run and Gettysburg. She was included in the Senate exhibit at O'Mara request in 2011 to coincide with the state and national observances of the 150th Anniversary of the start of the Civil War.

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

As part of the Senate's annual observance of Women's History Month, O'Mara also is accepting local nominations for the 22nd Annual "Women of Distinction" tribute to honor modern-day women making outstanding contributions to their communities. More information and an online nomination form are available [HERE](#). The deadline for submitting a local nomination for this year's program is Monday, March 18, 2018.