

NYS SENATOR TOM O'MARA

53rd District

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Press Release

LOCAL CIVIL WAR-ERA NURSE WILL BE INDUCTED INTO STATE SENATE'S HISTORICAL 'WOMEN OF DISTINCTION'

*Raised in Tompkins County, Susan Hall recognized as among very
first New York State women to serve as Civil War nurse*

Albany, N.Y., May 26—To commemorate the state and national observances of the 150th Anniversary of the start of the Civil War, area Senator Tom O'Mara (R-C, Big Flats) and his colleagues in the New York State Senate will make an early induction into the Senate's 2012 tribute to "Women of Distinction" from throughout New York State's history -- the Senate's version of a New York State Women's Hall of Fame.

That's because through O'Mara's sponsorship, one of next year's inductees will be Susan E. Hall, who 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 now's the time to honor it. The Senate's historical exhibit won't be on display again until next March, but there's no better time to begin paying tribute to Susan Hall," said O'Mara. "Susan Hall is a worthy reminder of the selflessness, compassion and bravery that distinguish all great New Yorkers."

For the past 14 years, the Senate's has sponsored a two-part celebration of Women's History Month in March.

The first part, which takes place at the beginning of every March, is the announcement of new inductees into an exhibit featuring "Women of Distinction" from throughout New York's history. This historical exhibit, which is displayed in the Legislative Office Building and can also be viewed on the state Senate website, features 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.

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. Earlier this week O'Mara announced that Carol Berry of Hornell, a long-time regional library professional and currently director of the Dormann Library in Bath, was honored on Tuesday, May 24th, in Albany as this year's local "Woman of Distinction" tribute.

Upon O'Mara's recommendation, and in order to capture the timing of the Civil War's 150th Anniversary, the Senate will include Hall's induction as part of its May 24th event. A local event to recognize Hall's induction is also being planned, O'Mara said.

He said that Hall's nomination was submitted 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 has been 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.

Tompkins County Historian Carol Kammen said, "We don't know a great deal about these women except that they stepped in when needed, even though most people said that 'war was no place for women.' Each found it was a place where she was needed."

Following is the biography of Hall that will be accompany 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.