



Women of DISTINCTION

HONORING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

2015 INDUCTEE

**Virginia Apgar
(1909-1974)**

Virginia Apgar was an obstetrical anesthesiologist, a leader in the fields of anesthesiology and teratology, who introduced obstetrical consideration to the established field of neonatology.

A brilliant physician and professor, Dr. Apgar was one of the very few women admitted to Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in the 1930s. She was the first woman to head a department at Columbia, where she was named Director of Anesthesiology in 1938. Dr. Apgar was also the first woman to hold a full professorship in any discipline at Columbia.

Dr. Apgar is best known for her development of the Apgar Score, a system to determine whether a newborn infant needs special attention to stay alive. This examination has saved countless infant lives since 1952. Despite initial resistance, the score was eventually accepted and is now used throughout the world. She was also an outspoken advocate for universal vaccination to prevent mother-to-child transmission during the rubella pandemic of 1964-65.

In 1959, while on sabbatical leave, Dr. Apgar earned a Masters Degree in Public Health from Johns Hopkins University. Deciding not to return to academic medicine, she devoted herself to the prevention of birth defects through public education and fundraising for research. Dr. Apgar became the Director of the Division of Congenital Defects at the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis (now the March of Dimes), and received many honors and awards for her work. She was one of the first to bring attention to the problem of premature birth, now one of the March of Dimes' top priorities.

Located in Harlem, Columbia University was Dr. Apgar's home. She made many breakthroughs in her field and continues to earn posthumous recognition for her contributions and achievements. In 1994, she was honored by the United States Postal Service with a 20¢ Great American Series postage stamp.



Text Source: http://www.nlm.nih.gov/changingthefaceofmedicine/physicians/biography_12.html
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia_Apgar

Photo Source: <http://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/ps/retrieve/Narrative/CP/p-nid/182/p-visuals/true>



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Bessie Allison Buchanan
(1902-1980)

The first African-American to hold a seat in the New York State Legislature, Bessie Allison Buchanan paved the way for women in state government. Born in Manhattan in 1902, Ms. Buchanan's parents had moved to New York City from Petersburg, Virginia, around the turn of the 20th century.

From a young age, Bessie Allison had an interest in singing and dance, appearing in the original *Shuffle Along* in 1921 – the first successful musical comedy with an all African-American cast. She was in the 1925 edition of *Plantation Revue* and in the integrated cast of *Lucky* in 1927, later performing with the *Show Boat* road company, recording for Black Swan Records and dancing in the chorus line of the famed Cotton Club.

Bessie Allison met Charlie Buchanan, director of the Savory Club, while she was working as a dancer and singer in Harlem. They later married, at which point she retired from the stage.

Ms. Buchanan's interest in politics was piqued when she campaigned for Governor Herbert A. Lehman's election to the United State Senate in 1949. After Lehman was elected, she stayed involved with community and political organizations in Harlem, and in 1954 was approached about running as the Democratic Party candidate for the New York State Assembly to represent Harlem's 12th District. In the General Election, Buchanan easily won over her opponent, Lucille Pickett, another African-American woman - 22,401 to 6,177 votes in a district heavily dominated by Democrats. Buchanan was reelected three more times and served a total of eight years.

While in the Legislature, Assemblywoman Buchanan served on the Cities, Institutions, Printing, and Social Welfare Committees. She was assigned to the Joint Legislative Committee on the Problems of the Aging, and in 1960, was selected by Governor Nelson Rockefeller to be a delegate to the White House Conference on the Aged. In 1962, Buchanan did not run for reelection, instead, crossing party lines to support Republicans Governor Rockefeller and Senator Jacob Javits in their reelection bids.

On April 30, 1963, Gov. Rockefeller appointed Buchanan to be New York State Commissioner of Human Rights, where she served for five years. She remained active in community activities long after leaving public office, and her efforts on behalf of all women in politics are long-lasting.



Text Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bessie_A._Buchanan

Photo Source: Photo courtesy of the NYS Archives.



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**Katherine Stoneman
(1841-1925)**

Paving the way for thousands, Katherine “Kate” Stoneman was the first woman admitted to practice law in the State of New York. She did so against enormous odds; supporting herself as a teacher, she worked nights, weekends, and summers as a clerk until she became the first female graduate of Albany Law School in 1898. She was also the first woman to receive a bachelor’s degree from Union University.

Born in Lakewood, New York, Ms. Stoneman moved to Albany to pursue an education at the New York Normal College, the only state school at the time that was training teachers for the public schools. Following her graduation in 1866, she taught for 40 years. Taking an interest in women’s suffrage early on in her career, Ms. Stoneman, along with others, formed the Woman’s Suffrage Society of Albany, where they lobbied for the extension of school suffrage to women.

Ms. Stoneman’s interest in law was piqued when she was designated executrix of her aunt’s estate in Troy. After three years of studying law and clerking for a local attorney, in 1885, Ms. Stoneman became the first woman to pass the New York State Bar Examination. However, when she subsequently applied for admission to the Bar, she was denied due to her sex. After a long but ultimately successful lobbying campaign to secure the passage of a bill that would open up the Bar to both men and women, Ms. Stoneman reapplied for admission to the Bar and was accepted in 1886. Becoming New York’s first female lawyer could now be added to the growing list of Ms. Stoneman’s professional accomplishments.

Throughout her life, Ms. Stoneman continued to play a vital role in the women’s suffrage movement, actively participating in efforts to secure suffrage legislation in New York State. All of her efforts paid off, when in 1918, as a poll watcher, she saw New York women vote for the first time.



Text Source: National Women’s Hall of Fame
Albany Law School

Photo Source: <http://mcclurgmuseum.org/blog/2011/03/12/bicentennial-biographies-no-41-45/>