



E-Newsletter | June 2014

Groundbreaking Women

On May 7, 2014, a groundbreaking ceremony for the Center for Great Women was held by the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, New York, the birthplace of women's rights and the home of the Hall. In honor of that groundbreaking, in this month's newsletter we feature two of the women who were discussed in a talk the night before the ceremony. That talk highlighted a few of the groundbreaking women from our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*. The two women we are pleased to feature are Frances Wisebart Jacobs and Saint Katharine Drexel.



Frances Wisebart Jacobs

Frances Wisebart Jacobs is known today as the "Mother of Charities". In 1887, she spearheaded the creation of the Charity Organization Society, which became a federation of charities that coordinated fundraising and other efforts and also shared the proceeds. This was the model that led to the creation of today's United Way, which recognizes Jacobs as its founder.



Saint Katharine Drexel

Jacobs was also the founder of National Jewish Hospital. She was known in the late 1800s for her benevolent work in Denver; she often stopped to offer food and medical help to the ill. She realized that the homeless consumptives needed more help than she alone could give, so Jacobs set out to raise funds to open a new hospital to treat them. She found support from the Jewish community, which, in November 1889, agreed to plan, fund and build a nonsectarian hospital for the treatment of respiratory diseases, primarily tuberculosis. The first patient was admitted in 1899. Today, the National Jewish Hospital for Immunology and Respiratory Medicine has an international reputation.

There are sixteen stained-glass windows in the dome of Colorado's state capitol, each one illustrating an important pioneer in the state's development. Only one of them is a woman - Frances Wisebart Jacobs.

Katharine Drexel was born into a wealthy family in Philadelphia. Her parents taught her and her siblings that wealth was simply loaned to them and was to be shared with others. She traveled widely and early in her life became aware of some of the difficulties faced by Native Americans and blacks. With her inheritance, she resolved to devote her wealth and her life to helping these particular people. Her first school for Native Americans was established in Santa Fe, New Mexico. During an audience with Pope Leo VIII, she asked him to recommend a religious congregation to staff the educational institutions she was financing. He recommended that she become the staff!

In 1889, she began her training in religious life in Pittsburgh. In 1891, with a few companions, Drexel founded an order that today is called the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. During her lifetime, Saint Katharine opened approximately 60 schools. The most famous is Xavier University (founded in 1915), in New Orleans, the first such institution for black people in the U.S.

We are proud to stand on the shoulders of all of the groundbreaking women who came before us.

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Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America
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