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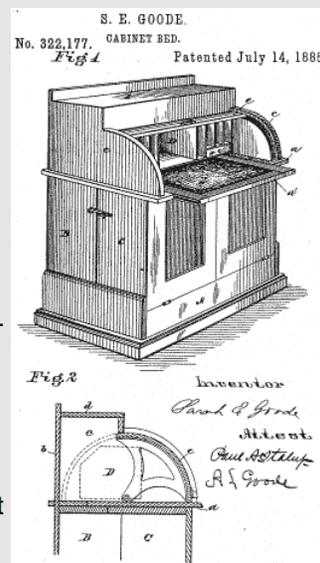


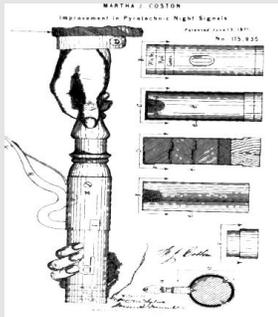
E-Newsletter | September 2010

Early Women Innovators in Science & Engineering

Although the typical image of an inventor in the U.S. is a man, women have been creating and inventing right along side of them, for thousands of years. In the U.S., prior to 1809, any woman who wanted to get a patent to protect her invention idea had to find a man (usually her husband) to get the patent for her. Then, of course, the patent was in his name. Mary Kies was the first woman to get a patent in her own name - for a device for straw-weaving with silk or thread.

Prior to Mary Kies, Sybilla Masters' husband received two patents in his name for his wife's inventions. These patents were issued in London as the United States of America did not yet exist. In 1715, Sybilla patented a method of crushing corn at the gristmill she and her husband owned. Masters is believed to have developed the process after she watched Tuscarora Indian women beat corn with a pestle in large bowls. Her 1715 patent was titled "Cleansing Curing and Refining of Indian Corn Growing in the Plantations". The second patent issued to Thomas Masters was for "Working and Weaving in a New Method, Palmetta Chip and Straw for Hats and Bonnets and other Improvements of that Ware."





Fast forward about 150 years to Martha Coston. Her interest was in an area considered "highly unfeminine". She was determined to make a signal flare. Signal flares were very hard to make: they had to be both durable and simple and they had to last for a long time. In the mid-1800s, to make a flare required gunpowder, chemicals, pyrotechnics, as well as the ignition apparatus. Martha Coston's green, red and white signal flares worked so well that the navy bought them from her for \$20,000, an astounding amount of money at that time. Coston

flares were used during the Civil War battle between the Monitor and the Merrimack. Martha Coston received her patent for this flare in 1871.

Another early woman inventor of note is Sarah Goode, the first African-American woman to receive a patent. In 1885, she received a patent for her cabinet bed. She sold furniture in Chicago, Illinois and her customers complained about the limited spaces in their apartments. She came up with an ingenious solution - a bed that when not in use could be folded up into a cabinet that was actually a roll-top desk and stationery shelf. Necessity truly is the mother of invention!

Women continue to invent and come up with new and fascinating ideas. We'll talk about some more recent inventors in next month's enewsletter.

Next Month:
**How Modern Women Innovators
Changed The World**

Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America
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