

# MOTHERS





The U.S. Congress, by a joint resolution approved May 8, 1914 (38 Stat. 770), has designated the second Sunday in May each year as “Mother’s Day” and requested the President to call for its appropriate observance. Over the years, many mothers have contributed to our quality of life and standard of living. Some of the mothers who are profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America* epitomize the saying that “necessity is the mother of invention”. When their husbands died, these women needed to provide for their children. In this column, we will learn about sculptor Patience Wright, writer Sarah Josepha Hale, inventor and businesswoman Harriet Strong, and clothing designer Jessica McClintock.

**Patience Wright** began a career, as a modeler in wax, in order to provide for her five children, after her husband died in 1769. With the help of her sister, by 1772, she had created a traveling waxwork exhibit of a type that had previously not existed.

Wright created waxworks of living and well-known personages. She was very talented and was able to make faithful reproductions quite quickly. In addition, her personality was such that she gained the favor and support of many of her subjects. Her wax show was positively received in Charleston, South Carolina;

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and New York City. After a fire destroyed much of her exhibit, she moved to England. We are pleased to share Wright’s story as America’s first professional sculptor. One of her works remains in Westminster Abbey in London, England. It is a full-length effigy of Lord Chatham (William Pitt).

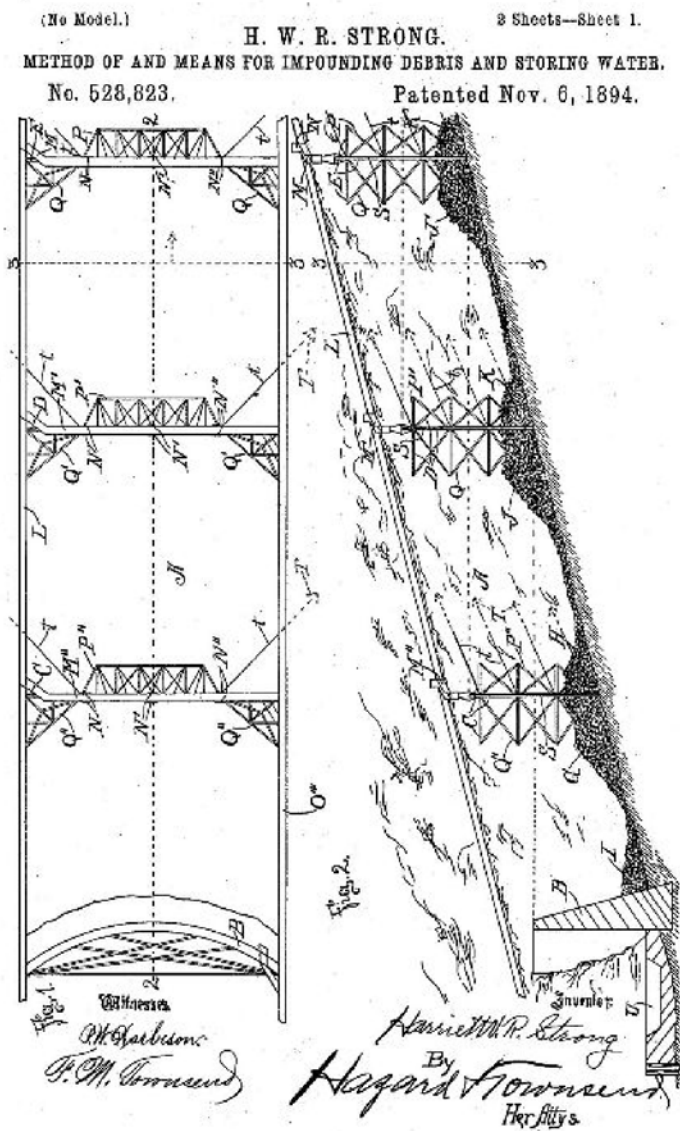


Like Patience Wright before her, **Sarah Josepha Hale** had five children. Upon her husband’s death in 1822, shortly before the birth of her fifth child, Hale opened a millinery shop with her sister-in-law and also began to write seriously. Her first book of poetry was published in 1823 and her first novel *Northwood*, was published in 1827. Her 1830 collection of poetry *Poems for Our Children*, contained the nursery rhyme that we all know today “Mary’s Lamb”. In 1827, she was offered the editorship of a monthly magazine, the first edition of which appeared in January 1828. Originally titled the *Ladies’ Magazine*, it later was titled *American Ladies’ Magazine*. The magazine was purchased in 1836 by Louis Antoine Godey and in January 1837, the first issue of *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, under the editorship of Hale, was issued.

Although Louis Godey insisted that all controversial topics were to be excluded from

discussion in his magazine, Hale still managed to advance women's interests. She encouraged her readers to exercise, get fresh air, have a proper diet and to dress sensibly. She laid out courses of reading that, if followed by her readers, would have been the equivalent of a college education. She never waivered in her support of education for women and urged financial support at the state and national levels for women's colleges. She advocated for women embarking on careers, as well as the ability of married women to have property rights. During her tenure as editor, *Godeys' Lady's Book* broke all circulation records due to Hale's excellent business sense. She also wrote about 50 books. Hale continued as the editor at *Godey's'* until her retirement at age 90.

**Harriet Strong** was a mother and an inventor. Her talents as a businesswoman sprung from a need to provide for her four daughters and herself, after her husband's suicide in 1883 left her penniless. After applying for patents for several of her inventions, Strong determined that her ranch in Oakland, California would be their financial salvation. She planted a few orange trees and many walnut trees. At the time, it was the largest single walnut orchard in the world. Around the edges of the walnut trees, she grew pomegranates and pampas – the pampas were to provide a cash crop until the walnut trees produced.. Because she lived and farmed



in an arid climate, she became very aware of the value of water – and the need for a consistent source and quantity. This knowledge led Strong to think about and to develop extraordinary ideas and ultimately patents for water storage systems. Known as both the “Walnut Queen” and the “Pampas Woman”, Strong became the first woman trustee at the University of Southern California Law School.

**Jessica McClintock**, widowed and with a young son to support, arrived in California in 1969. Her intention was to become a teacher. Instead, she joined the Gunne Sax Company based in San Francisco and designed their long, calico, lace-trimmed dresses (also known as “granny dresses”) and lace-trimmed denim clothes. By the 1970s, her designs had expanded to prom dresses and wedding gowns. The Jessica McClintock line was introduced in 1979. In the mid-1980s, the company was renamed Jessica McClintock, Inc. Today, the company includes many lines of clothing as well as fragrances, furniture, handbags, eyewear, jewelry, and home furnishings. Jessica McClintock herself epitomizes the self-made woman for whom necessity required invention.

We are proud to present these amazing women – and mothers – during the month of May when we celebrate mothers. Make sure that you take time during this month to acknowledge and celebrate the accomplishments of the many women around us!



**Charlotte S. Waisman, PhD**, is a national champion and advocate for women as a professor and keynote speaker. As an executive coach, Waisman coauthored 50 Activities for Developing Leaders and The Leadership Training Activity Book. She is a principal with a consulting company specializing in leadership and workforce excellence initiatives.

**Jill S. Tietjen, PE**, is an author, speaker and an electrical engineer. Her books include the Setting the Record Straight series. Tietjen is a top historian on scientific and technical women. She is President/CEO of Technically Speaking, a consulting company that specializes in improving career opportunities for women in technology. Write to us at [jill@herstoryatimeline.com](mailto:jill@herstoryatimeline.com) and [charlotte@herstoryatimeline.com](mailto:charlotte@herstoryatimeline.com) and tell us your stories.

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