



A TIMELINE OF THE WOMEN  
WHO CHANGED AMERICA



## July 2025 Her Story ENewsletter Economists

When we were writing *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America* we tried our best to include every woman who was the first to do something that made a difference to our country. Two decades later, we keep finding pioneering women! This month we profile someone we just found – Marina Whitman, the first woman to serve on the Council of Economic Advisors. We also profile two economists we did find: Edith Abbott and Elinor Ostrom.



**Marina Whitman** (1935-2025) did her undergraduate work at Radcliffe College earning a bachelor's degree in government. She also received a master's and PhD in economics at Columbia University. She joined the economics faculty at the University of Pittsburgh and then entered government service in 1970. In 1972, President Nixon announced her appointment to the Council of Economic Advisors. She resigned in 1973 and was subsequently invited to serve on boards of directors of high-profile companies including Procter & Gamble, Westinghouse, and what today is JPMorgan Chase. From 1979 to 1992, she served as an officer at General Motors Corporation. In 1992, she retired from GM and joined the faculty at the University of Michigan.



**Edith Abbott** was born in Nebraska in 1876 to a father who had fought in the Civil War and was lieutenant governor and a mother who participated in the Underground Railroad and in the suffrage movement. She and her sister Grace Abbott were both raised to be social reform advocates. Unable to afford college, she taught high school and saved her money until she could attend the University of Nebraska – Lincoln. She earned her PhD in economics from the University of Chicago in 1905. After time at the London School of Economics, and on the faculty at Wellesley College, Abbott was offered a position at the University of Chicago. She moved into Jane Addams' Hull House with her sister Grace and embarked on a career of social reform. She is remembered for her work in helping draft the Social Security Act.



The first woman to receive the Nobel Prize in Economics, **Elinor Ostrom's** citation reads for "her analysis of economic governance, especially the commons." She received her Ph.D. in political science, unable to pursue economics as she had been denied admission to trigonometry classes in high school. During her years teaching at Indiana University and Arizona State University, Ostrom focused on issues related to collective action, trust, and cooperative use in the management of common pool resources. These include forests, parks, fisheries, grazing land, and irrigation systems. Her later work involved human interaction with ecosystems. There is even a law named for her; Ostrom's law reads "A resource arrangement that works in practice can work in theory." Ostrom's many honors in addition to the Nobel Prize include election to the National Academy of Sciences.

Edith Abbott and Elinor Ostrom are among the more than 850 women profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*. Women's accomplishments continue to inspire and encourage us. Continue to help us tell women's stories!

Charlotte Waisman and Jill Tietjen

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J189 | Greenwood Village, CO 80112 US

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