



Important Women in United States History (through the 20th century) (a very abbreviated list)

1500s & 1600s

Lady Deborah Moody	<i>Religious freedom, leadership</i>	1586-1659	Brought settlers seeking religious freedom to Gravesend at New Amsterdam (later New York). She was a respected and important community leader.
Anne Marbury Hutchinson	<i>Religious freedom of expression</i>	1591-1643	Banished from Boston by Puritans in 1637, due to her views on grace. In New York, natives killed her and all but one of her children.
Pocahontas	<i>Native and English amity</i>	1595-1617	She saved the life of Capt. John Smith at the hands of her father, Chief Powhatan. Later married the famous John Rolfe. Met royalty in England.
Margaret Brent	<i>Human rights; women's suffrage</i>	1600-1669	Thought to be North America's first feminist, Brent became one of the largest landowners in Maryland. Aided in settling land dispute; raised armed volunteer group.
Anne Bradstreet	<i>Poetry</i>	1612-1672	One of America's first poets; Bradstreet's poetry was noted for its important historic content until mid-1800s publication of <i>Contemplations</i> , a book of religious poems.
Mary Bliss Parsons	<i>Illeged witchcraft</i>	1628-1712	Wife of prominent Salem, Massachusetts, citizen, Parsons was acquitted of witchcraft charges in the most documented and unusual witch hunt trial in colonial history.
Mary Rowlandson	<i>Colonial literature</i>	1637-1710	After her capture during King Philip's War, Rowlandson wrote famous firsthand accounting of 17th-century Indian life and its Colonial/Indian conflicts.

1700s

Mary Musgrove	<i>Trading, interpreting</i>	1700-1765	A Georgia woman of mixed race, she and her husband started a fur trade with the Creeks. As an important interpreter, she helped to avoid a war.
Abigail Adams	<i>Politics and writing</i>	1744-1818	She wrote lucidly about her life and time in letters, and exerted political influence over her famous president husband John, and son, John Quincy.
Phillis Wheatley	<i>Verse</i>	1753-1784	The first significant black poet in America, the former slave exemplified the superiority of the human spirit over the circumstances of birth.
Molly Pitcher	<i>Patriotism in battle</i>	1754-1832	At the Battle of Monmouth, she brought water to Continental soldiers, attended the wounded and also replaced her fallen husband at a gun.
Sacajawea	<i>Exploration</i>	1787?-Early 1800s	This resolute and resourceful Shoshone woman was a guide and interpreter for the famous Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1805 and 1806.
Sarah Josepha Hale	<i>Advancement of women, journalism</i>	1788-1879	Editor of magazines, notably Godey's <i>Lady's Book</i> , which promoted the betterment of women. She supported important economic reform.
Lucretia Mott	<i>Abolition, women's rights</i>	1793-1880	She and her husband, James, made their home a station on the Underground Railroad. Helped to organize the Women's Rights Convention.
Sojourner Truth	<i>Human rights, preaching</i>	1797-1893	As a preacher, Truth campaigned nationwide for the abolition of slavery and important women's rights. Also raised money for black Union soldiers.

1800s

Dorothea Dix	<i>Social reform and war nursing</i>	1802-1887	An advocate of asylum, poorhouse and prison reform, she also helped alleviate Civil War misery as Superintendent of Female Nurses.
Harriet Beecher Stowe	<i>Antislavery, fiction</i>	1811-1896	Famous for her controversial novel, <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> , an antislavery story based on her experiences. Also spoke against slavery.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton	<i>Abolition and women's rights</i>	1815-1902	Stanton (and important friend Susan B. Anthony) fought for women's suffrage when the 14 th and 15 th amendments excluded gender equality.
Julia Ward Howe	<i>Author, suffragist, abolitionist</i>	1819-1910	A poet, lecturer, author of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." She also helped form the National American Woman Suffrage Association.
Susan B. Anthony	<i>Abolition and women's rights</i>	1820-1906	A tireless campaigner for gender equality, Anthony (and friend Elizabeth Cady Stanton) inspired a nationwide suffrage movement.
Harriet Tubman	<i>Abolition</i>	1820-1913	A "conductor" on the Underground Railroad, she led more than 300 slaves to freedom. Also served Union forces in coastal South Carolina.
Elizabeth Blackwell	<i>Education, medicine</i>	1821-1910	The first woman physician in the U.S. (MD, Geneva College, 1849). She opened a slum infirmary and trained women in medicine.
Clara Barton	<i>Aid to soldiers and free education</i>	1821-1912	Organized and delivered important aid to Union and Confederate soldiers. Started the American Red Cross. Started a free school in New Jersey.
Mary Walton	<i>Pollution control, invention</i>	1829-1906	This Manhattan inventor devised a method to reduce factory smoke emissions and reduced the track noise from elevated trains.
Louisa May Alcott	<i>Writing, women's suffrage</i>	1832-1888	An American literary icon of the 19th century, Alcott was also involved in women's suffrage.
Hetty Green	<i>Finance</i>	1835-1916	She inherited her father's fortune and invested it so cannily that she was reputed to be the richest woman in the world at the time.
Mary Harris "Mother" Jones	<i>American Labor Movement</i>	1837-1930	"Mother" Jones was present as a labor organizer and speaker at many significant labor struggles of the 19 th and 20 th centuries.
Frances Elizabeth Willard	<i>Temperance and women's suffrage</i>	1839-1898	A tireless campaigner, she was a founder and president of important organizations that fought for prohibition. Also work for women's suffrage.
Ellen Swallow Richards	<i>Chemistry and engineering</i>	1842-1911	First woman to enroll in a technical institute (MIT), in 1870. Founded the science of home economics and promoted science for women.
Carry A. Nation	<i>Temperance</i>	1846-1911	Notorious for violent disruption of alcohol sales. She was jailed often, but her courage and eloquence impressed many people.
Annie Smith Peck	<i>Women's suffrage, mountaineering</i>	1850-1935	She scaled the 21,812-foot Peruvian mountain Huascarán, the loftiest Western Hemisphere peak climbed by an American man or woman.
Annie Oakley	<i>Sharp-shooting and entertainment</i>	1860-1926	Gifted with uncanny marksmanship and star of Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, she established herself as a famous western folk legend.
Jane Addams	<i>Social Reform</i>	1860-1935	Noted for Hull House, an influential haven for disadvantaged people. Active in a variety of causes, she shared the 1931 Nobel Peace Prize.
Grandma Moses	<i>Folk Art</i>	1860-1961	Discovered by the New York art world in 1939, Moses' style is noted for evocative themes and pleasing figure arrangement.
Anne Sullivan	<i>Teacher</i>	1866-1936	Overcame childhood obstacles to become Helen Keller's teacher and lifelong companion.
Emily Greene Balch	<i>Social Activism</i>	1867-1961	1947 Nobel Peace Prize winner, founder the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and was an important woman advocate for peace during WWI and WWII.
Molly Dewson	<i>Women's suffrage, politics</i>	1874-1962	An author, and head of the Democratic National Committee's Women's Division, Dewson also fought for a minimum wage law.
Margaret Sanger	<i>Social reform and family planning</i>	1879-1966	Dismayed by infant mortality, Sanger became a vocal advocate of contraception and established an important medically supervised family planning clinic.
Helen Keller	<i>Social reform, writing and lecturing</i>	1880-1968	Deafened and blinded by a childhood disease, she overcame her disabilities, then worked for the blind and numerous progressive causes.
Jeannette Rankin	<i>Politics</i>	1880-1973	Jeannette Rankin was the first woman ever elected to Congress. She was one of few congressional members to vote no on WWI and WWII.
Frances Perkins	<i>Politics</i>	1882-1965	Perkins was the first woman Cabinet member in the U.S. She served as FDR's Secretary of Labor, and played a key role in New Deal legislation.

Eleanor Roosevelt	<i>Activism, traveling and speaking</i>	1884-1962	Enormously effective wife of FDR, she was a Democratic Party activist, worked for racial equality and was U.S. Representative to the U.N.
Georgia O'Keeffe	<i>Painter</i>	1887-1986	Widely regarded as one of the great modernist painters of the 20 th century, O'Keeffe was a major figure in American art for more than 70 years.
Aimee Semple McPherson	<i>Broadcast evangelism</i>	1890-1944	Southern California evangelist famous for her Temple and "illustrated sermons." Founded International Church of the Foursquare Gospel.
Zora Neale Hurston	<i>Writing</i>	1891?-1960	Folklorist, anthropologist and novelist. Most prolific black woman writer of the 1930s.
Pearl S. Buck	<i>Adoption advocacy, writing</i>	1892-1973	Author of books reflecting her life in China. Won the 1938 Nobel Prize in Literature. Buck worked for the adoption of unwanted children.
Amelia Earhart	<i>Aviation</i>	1897-1937	Famous for flying across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. She attempted to fly around the world, then disappeared July 2, 1937.
Dorothy Day	<i>Catholic-based Social Service, writing</i>	1897-1980	Founded Catholic Worker Movement with Peter Maurin in 1933, an important outreach to disadvantaged and marginalized people.
Marian Anderson	<i>Racial amity, singing</i>	1897-1993	She used her rare voice to advance race relations. First black Metropolitan Opera star. Alternate U.N. delegate. Honored many times.
Margaret Chase Smith	<i>Politics</i>	1897-1995	Maine's first congresswoman and re-elected four times, she was U.S. senator from 1949-73. Remembered for independence and character.
Louise Nevelson	<i>Sculpture</i>	1899-1988	Best known for her abstract-expressionist boxes grouped together to form a new creation. She used found objects and everyday items. One of her works stands three stories high.

1900s

Margaret Mead	<i>Anthropology and psychology</i>	1901-1978	She became famous for her gender role studies of the cultures of the Pacific Islands, Russia and the U.S. Authored several classic books.
Ella Baker	<i>Human and civil rights</i>	1903-1986	Helped form Southern Christian Leadership Conference of which Martin Luther King Jr. was president, important for organizing Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.
Clare Boothe Luce	<i>Writing, politics and diplomacy</i>	1903-1987	She was managing editor of <i>Vanity Fair</i> and author of several successful plays, including <i>The Women</i> . Ambassador to Italy, 1953-56.
Esther Ross	<i>Native American rights</i>	1904-1988	Ross devoted 50 years to winning federal recognition of the Stillaguamish Tribe in the Puget Sound area of Washington State.
Margaret Bourke-White	<i>Photography and photojournalism</i>	1904 or 1906-1971	Important international photographic chronicler of people and events in war and peace. One famed picture: "Gandhi at His Spinning Wheel."
Ayn Rand	<i>Fiction, philosophy</i>	1905-1982	Russian-born, Rand wrote important fiction, notably <i>The Fountainhead</i> , and <i>Atlas Shrugged</i> . She espoused a philosophy of rational self-interest.
Grace Hopper	<i>Computer science</i>	1906-1992	A Ph.D. from Yale (1934), Rear Adm. Hopper was one of the earliest computer programmers and a leader in software development concepts.
Maria Goeppert-Mayer	<i>Science</i>	1906-1972	Goeppert-Mayer won the 1963 Nobel Prize in Physics, professor of Physics at UCSD, La Jolla, California, National Academy of Sciences member.
Rachel Carson	<i>The environment, marine biology</i>	1907-1964	Author of lucidly written books on ecological themes. Most famous for <i>Silent Spring</i> , a critical examination of chemical pesticides.
Virginia Apgar	<i>Obstetrics</i>	1909-1974	Dr. Apgar developed the Apgar Score, whose five items help physicians and nurses to determine if a newborn requires emergency care. The score is now standard worldwide.
Katharine Hepburn	<i>Stage and screen</i>	1909-2003	Four-time Academy Award winner for best actress, Hepburn combined her statuesque looks with a bold, plucky acting style.
Babe Didrikson Zaharias	<i>Multiple athletics</i>	1911-1956	This superathlete won three track and field Olympic medals and 31 LPGA titles. Famed for self-confidence and competitive spirit.
Claudia Taylor (Lady Bird) Johnson	<i>Politics, environment</i>	1912-	First lady during Lyndon B. Johnson's administration; instrumental in promoting the Highway Beautification Act, founded Lady Bird Wildflower Center.

Patricia Ryan Nixon	<i>Politics</i>	1912-1993	First lady during Richard M. Nixon's administration; after her father's death at 18, Pat worked part time to obtain her degree, graduating cum laude from USC.
Barbara Tuchman	<i>History</i>	1912-1989	Tuchman was a two-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize (The Guns of August, and Stillwell and the American Experience in China: 1911-45).
Rosa Parks	<i>Civil rights</i>	1913-	Parks' refusal to give up her seat on a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama, on December 1, 1955, sparked the modern civil rights movement.
Daisy Gatson Bates	<i>Civil rights and journalism</i>	1914(?)-	After segregation was ruled unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court, she led the fight to integrate Little Rock, Arkansas, schools from 1954-1957.
Martha Raye	<i>Entertainment</i>	1916-1994	An actor, comedienne and singer, Raye entertained and even nursed troops for 50 years. Presidential Medal of Freedom honoree.
Florence Chadwick	<i>Swimming</i>	1917-1995	The premier distance swimmer of the 1950s, she became the first woman to swim the English Channel both ways (1950, '51, '55).
Katharine Graham	<i>Newspaper and magazine publishing</i>	1917-2001	She was the influential president and publisher of the Washington Post from 1963-93. The paper is famed for its Watergate investigation.
Ella Fitzgerald	<i>Jazz singing</i>	1918-1996	Master of scat singing, she toured with such greats as Duke Ellington and the Oscar Peterson Trio. She performed internationally.
Elizabeth Bloomer Ford	<i>Social activism</i>	1918-	First lady during Gerald R. Ford's presidency, co-founder of the country's leading treatment center for alcoholism and drug dependency.
Bella Abzug	<i>Political activism, writing</i>	1920-1997	Attorney and Congresswoman, Abzug worked for a variety of progressive causes, especially women's issues. She was a noted author.
Marie Maynard Daly	<i>Biochemistry</i>	1921-	First African-American woman to earn a Ph.D. in chemistry (Columbia University, 1948). Holder of various professorships. Focus: nucleic acids.
Betty Goldstein Friedan	<i>Feminism</i>	1921-2006	Author of the revolutionary book: <i>Feminine Mystique</i> , co-founder of National Organization for Women (NOW).
Nancy Davis Reagan	<i>Social activism</i>	1921-	First lady during Ronald Reagan's presidency and championed the "Just Say No" to drugs program for school-aged children.
Rosalyn Sussman Yalow	<i>Physics, Medicine</i>	1921-	Co-winner of the 1977 Nobel Prize in Physiology, assisted in developing a technique to measure minute quantities of insulin in the blood.
Judy Garland	<i>Entertainment</i>	1922-1969	Made famous as Dorothy in "The Wizard of Oz," Garland was one of the greatest stars of Hollywood's Golden Era of musical film.
Helen Gurley Brown	<i>Feminism and writing</i>	1922-	Author of <i>Sex and the Single Girl</i> , a book about the positive benefits of single life; revived foundering <i>Cosmopolitan</i> magazine
Alice Coachman	<i>Track and field</i>	1923-	At the 1948 Olympics in London, Coachman was the first black woman and only American woman to win a gold medal in that year's Games.
Shirley Chisholm	<i>Social activism, politics</i>	1924-2005	A Democrat, she was the first black woman elected to Congress (1968). Also the first black woman to run for president in a major party (1972).
Phyllis Schlafly	<i>Political activism, writing</i>	1924-	Republican activist against the feminist movement, noting that it held women back. Testified against the ineffectiveness of the Equal Rights Amendment. Author of several books.
Barbara Pierce Bush	<i>Politics</i>	1925-	First lady during George H.W. Bush's presidency, warmly received by public and press as "everybody's grandmother;" mother of six children; articulately frank.
Marilyn Monroe	<i>Acting</i>	1926-1962	Completing 30 motion pictures, Monroe became an American icon and worldwide sensation before her mysterious death.
Rosalynn Smith Carter	<i>Activism</i>	1927-	First lady during Jimmy Carter's presidency, vice chair of The Carter Center, which promotes peace and human rights worldwide.
Maya Angelou	<i>Writing, civil rights</i>	1928-	A poet, historian, author, civil rights activist, producer and director, she composed and read verse at the Clinton inauguration in 1993.
Sarah Caldwell	<i>Opera direction and conducting</i>	1928-	She founded the Opera Company of Boston in 1957. In 1976, she became the first woman to conduct at the Metropolitan Opera House.

Shirley Temple Black	<i>Diplomacy, acting</i>	1928-	Becoming a diplomat later in life, Shirley Temple was perhaps the most famous child star in history.
Audrey Hepburn	<i>Aid to needy children; actor</i>	1929-1993	Special ambassador to UNICEF, she worked to help poor children. 1953 Academy Award winner for Best Actress in "Roman Holiday."
Coretta Scott King	<i>civil rights, music</i>	1929-2006	Known as the First Lady of civil rights, Coretta carried on the dreams of her husband, Martin Luther King Jr.
Carolyn Shoemaker	<i>Discovery, astronomy</i>	1929-	Holder of the record for the most comet discoveries (32) as well as more than 800 asteroids. Took up astronomy at the age of 51.
Sandra Day O'Connor	<i>Law, justice</i>	1930-	She became the first woman justice on the U.S. Supreme Court. She felt the court's role was to interpret the law, not legislate it.
Barbara Walters	<i>Television journalism</i>	1931-	The first woman to anchor TV nightly news, on ABC. Correspondent, then co-anchor of 20/20. She has interviewed numerous famous people.
Sylvia Plath	<i>Literature</i>	1932-1963	Plath wrote poems of stark self-realization and confession, was the first to win the Pulitzer Prize posthumously.
<u>Ruth Bader Ginsburg</u>	<i>Law, justice</i>	1933-2020	First Jewish woman and for several years was the only female justice on the Supreme Court. Strong advocate for women's rights and civil rights in general.

Source: <http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1551.html#1900s>