

**Women Commissioners Breakfast CCI, June 4, 2019, Keystone, CO,
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15 min. presentation

- Introduction Slide 1

This morning we are going to talk about the contributions women have made to our history, culture and society. This year's theme for Women's History Month, which was in March of each year is "Visionary Women" and each of us have stories to tell in our counties, so---

I'd like to share with you some historical "Visionary Women" and their accomplishments from our state, Colorado:

- Slide 2 (Carrie Holly, Clara Cressingham, Frances Klock)

In 1894, three women were sworn in to serve in Colorado's state legislature, Carrie Holly, Clara Cressingham and Frances Klock. While the 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920, women gained the right to vote in Colorado, passed by the people during a general election in 1893. Amazingly, these three women - Carrie, Clara and Frances, were elected to office before they could even vote for themselves!

Carrie Holly passed a bill allowing mothers the same rights to children as fathers. She supported many Populist bills, including a "local options" bill to regulate the sale of liquor in club houses, a bill to abolish capital punishment, and she opposed a church taxation bill.

Clara Cressingham was the youngest of these three newly elected legislators. She was the first woman to fill a leadership position in an American legislature and is credited with introducing the first law introduced by a woman in the United States. It set a government-provided bounty of \$3 per ton on sugar beets raised in the state, and sold to a factory within its borders, thus boosting the budding Colorado sugar beet industry. Now that's economic development! Along with the other two legislators, she successfully supported a bill to create homes for delinquent girls.

Frances Klock was the first woman to chair a committee of Indian and Veteran Affairs and was the first woman to preside over a state legislature. Early in the session, she protested offensive language used on the floor of

the House during debate about a provision for separate sleeping accommodations for jury members. The women legislators also insisted on enforcement of the rules against lobbyists on the floor and, smoking in the chamber. Perhaps one of our first public health leaders!

- Slide 3 (**Susan B. Anthony**)

The rallying cry during the election, “Let the women Vote! They can’t do any worse than the men have,” was heard from Denver to Durango by disgruntled and unemployed male voters - miners, farmers, ranchers, factory workers and businessmen. After hearing about Colorado’s women’s vote success, **Susan B. Anthony** visited, believing that the model used could be replicated, because campaign efforts didn’t rely on men, they used a grassroots organization. What an inventive campaign concept!

- Slide 4 (Eliza Pickrell Routt)

Eliza Pickrell Routt was the first woman to register to vote in Colorado after the vote in 1893. She was the first “First Lady” as wife of the State’s first Governor John Routt, who also endorsed the movement and which Routt County is named. Eliza was also the first woman to serve on the Colorado State Board of Agriculture and was a member of the non-partisan Suffrage Association of Colorado.

- Slide 5 (Baby Doe Tabor)

Socialites played an integral part of Colorado’s suffrage movement. **Elizabeth “Baby Doe” Tabor**, wife of “Silver King” **Horace Tabor**, lent her name and office space to the cause. In the end, careful planning and a low-key campaign yielded a 6,000-vote margin for equal suffrage, making Colorado the first state to enact equal suffrage by voter approved referendum.

- Slide 6 (The Unsinkable Maggie Brown)

Who doesn’t know about the **Unsinkable Molly Brown** who Kathy Bates portrayed in the movie Titanic? What you may not know is that she really went by Maggie, not Molly (the name Molly was invented by Hollywood for the Debbie Reynolds musical). Maggie traveled frequently, gave time and money to charity, sought women’s suffrage, spoke several languages, ran for the Senate and was well-known as a survivor of the Titanic disaster.

When she heard that her grandson fell ill, she bought a ticket home on the Titanic. On April 15, 1912, the Titanic hit an iceberg and sank. Since Maggie spoke several languages, she was able to tell other passengers to continue rowing so they didn't freeze to death. After being rescued by the Carpathia, she consoled survivors in their own language and after, spoke against the White Star Line for not providing enough life boats. She also set up and chaired a fund for survivor assistance. Truly and iconic visionary woman.

- Slide 7 (Susan Anderson)

While Elizabeth Blackwell was the first woman in the U.S. to become a physician, another well-known woman physician who practiced in Colorado was **Susan Anderson**, better known as "Doc Susie". Some of you may remember the T.V. series with Jane Seymour, Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman? Susan Anderson received her medical degree and then contracted tuberculosis in 1897. She established her first medical practice in Cripple Creek, Colorado that year, but struggled to gain the trust of patients. After unsuccessful attempts to set up a medical practice in Denver and Greeley, and due to prejudice against women doctors and the abundance of male doctors, she worked as a nurse in Greeley until 1907, when she moved to Fraser, Colorado, gravely ill from tuberculosis. To her surprise, she survived. People soon discovered she was a physician—even though her first patient was a horse. She brought successful medicine and healing in an era when women doctors were rare and not readily accepted. Also known also as Doc Susie, she made house calls. In 1904, she was appointed Coroner of Grand County, Colorado, during which time she investigated many of the deaths involved in the construction of the Moffat Tunnel railroad. Dedicated to public health, she strove to prevent epidemics of typhoid, smallpox, and diphtheria and dealt with the mysterious, deadly Spanish Influenza Pandemic of 1918 that spread like wildfire during the last months of the Great War, as well as the medical problems caused by alcohol abuse (she supported Prohibition). Dr. Susan Anderson was known as the best diagnostician on the Western Slope and despite her previous tuberculosis, lived to be 90.

- Slide 8 (Millicent Young)

While Amelia Earhart is a legendary female pilot, there were many women pilots who broke new ground. Among them was **Millicent Young**, one of

the first “Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (known as WASPs) during World War II. The WASPs performed stateside chores during World War II while male pilots were training for combat and fighting overseas. They are known as the first female “military” pilots in the United States. Millicent Young had dreamed of flying since she was six, after a pilot who had landed a plane on her family’s Nebraska farm told her, “Don’t touch that plane, little girl.” She obviously didn’t listen! Her son Bill said of her, “That was the wrong thing to say...she went right up and started touching everything. That day, she decided she was going to learn to fly.” In 2010, Millicent Young and about 300 other living WASPs were presented the highest civilian honor given by Congress, the Congressional Gold Medal. The same award has been given to icons including George Washington, Nelson Mandela and Mother Teresa. She often recounted to her children an exchange with a man refueling her aircraft who said “he” should be flying the plane. “I’m the man,” he told her, according to her children’s retelling. To which Millicent replied, “If you were, I would have noticed.” After she left the service, she continued to fight for the WASPs full military status and it finally happened in 1977 due to her petition drive. Millicent passed away this year in my home town Colorado Springs, at the age of 96, leaving behind a legacy of perseverance.

- Slide 9 (Fannie Mae Duncan)

In September of 1923 the Cotton Club opened in Harlem, where at the time, women entertainers were subjected to the "paper bag" test: only those whose skin color was lighter than a brown paper bag were hired. But another Cotton Club, years later and with a much different perspective, was established in Colorado Springs. **Fannie Mae Duncan** was the first African-American woman to succeed as an entrepreneur, philanthropist, and community activist in Colorado Springs. In the late 1950's, she founded the Cotton Club, a jazz mecca where she booked luminaries such as Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Lionel Hampton and Etta James, attracting a racially diverse following. While some local authorities objected to her patrons “mixing colors,” she defended her nondiscrimination policy because she felt turning away white customers would deny them their constitutional rights. That won the argument, and Duncan displayed a permanent sign in her window: “Everybody Welcome.” Her courageous stand fostered the peaceful integration of Colorado Springs.

- Slide 10 (Katharine Lee Bates)

A trip to Colorado in 1893 and the view from Pikes Peak inspired **Katharine Lee Bates** to write the poem, "America the Beautiful," which was published two years after she wrote it. Katharine Lee Bates helped found the New England Poetry Club in 1915 and served for a time as its president and she was involved in a few social reform activities. A well-respected poet and professor of English at Wellesley College, Bates was part of progressive reform circles in the Boston area, concerned about labor rights, urban slums and women's suffrage. It's said that her desire for an inclusive American "**brotherhood**" inspired the poem, which was written during the severe economic depression of 1893.

- Slide 11 (Jeanette Rankin)

It was **Jeanette Rankin**, the first woman to hold federal office that said,

"Men and women are like right and left hands; it doesn't make sense not to use both."

I know that you share the perspective that women have a responsibility to encourage other women to take on leadership positions. And, today, we have more women leaders than ever before.

- Slide 12 (Thank you Colorado Women Commissioners slide)

Congratulations for being a part of Women's History and I thank each of you, for your leadership to represent counties and improve the lives of people and our communities.

We, as women, have opportunities to make history every day and I'm going end by sharing with you one of my favorite quotes from Marilyn Monroe, "Well-behaved women rarely make history."

CCI Women Presidents: Johnnette Phillips (Eagle-2000), Marianna Raftopoulos (Moffat-2003), Dorothea Farris (Pitkin-2008), Kathay Rennels (Larimer-2009).

Total women commissioners: 55 out of 221 commissioners and city & county councilmembers/mayors

Women currently in CCI leadership (steering, districts, board):

- Barbara Kirkmeyer (Weld) and Debbie Bell (Fremont) are on the Board of Directors.
- Debbie Bell was the Vice President of Mountain District, but she will have to be replaced now that she's on the board. Helen Sigmond (Alamosa) is President of the Southern District.
- Suzanne Bothell (Rio Grande) is Agriculture, Wildlife & Rural Affairs Chair. Rose Pugliese (Mesa) is General Government Chair. Wendy Buxton-Andrade (Prowers) is Health & Human Services Chair. Nancy Jackson (Arapahoe) is Justice & Public Safety Chair. Mary Hodge (Adams) is Taxation & Finance Chair. Libby Szabo (Jefferson) is Tourism, Resorts, & Economic Development Chair.

Women commissioners for NACo:

- Debbie Bell, Fremont (Ag & Rural Affairs Steering Committee Member)
- Sue Hansen, Montrose (Community, Economic, & Workplace Development Steering Committee Member)
- Hilary Cooper, San Miguel (Environment, Energy, & Land Use Steering Committee Member)
- Kathleen Conti, Arapahoe (Environment, Energy, & Land Use Steering Committee Member)
- Barbara Kirkmeyer, Weld (Environment, Energy, & Land Use Steering Committee Member)
- Nancy Jackson, Arapahoe (Health Steering Committee Member)
- Cami Bremer, El Paso (Human Services & Education Steering Committee Member)
- Wendy Buxton-Andrade, Prowers (Human Services & Education Steering Committee Member)
- Nancy Sharpe, Arapahoe (Human Services & Education Chair)
- Libby Szabo, Jefferson (Justice & Public Safety Steering Committee Member)
- Ramona Weber, Mineral (Public Lands Steering Committee Member)
- Kathy Chandler-Henry, Eagle (Public Lands Subcommittee Vice Chair)
- Karn Stiegelmeier, Summit (Transportation Steering Committee Member)
- Holly Williams, El Paso (Transportation Steering Committee Member)