

GFWC WOMEN'S HISTORY AND RESOURCE CENTER
2024-2026 NEWSLETTER, ISSUE 1
Marian St.Clair, GFWC WHRC Chairman
Information to Share with Your Chairmen!

NEWS FROM WHRC

As members of GFWC, we are rightly proud of our history and sharing information and stories about our past is an important aspect of keeping members engaged, inspired, and motivated. To do your part, please ensure all clubs know about the three avenues of information posted on a regular basis by the Women's History and Resource Center, including:

1. A new blog series, "WHRC: From the Archives," which highlights some of the many stories of GFWC history found in our unique collections of photographs, artifacts, and archival materials, is published on the first Thursday each month. Look for previous posts at <https://www.gfwc.org/gfwc-news/>
2. Be alert for "WHRC Wednesday," a midweek feature on the GFWC Facebook page.
3. And, lastly, follow WHRC on Instagram: @gfwc_whrc

NATIONAL HISTORY DAY CONTEST

Clubs looking for new projects should consider the National History Day Contest, which provides an opportunity to engage middle and high school students with women's history. [National History Day](#) (NHD) is a non-profit organization that offers students the chance to learn critical thinking and research skills and apply them to a topic of their choice through a variety of presentation formats (documentaries, performances, websites, exhibits, or traditional research paper). Participants who win at the school contest move up through county and state contests, culminating in a national competition held each June in College Park, Maryland. Teachers also benefit from NHD training courses and professional development.

Clubs and members can get involved in NHD in a variety of ways, by volunteering to judge contests at the school, county, state, and national level; donating time and money to ensure that contests take place and teachers have the resources they need. You can also nominate a teacher for the NHD Teacher of the Year, or help students identify topics, access resources, and develop a strong presentation. Many county and state competitions award special prizes sponsored by local organizations. Contact your nearby school system or your [state NHD contest affiliate](#) to see how you and your club can help!

Here is a personal endorsement from Joanna Church, the GFWC WHRC Librarian:

"I have served as a judge, an exhibit advisor, and a behind-the-scenes organizer at school, county, and state competitions in Maryland for over 20 years, and I cannot overstate how rewarding the NHD program is (or how much I wish I'd had the chance to participate as a student). Seeing the work these students achieve is astounding, from unique analysis to polished, creative presentations. At a previous job, we recruited a wide variety of community members as judges for the county competition, and we heard only positive reviews; everyone

walked away with a sense of pride in these students and their commitment to historical research. We also brought in local organizations as special prize sponsors – our League of Women Voters chapter sponsored a Civic Engagement prize, for example, and the Business and Professional Women group sponsored the Women’s History prize – and found that this was a win-win for students, parents, teachers, and the organizations themselves. Although I’m no longer a contest organizer, I make sure to judge at least one NHD competition every year; I wouldn’t miss it.”

FUNDS FOR ART & ARTIFACTS

During this Administration (2024-2026), funds doated to WHRC may be designated for the restoration and preservation of GFWC art and artifacts. In addition to the many important paintings and art prints, the GFWC collection includes numerous ceramics, textiles, photos, documents, and other objects. Some of these artifacts are in urgent need of conservation.

There is one very special painting, *Mt. Mckinley National Park*, painted by Syndey Laurence in 1923 and donated by the Alaska Federation in the same year to GFWC, that urgently needs conservation.

Laurence painted Mt. McKinley (now named Denali) many times and is best known for those images. Laurence also painted other scenes of Alaska wilderness, from rocky coasts to rustic cabins, and he depicted the often solitary lives of natives and newcomers who fished, prospected, and trapped in the harshest conditions. More than any other artist, his paintings defined Alaska as “the last frontier.” For these reasons, as well as its size and artistic merit, *Mt. Mckinley National Park* is estimated to be the most valuable work of art in the GFWC Collection.

It is interesting to note that many of the paintings donated to GFWC by clubwoman over the years portray their region, state, or community, so members and visitors see the geographic diversity of our Federation reflected on our walls. GFWC also encouraged clubwomen to promote and collect art themselves, some of which was used to ornament schools, libraries, and other public buildings across the country. Then in the 1930s, GFWC adopted the Penny Art Fund to purchase various types of art and mount traveling exhibits that not only educated citizens, but also helped sustain artists during the Great Depression.

The collection arising from these efforts illustrates the significant role that art education and appreciation have played in GFWC’s history, while also providing a tangible and exciting connection to our past.

In 2022, *In the Arroyo*, a painting donated by GFWC California was conserved with great success. Now, the Laurence painting and other art and artifacts need restoration or conservation. Please share the news about this very special project and help us make it a success.

CONTACT

For more information about topics covered in this newsletter, or other WHRC materials, feel free to contact me at marian.stclair@gmail.com, or by phone at 864-414-5697.