



# Blanchard House Museum Celebrates Women's History Month

March 2021



# Welcome

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**Today you are going to hear the stories of four exceptional women who:**

- **Discovered;**
- **Developed; and**
- **Used their gifts and talents for the good of society.**

*"And Still I Rise"*



# The Women

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- **Mary Fields- “Stagecoach Mary” of the Wild west**
- **Mary Bowser- Union Spy during the Civil War**
- **Katherine Johnson- NASA Mathematician**
- **Shirley Chisholm- Presidential Candidate**
- **Let’s Get Started**

*"And Still I Rise"*



# Mary Fields - "Stagecoach Mary"

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# Mary Fields - "Stagecoach Mary"

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- Also known as “Stagecoach Mary”
- First African American female “Star Route” mail carrier in the United States when West was a predominately white society.
- Born into slavery around 1832; freed when slavery was outlawed in 1865.
- In 1895, in her early sixties, Mary secured the Star Route contract.

*"And Still I Rise"*



# Postal Service

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- Drove the route with horses and a mule named Moses.
- Nickname came due to Mary's use of a stage coach to transport and deliver mail.
- If snow too deep for horses, delivered mail on snowshoes, carrying sacks on her shoulders.

*"And Still I Rise"*



# Mary's Reputation

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- **Fearless mail carrier.**
- **Had to protect the mail from bandits, thieves, wolves and weather.**
- **Stood six feet tall and powerful.**
- **Carried a gun, smoked, drank and “had a wicked temper”.**
- **A beloved and respected public figure in Cascade, Montana.**

*"And Still I Rise"*



# Mary Bowser – Union Spy

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# Mary Elizabeth Bowser

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- Operated as a spy for the Union in Confederate White House.
- Born enslaved around 1839 on the plantation of John Van Lew.
- Upon John's death, Mary was freed by daughter outspoken abolitionist Elizabeth.
- Mary was sent by Elizabeth to be educated in Philadelphia.

*"And Still I Rise"*



# Mary the Spy

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- **Van Lew arranged for Mary to work in the Jefferson Davis household.**
- **Mary possessed a photographic memory and incredible acting skills.**
- **Engaged in a very dangerous activity.**
- **Played the stereotypical role of the ignorant slave.**

*"And Still I Rise"*



# Mary's Ruse

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- **Jefferson household assumed Mary was enslaved.**
- **Davis, cabinet and military leaders spoke freely in front of Mary.**
- **Took for granted Mary was illiterate.**
- **Mary read war dispatches and other military papers.**
- **Mary passed information on to military leaders including General Grant.**

*"And Still I Rise"*

# Katherine Johnson – NASA Mathematician

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# Katherine Johnson

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- **First African American woman to work as a NASA scientist.**
- **An African American mathematician whose calculations were essential to the first and subsequent U.S. crewed spaceflights.**
- **In 2015, awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.**
- **In 2019 awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.**
- **Two NASA facilities named in Katherine Johnson's honor.**

*"And Still I Rise"*



# Katherine's Gift

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- **Katherine loved to count; counted everything from steps to church to forks and knives she washed.**
- **Katherine loved to learn; loved learning math most.**
- **Started high school when she was ten years old.**
- **At fifteen, began college, took classes to become a mathematician.**
- **Graduated from college at 18.**

*"And Still I Rise"*



# Human Computers

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- **NASA was hiring African American women to solve math problems.**
- **These workers called “computers”.**
- **Very inquisitive; attended all male meetings to learn more.**
- **Left job as computer, became team member on space projects for NASA.**

*"And Still I Rise"*



# Katherine's Math

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- **Katherine studied how to use geometry for space travel.**
- **Figured out the paths for the spacecraft to orbit the Earth and land on the Moon.**
- **1962, Katherine Johnson was called to do the work for which she would become best known.**
- **John Glenn insisted that Katherine Johnson do the numbers for his flight, "If she says they're good, the I'm ready to go", said Glenn.**

*"And Still I Rise"*





# Shirley Chisholm - Politician

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# Shirley Chisholm

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- **American politician, educator, and author.**
- **Born in Brooklyn, NY to immigrant parents.**
- **1968, she became the first African American woman elected to the United States Congress, representing New York's 12<sup>th</sup> Congressional District.**
- **1972, Shirley Chisholm became the first African American candidate for a major party's nomination for President of the United States and....**
- **First woman to run for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination.**

*"And Still I Rise"*



# “Fighting Shirley”

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- **Introduced more than 50 pieces of legislation.**
- **Championed racial and gender equality, the plight of the poor and ending the Vietnam War.**
- **Co-founder of the National Women’s Political Caucus in 1971.**
- **1977- First African American woman to ever serve on the powerful House Rules Committee.**

*“And Still I Rise”*



# “Unbought and Unbossed”

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- **Faced discrimination during her quest for the 1972 Democratic Party Presidential nomination.**
- **Blocked from participating in televised primary debates; after legal action only allowed to make one speech.**
- **Received racist hate mail and multiple death threats; campaign materials routinely destroyed and vandalized.**
- **Underfinanced and not supported by the predominately male Congressional Black Caucus.**
- **Chisholm’s mission: “I want to be remembered as a woman, who dared to be a catalyst for change.”**

*“And Still I Rise”*



# Reflections #1

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- **What gifts or talents did each of these exceptional women possess?**
- **What abilities and skills did they work to develop?**
- **What personality traits helped them to over obstacles they faced?**

*"And Still I Rise"*



## Reflections #2

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- **What special gift /talent do you possess?**
- **How would you like to use your gifts/talents to better society?**

*"And Still I Rise"*