

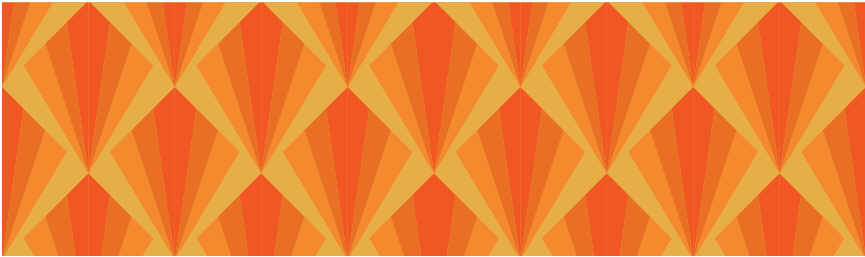


*Courtesy of*

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**Women's History in  
the Hudson Valley**

*Ten Stories from Columbia  
and Dutchess Counties*

**2018**



Dear Friends,

On August 7, 1957, in a letter to Amy Spingarn, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote: "Let me express my appreciation to you for the great part that you and your late husband have played in the struggle for freedom and human dignity for all people. The names of the Spingarns will go down in history as symbols of the struggle for freedom and justice." Amy Spingarn's Amenia home was long a gathering place for prominent thinkers, writers and activists including those who founded the NAACP. Yet it is too often in letters and diaries, not in history books, that we learn about these remarkable women.

The 2018 volume of **Women's History in the Hudson Valley: Ten Stories from Columbia and Dutchess Counties** includes the story of philanthropist, artist and poet Amy Einstein Spingarn, as well Megan Carr-Wilks, an emergency first responder with the NYPD during the September 11 attacks, and Julia Philip, a civil rights activist who helped drive Harlem school children after bus drivers refused to comply with new school integration measures, among others.

For the fifth year, in partnership with the Mid-Hudson Library District, our office is proud to produce and distribute **Women's History in the Hudson Valley** as part of Women's History Month to help ensure that the lives of women and girls from our region are known and remembered for generations to come. Please enjoy these stories of ten Hudson Valley women who made our community and world a better, more equitable place for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Didi Barrett".

Assemblymember Didi Barrett

March 2018





# Contents

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Anna Buchholz	2
Megan Carr-Wilks	4
Virginia O'Hanlon Douglas	6
Josephine Evarts	8
Anna Roosevelt Halsted	10
Dorothy J. Paulin	12
Julia Philip	14
Edith Roberts	16
Dawn Langley Simmons	18
Amy Einstein Spingarn	20





# Anna Buchholz

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*Town of Poughkeepsie*  
1921-2007

## **Town Supervisor**

Anna Buchholz's legacy of political perseverance has had a profound impact on the town of Poughkeepsie and New York State. In an age when few women were considered fit to run for office, Buchholz

persisted. After losing three campaigns for county legislature, Buchholz won her fourth campaign in 1971 on a platform of honest and open government. In 1975, Buchholz became supervisor of the town of Poughkeepsie and would serve seven terms until her retirement in 1989.

In addition to her leadership in the town of Poughkeepsie, Buchholz was appointed by Governor Mario Cuomo to his Community Affairs Advisory Board, his Task Force on Mandates and the Greenway Council. Buchholz also served as president of the League of Women Voters and



the board of the Mid-Hudson Civic Center. Buchholz continued to stay active in local politics even after retirement by attending meetings and working on local campaigns. According to the American Association of University Women, “her leadership was non-partisan, fortified by consensus, peaceful resolution and based on the soundness of her personal ethic and integrity.”

Women’s History in  
the Hudson Valley

*Ten Stories from Columbia  
and Dutchess Counties*

2018

[aaupoughkeepsie.org/uploads/PDFs/notable\\_women/anna%20buchholz.pdf](http://aaupoughkeepsie.org/uploads/PDFs/notable_women/anna%20buchholz.pdf)  
Photo: Poughkeepsie Branch AAUW, Inc.



# Megan Carr-Wilks

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*City of Hudson*  
1962-2017

## **9/11 First Responder**

Megan Carr-Wilks grew up in New York City, graduating from John Jay College in Manhattan. After college, Carr-Wilks worked in the Manhattan District Attorney's office before joining the police academy. After

graduation, she was assigned to the 60th Precinct in Coney Island, working as a youth officer before being promoted to detective with the Special Victims Unit. Carr-Wilks was an emergency first responder during the September 11 terrorist attacks. In the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, she spent countless hours working to restore normalcy. She worked for the NYPD for more than 20 years before retiring in 2010.

In 2011, Carr-Wilks moved to Hudson and worked as a school resource officer for the Hudson City School District, but as a result of



prolonged exposure to the toxic air at Ground Zero, she was diagnosed with cancer and passed away in 2017. She was a mother, daughter and hero who dedicated her life to protecting and serving her community. Carr-Wilks will be remembered for her bravery on that horrific day and for her tireless dedication to her family, community and country.

Women's History in  
the Hudson Valley

*Ten Stories from Columbia  
and Dutchess Counties*

2018

[hudsonvalley360.com/article/megan-carr-wilks](http://hudsonvalley360.com/article/megan-carr-wilks)  
Photo: Family of Megan Carr-Wilks





## Virginia O'Hanlon Douglas

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*Town of Chatham*  
1889-1971

### **Educator and Santa Skeptic**

Virginia O'Hanlon Douglas is famous for questioning the existence of Santa Claus at the age of 8. When she couldn't get a satisfactory answer from her parents,

O'Hanlon Douglas wrote to the New York Sun asking: "Dear Editor, I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, 'If you see it in The Sun, it's so.' Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?" The editor, Francis Church, a former Civil War correspondent specializing in religious and controversial issues wrote back, "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus," and went on to explain that "Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see." The letter captivated readers across the nation and



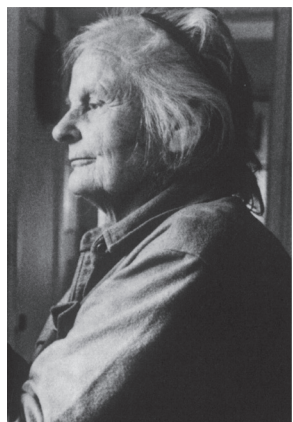
remains one of the most reprinted editorials of all time.

O'Hanlon Douglas' legacy was far bigger than the letter she wrote at the age of 8, however. She became a teacher, earning her master's degree from Columbia University and doctorate from Fordham University. She worked as an educator and school administrator.

After moving to North Chatham, O'Hanlon Douglas was honored by the North Chatham United Methodist Church for her place in Christmas lore. Her childhood home became the Studio School and a scholarship was established in her name. The purpose of the scholarship is to "educate children to take their place in the world with integrity, compassion and a lifelong love for learning."

2018

[biography.com/people/virginia-ohanlon-273642](https://biography.com/people/virginia-ohanlon-273642)  
[fs2.american.edu/vjc/www/santa.htm](https://fs2.american.edu/vjc/www/santa.htm)  
[studioschoolnyc.org/virginia-o-hanlon-scholarship.html](https://studioschoolnyc.org/virginia-o-hanlon-scholarship.html)  
Photo: Public Domain



## Josephine Evarts

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*Town of Dover*  
1901-1983

### **Physician**

Dr. Josephine Evarts was a local legend known for her larger-than-life personality, work ethic and dedication to her field. Dr. Evarts graduated from Vassar College in 1924 and went on to

attend the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons.

She began practicing medicine during the Great Depression. Many of her patients were poor agricultural workers with little education who lived in abject poverty. She often traveled directly to her patients, working at a significant discount or for free to care for the impoverished members of her community. Dr. Evarts maintained two offices, saw patients at four institutions and worked six days a week. She practiced in Kent, Conn., Millerton and the Harlem Valley Psychiatric Center.



She welcomed walk-ins and continued to visit patients well into her 70s.

Dr. Evarts' dedication to providing health care to anyone in need made her a staple of the community. She will always be remembered for her sense of humor and unwavering empathy for her patients.

Women's History in  
the Hudson Valley

*Ten Stories from Columbia  
and Dutchess Counties*

2018

[newspaperarchives.vassar.edu/cgi-bin/vassar?a=d&d=vq19750301-01.2.14](http://newspaperarchives.vassar.edu/cgi-bin/vassar?a=d&d=vq19750301-01.2.14)  
Photo: Vassar College, Special Collections Photo File or Ph.F 8.33



## Anna Roosevelt Halsted

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*Town of Hillsdale*  
1906-1975

### **Journalist and Radio Host**

Anna Roosevelt Halsted, the only daughter of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, was born on

May 3, 1906. Halsted was well-known for her career in public affairs and journalism, working as a writer, journalist and radio program co-hostess with her mother, amongst other accomplishments. She worked as a columnist and associate editor for the woman's page at the Seattle Post-Intelligencer from December 1936 to September 1943.

Halsted then became a private assistant to her father and attended the World War II Yalta Conference where FDR would meet Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin. Halsted then



launched a radio program called the Eleanor and Anna Roosevelt Program with her mother.

In 1955, she moved to Syracuse and worked as assistant to the director of public relations at the State University Upstate Medical Center. She became the director of public relations and then assistant to the dean in April 1957, a position that she occupied until 1958 when she moved to Iran. There, Halsted worked in public relations and administration at Pahlavi University Medical School, which she helped establish.

In 1962, Halsted led the effort to secure a new campus for the Wiltwyck School for Boys, the nation's first interracial school for children with emotional or behavioral issues, that was located across the Hudson River from her family's home. After retiring to her cottage in Hillsdale, Halsted remained active in a number of organizations, including the Roosevelt Institute, an organization that supports the efforts of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park.

[nytimes.com/1975/12/02/archives/anna-roosevelt-halsted-presidents-daughter-dies-white-house.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/1975/12/02/archives/anna-roosevelt-halsted-presidents-daughter-dies-white-house.html?_r=0)  
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Photo: Public Domain



## Dorothy J. Paulin

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*City of Beacon*  
1939-2017


### **Education Advocate**

Dorothy Paulin was born in Virginia, but moved to Beacon as a child. Her academic acumen was apparent at an early age when she was named valedictorian of her South Avenue School class. Paulin went on to earn

a degree in business management from Dutchess Community College and remained a lifelong learner for the rest of her life.

Paulin started her career at IBM in Hopewell Junction in 1968 in a manufacturing capacity and was then promoted to personnel recruiter in 1983 and to project manager in 1985. Paulin retired from IBM in 1993. In the same year, she was selected as the executive director for the Martin Luther King Cultural Center, Inc. in Beacon, a position that she held until 2011.

Paulin was a dedicated



education advocate for the children in her community and helped to foster a more holistic educational experience by managing several after-school initiatives, including the Prepare-A-Teen summer workforce training program. Paulin also developed and maintained partnerships with a host of other local and statewide organizations to further the MLK Center's mission. In 2000, she was honored by the Southern Dutchess NAACP for her tireless efforts. After receiving her award, Paulin said, "I am not looking for any recognition. I am just looking for a smile on a child's face and to know that they succeed, and if I can afford to do this without being paid, I would."

*and Dutchess Counties*

2018

[legacy.com/obituaries/poughkeepsiejournal/obituary.aspx?pid=186114294](https://legacy.com/obituaries/poughkeepsiejournal/obituary.aspx?pid=186114294)  
Photo: Southern Dutchess NAACP





## Julia Philip

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*Town of Claverack*  
1924-2017

### **Activist and Preservationist**

Julia Philip was a pioneer working woman, leading civil rights advocate and mother of five. As a resident of New York City in the 1960s, Philip participated in the Harlem Initiative – a grassroots

campaign to bus Harlem children to Manhattan schools after bus drivers refused to do so, in violation of newly enacted integration measures.

In 1967, she helped her husband, J. Van Ness Philip, create Modern Distribution Management (MDM) Premium, a bimonthly newsletter specializing in market analysis. In 1975, they moved the newsletter from Manhattan to Claverack so they could better care for Talavera, the Philips' ancestral home, which has been in the family for over 280 years and is one of the oldest continually operating family farms



in New York State. Over the years, Philip opened the family's house to the Columbia County Historical Society, which hosts events at the estate and offers guided tours.

In 1992, she helped form a group that successfully saved the Hudson Opera House, one of the oldest theaters in the country, from being demolished. She served on the opera house's board of directors, where she was instrumental in the handsome restoration of the historic theater, now called Hudson Hall. Philip was also a board member for two historic homes – Wilderstein in Rhinebeck and Clermont in Germantown.

*Women's History in  
New Stories from Columbia  
and Dutchess Counties*

2018

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[hudsonhall.org/history-2](https://hudsonhall.org/history-2)  
Photo: Family of Julia Philip



## Edith Roberts

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*Town of Poughkeepsie*  
1881-1977


### **Botany Professor**

A farmer's daughter from New Hampshire, Edith Roberts devoted her life to academia and botany. Born on April 28, 1881, Roberts earned a doctorate in botany from the University of Chicago

and went on to teach at and serve as chair of the department of plant science at Vassar College.

In the 1920s, Roberts established a four-acre ecological laboratory on the Vassar College campus. The laboratory was an ecological playground in which species native to Dutchess County could be cultivated and studied. When it first opened, the laboratory featured merely two oak trees and abundant poison ivy, but it wouldn't remain that way for long.

When Roberts retired in 1948, the habitat



included nearly 700 species native to Dutchess County. Unfortunately, neglect and changes to the ecosystem all but destroyed Roberts' habitat. Today, a new crop of students and faculty are working to preserve Roberts' legacy by removing invasive species and re-establishing native species.



## Women's History in the Hudson Valley

*Ten Stories from Columbia  
and Dutchess Counties*

2018

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Photo: Vassar College, Special Collections



## Dawn Langlely Simmons

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*City of Hudson*  
1922-2000

### **Civil Rights Activist and Author**

Dawn Langlely Simmons, who underwent sex reassignment surgery in 1968, was a prolific author, biographer and

unwitting pioneer of the human rights movement. She was the author of more than 20 books, including novels and biographies. Simmons' work took her all over the United States and Canada. She became famous for writing about Native Americans, Jacqueline Kennedy and Mary Todd Lincoln.

Around 1962, Simmons moved to a historically queer neighborhood in South Carolina. In 1969, Simmons married a 22-year-old black man. The marriage is believed to be the first documented interracial marriage in Charleston's history, and it was met with significant



backlash. The ceremony had to be relocated because of a bomb threat and their wedding gifts were incinerated in a suspicious fire. After a white man broke into Simmons' house and beat her, she moved to Hudson. There, Simmons directed the youth group at one of the area's Episcopal churches, where she was an active member of the congregation. Her daughter wanted her to be remembered for her devotion to her children and family.

Women's History in  
the Hudson Valley

*Ten Stories from Columbia  
and Dutchess Counties*

2018

[nytimes.com/2000/09/24/nyregion/dawn-langley-simmons-flamboyant-writer-dies-at-77.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2000/09/24/nyregion/dawn-langley-simmons-flamboyant-writer-dies-at-77.html)  
Photo: Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture



## Amy Einstein Spingarn

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*Town of Amenia*  
1883-1980

### **Philanthropist**

Amy Einstein Spingarn is well-known as a philanthropist, poet and artist who painted prominent African-American cultural figures. She was an advocate for struggling black artists and a friend of Langston

Hughes, whose university education she funded.

Her estate in Amenia, Troutbeck, now restored as an inn and restaurant, was frequently the meeting place of the NAACP, of which her husband, Joel Elias Spingarn, was a founder and prominent leader. Upon the death of her husband, Amy Spingarn was elected to finish out his term on the NAACP board of directors. After being awarded the Spingarn Medal by the NAACP, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote to Spingarn: "Let me express my appreciation to you for the great part that you



and your late husband have played in the struggle for freedom and human dignity for all people. The names of the Spingarns will go down in history as symbols of the struggle for freedom and justice.”



## Women’s History in the Hudson Valley

*Ten Stories from Columbia  
and Dutchess Counties*

2018

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[friendsofthepoughkeepsieruralcemetery.org/reflections/spingarn.htm](http://friendsofthepoughkeepsieruralcemetery.org/reflections/spingarn.htm)  
Photo: Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University



