



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

*Ten Stories from Columbia
and Dutchess Counties*

2021

Dear Friends,

History is filled with countless women who fought for their rights, made their voices heard and changed the fabric of American society – and many who continue to break barriers to this day. Earlier this year, we saw history being made as Kamala Harris was sworn in as Vice President, the first woman — and first woman of color — to serve in that distinguished role, as well as a record number of women representing our nation in Congress and in the New York State Legislature. And yet, for all the accomplishments women have achieved, far too many of their stories are often overlooked. While their names may not yet appear in history books, we are proud each year to recognize and share the invaluable contributions these local pioneers have made to make this world a better place.



The 2021 volume of **Women's History in the Hudson Valley: Ten Stories from Columbia and Dutchess Counties** features the stories of Sara Josephine Baker, a doctor who entered a male-dominated profession and made significant contributions to child and maternal health that helped save countless lives; Dutchess County Legislator Barbara Jeter-Jackson, who always put the concerns of her constituents first and strove to improve her community; beloved jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald, whose voice still continues to awe and inspire today; and many more.

My office is honored to once again produce and distribute **Women's History in the Hudson Valley** in partnership with the Mid-Hudson Library District as part of Women's History Month. The 10 women highlighted in this year's edition made significant strides toward equality, helped others in times of need and shaped the Hudson Valley communities we call home. Please enjoy their stories and find inspiration in their strength, determination and passion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Didi Barrett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Didi Barrett
Member of the Assembly, District 106



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Sara Josephine Baker

Poughkeepsie
1873-1945

Doctor and Child Health Advocate

Sara Josephine Baker's work in public health helped save the lives of countless children and mothers and made her an instrumental figure in her male-dominated field. Baker was born in Poughkeepsie to lawyer Daniel Mosher Baker and Jenny Hardwood Brown, who was among the first female graduates of Vassar College. While her brother's

death prevented Baker from attending Vassar, she enrolled in the Woman's Medical College of the New York Infantry and found role models in some of the first women to attend medical school. After graduating in 1898, Baker interned at the New England Hospital for Women and Children in Boston at an outpatient clinic that served impoverished residents. It was there that Baker became interested in the connection between poverty and ill health and developed a passion for social medicine.

In 1908, after Baker spent a year as assistant commissioner of health, where she managed smallpox vaccination programs and sanitation issues, she was appointed director of New York City's first-in-the-nation Bureau of Child Hygiene. There, she developed programs on basic hygiene for immigrants living in poor



neighborhoods, a basic infant care training program for young girls responsible for caring for their siblings, baby health stations and midwife training, as well as created highly influential policies on maternal and infant mortality. When Baker retired in 1923, New York City had the lowest infant mortality rate of any major U.S. city. Baker founded the American Child Hygiene Association in 1909 – the same year she became the first woman to earn a doctorate in public health from New York University and Bellevue Hospital Medical College. In addition to her significant medical work, Baker was a suffragist and member of the feminist debate group, the Heterodoxy Club. Baker retired to New Jersey with her beloved life partner, writer Ida Wylie, until she passed in 1945.





Dorothy "Dot" Burdick

Stanford
1924-2018

Community Activist

Dorothy Burdick embodied community spirit as a committed volunteer and member of many local organizations. Born to parents Frank and Carrie Barton, Burdick was raised in Stanford, attending Stanford Free School and Millbrook High School. She then trained in Albany as a well-baby nurse. Burdick was a devoted member of the Stanford Grange 808 for 82 years, serving in

many roles, including lady assistant steward, lecturer, Grange historian and a member of the executive committee, as well as cashier at the Grange Family Snack Bar at the Dutchess County Fair for many years. It was while she was preparing a lecture for the Grange that she met her husband, Irving Charles Burdick, a recently returned soldier. Together, they had four children.

One of Burdick's greatest passions was preserving the history of Stanford for generations to come in her role as town historian. Additionally, she served on the Stanford Rescue Squad, as secretary for the Stanford Fire Department and as an election poll inspector, as well as helped write "Stanford Memories." Burdick also volunteered as a Cub Scout, Brownie and 4-H leader and was one of the founding members of the "Asparagus" Club. She was a proud lifelong



member of the United Church of Christ in Stanford, where she also served in many positions, including Sunday school teacher for 65 years.



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Margaret Hamilton

Millbrook
1902-1985

Actress and Public Education Advocate

While Margaret Hamilton was most notably known for her role as the Wicked Witch of the West in "The Wizard of Oz," she had a lifelong commitment to public education and was a strong advocate for causes benefiting children and animals. The youngest of four children, Hamilton was born in 1902 in Cleveland, Ohio. Hamilton began her acting career onstage

in 1923 and became a professional entertainer in 1929. However, prior to turning to acting, Hamilton developed a lifelong passion for public education after she attended Wheelock College in Boston and went on to become a kindergarten teacher and a member of the Board of Education in Beverly Hills, California.

Hamilton's first on-screen role was in the 1933 film "Another Language." In order to support herself and her son, she sought to take on as many roles as possible. Hamilton played several character parts before starring in her most memorable role as the Wicked Witch of the West in "The Wizard of Oz" in 1939. In subsequent years, Hamilton made several appearances as the Witch, including on "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" to show children that she was only playing a part. Following "The Wizard of Oz,"



Hamilton went on to star in dozens of movies, radio series and television shows, as well as appeared in public-service announcements for organizations promoting the welfare of pets. Later in life, Hamilton moved to Millbrook where her son Hamilton Meserve, then owner of the Taconic Newspapers, lived. Before passing away in 1985, she asked that her ashes be spread across Amenia, NY, so as to be forever connected to the bucolic place she'd chosen to call home.





Caroline Morgan Clowes

LaGrange
1838-1904

Artist

Caroline Morgan Clowes was an exceptional Hudson River School painter who was known for capturing the natural beauty and ambiance of the Hudson Valley. She was born in 1838 to parents William Jones Clowes and Elizabeth Ann Hart Clowes in Hempstead, Long Island. Shortly after her birth, the family moved upstate near Monticello. Her mother passed away when Clowes was two

years old, and by the time Clowes was 13, she and her sister were being raised by extended family. Clowes was raised by her maternal uncle, Benjamin Hall Hart, and his wife, Elizabeth Nichols Hart, at their LaGrange home, Heartease.

Clowes was 16 years old when her work was exhibited in Poughkeepsie. She attended the Poughkeepsie Female Academy and studied under Hudson River School painter Frederick Rondel during his residency in Poughkeepsie from 1863 to 1868. Clowes mainly painted landscapes featuring farm animals, often cattle, from the area surrounding Heartease. The popularity of her work rose after the end of the Civil War. Her artwork was exhibited at the National Academy of Design in 1865, as well as in other major cities, including Philadelphia at the United States International



Exhibition, London at the Royal Albert Hall of Arts and Science and at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

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en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caroline_Morgan_Clowes
www.dchsny.org/cmclowes





Barbara Jeter-Jackson


*Salt Point,
City of Poughkeepsie*
1938-2020

County Legislator and Community Leader

Barbara Jeter-Jackson was a selfless local leader who devoted herself to helping others and improving the community for future generations. Jeter-Jackson was born in Salt Point in 1938 and raised by her grandparents, William and Mary Holman. She later moved to the City of Poughkeepsie. For 47 years, Jeter-Jackson worked

for the IBM Corporation until she retired in 2003. She first volunteered as a youth counselor for the Catharine Street, Smith Street and Lincoln Centers and became involved in the Model Cities and Community Development boards.

Jeter-Jackson dedicated herself to serving her community and was a member of numerous boards and organizations. In 1975, she served as executive secretary to then defunct Catharine Street Community Center and helped with its revival. She served on the City of Poughkeepsie School Board for 16 years, the Poughkeepsie Common Council, the Poughkeepsie Planning Board and the Waterfront Advisory Board. She also served on the boards of Vassar Brothers Hospital, Mid-Hudson Civic Center, REAL Skills Network Inc. and St. Simeon Senior Housing. In 2006, Jeter-



Jackson was elected to the Dutchess County Legislature District 10, a position she held until her death, putting the voices and concerns of her constituents above all else. Additionally, she was a charter member of the TWINKS Social and Civic Club for 57 years, serving as president for the national and local chapters and treasurer of the local chapter. She was also a devoted member of the Beulah Baptist Church, where she served as chairperson of the trustee board, president of the Mass choir and on the Courtesy Ministry, Membership Ministry and Marriage Ministry.



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DeGuerre A. Blackburn


Kinderhook
1943-2019

Social Worker

DeGuerre Blackburn was a passionate social worker whose generosity helped children in need around the globe. Blackburn was born in 1943 to Mary Averell and Walter Campbell on Long Island. After graduating from Ichabod Crane High School and Wells College, Blackburn earned a master's degree in social work from Simmons College. For 10 years, Blackburn served as the

director of a Columbia County family and child counseling service as well as working for the Veteran's Administration with veterans who had psychiatric disorders and those with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). After Blackburn married Roderic H. Blackburn in 1965, they lived in Kenya for two years, where Blackburn's husband worked as an anthropologist and Blackburn as a field assistant.

In 1986, Blackburn founded the not-for-profit international and domestic adoption agency Voice for International Development and Adoption (VIDA). Blackburn strove to help find homes for children with special needs and bring children from other countries in need of medical treatment to the United States. Through a program called Health for Life, Blackburn helped bring



12 children who were injured in the 2010 earthquake in Haiti to the United States for treatment. She also created an Eco Health Program at VIDA to support the environment and worked with a Guatemalan humanitarian organization to raise funds to provide girls ages 5 to 25 with an education. For her work, Blackburn received the Maida Solomon Award in Social Work from Simmons College and the 2006 South Carolina Angel in Adoption Award. Blackburn passed away in 2019 at her Kinderhook home.



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Honoria Livingston McVitty

Clermont
1909-2000

Poet and Family Historian

Born to John Henry Livingston and Alice Delafield Clarkson Livingston, Honoria lived alongside her sister Janet and their menagerie of pets at their family estate in Clermont. She was named after her mother, breaking the longstanding family tradition of being named after one of the many Livingston ancestors.

Her name Honoria meant "Honor to Alice." Her grandparents lived up the road and they spent a great deal of time together. Her grandmother and mother were both prolific journalists and poets and fostered Honoria's passion for creative writing. She would write poems in a specially engraved notebook every day.

In 1920, the Livingston family moved to Europe for 6 years in order to give Honoria and her sister a well-rounded European education. Her poems began to flourish and filled the pages of her notebook in various languages.

After the death of her father in 1927 and return home, she debuted her work in New York City. She fell in love with Reginald (Rex) McVitty and they married in 1931. Honoria continued pursuing her passions and became an accomplished writer, golfer,



gardener and the Lady of the Estate. After Honoria's mother deeded the Clermont grounds to New York State, Honoria passed the stewardship to her oldest daughter but often met with museum officials, historians and members of the public who were walking the grounds to tell stories about her ancestors that had been passed down through the generations. Her work embodied the post-WWII era and provides readers a glimpse of the last generation of one of New York State's first families.



Photo courtesy of Clermont State Historic Site, NYSOPRHP





Elizabeth "Betty" Young


Taghkanic
1931-2019

Town Supervisor

Even before spending 30 years as town supervisor, Elizabeth "Betty" Young worked hard to serve her community and help individuals with disabilities. While she was born in the Bronx, Young made her home in Taghkanic, graduating from Roeliff Jansen Central High School and the Columbia Memorial School of Nursing. Young worked as a registered nurse for Columbia

Memorial Hospital in the office of Dr. Joseph P. Gold and at the workshop of the Columbia County chapter of The Arc New York (COARC), where Young also served as a board member.

Young served on the Taghkanic Town Board for six years starting in 1982. She was then elected town supervisor in 1989 and held the position for 30 years. Young was also a life member of the Taghkanic Fire Company Ladies Auxiliary, board member of Columbia Opportunities Inc. and on the administrative board of the West Taghkanic United Methodist, as well as a Sunday school teacher for 35 years. In September 2001, Young was also appointed to the Governor's Advisory Council on Mental Retardation and Development Disabilities. For her tireless work and dedication, Young received numerous awards, including the Columbia



County Environmental Council Good Earth Keeping Award for County Wide Agricultural Preservation in 1993 and a New York Senate Woman of Distinction Award from Sen. Stephen M. Saland in 2002. Young was also honored in 2009 by Cornell Cooperative Extension in Columbia County for 20 years of service as the supervisor to that board and by the Columbia County Dialysis Center for her assistance in establishing a new center.



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Teresa "Dolly" Farinacci

Stuyvesant
1927-2019

Devoted Community Member

Teresa "Dolly" Farinacci was a beloved community member who spent much of her life in Stuyvesant. She was born in 1927 to Frank and Mary Pino. Farinacci was a long-time communicant and active member of the Church of Nativity. There, she served as a Sunday school teacher, held positions on numerous committees and ministries and was the organist for 57 years.

Farinacci further served her community as co-owner and co-operator of the Stuyvesant Press. For several years, she also worked in the kitchen and cafeteria of Ichabod Crane High School in Valatie, where she at one point worked as supervisor. Additionally, Farinacci was an active member of the Stuyvesant Fire Co. Ladies Auxiliary and was honored as Mother of the Year by the Kinderhook Elks Lodge No. 2530.



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Ella Fitzgerald


Hudson
1917-1996

Singer

Ella Fitzgerald is known today as one of the most prominent and revered jazz singers to ever grace the stage. Her striking presence and voice earned her warm accolades which still resonate deeply within the hearts of many. Fitzgerald was born in Newport News, Virginia to her parents who separated shortly after her birth. Fitzgerald moved with her mother, Temperance or "Tempie," and her mother's

boyfriend to Yonkers where she developed a love for dancing and listening to jazz records. After the death of her mother in 1932, Fitzgerald first lived with her aunt in Harlem. However, she began skipping school and got into trouble with the police and found herself at the age of 15 in Hudson at the New York State Training School for Girls. Fitzgerald soon left the school and ended up living on the streets of New York City trying to make it on her own.

Fitzgerald's career was launched in 1934 when she performed at Harlem's Apollo Theater during Amateur Night. She had planned to showcase her dancing, but it was her singing that won her first place. With the help of jazz great Benny Carter, Fitzgerald began meeting people who could help her career get off the ground. Soon, she met drummer and bandleader "Chick"



Webb at the Harlem Opera House and was hired to sing with his band, which regularly performed at Harlem's Savoy Ballroom. In 1938, Fitzgerald recorded her first number one hit, "A-Tisket, A-Tasket," which took her career to instant stardom. Since then, she has been idolized by musicians and fans alike for her over 150 songs with her band "Ella and Her Famous Orchestra" and successful film career.



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www.ellafitzgerald.com/about/biography
www.biography.com/musician/ella-fitzgerald
www.prisonpublicmemory.org/blog/2014/the-ungovernable-ella-fitzgerald







Courtesy of

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