

From the Director

Welcome to ReSearch, the e-zine of the Women's Studies Research Center at Brandeis University, where research, art and activism converge.

You will receive this compact ezine three times a year – free of charge. Each issue will focus on a theme, today's being Great Women of Boston to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the Boston Women's Heritage Trail. Each issue will also profile Scholars who are collaborating on unusual projects.

To be as "green" as possible, we will not create hard copies, but you can e-mail or download and print all or part of this ezine.

I welcome your visit to the WSRC and your comments on ReSearch.

Shulamit Reinharz

Great Women of Boston



*Anne Whitney (1821-1915)
Credit: Courtesy First Mountain Forest,
Shelbourne, NH*

Boston's First Female Sculptors

Four women defy the odds and create delicate art from stone.

Terry Byrne, Visiting Scholar

Beach on the Shell: How I changed an icon

A musicologist successfully lobbies for recognition of a neglected composer

Liane Curtis, Resident Scholar

Politics, a Profession for Women

In 1920, women got the vote and Kay Filene encouraged them to enter politics.

Ann W. Caldwell, Visiting Scholar

Profile in Collaboration: Jane Ring Frank and Ruth Lomon

Ann W. Caldwell, Visiting Scholar

Celebrating Forgotten Pioneers

On the trail of remarkable women in Brighton-Allston

*Brenda Gael McSweeney,
Resident Scholar*

Design and Production

*Fran Forman,
Visiting Scholar*

Volume 1, Issue 1
Spring 2009

Carving Out Careers *by Terry Byrne*

A defiant patriot demanding the departure of a formidable foe; the quiet dignity of a statesman; a loving commitment communicated through clasped hands; and an elegant tribute to health – Bostonians pass these familiar statues every day, never realizing they were carved by four of the first American women sculptors: Anne Whitney (1821-1915), Emma Stebbins (1815-1882), Edmonia Lewis (1843-1911) and Harriet Hosmer (1830-1908).



*The Bethesda Fountain,
New York
Central Park.
By Emma Stebbins*

A passion for their subject matter and a determination to leave a mark drove Whitney to create the statue of Samuel Adams that stands in front of Faneuil Hall. They inspired Stebbins to carve the stately Horace Mann in front of the Massachusetts State House. They won Lewis the commission to memorialize a pioneering woman doctor in the form of the goddess of health in Mt. Auburn Cemetery. And they encouraged Hosmer to carve the

hands of her friends, the poets Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, now part of the Schlesinger Library at Harvard.

The beauty of these sculptures is even more impressive given Boston's puritanical restrictions on women's access to anatomy and physiology classes and the interdiction against using male models.

In the mid- to late 19th century, sculpture was still considered beyond women's ability because it required strength and stamina and demanded a large financial investment in time and materials. Nevertheless, these four women triumphed with works of inspirational art.

Ironically, however, these artists could not achieve their goals in Boston and Hosmer, Stebbins, Lewis and Whitney took refuge in Rome. Rather than an exile, the Italian capital became a place of liberation. Freed from the expectations and social restrictions back home, they pursued their art and their lives in a supportive, creative community. Henry James dubbed the women "the white marmorean flock," and, although he intended to disparage the way they flew together, his metaphor also suggests a nurturing, ultimately transformative environment.

In Rome between 1867-1871, the four sculptors occasionally lived and worked together, socializing and providing each other much-needed critical feedback.

None of the women married, and all had deeply intimate relationships with each other or with other women that involved a kind of equality unavailable in a traditional marriage with a man. Hosmer, for one, said what she really needed was "a wife," so that she could concentrate on her professional work. While Hosmer never committed herself to one woman, she did cultivate a network of women patrons and friends; her best work celebrated heroic women in triumph or despair. Her



*Emma Stebbins (1815-1882).
Credit: Library of Congress*

sculptures, rooted in the neo-classical tradition of the time, included the heartbreaking “Beatrice of Cenci,” which adorns a tomb in Italy; “Zenobia in Chains,” which is at the Wadsworth Atheneum; and “Queen Isabella,” destroyed in the San Francisco earthquake of 1906.

Rome offered the quartet the opportunity to socialize in an expatriate community that included painters, writers, diplomats and poets. In

this crowd, the Boston-born actress Charlotte Cushman became an important catalyst in promoting their careers. Cushman took an early interest in Harriet Hosmer, convincing her father she would keep an eye on the 22-year-old when she moved to Rome. Later she shared her apartments with Hosmer, who then opened her home to the fledgling sculptor Emma Stebbins, introducing her to Cushman, who became Stebbins’ life partner. Cushman used her influence with friends in Boston to get Stebbins the commission for the Horace Mann statue, but it was Stebbins’ brother Henry who won Stebbins to the opportunity to create her greatest work, the “Angel of the Waters,” for the Bethesda Fountain in New York’s Central Park.

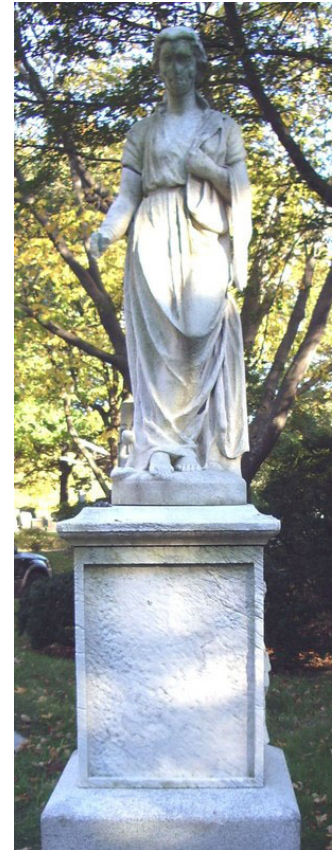


*M. Edmonia Lewis (1843-1911)
Credit: Henry Rocher, 1868*

Cushman also took an interest in Edmonia Lewis, the daughter of an African-American father and Chippewa mother, purchasing her first life-size sculpture, “The Old Arrow Maker and His Daughter” and donating it to the Boston YMCA. After suffering a racist attack while a student at Oberlin College, and making a name for herself in the Boston abolitionist community, Lewis felt Rome was colorblind, and offered her the freedom to be whoever she wanted to be. Hosmer took Lewis under her wing, and Lewis, in turn, looked up to the internationally successful artist, following her lead in using the press to promote her work

and charging admission to see one of her statues as a way of defraying shipping costs. Her masterpiece, "The Death of Cleopatra" is now in the Smithsonian.

Anne Whitney, like Hosmer a native of Watertown, got to know Lewis during her stay in Boston, and it was she who suggested Lewis look up Hosmer in Rome. Whitney's passion for politics led her to move away from poetry, where she'd found some success, and into sculpture, which she felt could more fully express her commitment to social justice, abolition and women's rights. After winning a blind competition for a Public Garden statue dedicated to Charles Sumner, the committee revoked the commission, saying it would be "unseemly for a woman to model a man's legs." Undeterred, Whitney raised funds herself and her sculpture of Sumner now sits in Harvard Square.



*Hygieia, by Edmonia Lewis.
On the grave of Harriot Kezia Hunt,
Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, MA*

Each of these women overcame sexism, racism and accusations of plagiarism to create art that endures. The environment in Rome helped build their confidence and establish a supportive network of patrons and fellow artists that made it possible for them to succeed and thrive as artists. And Boston was the beneficiary.

*Profile in Collaboration:***Jane Ring Frank and Ruth Lomon****Testimony to Teamwork***by Ann W. Caldwell*

A remarkable 10-year collaboration between two WSRC Scholars – Jane Ring Frank and Ruth Lomon - has been a creative and professional boon for both of them and is making a new and distinctive contribution to the Boston music scene. It all began in 1998 when Frank left her posts as choral director at Harvard and Arlington Street Church to found the Boston Secession, a professional choral ensemble, and become a WSRC Scholar. That same year, Ruth Lomon, concert pianist and composer, was also admitted to the Brandeis community of Scholars.

“It took a while for me to find my place at the WSRC because I was not writing books but rather making CD’s. In Ruth, I found the mentor I needed at the time,” says Jane. “She had lived and worked as a professional musician and she knew the in’s and out’s of the music world.”

As their relationship evolved, “Ruth started to offer me scores, small pieces at first that we would arrange to have performed at the WSRC,” Frank says. Eventually their work led to the Festival of Women Composers in 2004, a large-scale, sold-out performance on the Brandeis campus preceded by an international competition for contemporary women composers. The Boston Secession was the featured chorus. Jane says the festival was the brainchild of WSRC Director Shulamit Reinharz and attracted significant media attention to both the Center and Boston Secession.

Lomon and Frank began working on a new piece - *Testimony of Witnesses: An Oratoria of Remembrances* - in 2001. It is a multi-lingual work scored for orchestra, chorus and soloists and has 14 movements. It represents the personal experience of 18 writers, from children who died at Terezin

to adults who survived Mauthausen, Auschwitz-Birkenau and a Ukraine work camp. Says Lomon, “With my musical settings of the poetry I have attempted to translate my deeply felt response to the ‘glimpse of the abyss’ and the spiritual and emotional force of the poems. I want to bear witness to the courage and tenacity of the poets of the Holocaust....”

Each time Lomon completes a movement, the Boston Secession performs it. “Not all composers are open to the process of refining their work through rehearsal and live performance,” says Frank, “but Ruth has been like a dramaturge, working closely with the chorus. The music is so fine, emotionally and technically powerful.”



The Boston Secession Orchestra

Founding Boston Secession was a journey of discovery for Frank, a self-described introvert. As choral director, she discovered that turning to face the audience and offering impromptu comments about the connections among the pieces being performed made the music come to life in new and rich ways. 90 choruses perform in the Boston area, five of which are professional groups where

the singers are paid; the rest are university or community-based volunteer organizations. Of the five professional choruses, the Boston Secession is unique in featuring contemporary music “through an historical line,” says Frank. The Boston Secession sound is distinctive as well, according to Frank. “It is disciplined and homogeneous; it puts the music front and center without distraction and without bravado.” The singers drawn to Boston Secession are talented soloists willing and able to subsume their individual voices to the larger communal effort.

Why the name Boston Secession? One hundred years ago, Austrian painter Gustav Klimt's artist's cooperative, the Vienna Secession, displayed paintings at eye-level for the first time. Now common practice, the secessionists' approach modernized the presentation of art. Inspired by the original Secession, Frank envisioned the Boston Secession as a professional studio for modern vocal performance, "bringing classical music to eye level."



Jane Ring Frank

Frank says critics have taken note, praising the quality of the music, the singing and the programming. "My success would not have been possible without the support and encouragement I found at the WSRC."

Both composer and choral director look forward to the world premiere of *Testimony of Witnesses* as not only the culmination of their collaboration, says Frank, but because it represents a powerful demonstration of the WSRC mission "Where Research, Art and Activism Converge."



For additional information about *Testimony of Witnesses* and the Boston Secession, go to testimonyofwitnesses@bostonsecession.org

Beach on the Shell:

How I changed an Icon

by Liane Curtis

I remember clearly the day I decided something had to be done about the Hatch Shell. I had the impression the name of Amy Beach was not included among the many composers that decorate the Shell. It was a warm fall afternoon in 1997 and I set out to take a serious look to confirm that impression and answer some questions. How many names were there? Who were they and how had they been chosen? Why had the Shell been built and how was it maintained? Finding all that out was easy – that was research. But how to get the name of Amy Beach – certainly one of Boston's most important composers – added to the Shell? That was activism, something new for me. That was to be a long and daunting process.



This idea of taking action came through the encouragement of my new affiliation with the Women's Studies Scholars Program at Brandeis University (that would become part of the WSRC). The Scholars Program reinforced the notion of collaboration with others and applied feminism. Thus, in finding out how to bring about change, I realized I should work together with a group of people who cared about preserving and recognizing Boston's History.

Virginia Eskin, a remarkable pianist (and one of the first to record Beach's music), pointed me to the work of the Boston Women's Heritage Trail (BWHT). I attended the celebration of their new Guidebook, and they were excited to be involved in the new and significant project I proposed.

In 1997, 87 names, written in five-inch bronze letters, decorated the Shell. Ranging from the obvious (Bach, Mozart, Beethoven) to the obscure (Hadley, Gilbert, Auber) all the names were indeed male. The Shell was built in 1941 (by means of an endowment memorializing Edward Hatch) for use by the Boston Pops in their summer season, and the composers' names seem to have been a decision of the Pop's conductor and tireless champion, Arthur Fiedler. Newspaper reports describe a balloting process by which a list of 97 names was distributed among 70 experts with the goal of choosing 50 for inclusion. But ultimately, 86 names – most of those on the original list – wound up on the Shell. The balloting process gave a veneer of democracy and meritocracy to the process, and served to build excitement and public interest in the new structure. But the list of names reflected Fiedler's own idiosyncratic values in music programming. He was certainly not known for taking women seriously – his colleague Harry Ellis Dickson described him as “an unabashed male chauvinist,” so it seems predictable he would not recognize Beach, despite her fame and achievement. Sadly, because of Fiedler's attitude, the Pops was one of the last orchestras to admit women.

Uncovering this history led me to an important insight: the names inscribed on this monument largely reflected the opinion of one man.

I also noticed that a living composer, John Williams, was honored by having his name added to those on the Shell upon his retirement as conductor of the Pops in 1993. This was a precedent I could use. Although “carved in stone” the names could be changed; one had already been added!

My next task was to persuade the state agency in charge of the Shell, the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC, now the Department of Conservation and Recreation) to make a change. They were amazingly helpful and offered many suggestions as well as documentation on the history of the Shell. I began writing to prominent musicians and scholars to petition the MDC in favor of adding Beach's name. But getting the

support of Pops conductor Keith Lockhart was clearly crucial. I worked on him with a series of letters and calls. In March, 1999 he led a concert for children featuring women composers only, revealing that he understood this gender issue and took it seriously. Once Lockhart threw his name behind the project, everything fell into place. The BWHT wrote to the MDC in April, 1999, formally urging them to include Beach's name. The MDC announced its decision in June 1999 (only 1 ½ years after my autumn walk), and Beach's name was unveiled at the Pops concert on July 8, 2000. At that event Maestro Lockhart praised Beach, said the addition of her name was "long overdue," and performed her lovely "Bal Masque."

This process also can be seen as part of a groundswell of interest in Amy Beach that has produced new books and articles about her life and more performances and recordings of her music. But "groundswell" suggests this was the result of some unseen force of nature. In reality, change takes place



Liane Curtis (center) at the unveiling of Beach's name on the Hatch Shell

through the perseverance and dedication of individuals, working alone and together. Adrienne Block worked on her book about Beach for 10 years; it took numerous partners to get Beach's name up on the Shell; Virginia Eskin insisted on recording and performing works by the composer who, when we were in music school, was only referred to by the dismissive nickname "Mrs. Ha Ha Beach." These dedicated women inspired me, the Women's Studies Research Center supported me, and the determined and enthusiastic Boston Women's Heritage Trail gave me incredible backing so together we could change an icon.

Has the addition of Beach's name made a difference? The interest in the event was great – my role in getting Beach included was the subject of articles in the *Boston Globe* and the *Somerville Journal*; radio broadcasts and publications featured and discussed the event, including the books *Boston Sites and Insights* and *Unsung: A History of Women in American Music*. Recordings and performances of her music continue, including the 2004 release of the first American recording of the Piano Concerto, and performances in the fall of 2007 of her opera *Cabildo*. While I can't directly connect these performances to having Beach's name on the Shell, I do believe her inclusion and recognition help the climate for those interested in performing and studying women composers, and also for composers themselves.

And my life has changed as well. I am an active board member for the Boston Women's Heritage Trail and the president of two organizations based at the WSRC, The Rebecca Clarke Society, Inc. and Women's Philharmonic Advocacy.

Politics, A Profession for Women

by Ann W. Caldwell

“The opportunity for advancement is limited only with the presidency of the United States....The field of politics offers, more than any other field for women, all the incentive of unlimited advancement commensurate with individual ability.” Mary Garrett Hay in *Careers for Women*, edited by Catherine Filene (1920, Riverside Press, p. 395-398)

At 63, Garnett Hay, a veteran of the suffragette struggles, President of the New York Equal Suffrage League and the New York City Women Suffrage Party, knew her subject well, having organized the political process that won the most populous state for the suffragette cause. Perhaps her enthusiastic endorsement of women moving into politics reflected the fact that the publication of “Careers for Women” in 1920 coincided with the ratification of the 19th Amendment.

As notable as she was, Mary Garnett Hay was only one of over 60 women who contributed a chapter for Catherine Filene’s book. Others included Frances Perkins, the first woman appointed to the U.S. Cabinet as Secretary of Labor under FDR; the playwright Rachel Crothers; Lois L. Howe, an MIT graduate and the first woman elected a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects; and many other female role models.

The editor, Catherine Filene, known as Kay, was only 24 years old at the time. Nevertheless, as the wealthy and privileged daughter of a prominent Boston family, she decided to assemble a large and varied group of distinguished writers for her book. How did she conceive of the need for a taxonomy of professional opportunities for women, “the first of its kind in the country”? In the preface, she credits her parents, Lincoln and Therese Filene, and especially her father, for his active interest in the “social significance of vocational education.” As it turns out, the Filene home was a cauldron for progressive thinking and the arts. And the family business, Filene’s, employed a predominantly female sales force. As a result, both

Lincoln and his brother Edward Filene took a serious interest in women's workplace participation.

The genesis of the book came in 1917, when, as a decidedly bored undergraduate at Wheaton College, Kay organized the Intercollegiate Vocational Guidance

Association and appointed herself its first director.

The association included 50 women's colleges and universities and was dedicated to the study of vocational opportunities for college women. From 1917 through 1920, she convened annual conferences on women's vocations at Wheaton, Radcliffe, Cornell and the University of Pittsburgh. In 1918, following her Wheaton graduation, she spent a year in Washington working for the US Department of Labor. The book clearly is the product of her activism and research about women's work.



*Catherine Filene 1913 Graduation Photo from Bradford Academy
The Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University*

<http://www.radcliffe.edu/schles/>

Like every other chapter in "Careers for Women," the one on politics breaks down the occupation in detail. For preparation, "law, business and practical politics" are recommended as well as "schools for citizenship now being established... by the suffrage organizations...." The author promises "the financial returns are decidedly good. Salaries ...have an enormous range from the President's \$75,000 and traveling allowance, down to the 'dollar a year man.'" The advantages of a career in politics for women "are those of an

unploughed field....The power for influence is great....It lacks the stultifying effect attaching to most occupations for women. Politics for women means a life of real vitality and worth." But Garnett Hay was also realistic enough to know what Hillary Clinton and her supporters learned: there is a downside to politics. "There is no eight-hour day," she wrote. "Prejudice and ignorance must be fought or conciliated. Personal existence and perhaps personal happiness must be sunk in the public good. Many illusions perish violently."

"Careers for Women" covers an astonishing array of occupations, from public accountant to statistician. It covers business, government, the arts, health and science, education, social work. There are such unlikely entries as coroner, motion picture director, wood carver, (live)stock-raiser, as well as the conventional professions of law, medicine, education, and social work, though each is broken down into many sub-specialties. The chapters on law include corporation lawyer, legal editor, magistrate, patent lawyer, and prosecuting attorney.

Kay Filene herself wrote one of the chapters in "Careers for Women" on her own profession at the time, "Vocational Advisor in Colleges." She observed "The occupation being a new one, one meets the obstacles that confront all pioneers." She herself was embarking on a long (1896-1994) life that would take her often to the White House, the halls of Congress, as well as European capitals. In the final two decades of her life she created a lasting legacy in Wolf Trap Performing Arts Park outside of Washington D.C. Her early identification with pioneering women in the professions was the beginning of a life of social reform that adds luster to the Filene's name.

Women of Vision

*Brighton-Allston Historical Society
champions ground-breaking work by women
in the neighborhood*

By Brenda Gael McSweeney

In mid-2003 I moved back to my hometown Boston after three decades of managing United Nations programs worldwide. Throughout my UN career, putting a “feminist lens” on everything around me became second nature. Beginning in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in the ’70s, I campaigned for development training and necessary equipment to reach women. Later in the ’80s, heading the UN in Jamaica where men were left behind, my “gender lens” became sharply refined. By the mid-’90s when the Fourth World Conference on Women gathered in Beijing, we proclaimed “gender mainstreaming” as the strategy to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Thus, my post-UN career at Brandeis and Boston University and with the United Nations Development Programme’s Virtual Development Academy focuses on research, teaching and activism to promote gender mainstreaming. Against this backdrop, I joined the Brighton-Allston Historical Society (BAHS) to see how women’s history was reflected in its work. When introduced to the Boston Women’s Heritage Trail, I immediately thought: why not a Women’s Heritage Trail for Brighton? In the 1970s, Aurora Salvucci, the first Curator of the Brighton-Allston Historical Society, researched three extraordinary Brighton women: America’s first female novelist, a renowned newspaper columnist, and a philanthropist. At the time, The Allston-Brighton Citizen Item published

an article, “Historical Society resurrects forgotten Brighton women.” When a few of us gathered to renew this research, I added a fourth star: Jennie Loitman Barron (1891-1969), a suffragist, human rights activist, and



*Judge Jennie Loitman Barron (1961).
Photo courtesy of her daughter Joy*

the first full-time female judge in Massachusetts. Former Brandeis Chancellor Abram Sachar understood Ms. Barron's struggle for professional recognition, writing that she “slogged her way through the minefields of prejudice” and prevailed, in large measure owing to “the compassionate way she administered cases involving children, widows, and the disinherited, people who lived submerged.” My own research included interviewing one of Jennie's daughters, combing the rich Brandeis archives, and exploring Schlesinger Library's vast Jennie Loitman Barron collection.

To share our research findings with the Brighton community, the BAHS launched a Women's History Series, beginning in 2005 with the publication of 'Brighton's Invisible Women: Champions of Gender justice.' In 2006 we screened *Betty Tells Her Story*, the award-winning classic of the early women's movement by Brighton's own feminist filmmaker Liane Brandon. We also invited our youngest female historian, Malene O'Hara, to give a presentation on the Knox Expedition that forced the British evacuation of Boston.

Soon we numbered a dozen researchers in the Women's History Group of which I was Founding Chair. We divided up tasks and carried out studies on sixteen influential Brighton women and women's organizations, with a view to creating a Brighton-Allston Women's Heritage Trail. Decked out in period regalia, we presented our discoveries to the community at a Women's

Heritage Trail Program during the Brighton-Allston Historical Society Annual Meeting in spring 2007.

In fall 2008 our Women's History Group organized an inaugural bus tour of the Brighton Women's Heritage Trail. We wound our way through the narrow streets of historic neighborhoods in an enormous packed-to-capacity bus. The stories of the remarkable women and organizations we uncovered are linked to sites we visited and which we mapped out in *Women of Vision: Brighton-Allston Women's Heritage Trail Guide*.

Our next project is a multi-media exhibition at the Brighton-Allston Heritage Museum based on our town's "Women of Vision." The Women's History Group continues to grow, with our latest output being a 2009 Historical Calendar showcasing the path-breaking accomplishments of the 'Women of Vision.' Three centuries of once famous Brighton women are no longer forgotten, thanks to the research of members of the Women's History Group.

My next project is to have our 'Women of Vision' approach taken up in other countries such as India, where Justice Leila Seth deserves to be recognized. As the UN delegation head in India in the late nineties, I met Justice Seth "the first woman Chief Justice of a High Court in India, the first female judge of the Delhi High Court, and the first woman to top the bar examinations in London." Judges Jennie Barron and Leila Seth struggled against the odds for women in their profession and they persevered to advance social justice.

A team of partners in the UNESCO/University Twinning Network on Gender, Culture and People-Centered Development that I initiated is now preparing a 'Women of Vision – India,' and action has been launched to develop a Women's Heritage Trail in Burkina Faso. By promoting gender mainstreaming and helping give women's heritage the visibility it deserves, we are translating into action the very motto of Brandeis' Women's Studies Research Center: "**Where Research, Art and Activism Converge.**"