

## **Public Policy:**

# *American Women Quarters Program*

**By Jeanne Delp**

Do you have a Pandemic habit holdover? I do, and I'm not proud of this particular habit.

I began using a credit card for almost all of my purchases and gave up carrying change, including my habit of acquiring Collectable quarters for my grandchildren. I completely missed the **American Women Quarters Program** beginning in 2022 and continuing through 2025!

The American Women Quarters designs honor a diverse group of notable American women who made significant contributions to the development and history of our country. The variety of fields include: suffrage, civil rights, abolition, government, humanities, science, space, and the arts. The women honored are from ethnically, racially, and geographically diverse backgrounds. A perfect match for Women's History Month and DEI as celebrated and honored by AAUW <https://www.littletoncoin.com/shop/US-Women-Quarters-Release-Schedule>

Here is my short list of women to be celebrated this month:

**Michelle Smith McDonald** is an accomplished sports journalist hailing from San Leandro, CA, and enshrined in the Women's Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame. Her writing has focused on telling the stories of women who have changed the face of sports. A standout athlete at Arroyo High School, she competed as part of the first generation of girls given equal access to sports through federal civil rights legislation known as Title IX.

**Harriet Bell Hayden**, 1816-1893: One of Boston's most fervent and daring abolitionists who kept rifles, kegs of gunpowder and a secret tunnel in order to defend freedom-seekers via the Boston Underground Railroad. Her will included the establishment of a scholarship for Black students at Harvard Medical School, believed to be the only university bequest from someone who was once enslaved. *Smithsonian* magazine, January 2025.

**Lily Ebert**, 1923-2024: As a prisoner in Nazi death camps during WWII, she vowed, that if she survived, she would tell her story of the systematic slaughter of Jewish people. Encouraged by her daughter in the 1980s, she began telling her stories in English schools, the British Parliament, and then during the Covid-19 pandemic her great-grandson introduced her to social media, including TikTok, and attracted an audience of two million followers. *The Wall Street Journal*, November 2, 2024.

**Marguerite "Peg" Lindsley**, 1901-1952: "The Marvelous Ms. Marguerite (*National Parks* magazine, Winter 2025, Jacob Baynham) Yellowstone's first full-time female ranger was a gun-toting, motorbike-riding bacteriologist born and raised in the park." Leaving a career as a lab scientist, she rode her Harley-Davidson some 2,600 miles from Philadelphia to Yellowstone National Park, her former home and where her parents

still lived. She was hired as a permanent ranger in 1924 overseeing the Government Information Office in Mammoth.

**Matilda Gage**, 1826-1898: Mother-in-law to L. Frank Baum, the author of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, the story that involved Wicked Witches of the West and Glinda the Good Witch that has evolved into today's movie *Wicked*. Gage was the one who encouraged Baum to write and publish his poetry and stories, but "she was a notable figure in her own right. As one of the three principal leaders of the women's rights movement, along with Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Gage was known for her radical views and confrontational approach. At the Statue of Liberty's unveiling in 1886, she showed up on a cattle barge with a megaphone, shouting that it was 'a gigantic lie, a travesty and a mockery' to portray liberty as a woman when actual American women had so few rights." *Smithsonian* magazine, Dec. 2024.

**Ruth Bader Ginsburg**. 1923-2020: a liberal icon and feminist trailblazer who served on the Supreme Court for 27 years, She was known as a champion of women's legal rights and helped the Dwight D. Opperman Foundation establish an award to recognize 'Women of Distinction'. The 2024 award included men for the first time "chosen for their contributions to society and didn't consider politics. Those chosen were: Elon Musk, outspoken billionaire and owner of X, Michael R. Milken, billionaire philanthropist who spent nearly two years in prison for securities and tax violations, and actor Sylvester Stallone. Rupert Murdoch, the founder of Fox News . . .and owner of *The Wall Street Journal*, was also an honoree. Businesswoman Martha Stewart was the lone woman recognized." After the slate of recipients was announced, Ginsburg's family demanded her name be removed from the award. "This year the Opperman Foundation has strayed far from the original mission of the award and from what Justice Ginsburg stood for," said her daughter, Jane Ginsburg. The award ceremony was canceled. *The Wall Street Journal*, March 20, 2024.

Read more about AAUW's stand on DEI and women's rights concerning the latest developments.

<https://www.aauw-ca.org/public-policy-committee-policy-news/> February 2025