WE BUILT THIS:
How Women Innovators Shaped The World

An activity guide from the Smithsonian and the USA TODAY Network
Women’s stories are woven into the American tapestry, integral to the character and history of the nation. For too long, the contributions of women—the prominent and the obscure, the pioneers and the innovators, the artists and the activists—have been overlooked. The Smithsonian is changing that narrative. Since 2018, the Smithsonian American Women’s History Initiative has done so by researching, disseminating, and amplifying the histories of American women. This collaboration with USA TODAY can help create a more equitable representation of America by bringing some of those stories to a wider audience. This guide for learners of all ages draws upon the Smithsonian’s robust content, collections, and programming from our museums, libraries, educational units, and research centers. Its activities are organized into four categories: Leading Lights, Amplifiers, Divergent Minds, and Inspiring the Future.

I am confident this collection will surprise, challenge, and inspire you. It exemplifies the American Women’s History Initiative. It also provides a glimpse of the kinds of stories you will discover when one of our newest museums comes to the nation’s capital, the Smithsonian American Women’s History Museum.

A dream decades in the making, Congress enacted legislation in 2020 to realize that dream, a museum that will recognize women’s accomplishments, the history they made, and the communities they represent. Although building it will take several years, it will become a virtual presence long before then. The intellectual and educational framework created by the American Women’s History Initiative will underpin the museum’s direction. I hope this collection will excite you for what is to come when the American Women’s History Museum becomes a reality.

Congratulations to the educators who worked on this activity guide, as inspirational as it is educational. It beautifully illustrates the indelible impact women have made on our country. I encourage you to learn more about the women contained within and the countless others who have been instrumental to our nation.

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Lonnie G. Bunch III
Secretary of the Smithsonian

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What is the Creative Process?

This “map” highlights each of the stages of the creative process. These stages are meant to guide the creator from start to finish. While the map appears to be one-directional, creators know that you must often move between stages—forward, backward, sometimes even skipping ahead. Explore these women creators and their innovations as you consider the decisions made at each stage of the process.

Preparation
Getting started - Brainstorm, gather materials, initial research, jot down ideas

Incubation
Let it grow - Step back and create space for your idea to develop

Illumination
Eureka! - That lightbulb moment where insight is gained

Evaluation
Further consideration - Reflect, consider alternatives, further research and testing

Verification
Final development - Your idea, plan, or vision comes to life
Women make history in different ways. Creating new pathways and lighting the way for others to follow is one way to make and shape history and communities. Can you imagine being the first woman to work in a job or profession that had always been for a man? Think of the challenges! One has to have a lot of moxie and gumption (two retro words), and courage to create your own place in history. Dr. Eloise Gerry’s research on lumber affected the study of pine trees in the first half of the 20th century. Teenager Daisy Bates was one of many women leading the charge for civil rights in the 1950s. Whether through running a newspaper and advocating for the integration of students in schools or supporting creative and culinary culture by activating a restaurant to be a much-needed community center, these women shaped the future! Aviator Alverna Williams did just that, stating “I have no legs, but I do have wings.”

All the extraordinary women in this section made history by being courageous and challenging the status quo of their time. They all lead fundamental change and are discussing the Little Rock Integration crisis.

Celebrated Puerto Rican Poet

Penning over 200 poems, Julia de Burgos tackled themes of love, feminism, equality, and social justice in her writing. The poem “El Río Grande de Loíza” celebrated the river of her childhood in Puerto Rico. Her groundbreaking works were an extension of the activism and advocacy that defined her life. Julia de Burgos often brought to light the struggles of the oppressed - women, minorities, the poor, and dispossessed - while advocating for personal and political freedom. Her writing paved the way for many contemporary writers. This stamp, issued in 2010 by the U.S. Postal Service, was the 26th issued in the Literary Arts series.

Advocate for Disability Rights

There was no governmental legislation ensuring equal rights for Americans with disabilities in the late 1970s. Kitty Cone and her follow disability rights advocates helped change that with a sit-in and occupation of a federal building in San Francisco for more than 25 days. They demanded the government protect their rights by enforcing Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which said no program receiving federal funds could discriminate against people with disabilities. Kitty and other protestors occupied a traffic light, a wheelchair, a headchair and the words “504 Unchanged, SF, 1977” on a sidewalk. This sit-in, accomplished a three-fold goal: to educate the public that people with disabilities want and need a place to live, work, and participate in American society; to require the government protect their rights by enforcing Section 504; and to mobilize a community of activists to change national policy. Kitty and others achieved this goal by spreading awareness, motivating to protest, and eventually raised enough funds to build the first modern hospital in Thurston County, Nebraska.

Self Portrait of a Modern Artist

Anne Goldthwaite, known for her work as a painter and etcher, was born during Reconstruction era in Montgomery, Alabama. Goldthwaite’s work and associations with painters like Mattox and Picasso helped to introduce modern art to the United States. She established herself prominently as a recorder of the South’s past and many of her paintings include scenes of rural African Americans. An advocate, she fought for equal rights in the South and women’s rights. Goldthwaite painted this self-portrait in oil on board mounted wood.

Daisy Bates & The Little Rock Nine

This black-and-white photograph depicts seven of the Little Rock Nine, from left to right, Melba Pattillo, Carlotta Walls, Jefferson Thomas, Elizabeth Eckford, Thelma Mothershed, Terrence Roberts and Gloria Ray, meeting at the home of Daisy Bates, local NAACP leader and Civil Rights activist. The seven are discussing the Little Rock Integration crisis.
LA’S TOP CHEFS

These small dishes were used to hold spices at Mary Sue Milliken and Susan Feniger’s City Café in Los Angeles, California. Like the brightly hued chef’s coats donned by Milliken and Feniger, the dishware at City Café signaled the lively and appealing environment cultivated by the chefs at their first restaurant. City Café opened in 1981 on Melrose Avenue and held 39 seats. Though the duo outgrew the original space and moved on to other endeavors in the mid-1980s, they continue to celebrate the restaurant’s importance to the evolving Los Angeles dining scene. Milliken and Feniger donated these items along with several others to the National Museum of American History after receiving the Julia Child Award in 2018.

Leah Chase

A red double-breasted chef jacket worn by Chef Leah Chase. Yellow embroidery on the right reads [Leah Chase]. Yellow worn by Chef Chase’s,” became a gathering spot for civil rights activists in the 1960s.

Visionary of the Arts & Crafts Movement

Like many women in the late 19th century Alice Cordelia Morse established a career in the arts by designing book covers, illustrations, and stained glass. This title-page design, while never published, appears to have been intended for What Women Can Earn: Occupations of Women and Their Compensation (1899), a collection of essays on the various professions available to women in America. The design demonstrates the increasing sense of power and independence that women like Morse were experiencing as more career opportunities opened up for them.

Ethnobotanical Researcher

Gladys Tantaquidgeon (right) brought an Indigenous worldview to her ethnobotanical research among the Delaware, Nanticoke, Cyuga, and Wampanoag tribes of the East Coast. Born to Mohegan parents, Tantaquidgeon trained in Indigenous practices with Mohican knowledge keepers Emma Baker, Mercy Mathews, and Fidelia Fielding, the published significant works among the Delaware, Nanticoke, Cayuga, and Wampanoag tribes of the East Coast. Born to Mohegan parents, Tantaquidgeon trained in Indigenous practices with Mohican knowledge keepers Emma Baker, Mercy Mathews, and Fidelia Fielding, the published significant works on tribal knowledge and on the use of local natural resources to create traditional herbal medicines. She also worked with Nanticoke leaders to successfully lobby the Delaware State Capitol for a school where Native American children could receive a modern education and learn traditional values. Gladys is seen in this photograph with a young Nanticoke woman (Jane or Janie Harmon or Harmon) in Millsboro, Delaware.

Paving the Way for Labor Laws

In the 1920s–1930s, radium was all the rage. A glowing radium watch was a must-have item. In factories, young women painted face dials with radioactive material. Unaware that the paint was harmful, they would place the brush tip on their lips to achieve a fine point. After suffering from radium poisoning, several young women sued their employers and brought national attention to the safety of workers. These young women helped create new laws to protect all workers. Shown here is a New Haven Meter brand pocket watch with black faceplate and radium painted numbers and clock hands.

Taking Flight

Alverna Williams poses on the wing of her Ercoupe 415CD, circa 1977. Williams was the first American pilot with disabilities to earn a pilot’s license.
Think of your favorite song. How does it make you feel? Excited or calm? Does it make you feel like dancing? Or does it make you want to sing or play a guitar? Women and girls have been moved to express themselves through music and dance since the earliest days of humankind. Whether singing as they worked to composing pieces for orchestras and from dancing at gatherings to choreographing dances for the stage, women have been movers and shakers in the world of dance and music. In these pages, you’ll learn about Ella Sheppard, one of the founders of the Fisk Jubilee Singers who used her voice to preserve songs sung on plantations and uplift African Americans in the eyes of the world. You’ll also learn about Isadora Duncan, an unconventional dancer, who taught dance and toured Europe and America. A child prodigy on piano, Mary Lou Williams would work closely with jazz greats Duke Ellington and Benny Goodman, and dancer and director Alvin Ailey was inspired to choreograph a ballet to Mary Lou’s Mass. Judith Jamison, a member of the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater, performed in the 1971 premiere of Mary Lou’s Mass and went on to become the artistic director of the company in 1999. We hope you’re inspired by these stories to choreograph a dance or compose a new song! Turn on some music and create something unique.

The Mother of the Blues

Bessie Gertrude Melissa Nix Pidgenott, “Ma” Rainey, joined the black vaudeville circuit touring the South at age 14. Shortly after she married William “Pa” Rainey, she began to tour with the “Babbit Foot Minstrels” and incorporated plaintive tones she had first overheard a young Mississippi woman sing. Among her most memorable songs are “See You Later,” “Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom,” and “Bo Weavil Blues.” “Ma” Rainey and several other jazz and blues legends were honored with 29-cent stamps in the Legends of American Music Stamp Series issued in 1994 at the Delta Blues Festival.

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

In 1871, a student singing group was formed to fundraise for Fisk University. Soon to be called the Fisk Jubilee Singers, the a capella group was composed mostly of formerly enslaved people. At first met with skepticism, it was not long before their tours gained in popularity and raised substantial amounts of money. The Fisk Jubilee Singers appeared at the White House before President Ulysses S. Grant and toured Great Britain, where they performed for Queen Victoria. Ella Sheppard, a descendant of President Andrew Jackson, was born into slavery in 1851. Considered the matriarch of the original Fisk Jubilee Singers, Sheppard (fourth from the left) was a soprano and pianist. She was a talented musician who helped to compose and arrange the group’s repertoire of spirituals and acted as mentor for the group.

Sometimes You Win, Sometimes You Lose

Carole King, the creative and talented singer, songwriter, and musician, defined a generation. Regarded by many for her significant contributions to pop music, she continues to influence artists today. Her achievements include writing or co-writing 188 hits on the Billboard Hot 100, recording 25 solo albums, winning four Grammy awards, and being inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame (1990) and Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (1987 and 1999, 2021).

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WORD SEARCH

Search, up, down, forward, backward, and on the diagonal to find the following hidden words. Solutions on page 11.

T O Z Q H T X Y J E D T C
O R I N N O V A T I O N E C H
C T A G W Q D Y P Z S H O
S X U N K V V S I Z P Y I E R
B K S R S I V A R Z A G E F E
Q I T W Y F N W K H A N U O
M P F I O J C V B A J Z G
F Q E R S Y D R Z C G T M B R
P R A T O C H M Y U S M O A
C G H U M A N I T A R I A N P
E T S IN V E D A T S I N V E
S W E E T T R A S G S S I A W E
T N I R P N E E R C S T O R R
E K I W K P Q K L R M C N T
R O C D B E E J W A F M P
A true revolutionary, Katherine Dunham was one of the founders of the anthropological dance movement. She distilled Caribbean and African dance elements into modern American choreography. A pioneering educator, dancer, and choreographer, Dunham created more than ninety dances. She once wrote, “I am only interested in dance as an education, a means of knowing people.” This forever stamp was released on July 28, 2012, as part of the U.S. Postal Service’s National Dance Day tribute to innovative choreographers.

Get Up and Move!

Back in the day, choreographers regularly used dance step diagrams to plan and teach new dances. While these diagrams are still used today, it is more common to use social media to spread new dances. Create your own dance and share it using the #BecauseOfHerStory hashtag.

Pioneer of American Modern Dance
Born in Newark, New Jersey in 1879, Ruth St. Denis began to study movement and dance at a young age. After seeing an ad portraying an Egyptian goddess, St. Denis became fascinated with Egyptian dance and culture and later dances of India. While she did have critics in her time, many were captivated by her innovative incorporation of Eastern-influenced movements and costumes. She co-founded the American Denishawn School with her husband Ted Shawn in 1915, training such young dancers as Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, and Martha Graham. Researchers and historians today have considered whether her work perpetuated the stereotyped ideals of Orientalism and exemplified cultural appropriation. This portrait of Ruth St. Denis, seen in brilliant green costume, was painted by American artist Alice Pike Barney in 1910.

Creator of the Dunham Technique
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“The Light of Tomorrow”
Dancer Judith Jamison)s mid-dance, right leg and arm extended, shirt and head tilted upwards. Choreographer Alvin Ailey recruited Jamison to the Alvin Ailey Dance company in 1965 and served as the principal dancer in until 1980. She was later appointed the artistic director of his company. She was later appointed the artistic director of his company.

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden
Smithsonian American Art Museum
National Postal Museum
National Museum of African American History & Culture
National Museum of African American History & Culture
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Divergent Minds

There isn’t always one solution to a problem, or one path to a destination. Innovation often requires one to step back and consider alternatives. Two examples of women in science and medicine who took creative approaches to solve real-world problems are Dr. Ruby Hirose and Dr. Patricia Bath. Though she was looking for a vaccine for diphtheria, an infection caused by bacteria, biochemist and bacteriologist Ruby Hirose found a solution for something else. Through her research, Dr. Hirose developed improved treatments for allergy sufferers. Ophthalmologist Dr. Patricia Bath had already established herself as a pioneering academic, researcher, and humanitarian before her contributions to laser cataract surgery. While the use of lasers to perform precision eye surgery was not new, Dr. Bath improved on existing designs and patented her own device – contributing to restored vision for people worldwide. With time, materials, and support these creative women branched out to transform their fields and industries and, as a result, change the world. They are proof that without deviation innovation is limited. Read about more creative minds on the following pages and ask yourself if you can take a unique approach to develop a new and innovative idea, object, or solution!

Improving on Earlier Designs

Margaret Knight’s first patented invention, inspired by her work at a Massachusetts paper company, was a machine for improving paper-folding. It was given patent number 109224 in 1870. She applied for another patent using the model in this image to demonstrate her machine that folded and pasted flat-bottomed paper bags, and was granted patent number 220925 in 1879. As stated in her patent specification, the design is an improvement on another earlier patent granted in 1871. Her concept continues to be used in the manufacture of today’s paper grocery bag. Knight received patents for inventions having to do with the paper bag, shoe manufacturing, and rotary-engine industries.

Gilbreth Stopwatch

Using custom stopwatches, specialized timers, and still and moving pictures, Lillian Gilbreth and her husband created a system for analyzing human motion in time. Their main clients were industrial managers, who sought to increase worker output while saving time and money. Their study subjects were workers, whose job satisfaction the Gilbreths hoped to increase as they decreased wasted motions. The Gilbreths did not invent stopwatch studies. Instead, in their system of motion study, watches were secondary, in direct reaction to worker resistance to earlier stopwatch studies conducted in industrial workplaces. Although the stopwatch no longer provokes the passions it once did, scientific management’s compelling emphasis on standardization, order, and efficiency and its obsession with time persists in our own age.

Creative Thinking Challenge

A creative thinker is someone who can see the uncommon, contradictory, or unique in their everyday experiences. Creative thinkers ask: what other ways can everyday objects be used? For example, an old checkbook can be used as a coupon organizer or dry coffee grounds as an odor eliminator. Try creative thinking with this challenge. Make a list of as many uncommon or unusual uses for an everyday object in 3 minutes. Try it with a friend and compare your lists.
Katharine Burr Blodgett was the first woman to be awarded a PhD in physics from the University of Cambridge. She was also the first female research scientist hired by General Electric Laboratory in Schenectady, NY. Working with chemist, physicist, and engineer Irving Langmuir, Blodgett was able to enhance Langmuir’s techniques. Blodgett’s breakthrough in surfactant chemistry led to the development of a nonreflective glass coating called Langmuir-Blodgett film. Among its many applications, the film has been used as a coating in projector, camera, and paint industries. Blodgett received many honors for her work, including induction into the National Inventors Hall of Fame. In this publicity photo, Blodgett is seen demonstrating her equipment.

**Innovative Vaccine Researcher**

Sometimes, when searching for solutions to one problem, we're presented with answers to another. Ruby Hirose, a Japanese American bacteriologist, made a career of studying anthrax and sepsis as a researcher at Ohio's Merrell Labs. While investigating medicines for protection against diphtheria, Hirose identified a method to improve the effectiveness of vaccines in protecting the population. She eventually received a patent for her discovery. One of ten women recognized by the American Chemical Society in 1940, she was not exempt from the xenophobia of the time. Three of her family members were held in internment camps during World War II, though Hirose was spared due to living in Ohio. Despite facing adversity, Hirose's ongoing research later made major contributions to the development of vaccines against infectious poliomyelitis.

**The Wonder Fiber**

Chemist and inventor Stephanie Kwolek began her career at DuPont in 1946, one of a few women scientists. While working to create a material that would help treat breast soreness, Miller and Palmer-Smith were costume designers and tried creating a solution using different materials. Lindal's then-husband suggested they sew together two jock straps. After some laughter, the trio realized he was onto something and the Jogbra was born. The Jogbra was the first example of the garments now known generally as sports bras, an industry that women could wear when running to reduce breast movement. Miller and Palmer-Smith were encouraged to explore their ideas using their imaginations. The three included time for discussions, research, and sharing ideas in topics selected by kids themselves. But also needed for injection casting, writing, dancing, debating, and reflecting. "Use all the tools at your disposal - a tablet and stylus, clay, paper and pencil, sticky notes, a dry eraser and erase board and markers. Parents and caregivers can encourage children to track their "genius hour" ideas in a notebook, journal, scrapbook, or portfolio.
Inspiring the Future

How do you imagine the future? Virtual worlds? Human-like robots? What if for some, the future holds the promise of living authentically and dreaming big?

At the Smithsonian, my fellow educators and I have the privilege of using Smithsonian collections to share the stories of brilliant women. They had the foresight to carry out new ideas while battling cultural and social barriers. These imaginative thinkers pushed the boundaries in their respective professions and empowered future innovators to create and share their ideas of the future. In this final section you will discover women like architect Norma Sklarek, a pioneering African American architect who co-led a women-owned architectural firm in the 1960s, and Toshiko Takaezu, whose grand ceramic triumphs changed the art world. Their stories show us that when we tap into our power and believe in ourselves, when we try new things, it transforms the world around us! These women saw past the limitations of the world they lived in and invented new visions and processes. They inspire us all to improve and enrich lives not just in our communities, but also around the globe.

Award-Winning Sci-Fi Writer

This Olivetti Studio 46 Typewriter belonged to Octavia E. Butler, who wrote science fiction when few black writers did. Butler began writing at age 10 and eventually used a computer to compose. Butler’s blue typewriter dates to the 1970s. It is manual, not electric; fingers must make metal letters leap to dates to the 1970s. It is manual, not electric; a computer to compose. Butler's blue typewriter was one of the first African American women architects in the United States.

Design a Public Space

How can public spaces be more enjoyable? How can we make our environments more safe? How can we remove barriers? How can we be more inclusive? Design a public space of the future for your community.

Dynamic Ceramicist

Sculptor Toshiko Takaezu sits behind a pottery wheel, working on a large ceramic pot. Her distinctive “closed-form” objects helped to elevate ceramics in the art world.

Computing Camp ‘Connects’ Girls

When few girls signed up for the University of Maryland’s computer science classes, Dr. Jan Plane wasn’t working. So Dr. Plane, a lecturer in the university’s computer science classes, created a camp for middle schoolers to excite them about computer science, programming, applications, cybersecurity, and computer games. CompSciConnect, a three-year program, teaches students topics like computer science, programming, applications, cybersecurity, and computer games. Amber Melton made this LEGO robot at CompSciConnect. The small rover-like programming, computing applications, cybersafety, and cybersecurity.

Brought to You By

Asian Pall Bore Caron

As long Head of Education, National Museum of African American History Initiative

Investing in the Human Soul

Born in Minneapolis, South Carolina to formerly enslaved parents, Mary McLeod Bethune believed deeply in education as the main route out of poverty for herself and other African Americans. She founded the Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Black girls in 1904. By 1920, that institution became Florida’s Bethune-Cookman College. Perhaps Bethune’s greatest impact came in the mid-1930s with her service as a director for the National Youth Administration. She spoke out powerfully against racial discrimination throughout the federal government. When President Roosevelt issued an executive order in 1941 requiring equal consideration for African American workers jobs in the government and in the nation’s defense industries, there was little doubt that Bethune’s lobbying had played a major role in bringing it about.

The Rosa Parks of Architecture

American architect who co-led a women-owned architectural firm in the 1960s, and Toshiko Takaezu, whose grand ceramic triumphs changed the art world. Their stories show us that when we tap into our power and believe in ourselves, when we try new things, it transforms the world around us! These women saw past the limitations of the world they lived in and invented new visions and processes. They inspire us all to improve and enrich lives not just in our communities, but also around the globe.
This yellow sports wheelchair, donated to the Smithsonian’s collections by its creator, Marilyn Hamilton, was a revolution in wheelchair design. Lightweight aluminum (Hamilton was aeronautical engineer) allowed improved maneuverability in ways that traditional steel wheelchair users in the early 1960s couldn't have hoped for. Hamilton used this chair as a test model, champion and went on to found Quickie, one of the leading wheelchair manufacturers that support both mobility and active lifestyles.

**CROSSWORD**

Use the clues to complete the crossword puzzle below. Solutions at the bottom of the page.

**ACROSS**
1. Ancient culture that inspired the works of James Bond (9)
2. First Hollywood dance film shot in Technicolor (6, 7)
3. Common name for the plant Guillhermina
4. Region where confectioners and scholar-writers lived (12)
14. Great Comet of 1744
16. People who make ultralight aluminum more malleable (14)
18. Florida city where Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune established a school for African American students
21. Actress who portrayed Lillian Gish in Choover by the Ocean (1914), __...

**DOWN**
8. Bea Ann Silva was a makeup artist on __
2. Form of dramatic expression coined by playwright Nieke Shange
16. Traditional craft method used to add color to cloth
5. Pennsylvania city home to Ma’s Amish Country
7. First look in Orson Welles’ Butcher’s Hand (1937)
17. First major motion picture filmed on Technicolor (8)
19. With the Wind (1939)
20. Horse, historically black university Pk
21. Albany Symphony maestro founded by businesswomen and philanthropist Mary Lou Whitney (1943–)
23. Nameake of Eleanor Gerty’s write-...
Featured Women & Innovations

Teaching The Solar System

To create this remarkable quilt, astronomer and teacher Ellen Harding Baker combined three acceptable activities for women in the 19th century: quilting, the study of astronomy, and teaching. Baker started the wool-appliqué quilt in 1870, taking seven years to complete. Her inspiration may have come from solar system illustrations found in astronomy textbooks from the 1860s, and her own night sky viewing at Chicago’s Dearborn Observatory. Baker used the quilt as a visual aid for lectures she gave across Iowa. Measuring 89” x 106”, the quilt features the sun, planets and their orbits, moons, stars, a comet, and the asteroid belt.

Nobel Prize-Winning Cytogeneticist

Barbara McClintock’s studies of maize were ahead of their time. Maize, or corn, is a domesticated crop whose kernels are found in a rainbow of colors. Maize were ahead of their time. Maize, or corn, is a domesticated crop whose kernels are found in a rainbow of colors. McClintock’s persistence resulted in important details, previously unknown, about the genetic material of maize. She was awarded numerous prizes over the years, including the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1943.

Dedicated, Dutiful & Diverse Girl Scouts

Conflicted about her status as a “woman of ease,” Louise Davis looked for a call to service. She was awarded numerous prizes over the years, including the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1943.

Vital Midwives

Curators at the National Museum of African American History and Culture purchased this tissage at auction in 2018 because it provided rare visual evidence of a 19th century black woman as a medical professional. Additional research uncovered the potatoes that made this hat possible: a 19th century black woman as a medical professional. Additional research uncovered the potatoes that made this hat possible: the hat designed by milliner Sarah Logan Turnbo - the Golden Eaglet. Davis and her troopers broke with tradition by moving their patches from their uniform sleeves to a sash. Inspection of the patches on Davis’ sash shows her willingness to challenge the gender roles of her time.

Ntozake Shange

Shiloh dress costume for the character Lady in Shange from the choreopoem “for Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/when the Rainbow is Enuf.” The image is of a large hue-chest women amidst a subway car and urban cityscape on a psychadelic, multi-colored background. The serigraph is signed by the artist on the verso.

Anne Malone

This letter is from Mrs. Annie Malone Pope Tharpe, who was a pioneer of the African American beauty industry. The recipient Lucille Brown was a graduate of Malone’s Poro College, a cosmetology school that used Malone’s hair care products.

Lady Pink

Sleeveless dress costume for the character Lady in Shange from the choreopoem “for Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/when the Rainbow is Enuf.” The image is of a large hue-chest women amidst a subway car and urban cityscape on a psychadelic, multi-colored background. The serigraph is signed by the artist on the verso.

Mae Reeves

Black velvet bustier hat designed by milliner Mae Reeves with a widepink velvet hatband and pink velvet top on the crown. The business pioneer’s shop Mae Reeves was an important community space for African Americans in Philadelphia. Ella Fitzgerald, Eartha Kitt, Moms Mabley, and Lena Horne all donned her hats, a testament to their quality, appeal, and to the lifestyle Reeves made for herself.