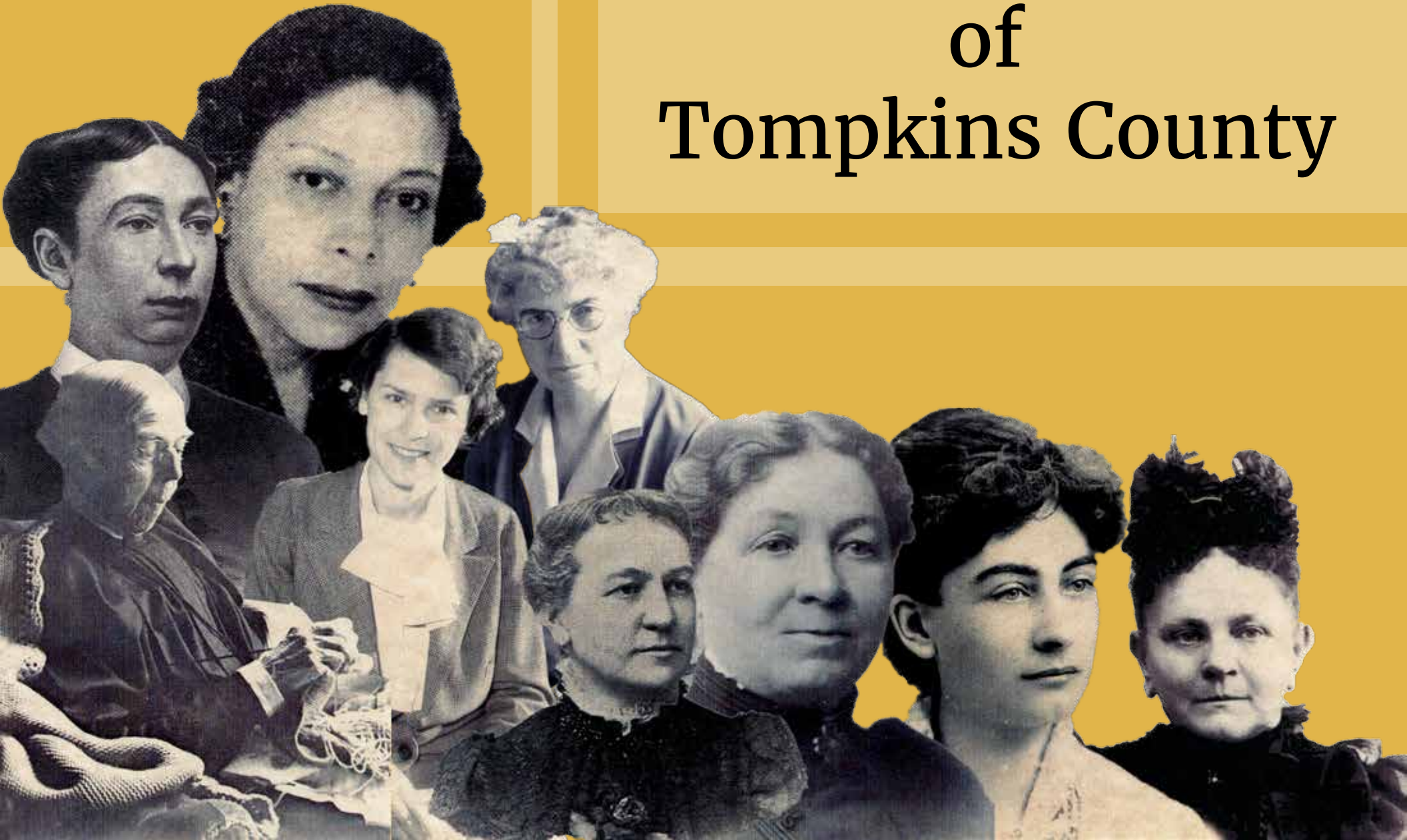


Notable Women of Tompkins County



For much of recorded history the lives and work of women have been omitted from the chronicles of our past. In the early 1980s that began to change when the week of March 8 was declared National Women's History Week, and in 1987 Congress declared March National Women's History Month in perpetuity. These efforts have encouraged the inclusion of women's history in educational curriculums across the country. Historical literature on women has blossomed in the last thirty years as well, as this neglected subject is gradually addressed.

In honor of Women's History Month the lives and work of nine notable women from Tompkins County's past is celebrated here with images and text. A diverse group that includes physician Samantha Nivison, educators Martha Van Rensselaer and Emma Corinne Brown Galvin, and suffragist Louisa Riley, and more, these 19th and early 20th century women represent the best of a group that toiled in obscurity for the greater community.

Sophronia Bucklin

Born in 1846, Sophronia Bucklin of Ithaca served in the Hospital Service as a nurse during the Civil War. After the battle of Gettysburg, Bucklin served in a tent hospital ministering to the most wounded soldiers. She was an efficient and dedicated nurse, and a compassionate friend to her patients, many of whom she corresponded with after the war. She published an account of her experiences entitled *In Hospital and Camp: A Woman's Record of Thrilling Incidents Among the Wounded in the Late War*.



Courtesy of the Photo Archives of The History Center in Tompkins County

Emma Corrinne Brown Galvin

Emma Galvin, originally from Richmond, Virginia, received her B.A. from Shaw University in 1929, and her M.A. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1931. A high school teacher, Galvin taught in schools in Virginia, North Carolina, and Florida. She came to Ithaca and resumed her graduate work at Cornell University, where she was awarded her Ph.D. in 1943. Later a professor at Ithaca College, Galvin was a member of the National Committee of the American Association of University Women, as well as a member of the board of trustees for Ithaca's Southside Community Center.



Courtesy of the Photo Archives of The History Center in Tompkins County

Welthea Marsh

Groton resident Welthea Marsh was the wife of Dexter Marsh, one of the founders of the First National Bank of Groton. Upon his death in 1895, Marsh inherited one third of the stock of the bank, and was elected its president. She was one of the first women bank presidents in the United States. In addition to her professional commitments, she was also involved with Groton community activities such as Groton's Congregational Church and the Political Equality Club, a forerunner of the League of Women Voters.



Courtesy of the Photo Archives of The History Center in Tompkins County

Effie Dallas Morse

Effie Morse was a very early president of the Ithaca Women's Club, serving from 1898-1899. Closely involved with children's education in Ithaca, she organized the first kindergarten in the city. She also oversaw the development of the Social Service League, which built the North Side and West Side community centers. Morse organized the Associated Charities, an umbrella organization that later became the United Way, and was appointed Ithaca's first woman Commissioner of Charities.



Courtesy of the Photo Archives of The History Center in Tompkins County

Samantha Nivison

A graduate of the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania, Samantha Nivison was the first woman to practice medicine in Tompkins County. In 1862 she established a water-cure sanitarium in Dryden that was so successful that she attempted to open a larger institution in Ithaca. Originally supported by Ezra Cornell, her plan for a new sanitarium collapsed due to lack of funding as he redirected his efforts to the founding of Cornell University. She later established another sanitarium in Hammonton, New Jersey.



Courtesy of the Photo Archives of The History Center in Tompkins County

Martha Van Rensselaer

A pioneer educator of women, Martha Van Rensselaer joined the faculty of Cornell University in 1900 to give extension courses in home economics. In 1911 she became one of the university's first full time women faculty members. She was instrumental in the establishment of Cornell's School of Home Economics in 1919, of which she was a director. It later became the New York State College of Home Economics, and is now Cornell's College of Human Ecology.



Courtesy of the Photo Archives of The History Center in Tompkins County

Louisa Riley

Louisa Riley was the founder of the Ithaca Women's Club, an organization dedicated to working for women's suffrage. Originally from Philadelphia, she moved to Ithaca to enable her son to attend Cornell, and founded the organization in 1895, ostensibly as a women's "study club," but in reality to work for women's right to vote in the United States.



Courtesy of the Photo Archives of The History Center in Tompkins County

Belle Sherman

Mary Isabella Sherman of Galesburg, Illinois, earned her B.S. from Lombard University in 1874, a unique accomplishment for a woman of that era. She came to Ithaca to study science at Cornell, and began teaching high school in 1875. Sherman taught science and history to Ithaca students until her retirement in 1908. Generous to her fellow teachers, tolerant and caring to her students, Sherman was honored by the community with the naming of a new elementary school for her in 1926.



Courtesy of the Photo Archives of The History Center in Tompkins County

Margaret Bourke-White

Margaret Bourke-White was one of the preeminent American photographers of the 20th century. Born in the Bronx, Bourke-White came to Ithaca to finish her education at Cornell University. She became a protégé of Ithaca photographer Henry Head, and developed a portfolio of remarkable architectural photographs of the Cornell campus. She later worked for Henry Luce's *Time* Magazine, and produced dramatic industrial photographs for his newly founded *Fortune* Magazine in the 1930s.



Courtesy of the Photo Archives of The History Center in Tompkins County