

Virginia Women in history

Presented by:



Elizabeth Van Lew

Richmond, Union Spy

Elizabeth Van Lew was one of three children born to a prominent Richmond family. She was educated in Philadelphia where she developed strong abolitionist views. Van Lew's antislavery stance led her to become a dedicated spy and zealous defender of the Union cause. She even cultivated the image of "Crazy Bet," posing as mentally deranged in order to cover her covert activities.



Elizabeth Keckley

Dinwiddie county, dressmaker, author, and confidante of Mrs. Lincoln

Elizabeth Keckley grew up as a slave. Like most slaves Lizzie had no formal education but she learned to be a fine seamstress. Her hard work and skillful designs brought her many loyal customers. After freedom, and a position as Mary Todd Lincoln's dressmaker, Keckley used her position in the White House to work on behalf of the thousands of newly freed slaves that came to Washington.



Sally Louisa Tompkins

Mathews county, Nurse

Within days of the First Battle of Manassas, streams of wounded Confederate soldiers arrived in Richmond. Tompkins, believing her duty in the war lay in nursing the wounded back to health, was motivated to open a hospital using her family's society ties to organize wealthy matrons as volunteers and her father's money to purchase beds, medical supplies, blankets, and food. Tompkins demanded exacting standards for nursing care, cleanliness, and food.



Rosa Dixon Bowser

Amelia county, Educator

In 1872, Bowser began teaching at the Navy Hill School, for African-Americans. She was the first black female schoolteacher in Richmond and spent most of her life educating Richmond's African-American population. She understood that African-American women could be a powerful, progressive force in Virginia society.



Edith Bolling Galt Wilson

Wytheville, First Lady

Edith married Woodrow Wilson shortly after his election to a second term as president. She was always at Wilson's side, working with him. In 1919, Wilson collapsed from a stroke, leaving his left side paralyzed. Convinced that removal from office would kill him, Edith served as a buffer between him and his cabinet, political advisors, and the public.



Theresa Pollak

Richmond, Artist

Born on August 13, 1899, Theresa Pollak has lived nearly her entire life in Richmond. Her contributions to the Richmond art world, both as an artist and teacher, are legendary. Credited with establishing the art departments at Virginia Commonwealth University and the University of Richmond, she dedicated 31 years of her life to art education. Known for her rigor and discipline, she has trained many of Richmond's most prominent artists.



Elizabeth Pfohl Campbell

Arlington, founder of Educational Television in Washington, D.C.

Her roles as mother, educator and activist merged in the late 1950s as she realized the possibilities that television had as an educational medium. She became the major unpaid force behind creating a public television station that would provide educational programming for the nation's capital. Her energy and vision have been recognized across the country through five honorary doctorates and 50 broadcasting and communication awards.



Thomasina Jordan

Alexandria, Native American Activist

Jordan's greatest energies were dedicated to improving the lives of Native Americans. While working on behalf of all Native Americans, Jordan actively pursued federal and historic recognition of Virginia's eight tribes. When George Bush was elected president in 1988, she became the first American Indian to serve in the electoral college.



Photography:
Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia
Rosa Dixon Bowser
International Newsweek
Edith Bolling Galt Wilson
Thomasina Jordan
The Library of Virginia
Elizabeth Keckley
The Valentine Museum
Elizabeth Van Lew
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Sally Louisa Tompkins
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