

# in the know



## Firsts For Women by Cristina Velocci

In the early 19th century, women were considered second-class citizens and their activities were limited to the domestic sphere. Since then, considerable strides have been taken by extraordinary women to forever change the role of females in society. While it may seem the suppression of women is ancient history, it has not even been a century since women first won the constitutional right to vote in 1920.

Indeed, women today continue to pave the way for future generations, whether it's taking on leadership roles, breaking through the glass ceiling, or joining the old boys clubs that excluded their female counterparts for so many years.

What began in 1978 at a California school district as Women's History Week grew in popularity until, in 1981, Congress passed a resolution making the week a celebration for the entire country. It wasn't until a group of women campaigned in 1987 to expand the celebration that Congress declared the entire month of March National Women's History Month to celebrate the accomplishments of women throughout American history.

In honor of Women's History Month, *Blush* has constructed a timeline of famous American women's firsts. These trailblazers have made it possible for women to pursue their dreams and achieve anything. Even to this day, women continue to make the history books. As for the future (the first woman president of

the United States?), the possibilities are endless.

- **1707:** Henrietta Johnston works as a portrait artist in Charles Town, now Charleston, S.C., making her the first known professional female artist in America.

- **1795:** Anne Parrish establishes the House of Industry in Philadelphia, the first charitable organization for women in America.

- **1849:** Elizabeth Blackwell becomes the first woman with a medical degree, granted to her from the Medical Institution of Geneva in New York.

- **1879:** Mary Baker Eddy becomes the first woman to found a major religion, Christian Scientist.

- **1916:** Jeannette Rankin of Montana is the first woman to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

- **1921:** American novelist Edith Wharton becomes the first woman to win a Pulitzer Prize for fiction for her novel *The Age of Innocence*.

- **1932:** Amelia Earhart becomes the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic.

- **1932:** Hattie Wyatt Caraway of Arkansas becomes the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate.

- **1933:** Frances Perkins is appointed Secretary of Labor by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, making her the first female member of a presidential cabinet.

- **1934:** Lettie Pate Whitehead becomes the first American woman to serve as a director of a major corporation, The Coca-Cola Company.

- **1964:** Margaret Chase Smith becomes the first woman nominated for president of the United States by a major political party at the Republican National Convention in San Francisco.

- **1967:** Muriel "Mickey" Siebert becomes the first woman to own a seat on the New York Stock Exchange and the first woman to head one of its member firms.

- **1970:** Diane Crump becomes the first female jockey to ride in the Kentucky Derby.

- **1981:** Sandra Day O'Connor is appointed by President Reagan to the Supreme Court, making her its first female justice.

- **1983:** Sally Ride becomes the first American woman in space.

- **1984:** Geraldine Ferraro is the first woman to run for vice-president on a major party ticket.

- **1993:** Janet Reno becomes the first female U.S. attorney general.

- **1997:** Madeleine Albright is sworn in as U.S. Secretary of State, making her the first woman in this position as well as the highest-ranking woman in the United States government.

- **1999:** Nancy Ruth Mace is the first female cadet to graduate from the Citadel, the formerly all-male military school in South Carolina.

- **2007:** Nancy Pelosi becomes the first female Speaker of the House of Representatives.

