

Harriet May Mills: A woman ahead of her time

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The historic Harriet May Mills house in Syracuse, NY

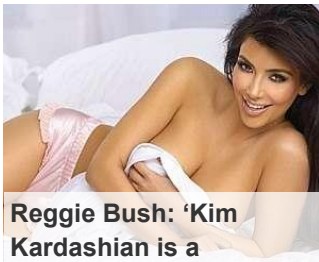
Photo credit: M E Messere

Driving down West Genesee Street one notices the many businesses and car dealerships that have sprung up over the years, removing house after house from a once residential drive. Among them still standing however, is a piece of forgotten history that played a major role in Women's Rights. The house is the Harriet May Mills house, a New York State Historic Marker today marks its red exterior, and near the front door is a small plaque denoting it as listed on the Nation Historic Register.

The house once saw visitors from not only the women's movement but also the abolition movement. Harriet May Mills is a standout in many fields. Mills who came from a strongly abolitionist family, her middle name derived from the famous Rev. Samuel J. May, attended Cornell in only its second class allowing women. With a gift for oratory, she managed to make a mark for herself as spokeswomen for "Woman's Rights" becoming closely associated with Cady Elizabeth Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. Harriet eventually became the secretary of the state suffrage association. Her keen organizational skills forwarded her in the New York State Woman's Suffrage Association, which was headquarters in her home.

Harriet also became interested in politics founding the Onondaga County Women's Democratic Club. It is through this that she became acquainted with Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt, working with Eleanor in New York State politics, once accompanying Franklin in a statewide tour for governor. Mills died in 1935 never marrying. Her home had seen noteworthy and famous visitors, eventually becoming used as the headquarters for the G. B. Stringer Hardware Company.

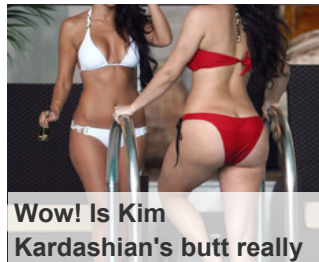
In August of 2001 the house was dedicated as a significant historic structure and sports a historic marker honoring this unusual and influential woman, a woman who was ahead of her time. For more information on the house and Harriet May Mills you can visit www.harrietmaymills.org (<http://www.harrietmaymills.org>).



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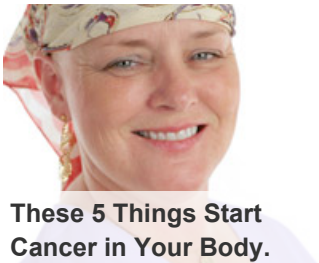
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Mary Messere, Syracuse Historic Places Examiner

Mary Messere, also known as "Back Street Mary" for her historic writings, is the former Madison County Historian and the founder of Neighbors for Historic Eaton. She has written history for not only Madison County but also for Onondaga County and won the Upstate History Alliance Award for...