

## Alexandria Women's History Bike Tour: Women's Suffrage and Alexandrian Women in Government

### Overview

- 2020 is the centennial of the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote.
- This tour explores Alexandria's role in the women's suffrage movement and trailblazing Alexandrian women who served in government.
- Please note that this is just a sampling of women's history in Alexandria. There are many more women who helped shaped the City.
- The route is about 13.5 miles long, with 8 stops at sites associated with women's history.
- Go to <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/31837986> for cuesheets or turn-by-turn directions.

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### 1. Market Square, 301 King Street

**Starting point: in front of the fountain.**

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*Look around you and admire the legacy of **Margaret Brent**.*

All of the land on which Old Town Alexandria is sited once belonged to a remarkable woman, **Margaret Brent**, considered the first woman lawyer in America and the first woman to seek the right to vote. Born in England in 1601, she and her sister moved to colonial Maryland to find religious freedom. She held a patent (a land grant) from Cecil Calvert, proprietary Governor of Maryland, which gave her land in her own name. She and her sister developed their property well, working with indentured female and male servants. She became active in the Maryland colony's affairs, and sometimes lent money to other colonists.

Her business and her representation of the Calvert family matters made it necessary for her to appear in court -- inspiring, much later, the American Bar Association to dub her the nation's "first woman lawyer." A single woman, Brent was legally able to own her property and represent herself and others, but she could not vote in the Maryland Assembly, a right she needed to do her work. She asked for the right to vote and was turned down. She then left Maryland entirely and moved to Virginia, purchasing 11,000 acres, where she lived from 1651 to 1671. The property included a 700-acre tract that is now the heart of Old Town Alexandria. She lived on her plantation, called "Peace," in what is now Fairfax County until her death. Her heirs later sold the property.

Source: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/dchs/info/WomenTourWebsite.pdf>.

See also <https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/speccol/sc3500/sc3520/002100/002177/html/brochure.html>.

*Look toward the northeast corner of King Street and Fairfax Street. The white building with the brick and stone foundation is **Ramsay House**, at 221 King Street.*

Ramsay House was the home of William and **Ann McCarthy Ramsay**, two key figures in Alexandria history. William Ramsay was a Scottish merchant who settled here, and was one of the City's founders. Ann McCarthy was the daughter of Alexandria Mayor Dennis McCarthy and Sarah Ball (George Washington's cousin). Ann married Ramsay and had five daughters and three sons, and in her spare time became one of the most effective fundraisers for the Revolutionary War. She became Treasurer of Alexandria and Fairfax County and led a fundraising drive that collected more than \$75,000 (this would be millions today) to help support the Continental Army. Mrs. Ramsay did not have to raise her eight

children in this small house, which is a replica of the original, and today serves as the Alexandria's Visitors Center. The Ramsays moved to larger quarters elsewhere in the City.

Source: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/dchs/info/WomenTourWebsite.pdf>

*Leaving Market Square, ride north on N. Royal Street for one block, turn left onto Cameron Street, and then turn right onto N. Columbus Street. The next stop is the **Kate Waller Barrett Branch Library**, at the northeast corner of N. Columbus Street and Queen Street.*

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## **2. Barrett Library and Lloyd House**

**Stopping point: by the library bike racks, in front of the library at 717 Queen Street.**

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The library is named after **Katherine Waller Barrett**, renowned humanitarian and social activist. She grew up in Stafford County and attended the Arlington Institute for Girls in Alexandria for two years. In 1876, she married Robert S. Barrett, an Episcopal minister. Between 1877 and 1888 they had four sons and three daughters, of whom one son died young.

The Barretts lived in Virginia, Kentucky, Georgia, and Washington D.C. before moving to Alexandria in 1896. While in Atlanta, she completed a three-year course of study at the Women's Medical College of Georgia and earned an M.D. In 1893, she opened a rescue home in Atlanta where unmarried pregnant girls could find refuge and receive care and education. She later worked with Charles Nelson Crittenton, a New York millionaire, to establish seventy-eight Florence Crittenton Homes throughout the United States and in Mexico City, Marseilles, Shanghai, and Tokyo. She devoted remarkable physical and intellectual energy to a broad range of concerns that included prostitution, venereal disease, the white slave trade, working conditions for women and children, the welfare of America's returning soldiers and disabled veterans, the education of immigrant families, and woman suffrage. Her travels took her from Alaska to Bangkok, from Mexico to Italy. She spoke to presidents in the White House, to congregations in American churches, and to young girls in saloons.

An early and active supporter of woman suffrage, Barrett presided over the founding meeting of the Alexandria chapter of the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia in March 1912 and was the chapter's first president. Elected an honorary vice president of the Virginia league in 1913, Barrett attended state conventions that year and in 1915 and 1919. She attended national conventions of the National American Woman Suffrage Association in 1913, 1914, and 1916, and made speeches in support of woman suffrage in Roanoke and Lexington early in 1915. After Congress submitted the Nineteenth Amendment to the state for ratification, Barrett campaigned early in 1920 for its ratification in Virginia (the General Assembly refused) and later that year was a founding member of the Virginia League of Women Voters.

Newspaper accounts of Barrett's public addresses regularly noted her power as a speaker. As a delegate from Virginia to the 1924 Democratic National Convention in New York, she delivered a seconding speech for favorite-son candidate Carter Glass. In response to her brief but brilliantly delivered speech, a delegate from New Jersey spontaneously placed Barrett's name in nomination for the vice presidency.

Katherine Harwood Waller Barrett died suddenly as a result of diabetes mellitus at her Alexandria home in 1925, and she was buried in the churchyard of Aquia Church in Stafford County. The governor of Virginia ordered the flag to be lowered on the State Capitol in Richmond, the first time that a woman had been so honored.

Source: [https://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/dvb/bio.asp?b=Barrett\\_Katherine\\_Harwood\\_Waller](https://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/dvb/bio.asp?b=Barrett_Katherine_Harwood_Waller)

See also: <https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/people/barrett-kate-waller/>

*Look across the street toward the southwest corner of Queen Street and N. Washington Street. The brick building with green shutters is **Lloyd House**, at 220 N. Washington Street.*

Lloyd House, today the offices of Historic Alexandria and home of extensive historical resources about Alexandria, was once the home of an especially interesting woman, **Carolyn Hallowell Miller**.

Born in Alexandria in 1831, she was the daughter of Alexandria Quakers Benjamin and Margaret Hallowell. The Hallowells were accomplished educators, and Margaret Hallowell opened the city's first school for girls. Carolyn also started a girls' school, in Sandy Spring, Maryland.

"Her strongest characteristic was a love of justice, and this was what made her a champion for women's enfranchisement," the Friends' Intelligencer wrote. She became a suffragist leader, passionately supporting women's right to vote and organizing the Maryland Woman Suffrage Association in 1889.

In January 1883, she was introduced by Susan B. Anthony to address the National Women's Suffrage Convention. Her remarks, as reported in the Alexandria Gazette, said this about Alexandria: "I was born and reared in a town noted for its slave pens and intense conservatism, whose women inhabitants, if of social rank sufficient to be considered ladies, were treated with all respect...but yet (I) had also seen women of lower social classes there stripped to the waist and brutally beaten in public by order of the law, their only offense was impertinence to the young snipes of dry goods clerks whose own conduct provoked this impertinence." Describing Susan B. Anthony and other leaders seeking women's right to vote, she predicted, "Coming generations would rise up and call them blessed."

Sources: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/dchs/info/WomenTourWebsite.pdf> and <https://oldtowncrier.com/2014/03/01/suffrage-the-womans-bible/>

*Ride east on Queen Street and cross N. Washington Street. Turn left onto N. Fairfax Street, turn left onto Pendleton Street, and stop in front of the **Annie B. Rose House** at 399 Pendleton Street.*

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### **3. Annie B. Rose House**

**Stopping point: sidewalk in front of the building, 399 Pendleton Street.**

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**Annie B. Rose** was the daughter of the Rev. Lewis (Louis) Henry Bailey, who was sold from the Alexandria slave pen at 1315 Duke Street when he was a young boy. Bailey was taken from his mother, Ann, and sent to a new slave owner in Texas. He spent his childhood and his teenage years in slavery until he was emancipated in 1863. From Texas, he walked all the way back to Alexandria, where he found his mother living not too far from the slave pen where he was sold. For the rest of his life, Rev. Bailey devoted his time to his church and his family. In all, he founded five churches and two schools. He and his wife, Ella Dean, raised four children, with Annie being the oldest.

Rose married William Henry Rose of Alexandria, taught school in the area, and worked for many years at the U.S. Bureau of Printing and Engraving until she retired in 1945. She then devoted the rest of her long life to the Alexandria community, improving housing and home nursing for the elderly, educating

Alexandria young people about African-American history and slavery, and preserving African-American history.

In the 1940s, Rose worked to encourage African Americans to register and vote and to take active roles in the community. At the height of the civil rights movement, she helped organize the 1963 March on Washington. With hundreds of others from Alexandria, she marched for jobs and freedom. She helped establish the Black History Resource Center, founded the City's Commission on Aging, was a founding member of the Senior Citizens Employment Services of Alexandria, served on the Urban League Board, played the organ for Ebenezer Baptist Church, and became the first African-American president of the Alexandria Women's Civic Association.

Rose died in 1989. Her last act of kindness to her community was to have her property sold and have the proceeds go to several nonprofit organizations in the City of Alexandria. Rose received more than 30 awards from local and national groups in recognition of her life of activism and education. She was further honored posthumously by the Alexandria City Council and ARHA, who rededicated the Pendleton House as the Annie B. Rose House.

Sources: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/dchs/info/WomenTourWebsite.pdf>, <http://connectionarchives.com/PDF/2019/031319/Alexandria.pdf>, and <https://www.anniebrosehouse.com/anniebrose.aspx>

*Continue west on Pendleton Street. Turn right on West Street, then take the first left onto Braddock Road. After the underpass, turn right onto the Potomac Yard Trail. Near the intersection of Potomac Avenue and Glebe Road, pull off the trail into the small plaza overlooking the train tracks.*

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#### **4. Potomac Yard**

**Stopping point: plaza overlooking the train tracks, just south of the retaining ponds.**

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**Patsy Ticer** was elected to the Alexandria City Council in 1982 and served three terms before being elected as the first female mayor of Alexandria in 1991. As mayor, Ticer was best known for standing up to then-Redskins owner Jack Kent Cooke, who wanted to build a new stadium for the team in the Potomac Yard area of Alexandria. Ticer was reelected to a second term, then elected to the Virginia State Senate in 1996, and served four terms before her retirement in 2012.

Patricia Keyser Smith was born in Washington, D.C. on Jan. 6, 1935 and moved to Alexandria with her parents in 1947, when she was in seventh grade. She graduated from George Washington High School. When she married Jack Ticer in 1956, he was in his first term on City Council. Patsy and Jack went on to have four children. Patsy was active in volunteer work and worked in real estate for 12 years before running for office.

As mayor, Ticer was a staunch advocate for women, children and families, especially the most vulnerable. She established an Alexandria Office of Early Childhood Program for at-risk children. She was devoted to historic preservation and affordable housing and was a passionate environmentalist. She oversaw the first extensive revision of the city's master plan. She championed the arts and created the city's Commission for the Arts. She started our city's annual birthday celebration along the waterfront.

When she died in 2017, people remembered her as a good listener, genuine, authentic, open-minded, and someone with very little patience for nonsense.

Sources:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/historic/info/attic/2019/Attic20190314TicerLawson.pdf>,  
<https://alexandrialegends.org/patsy-ticer/>, <https://alextimes.com/2017/08/patsyticer/>.

*Continue north on the Potomac Yard Trail. At the intersection where the movie theater is, turn left and then immediately right to continue north on the service road that runs behind the shopping center. Cross Route 1 and pick up the Four Mile Run Park Trail, and take that trail as far as Mt. Vernon Avenue. After crossing Mt. Vernon Avenue, take the lane on Four Mile Road, then turn left onto Old Dominion Boulevard. Cross W. Glebe Road, continue on Old Dominion Boulevard, take the first right onto Tennessee Avenue, turn left onto Valley Drive, then bear left at the fork to continue on Valley Drive. Partway up the hill, stop at the corner of Valley Drive and Preston Road.*

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## **5. Parkfairfax**

**Stopping point: open area at the corner of Valley Drive and Preston Road.**

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**Vola Lawson** began her career in Alexandria in the 1960s as a community activist who was deeply committed to the rights of women and minorities at a time of turbulent race relations. She credited her grandparents for her passionate beliefs about justice and equality. Lawson once said in an interview, “My grandparents taught me, ‘You ought to be able to do anything. It doesn’t matter if you’re a little girl.’” She took her grandparents’ advice and made it a reality for herself and countless others.

Lawson and her husband, David, moved to Parkfairfax in 1965, with sons David, 4, and Peter, 4 months. “We never meant to stay. But we fell in love with Alexandria and put down roots,” Lawson said. They helped start the tenants’ association at Parkfairfax and worked to save a piece of land there as open space.

After joining the city government in 1971 as assistant director of the Economic Opportunities Commission, Lawson later became assistant city manager for housing. In 1985, she was appointed city manager and served in that role for 15 years. She was the first female city manager in Alexandria and among the first women to run a local government in the Washington area.

During her tenure as city manager, Lawson increased the diversity of city staff by hiring more women and minorities. She formed the Alexandria Commission for Women to ensure that women had an official voice in city government. She instituted Head Start and other child-care services and was an active participant in the Northern Virginia Housing Coalition, which provides affordable housing for low- and middle-income families. She worked to regain the city’s AAA bond rating, which meant the City could issue bonds at lower interest rates.

In the mid-1990s, she helped start Alexandria’s cancer fund-raising walk after receiving a breast cancer diagnosis and having a double mastectomy. The walk raised money to provide mammograms and follow-up care to more than 5,000 low-income women. After leaving city government, Lawson served on the board of the Campagna Center, a community service agency for children; the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria, which named its shelter after her; and the Alexandria Police Foundation. She returned to live in Parkfairfax a few years before her death in 2013.

Sources:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/historic/info/attic/2019/Attic20190314TicerLawson.pdf>,

<https://alexandrialegends.org/vola-lawson/>, and [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/obituaries/vola-lawson-alexandria-city-manager-turned-around-tumult-and-advocated-for-minorities/2013/12/11/b069c7f0-6290-11e3-91b3-f2bb96304e34\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/obituaries/vola-lawson-alexandria-city-manager-turned-around-tumult-and-advocated-for-minorities/2013/12/11/b069c7f0-6290-11e3-91b3-f2bb96304e34_story.html).

*Continue up the hill on Valley Drive. Turn right onto Kenwood Avenue, right onto Fern Street, then left onto Quaker Lane. Take the first right onto 36<sup>th</sup> Street South, go around the traffic circle, and take the second exit to continue onto 36<sup>th</sup> Street South. Take the first left onto S. Taylor Street, cross King Street at the traffic light, then turn left onto the service road. Take the first right onto Marlee Way, then turn right onto W. Braddock Road. Turn right into the parking lot of the T.C. Williams High School Minnie Howard Campus.*

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#### **6. T.C. Williams High School Minnie Howard campus**

**Stopping point: parking lot between the field and the school.**

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Born in 1869, **Minnie Howard** devoted much of her life to the welfare of children. As she and her husband raised seven children to adulthood, Howard founded a children's home and was appointed Alexandria's first juvenile probation officer. She founded Alexandria's first PTA in 1912 and created Alexandria's school lunch program. Recognizing the danger that the newly invented automobile posed to children's street activities, she successfully introduced the concept of the supervised playground. Howard helped to establish Alexandria's first public playground at the Washington Street school, and she served as president of the Alexandria playground association. Her namesake school opened just a few years after her death in 1950.

Sources: <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/Page/468> and <https://www.facebook.com/AlexandriaVAGov/posts/10157378521025757>

*Continue west on W. Braddock Road. Turn left onto Ivor Lane, then take the first right onto N. Pickett Street. Take the first left to continue on N. Pickett Street, which becomes Seminary Road. At the last stop sign before getting to the big Seminary Road, turn right through the apartment complex's parking lot, take the first left, then take the first left again onto Library Lane. **Ellen Coolidge Burke Branch Library** will be on your left. Public bathrooms are available inside the library.*

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#### **7. Ellen Coolidge Burke Branch Library**

**Stopping point: library parking lot, 4701 Seminary Road.**

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**Ellen Coolidge Burke** was born in Alexandria in 1901, at the start of what would become a hallmark century for women. Thomas Jefferson was an ancestor of her family, and she may have been named after Jefferson's granddaughter, Ellen Coolidge.

Coolidge attended Catholic University in Washington, D.C., where she earned both her B.A. and M.A. degrees. Coolidge started with the Alexandria Library in 1938 as a cataloger and then became a reference librarian. In 1948, she rose to become the library director. As director, she fought to bring a bookmobile to Alexandria, a service that enabled the collections to reach many more parts of the community. It was one of the first bookmobiles in the state of Virginia. During her tenure as director, the Library expanded to include two more locations, Seminary Avenue's Burke Branch (in 1968) and the Duncan Branch on Commonwealth (in 1969).

In addition to her career, Ellen was active in the League of Women Voters and the Urban League. She belonged to professional library associations and was involved with several civic organizations. She retired in 1969 and passed away in 1975.

Sources: <https://www.remembermyjourney.com/Memorial/2033057> and <http://andyswebtools.com/cgi-bin/p/awtp-pa.cgi?d=plainfield-garden-club&type=4485>.

*Continue on Library Lane and turn left onto Seminary Road. Continue southwest on Seminary Road, which becomes Janneys Lane. Turn right onto King Street, right onto Daingerfield Road, and left onto Prince Street. Stop at the southwest corner of Prince Street and S. St. Asaph Street.*

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## **8. Site of former federal courthouse**

**Stopping point: parking lot at the southwest corner of Prince Street and S. St. Asaph Street.**

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This was the former site of the Alexandria Custom House and Post Office. It was built in 1858, constructed of granite with cast-iron doors, window frames, and stairways. The Post Office was on the first floor, the customs rooms on the second, and a courtroom on the third. The building was demolished to provide parking spaces for the new U.S. Court House, erected facing Washington Street about 1930. But before its demolition, it was the site of a court hearing for dozens of women fighting for the right to vote.

In 1917, suffragettes began picketing the White House demanding women's voting rights. Many were arrested on false charges like "obstructing free passage of sidewalk" and taken to the Occoquan Workhouse in Lorton, Virginia. The conditions there were unsanitary, and the prisoners were harshly treated: hit by the guards, literally thrown into their cells, denied food and water, and threatened with gags and straitjackets if they tried to communicate with each other. Some went on hunger strikes and were force-fed.

On November 23, 1917, the women appeared for a court hearing in Alexandria. Onlookers gasped: the women were emaciated, some were too weak to sit up, some still had bruises from the guards' rough treatment, and one woman collapsed soon after entering. Judge Waddill, a soft-spoken, older Southern gentleman, expressed great concern at the unchivalrous treatment of the women: "Here is a case concerning twenty-five or thirty ladies. The statement as to their treatment was bloodcurdling; it was shocking to man's ideas of humanity if it is true."

Judge Waddill later ruled that the women's transfer to Occoquan was illegal, because they had been arrested for an offense committed in the District of Columbia but sent to a workhouse in Virginia. He ordered them sent to the D.C. Jail instead, where conditions were somewhat better.

Sources: William Francis Smith, *A Seaport Saga: Portrait of Old Alexandria, Virginia* (1989); <https://msmagazine.com/2019/11/23/feminist%e2%80%8b-history-november-23/>, <https://msmagazine.com/2019/11/24/feminist-history-november-24/>, <https://msmagazine.com/2019/11/25/feminist-history-november-25/>.

*Continue east on Prince Street. Turn right onto S. Fairfax Street, turn left onto Duke Street, turn left onto Union Street, turn right onto Prince Street, and take the first left onto Strand Street. End the ride at Vola's Dockside Grill and Hi-Tide Lounge, 101 N. Union Street, which is named after Vola Lawson.*