

A Salute To Black Heritage

Women's Contributions Made For A Better Life

Achievements Against The Odds

Art Exhibit Illustrates Successes

Their unquestioned contributions to black America run the gamut from arts to abolition, though most were relatively unknown in their day.

Even in 1989, many of the 120 figures featured in the Smithsonian's "Black Women: Achievements Against the Odds" remain mired in obscurity.

The exhibition, which opens at the Washington Civic Center on Sunday, Jan. 15, features 120 black women representing 200 years of achievement in areas ranging from religion and civil rights to music and medicine.

The show is organized around 18 carbon pencil portraits drawn by illustrator Nancy Edwards Calder, each including scenes, quotations and stories about the subject. Each panel also includes reproductions of vintage photographs and statements about five to seven other women whose contributions to history can be similarly categorized.

Among the women featured are Madam C.J. Walker (1867-1919), the first black female millionaire, who worked her way from a wash woman to the head of her own cosmetics manufacturing company; Katherine Dunham (born 1912), an anthropologist who studied African, Caribbean, Central European and classical ballet dances and formed her own troupe; and Harriet Tubman (1820-1913), who is widely known for her work in the underground railroad, though she also is the only woman in American history to plan and lead a military raid.

Other achievers include Edmonia Lewis (1843-1911), the first black woman to gain widespread recognition as an artist; Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955), a forceful educator who founded the National Council of Negro Women in 1935; Wilma Rudolph (b. 1940), who in 1960 became the first American woman to win three Olympic medals, and Barbara Jordan (b. 1936), who in 1972 was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Texas, the first black from the South to be elected to Congress since Reconstruction.

The Beaufort County Arts Council bought the exhibition from the Smithsonian for \$200 and will leave it on display in the Lane Gallery from Jan. 15 to Feb. 24 to commemorate Black History Month, which is February.

"We are always trying to highlight minority artists," said Wanda Johnson, public relations coordinator for the Arts Council. "I think this exhibit points out a lot of the contributions of black women that we don't always think about or associate with them."

Also featured at the opening Jan. 15 will be an exhibition of photographs featuring North Carolina's State Parks.

The opening reception for both "Black Women: Achievements Against the Odds" and "North Carolina State Parks" is from 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday. A reception will be hosted by the Pamlico-Tar River Foundation and the Eno River Association. The public is invited.



HARRIET TUBMAN (1820-1913) was born a slave in Maryland but escaped to freedom and became the most successful and renowned conductor of the underground railroad. On June 2, 1863, she and Union Col. James Montgomery led three gunboats of blacks on a campaign up the Combahee River in South Carolina. The battling and burning resulted in the escape of more than 700 slaves. She served in the Union Army for three years as a guerrilla leader, scout, spy and nurse. Thirty years after her death, Congress named a "Liberty" ship in her honor.



MAGGIE LENA WALKER (1867-1934) was the first American woman to become a bank president. In 1899, she became the executive secretary-treasurer of the Independent Order of St. Luke, a fraternal agency and insurance cooperative headquartered in Richmond, Va. Under her leadership, the membership grew from 57 local chapters to 1,500 in 14 states, boasting a total membership of 50,000. She founded the Penny Savings Bank in 1903 and later served on the NAACP Board of Directors and as vice president of the National Association of Colored Women.

BLACK WOMEN ACHIEVEMENTS AGAINST THE ODDS



SOJOURNER TRUTH (1797-1883) was a slave in New York state for 40 years before escaping and changing her name from her slave title, Isabella. Following her escape, she traveled as a preacher and later converted to the anti-slavery cause, sharing platforms with such notables of the day as Frederick Douglass. In the Civil War, she collected clothing and food for black soldiers and entertained troops with religious music and scripture. Later, she was instrumental in integrating public transportation in the nation's capital.

EDUCATION



FANNY JACKSON COPPIN (1837-1913) graduated from Oberlin College in 1865. A former slave, she later went to Philadelphia and became head principal for the Institute of Colored Youth. In 1871 she established a teacher training program at the Institute which included an unprecedented practice-teaching course. She later persuaded the school board to establish the nation's first industrial education department to teach trades to black youths. Today, the Institute is located at Cheyney State College in Pennsylvania.

Genealogist-Author-Lecturer To Speak

CRESWELL — Like many Americans — black and white — Dorothy Spruill Redford was inspired by Alex Haley's 1977 book and drama *Roots*.

And like many, the inspiration compelled her to take a journey beyond her own life and into the lives of her ancestors.

Over the next decade, she pored over census records and property books, sought out distant relatives and eventually discovered a bill of sale tracing her great-great-great-grandmother to Somerset Place plantation in

Creswell. When all was said and done, the personal search for her roots had become a family tree boasting the names of more than 300 slaves under 21 different surnames who had worked at Somerset, one of the state's largest plantations.

In the late summer of 1986, her work was instrumental in bringing together more than 2,000 descendants of the slaves who had worked at Somerset. Their celebration at the restored 19th century plantation house was un-

precedented in the annals of genealogy, drawing participants not only from Washington County but Washington state.

Today, she is program officer for the plantation, one of several sites along the Historic Albemarle Tour. She currently is spearheading a program to restore the plantation as the nation's first to factually depict the lives of both former slave and non-slave populations.

She also gives lectures, genealogical workshops and dramatic presentations based on

her research.

On Thursday, Feb. 12, at 7:30 p.m., she will speak on genealogy and the writing of her book, *Somerset Homecoming, Recovering A Lost Heritage*, as part of the Beaufort County Arts Council's exhibit on the achievements of black women.

Her presentation is co-sponsored by Beaufort County Community College. A reception sponsored by Delta Sigma Theta, a black sorority, will follow. Both events are free and open to the public.



Dorothy S. Redford