

The Engager

Newsletter of the Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation - March 2002

WINNER OF THE "NAME THIS NEWSLETTER" CONTEST

Congratulations to Annie Laurie Gaylor and April Swaney, both of whom suggested the name "The Engager." This name calls forth Matilda Joslyn Gage as our inspiration as we engage with one another to write Gage back into history and celebrate the significance of her work to social justice issues today. Annie and April will receive their choice of a pin/tie tack, earrings, or pendant from our line of handcrafted sterling silver jewelry depicting the home of Matilda Joslyn Gage. The jewelry was custom designed for us by Norman K. Dann of Petersboro, New York.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Our successful Tech Team appeal last year (thank you all!) funded a computer, which, together with our copy machine (gift of the Eastwood Rotary) became our seed equipment, through which we applied for a \$50,000 grant from the Ludwig Family Foundation to buy equipment -- and received the full amount! We are now like kids in a candy store, researching copiers, printers, scanners, digital cameras, camcorders and other equipment which will allow us to be self-sufficient, printing our own brochures and publications. If you have suggestions for what we should purchase, please get in touch. We can use your expertise as we wind our way through this wonderfully confusing world of possibilities.

I keyed the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency annual conference and the Sojourner Storytelling conference at Syracuse University's Hendricks Chapel in February and will keynote the Great Lakes Research Association conference this month. Also in February, a performance visit as Elizabeth Cady Stanton to a Women's Funding Network event at Gloria Steinem's apartment in New York City was followed by a Gage performance for the Women's Funding Network Board, which allowed me to bring the voices of our feminist past to women funders, thanks to arrangements by our wonderful friend and supporter, Helen LaKelly Hunt. I have joined the Steering Committee of the National Collaborative for Women's Historic Sites, and look forward to our strong connection with that organization as we develop the Gage house, designated as a component of the "Votes for Women" trail in the recently-released Women's Rights National History Trail Feasibility Study commissioned by Congress.

I rise with joy each morning, grateful that I am able to share this work with all of you to bring our "forgotten feminist" and her critically relevant work to light today.

Warm thanks,

Sally

P.S. A very special thanks to Sue Boland, who edited this newsletter.

THANK YOU FOR GRANTS

- To the Sister Fund of New York City for a \$1500 grant allowing us to bring African American scholar Marilyn Richardson to our 2001 Gage conference on "Writing Women Back into History and Religion."
- To the Rosamond Gifford Foundation for funding the Girl Scout Path of Friendship Program, providing us with \$1800 to create information packets and activities at the Gage house.
- To L. and J. G. Stickley, Inc., who provided an \$1800 grant for a Conditions Assessment Report of the Gage house, which was prepared by Crawford & Steams, Architects and Preservation Planners. This Report is the first step toward the purchase and restoration of the Gage house. We hope to have exciting house news soon.
- To the Ludwick Family Foundation for a \$50,000 grant, which provides secure grounding for technological self-sufficiency with state-of-the-art equipment.

VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION AT THE GAGE HOUSE

Want to become involved in our work? Mark your calendar for volunteer orientation at the Gage House for three Saturday sessions, from 10:00 am to 12 noon:

- **March 16** — “Matilda Joslyn Gage’s Fayetteville” by Barbara Rivette, Town of Manlius Historian
- **March 23** — “I Want to Be a Part of Your Exciting Work” by Barb Evans, Volunteer Coordinator, and “The Gage-Baum Connection” by Kathy DiScenna, L. Frank Baum Historian
- **April 6** - “Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Matilda Joslyn Gage and Now You Can Ask” by Dr. Sally Roesch Wagner, Executive Director, Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation

Please see the enclosed calendar for more detailed information on each session. You are welcome at any or all of the sessions. Please RSVP to Jan at the Gage Foundation at (315) 637-9511. Come join us!

HELP PLAN A COMMEMORATION OF THE SYRACUSE 1852 NATIONAL WOMAN'S RIGHTS CONVENTION

Suffragists and their male supporters came from around the country to Syracuse 150 years ago to attend the third national woman’s rights convention on September 8 -10. This important convention was the first attended by Matilda Joslyn Gage and Susan B. Anthony. How shall we commemorate it? We’ve begun talking with the Women’s Hall of Fame and the Susan B. Anthony House on joint programming. Some ideas are a 2002 gathering on the current state of women -- perhaps beginning with a re-enactment of the speeches from our foremothers -- and a torch relay from Rochester to Seneca Falls to Syracuse, with events at all three sites. Please join us as we plan.

March 19 at 7:30, Gage House.

When I read the notice of a convention to be held in Syracuse, in 1852, I at once decided to publicly join the ranks of those who spoke against wrong.

--Matilda Joslyn Gage

ROTARY PRESENTS FLAG TO GAGE FOUNDATION

Andrew Zaplatynsky, president of the Syracuse Sunrise Rotary Club, presented a handcrafted metal flag to the Gage Foundation. The flag is a near replica of the one that hung on the front porch of the Gage House during the Civil War. The word “Liberty” at the bottom of the flag represents the Gage family’s “loyal opposition” to governmental policy, when Gage challenged the Lincoln administration’s contention that the war was only being fought to preserve the union. No, Gage countered in her 1862 flag presentation speech to the Fayetteville 122nd Regiment, the war was being fought to end slavery. Smaller metal versions of the flag, produced by the Sunrise Rotary Club, are on sale from them for \$15.00. Contact the Gage Foundation for details.

Let Liberty be your watch-word and your war-cry alike. Unless liberty is attained -- the broadest, the deepest, the highest liberty for all — not for one set alone, one clique alone, but for man and woman, black and white, Irish, Germans, Americans, and Negroes, there can be no permanent peace.

--Matilda Joslyn Gage, Flag Presentation Speech to the 122nd Fayetteville Regiment, September 3, 1862

WANT TO PLAY BETSY ROSS WITH US?

Working with the Onondaga County Committee for the Civil War Flag Preservation Project, we want to make two replicas of the flag Gage presented to the 122nd Regiment during the Civil War. That flag was sewn by Fayetteville women, and we want to repeat history in the Gage house. We’d like it to be a mentoring project, with our Junior Docents learning some of the needlework skills women practiced in Gage’s time. We need expert seamstresses who will sew and teach others in order to make this project become a reality. Want to volunteer?

GAGE FOUNDATION INITIATES PATH OF FRIENDSHIP PROGRAM

The Girl Scouts of America, in association with the Onondaga Nation and the Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation, have a new patch for girls to earn called the Path of Friendship. This program, funded through a generous grant from the Rosamond Gifford Foundation, draws its inspiration from Sally Roesch Wagner's book *Sisters in Spirit*, which describes the influence of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) on early feminists, including Gage. On Saturday, April 13, 40 girl scouts, ages 10 - 12, coming from four troops, will participate in activities at both the Gage House and the Onondaga Nation School. They will travel the path of friendship followed by Gage and her Onondaga friends when they visited each other over 100 years ago.

After reading primary documents from Gage's time showing native and non-native women's lives in such areas as family, property ownership, decision-making, and economic roles, the girls will participate in activities dramatizing the differences between these women's status. Using what they've learned, the girls will compare and contrast life in the 19th century for women in white society and in native society. Their written reactions will be published on the Gage Website. In the future, we hope to work with the Central NY Council for Social Studies to turn the primary documents used by the girls, the activities, and the follow-up analysis into curricula. We have applied to the Central New York Women's Fund for a grant which would allow mentor teachers to work with young women in developing ideas on how to teach the information. Interested in working with us? Contact Lynne Pascale, Education Coordinator, at (315) 637-9511 for more information.

EDUCATION PROGRAM BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Lynne Pascale, Education Program Coordinator, is working on ways to introduce Matilda Joslyn Gage to her own community and create dynamic educational activities. In a meeting with educators from the Central NY Council for the Social Studies, Tom Henry, President of the Council, recommended that we develop primary documents to assist teachers in creating document-based questions. DBQs, as the Board of Regents calls them, are an important assessment tool used on the NY State Social Studies exams. In October, Sally and Lynne gave a presentation on Gage to the annual CNY Council for the Social Studies and provided some primary documents for a standing-room only crowd of teachers and administrators. In January, Lynne met with two groups of educators at the Gage House to discuss school programming and offer more primary documents. The possibilities for the future are very exciting! If you'd like to be involved in education programming, please contact Lynne at the Gage Foundation at (315) 637-9511.

OASIS SENIOR EDUCATION TO MEET AT THE GAGE HOUSE

A strong partnership has developed between the Gage Foundation and OASIS, a University Hospital senior education program housed in Shoppingtown Mall. Classes taught by Dr. Wagner on Matilda Joslyn Gage and the Haudenosaunee influence on women's rights last year were followed by a class in February about the famous Syracuse Jerry Rescue. Enthusiastic response led to a Walking Tour of the Jerry Rescue sites, which Dr. Wagner will lead on August 5.

Our offer of "A visit to the Gage house" as a course offering proved so popular that three more classes have been added. The four dates are April 11, 18, 25, and May 2. All classes are from 1:00 to 2:30 PM at the Gage house. OASIS classes are free to anyone over the age of 55. To register for classes, call OASIS at 464-6555.

WHO WOULD YOU INVITE TO DINNER?

When Lori A. Swiecki, a junior at Cazenovia College, was asked by the Syracuse Post Standard newspaper which four people, living or dead, she would like to invite for dinner, her reply was: Robert Frost, Albert Einstein, Michael Santos, and Matilda Joslyn Gage. Lori is a student in Susan Goodier-Kalif's women's history class, which heard Sally Roesch Wagner speak about Gage last month. Someone

was listening!

MATILDA NEEDS YOU!

Have a secret passion to be a journalist? Free time and a computer on your hands? Nancy Drew your childhood here? We are looking for newsletter writers and people interested in laying out our publications. We need data entry of Gage's writing and researchers about her life/work. If you live in the area, there are numerous possibilities for working in the house. Come to the three volunteer orientation sessions or give Barb Evans a call at (315) 637-9511 and we'll put you to work.

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD AND ABOLITION ARE RESEARCHED

Judy Weilmann, professor emerita of history at SUNY Oswego and board member of the Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation, is undertaking a research project to identify and study former sites on the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, and African-American life in Syracuse and Onondaga County. With its clear affiliation to Gage as an outspoken abolitionist and its possible use as an underground railroad site, the Gage house ranks high on the list of sites to be documented. Three of Gage's four children made reference to her work on the underground railroad. The Gages moved to their house on Genesee Street in 1854, so it is probable that at least some of these incidents took place here.

Documentation of the Gage house as a site related to abolitionism and underground railroad work will link the site directly to the New York State's Freedom Trail, sponsored by Governor Pataki, and will make it eligible to apply for funding. Executive Director Sally Roesch Wagner serves on this Onondaga County Underground Railroad committee.

MEETINGS AT THE GAGE HOUSE

Our successful 2001, when we conducted educational programs for nearly 1200 visitors, has been followed by a busy new year. The Limestone Antique Group, students from Chittenango High School and Baldwinsville Central School, a Native American Women class from Ithaca College and the Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce were among January and February visitors to the Gage house. In March and April we will welcome the SUNY Oswego Women's Center, Central NY SUNY Empire State College Faculty, Central New York NOW, Fayetteville-Manlius Newcomers and the Tabitha women's group of the United Church of Fayetteville. We invite groups to meet at the house. We will provide a talk about Gage and the history of the house.

VOLUNTEER PROFILE - MURRAY LUCAS

In each newsletter, we will introduce you to one of our volunteers who make the foundation run. The unanimous choice for the inaugural article was the affable Murray Lucas. A retired accountant, businessman and adjunct faculty at Syracuse University, Murray joined us as our chief financial adviser last fall. He's created a business system, gotten our bookkeeping system up to date, and advocates for the Gage Foundation among his numerous friends and colleagues in the community. Hospitalized recently, he lobbied a public relations person to work with us on a Gage PSA from his hospital bed! Murray works out of a corner of the Foundation work table, exclaiming that he thinks he has returned to his roots. "I began with an orange crate as a desk," Murray grins. Soon, with money from our Ludwick Foundation grant, Murray and the other volunteers will have their own work desk and computer.

OFFICE STAFF CHANGES AT THE GAGE FOUNDATION

Welcome to Jan Sawkins, our new secretary, who comes to us with ten years of experience in the non-profit area. Living her whole life in the Fayetteville-Manlius area, she is finding it fascinating to learn the local history as she makes the office run smoothly for us. With three daughters and a granddaughter, the history of the woman's rights movement is especially meaningful to her. She brings us each morning a new story of her brilliant and beautiful one year old granddaughter, Anya. Jan makes a mean chocolate cake.