

## WFWP USA anticipates of Women's History Month - Women who inspire us

Cynthia Nakai  
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*"When we do the best we can, we never know what miracle is wrought in our life, or in the life of another." – Helen Keller.*



*Pack Horse Library Project*

We often don't realize how much of an impact we have on the lives of others who have crossed our paths, and sometimes even on those who live decades or centuries after us, on the other side of the planet. In particular, the often overlooked contributions of women in history have now come to the forefront. In anticipation of Women's History Month, WFWP USA Financial Administrator Irmgard Baynes hosted a gathering of WFWP members and local ladies at her home in New Jersey on February 22nd, 2020, to share stories of inspiring women in history.

The ladies appreciated Irmgard's warm hospitality, and they enjoyed high tea with shortbread cookies and cucumber sandwiches as they remembered some of the incredible women who have made an impact on the world.



First to speak was Cynthia Nakai, WFWP chairwoman of Hackensack, New Jersey, who shared about the early horseback librarians – colloquially known as "book women" – during the Great Depression. The Pack Horse Library Project was a Works Progress Administration program that delivered books to remote regions in the Appalachian Mountains between the years 1935 and 1943.

These librarians not only delivered books by horse to rural areas but also read to people and encouraged learning. Over the course of a month, women would ride and walk an average of 4,905 miles. The book packs they carried could hold about 100 books. Book carriers provided their own horses or mules, some of which were leased from local farmers. Their pioneer spirit helped feed their families during these financially difficult times.



Sharon Nelson chose to share about Eleanor Roosevelt, the longest-serving First Lady of the United States, and a lifelong advocate for human rights. Sharon described Eleanor as a very active First Lady who supported her husband while doing public work also, and read out a number of quotes by her, such as this one: "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."

Irmgard Baynes, who herself seeks out ways to serve and regularly crochets blankets through her Strings of the Heart prayer blanket ministry (see picture), was inspired by two women who felt called to serve the public. The first was Indira Gandhi, the former prime minister of India, who used social reforms to combat poverty and promoted equal pay for men and women. Another politician that inspired Irmgard was Israel's only female prime minister to date, Golda Meir.

What women in history have inspired you or affected your life in some direct or indirect way?