

# Dorchester *women's* HISTORY TRAIL: UPHAM'S CORNER WALK

## INTRODUCTION

The Uphams Corner Walking Trail was developed by a class of young women at the Codman Academy Charter School during a 10-week course on Dorchester Women's History. Each Saturday, the students met and learned about local women's history through field trips, interviews with community members, and primary source research. The young women in the class each selected a woman to research. This brochure is the result of their efforts.

The Dorchester Women's History Trail is a project of the Boston Women's Heritage Trail in partnership with the Codman Academy Charter School and the Dorchester Historical Society, and was made possible thanks to a grant from the History Channel's *Save Our History* program. We hope that this brochure is the first of many trails that document the rich and significant history of women in Dorchester. We also hope that you as community members and/or visitors enjoy this trail and use it as an opportunity to learn about some of the many significant women who made history in Dorchester.

TAKE A  
*walk*

### Dorchester Women's History Trail

A Project of the Boston Women's Heritage Trail  
at Codman Academy Charter School,  
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## THANK YOU

The Dorchester Women's History Project would like to thank:  
Wanda Alston • Meg Campbell • Barbara Burg • Flavio Cigliano •  
State Representative Linda Dorcea Forry • Barbara Locurto •  
Sylvia McDowell • Mayor Thomas M. Menino • Gretchen O'Neill  
• Joanne Riley • Anthony Sammarco • Mary Smoyer • Earl Taylor  
• Marie Turley • Bill Walzak

### PHOTO CREDITS:

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All Other Historic Photos: Dorchester Historical Society

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## SPONSORS

This project was funded by a grant from the History Channel.  
Project support was provided by the Boston Women's Heritage Trail.



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- Geraldine Pindell Trotter 1
- Anna Clapp Harris Smith 2
- St. Mary's Infant Asylum 3
- Sarah Baker 4
- Alice Stone Blackwell 5
- Sarah Wentworth Apthorp Morton 6
- Geraldine Pindell Trotter 7
- Anne & Betty 8
- Elida Rumsey Fowle 9
- Dorchester Female Anti-Slavery 10
- Clapp Farm 11





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Geraldine Pindell Trotter



Anna Clapp Harris Smith



St. Mary's Infant Asylum



Alice Stone Blackwell



Sarah Wentworth Apthorp Morton

## TAKE A *walk*

### 1 ☒ GERALDINE PINDELL TROTTER (1872–1918)

97 SAWYER AVENUE, JONES HILL  
Geraldine "Deenie" Trotter served as the accountant and associate editor of *The Guardian*, the Boston civil rights newspaper founded by her husband William Monroe Trotter. Geraldine Pindell was raised in the elite African-American society of Boston. Her work on behalf of racial justice included organizing anti-lynching campaigns, raising money for St. Monica's Home for elderly black women, and supporting equality for African American troops in WWI.

### 2 ☐ ANNA CLAPP HARRIS SMITH (1843–1937)

69 PLEASANT STREET, JONES HILL  
Anna Clapp Harris Smith founded the Animal Rescue League. She lived in the colonial house built by her grandfather Samuel Clapp. In 1899, Anna Smith was infuriated when she learned of the growing number of cases of animal cruelty in Boston. As a result, she founded the League, which supported animal shelters and provided care for aging work horses.

by Lucy Blayney

### 3 ☐ ST. MARY'S INFANT ASYLUM

CUSHING AVENUE at WINDEMERE, JONES HILL  
This Catholic orphanage opened on Bowdoin Street in 1872. It was run by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. The asylum moved to the old Greene estate on Jones Hill, where it served poor families regardless of their religion. The maternity ward at St. Mary's was the forerunner of St. Margaret's Hospital, which became a major gynecological hospital serving women in greater Boston.

### 4 ☐ SARAH BAKER (1806–1866)

565 COLUMBIA ROAD and CUSHING AVENUE,  
UPHAM'S CORNER

Sarah Baker was an entrepreneur who started her own band box business, which she carried on for 40 years at Lower Mills. Sarah Baker made so much money that when she died in 1866, she left enough money to build a church. The Baker Memorial Church was built on Columbia Road (the site is now a parking lot next to the Strand Theater).

by Sherry Jones

### 5 ☐ ALICE STONE BLACKWELL (1857–1950)

MOUNT MONADNOCK APARTMENTS,  
714-721 DUDLEY STREET, UPHAM'S CORNER

Alice Blackwell lived here after her father's death in 1909. She and her parents had moved to Pope's Hill when it was first developed into a residential neighborhood. Her mother, Lucy Stone, was not only the first woman editor of a nationwide newspaper, but also the first woman to retain her family name after marriage. Alice Blackwell also became a leader of the women's rights movement. She edited *The Woman's Journal* after her mother's death and fostered cooperation between the two major suffrage organizations.

by Minnetta McKenzie

### 6 ☐ SARAH WENTWORTH APTHORP MORTON (1759–1846)

DUDLEY and BURGESS STREETS

Sarah Wentworth Apthorp Morton was a writer and poet. One of her epic poems was called *The Virtues of Nature; An Indian Tale*. It was published in 1790. This was one of the first books to raise awareness about the poor treatment of Native Americans. Her neighbor wrote *The Power of Sympathy*, considered the first American novel. It was about Sarah's unhappy marriage. The couple lived in an elegant Federal mansion on this site until moving to an estate on Jones Hill.

by Sandra Michaud

### 7 ☐ HEPZIBAH CLARKE SWAN (1776–1825)

DUDLEY and HOWARD STREETS

The Swans moved to a Federal mansion on this site in 1796, where they raised five children. Colonel James Swan had amassed a fortune in France following the American Revolution. Hepzibah Swan proved as capable in business as her husband. When James Swan was imprisoned, she managed his business affairs, became one of America's first art collectors, and was the only woman in the group of entrepreneurs who developed Beacon Hill into an elite residential neighborhood.



**8** **ANN & BETTY**  
(1740s)

OLD NORTH BURYING GROUND, UPHAM'S CORNER  
The Massachusetts slave census of 1754 listed 13 female slaves living in Dorchester. Ann, who died as a child, and Betty, who died at the age of 25, were the "servants" of Captain Robert Oliver, a plantation owner who came from Antigua about 1737. The small headstones marking the graves of these women survive in Dorchester's oldest cemetery.

**9** **ELIDA RUMSEY FOWLE**  
(1843-1919)

654 COLUMBIA ROAD, UPHAM'S CORNER  
Seventeen-year-old Elida Rumsey went to Washington during the Civil War to become a nurse. When told she was too young, she sang to soldiers in the wards. With the help of Eleanor Baker, Elida organized a soldiers' library. She eventually became the youngest member of the Massachusetts Army Nurses. After the war, Elida Rumsey and her husband John Fowle moved to Upham's Corner, where she raised two emancipated slave children and did local civic work.

**10** **DORCHESTER FEMALE**  
**ANTI-SLAVERY ACTIVISM** (1830s-1850s)

COTTAGE and POND STREETS, RICHARDSON PARK, EVERETT SQUARE  
Dorchester was a center of abolitionist activities. Several families were associated with William Lloyd Garrison's radical American Anti-Slavery Society, which encouraged women to be involved in anti-slavery work. Local women's abolition groups met at the Lyceum on Meeting House Hill and at the Dorchester Athenaeum, which was located here at Everett Square.

**11** **CLAPP FARM**  
(1806-1956)

195 BOSTON STREET, DORCHESTER LITTLE NECK  
The Federal farm house was built for tanner William Clapp and his wife Elizabeth Humphreys in 1806. The family farm evolved into a commercial orchard and dairy beginning in 1830s. New England dairy products, especially butter, were highly prized. Wives, daughters and hired dairy maids milked the cows, churned the butter and helped make cheese. Since 1945, Clapp Farm has been the site of the Dorchester Historical Society.



9 Elida Rumsey Fowle



11 Clapp House



## ADDITIONAL SITES AROUND & ABOUT DORCHESTER

**MARY JANE SAFFORD** (1831-1891)

5 PERCIVAL STREET, MEETING HOUSE HILL

Mary Jane Safford was a nurse in the Civil War. She became a doctor and was one of the first woman gynecologists in this country. At the Boston University School of Medicine, Dr. Safford specialized in the care of the poor women who lived in the inner city. She took care of immigrants and impoverished people. She lived on Meeting House Hill with her husband James Blake.

by Naomie Lebon

**ELEANOR JAMESON WILLIAMS BAKER** (1806-1891)

WASHINGTON and PARK STREETS (NOW 22 REGINA RD.), CODMAN SQUARE

Eleanor Baker was the widow of chocolate manufacturer Walter Baker. She supported many charitable causes. Eleanor Baker was part of the fight for giving black people education by providing them with scholarships to go to the Hampton Institute. During the Civil War, Eleanor Baker held lint-picking classes for making gauze bandages at her Dorchester mansion. She also supported a home for elderly African-American women in Lynchburg, VA. (pictured above). by Jenna Marseille

**FRANCES CIFINO KISSEL** (1923-2003)

DORCHESTER DISTRICT COURT, CODMAN SQUARE

Frances Kissel served as a sergeant in the Marine Corps in WWII. She was one of the first women to attend Boston College Law School, graduating first in her class. She was also the first woman ever to be appointed to the U.S. Attorney's office. Frances Kissel later worked for the Small Business Administration. She lived in Dorchester with her husband.

by Inestina Valchmond

**LUCY STONE** (1818-1893)

45 BOUTWELL STREET, POPE'S HILL (marker)

Lucy Stone and her husband Henry Blackwell were leaders of the women's suffrage movement. Lucy Stone called for the first national woman's rights convention, held at Worcester in 1850. She was also the co-founder of the suffrage newspaper *The Woman's Journal*. In 1874, Lucy Stone helped form the Dorchester Women Suffrage Club. Their first project was to work for the election of women to the Boston School Board.

**BAKER MILL WORKERS** (1834-1965)

1231-1245 ADAMS STREET, DORCHESTER

The Walter Baker chocolate company hired its first women in 1834. Back then the women were not considered very important to the factory. They did such a good job at wrapping the chocolate that by the 1860s, women did most of the wrapping. Many of the early workers lived near the factory at Lower Mills. By 1965, when the company closed its Dorchester factory, 90% of the workers were women.

by Evelis Perez

**GRACE LONERGAN LORCH** (1903-1974)

CHARLES TAYLOR SCHOOL (marker)

1060 MORTON STREET, MATTAPAN

Grace Loneragan was a teacher at the Charles Taylor School, but, when she got married, she was fired. As a union leader, Grace Loneragan Lorch fought the ban on married teachers. In 1944, the School Committee allowed her to return to teaching, but only as a substitute at less pay. It took Grace Lorch until 1953 to change the law. She remained a lifelong activist for education and civil rights.

**LADIES HELPING HANDS / HEBREW CHILDREN'S HOME**

150 AMERICAN LEGION HWY., DORCHESTER

This settlement house originally served Jewish immigrants in the North End. In 1936, the agency moved to Dorchester, serving the large Jewish population around the Mattapan and North Dorchester area. Women from the community saved pennies to fund the children's home and the educational activities at the community center. The Home was renamed the Hecht Neighborhood House in honor of its founder, Lina Hecht.

**IRISH DOMESTICS** (1860s-1900s)

O'BRIEN HOUSE, 24 CARRUTH STREET

In the late 19th century, many families in Dorchester had at least one live-in maid, many of whom were Irish immigrants. For these women, often the only way to any economic security was to marry the owner or his clerk. As an example, the maid who worked at the Jacques House on fashionable Ashmont Hill married Mr. Jacques' clerk, George O'Brien.



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Lynchburg, Virginia, families supported by Mrs. Elmore Baker



101 Dorchester Athenaeum



Baker Factory