



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Betty Little

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BETTY LITTLE March 11, 2011

NEW YORK STATE SENATE CELEBRATES WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

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Mary Wiltsie Fuller, a women's advocate who founded the Wiawaka retreat on Lake George, will be honored in Albany next week as part of a New York State Senate exhibit celebrating Women's History Month.

Wiawaka is one of the oldest and longest continuously operated non-profit retreats for women in the United States of America today.

The exhibit located in the Well of the State Legislative Office Building includes three new honorees: Fuller (1862-1943) of Troy and Glens Falls; America's first trained nurse Linda Richards (1841-1930) of Potsdam; and, the first African-American female doctor in New York, and the third in the nation Susan Smith McKenney Steward (1847-1918) of Brooklyn.

"Each March, we honor and recognize women who have changed lives for the better through remarkable efforts and achievements," said Senator Little. "I'm very proud that one of our own, Mary Wiltsie Fuller, will be highlighted. Her legacy continues today at the beautiful Wiawaka House."

Wiawaka Executive Director Christine Dixon said: "Mary Wiltsie Fuller's vision continues to touch the lives of hundreds of women who find respite every year at Wiawaka. Her original intention is very much alive at Wiawaka and is as meaningful for women today as it was in 1903; renew yourself and uplift others. We're honored to see Mary Fuller receive this distinction and to continue her inspiring work."

Fuller was the daughter of a Troy industrialist and became aware of the need for respite for the working women in shirt-collar factories, mills and laundries of Troy and Cohoes. Vacations and recreation were beyond the means of these hardworking women. When it officially opened in 1903, Wiawaka (Indian name for the "Great Spirit of Women"), could accommodate up to 38 women for a weekly rate for room and board of \$3.50.

Through her association with the Girls Friendly Society of the Episcopal Church, Ms. Fuller was able to elicit fellow sponsors as well as other influential friends from Saratoga and surrounding areas for help. She approached, Katrina Trask (Yaddo - Saratoga) about helping to find a location for her retreat for the women. Ms. Trask was civic minded and leased to Ms.

Fuller land located on the southeastern shore of Lake George. The following year Ms. Trask sold the property to Ms. Fuller for one dollar and a bouquet of flowers.

Mary Wiltsie Fuller lived and worked at Wiawaka until her death at Glens Falls in 1943

The Women of Distinction exhibit features historic New York women, from suffragists to geneticists, labor organizers to entertainers, whose contributions are still felt today and who stand as an inspiration to the next generation of inventors, explorers, and achievers.

The exhibit will be on display in Albany, March 14-18 at the Legislative Office Building. Senator Little is also offering an online Women of Distinction exhibit through her web site www.little.nysenate.gov.

The Women of Distinction program was created by the Senate in 1998 to recognize the historic contributions of New Yorkers in celebration of National Women's History Month, observed each March.