

What did early Evanston women do?

The early women of Evanston were pioneers, innovators, and social reformers, tirelessly championing the rights, education, and welfare of women and children, transforming our cultural heritage.

The Evanston women featured here were all born before 1900. Each of them provided a service to society that exceeded the boundaries of Evanston. Evanston continues its tradition of illustrious, inspirational women, through to the present day.

Information listed here is derived from the Evanston Women's History Project, Shorefront Legacy Center, [Woman of the Century](#) by Frances E. Willard and Mary A. Livermore, Wikipedia, and other sources.

She was commissioned by the British government to investigate the opium trade between China and India.	Katharine C. Bushnell
She was a prolific writer on women's rights, appearing twice before the U.S. Senate on behalf of women's right to vote.	Elizabeth Boynton Harbert
The first full-time female professor at Northwestern University, she was a world-renowned botanist and conservation advocate.	Margery Claire Carlson, Ph.D.
She was the fifth woman honored with a bust in the Hall of Fame for Great Americans in New York.	Frances E. Willard
She was a significant figure in the socialist movement as a lecturer and served as assistant editor of the "Chicago Party Socialist."	May Wood Simons
She framed Illinois legislation allowing women to vote for presidential electors before the passage of the 19th Amendment.	Catharine Waugh McCulloch
She was the first woman in Illinois to serve as a Justice of the Peace.	Catharine Waugh McCulloch
She collected 32,000 pounds of food for the needy in Belgium during WWI.	Helen Palmer Dawes
She was instrumental in the passage of the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution fully establishing prohibition.	Anna Adams Gordon
A contributor to numerous Chicago newspapers and journals, she was a charter member of the Illinois Social Science Association.	Mary Crowell Van Benschoten
She founded the Illinois Children's Home and Aid Society, which for over 130 years has remained a leading child and family service agency in Illinois.	Caro Blymyer Dawes
She was the most famous American woman of her era, and is credited with helping to "transform the role of women in 19 th century America."	Frances E. Willard
She wrote a groundbreaking study of male-biased mistranslations of the Bible. It was based upon her own translations from the Hebrew.	Katharine C. Bushnell
A Northwestern University professor with a doctorate from the University of Chicago, she's "often dubbed the mother of creative drama."	Winifred Louise Ward, Ph.D.
She was one of the first female African American physicians in Illinois.	Isabella M. Garnett, M.D.
She urged Congress to hold the 1893 World Columbian Exposition in Chicago and was credited with being largely responsible that Chicago was chosen.	Myra Colby Bradwell
She was the first licensed female cab owner in Illinois.	Lois Mae "Peaches" Williams Davis
She developed nationally acclaimed programs for the assimilation of immigrants and for the political education of women.	May Wood Simons
She headed the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, an organization with 250,000 members, mobilizing countless women to action.	Frances E. Willard
She founded the Drama League of America, which established 37 centers throughout the U.S.	Alice C. D. Riley
She became an architect during a time in which only one percent of practicing architects in the U.S. were female.	Bertha Whitman
She founded the Illinois Industrial School for Girls, which provided a home and training for destitute orphans of the Civil War.	Helen Judson Beveridge
They founded the Visiting Nurse Association, which provided a wide range of medical services to low-income residents in Evanston and surrounding communities.	Nancy Lutkin, Jessie Chandler, Kate Way McMullen
A Broadway sensation at the age of 16, she was the youngest leading lady of her era on the American stage.	Kathryn Kidder
She founded the Women's Educational Aid Association, a pioneering organization in providing financial assistance for women students. By 1907, over 1400 women had received aid from WEAA.	Hannah Bailey Pearsons
During WWI, she reported from France for the "Chicago Daily News," one of only a few women war correspondents at the time.	Eunice Hammond Tietjens
She exposed white slavery in Wisconsin lumber camps, which led to state legislation.	Katharine C. Bushnell
They founded the Girls League, which nurtured young single workingwomen for 38 years before merging with the YWCA.	Catherine Howard Reckitt, Bessie Cook Kingsley, Rosetta Wiege Lukey
An accomplished early businesswoman, she developed a neighborhood of 32 homes in Evanston during the first decades of the 1900s.	Eda Hurd Lord

She ran the University of Chicago Settlement House and lobbied the U.S. government to study living conditions among women and children.	Mary Eliza McDowell
She was on the executive committee of the Illinois Woman Suffrage Association and successfully lobbied the State for widow's legal property rights.	Myra Colby Bradwell
She opened a hospital in her own home, the only hospital between Chicago and Milwaukee to admit African American patients.	Isabella M. Garnett, M.D.
As a member of the U.S. House, she served on the Foreign Affairs, Government Operations, and Science and Astronautics Committees.	Marguerite Stitt Church
She established the international Society for Universal English, publishing its popular magazine, "Correct English" for nearly 40 years.	Josephine Turck Baker
She was a charter member of the Illinois Women's Press Association, believed to be the oldest organization of women writers.	Frances E. Willard
A former slave, she was the first African American woman who lived in Evanston.	Maria Murray Robinson
She was one of the first American women in uniform to serve as an ambulance driver in World War I.	Mary Chaplin Glenn
Her "Twins" series of 26 children's books highlighted themes of geography and history and sold over two million copies. They inspired Beverly Cleary.	Lucy Fitch Perkins
She formed the Benevolent Society of Evanston, a predecessor of the United Way.	Sarah Blaisdel Blanchard
She was a pioneer in the Children's Theater movement.	Winifred Louise Ward, Ph.D.
She helped found the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, which grew to become the largest organization of women in the world, ultimately growing to a worldwide membership of nearly one million women.	Elizabeth Smith Marcy
A faculty member at Northwestern University, she served as the first African-American hospital chief of staff in Illinois.	Elizabeth Webb Hill, M.D.
She was founding president of the National Council of Women, the first nationwide, nonsectarian organization of women in America.	Frances E. Willard
She was the Chair of the Woman's Committee of the International Congress of Public Health, held in conjunction with the 1893 Columbian Exposition.	Sarah Brayton
She was instrumental in shaping Northwestern University's music department, one of the nation's first university-based music schools.	Cornelia Gray Lunt
She acted as an intermediary between the Potawatomi tribe and early Chicago residents.	Archange Chevalier Ouilmette
The Illinois Supreme Court twice dismissed her case to be awarded a law license, stating, "God designed the sexes to occupy different spheres of action." She appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which in 1873 upheld the State's decision.	Myra Colby Bradwell
She pioneered the "learning by doing" educational philosophy for children.	Clara Belle Baker
She was a pioneering anthropologist who helped establish African and African American Studies as a prominent field for scholarly research.	Frances Shapiro Herskovitz
An American Impressionist, she became an important member of the Taos, New Mexico, arts colony.	Ethel Louise Coe
She was a founding member of the Business and Professional Women's Club and served as president of the Illinois State Library Association.	Ida Faye Wright
An Army Corp nurse, she was among the first Americans to die in World War I.	Helen Burnett Wood
She established a pediatrics hospital in Shanghai.	Katharine C. Bushnell
She helped establish the Northwestern University Settlement House in Chicago, the longest continually operating settlement house in the U.S.	Emma Winner Rogers
She co-write the Illinois Married Women's Property Bill and the 1869 Earnings Act, giving married women control of their own earnings and property.	Myra Colby Bradwell
She was the first president of the first women's alumnae association in the world.	Mary Hyde Brown Hitt
A prolific lecturer, she was a strong proponent of preserving forestland in the Chicago area.	Eleanor Ellis Perkins
She was the first American woman to found and edit a legal publication. Susan B. Anthony donated a copy of the first volume of the "Chicago Legal News" to the Law Library of Congress.	Myra Colby Bradwell
Known for her ability to interpret art for laymen, she was fundamental in bringing an understanding and appreciation of art to women.	Ethel Louise Coe
She was a founding member of the Women's Architectural Club of Chicago, which later became a part of the American Institute of Architects.	Bertha Whitman
She was a prominent pioneer both nationally and internationally in providing access to medical information about women's health and sexuality.	Alice Bunker Stockham, M.D.
A close associate of Susan B. Anthony, her long career as a prolific writer and women's rights activist began in the 1860s.	Elizabeth Boynton Harbert
She wrote the bill that strengthened rape and age-of-consent laws in Illinois.	Catharine Waugh McCulloch
Her actions led to reforms in food safety that were credited with preventing an epidemic of typhoid fever in Chicago's north suburbs.	Helen Palmer Dawes
She was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Medicine, having spent more than 30 years developing the first scarlet fever vaccine.	Gladys Henry Dick, M.D.
A famous poet and writer, she raised funds in support of the Union cause during the U.S. Civil War.	Emily Huntington Miller
She was legal advisor to the National Woman's Suffrage Association.	Catharine Waugh McCulloch
Believed to be the fifth female doctor in the U.S., her writings were translated and published in German, French, Finnish, and Swedish. Leo Tolstoy was so impressed with her work that he arranged to have it translated into Russian.	Alice Bunker Stockham, M.D.
She was a nationally recognized author who served on numerous national panels promoting new standards in child education and care.	Edna Dean Baker
As a pioneer female gynecologist and professor of gynecology, she advocated for better medical practices and for recognition of women physicians.	Mary Gilruth McEwen, M.D.
The first female college president in the U.S., she wrote a book about learning to ride a bicycle that inspired a generation of women and girls.	Frances E. Willard
She established Equity Club, the first association of women lawyers in the U.S.	Catharine Waugh McCulloch
She operated the innovative Smith Employment Agency for almost 40 years, specializing in finding employment for African Americans.	Carrie Crawford Smith

She established the Cook County Juvenile Court, the first of its kind in the U.S., and the Bartelme Home for Girls, that served girls under the age of 16.	Mary Barelme
She founded the Women's Club of Evanston, which has championed and funded innovative projects to support women's interests since 1889. Jane Addams and Susan B. Anthony were among the WCE's first guest speakers.	Elizabeth Boynton Harbert
After studying under Dr. Maria Montessori, she brought the Montessori method to America, becoming the first American Montessori teacher.	Anne George Millar
Leaders of the missionary movement in the late 1800s, they raised \$526,000 to send missionaries throughout the world.	Elizabeth Washburn Crandon, Mary Hyde Brown Hitt, Catherine Gillespie Queal
They pioneered development standards for early childhood education and established the Baker School, which has served children for 100 years.	Clara Belle Baker, Edna Dean Baker
She helped organize the Illinois Congress of Mothers, a predecessor to the Parent Teacher's Association.	Louise L. Brockaway Stanwood
Fluent in French and German, she was a correspondent for the United Press in Germany in 1882 and opened a Red Cross relief station in France in WWI.	Jane Hutchins White
She wrote a petition that was subsequently signed by nearly 1,000,000 people in forty-nine nations.	Frances E. Willard
An award-winning author, she wrote 80 children's books, including 17 biographies.	Clara Ingram Judson
They conducted and published a covert examination of the systematic exploitation of Chinese women in Hong Kong by British military personnel.	Katharine C. Bushnell, Elizabeth Wheeler Andrew
She wrote four oratories for opera. She also published 45 songs and many plays and children's books.	Louise Ayers Garnett
She was a founder of the Chicago Home for the Friendless in 1858 and recruited nurses for the Union Army during the Civil War.	Jane Blaikie Hoge
Physician, gynecologist, and professor of gynecology, she was one of the first ten female fellows of the American College of Surgeons.	Mary Gilruth McEwen, M.D.
She was the first Illinois woman to be elected to the Circuit Court.	Mary Bartelme
She designed the Woman's Booth at the 1933 Century of Progress World's Fair in Chicago.	Bertha Whitman
She launched 'creative dramatics,' an innovative technique in which children took part in improvised dramas without an outside audience.	Winifred Louise Ward, Ph.D.
She was instrumental in the signing of the 1829 treaty, which gave the U.S. government title to most of the tribal lands in northern Illinois.	Archange Chevallier Ouilmette
They founded the Iroquois League to provide a safe, supervised, and economical home for Negro working girls.	Eva Taylor Rouse, Cora Lee Banner Watson
They established Evanston's Community Kitchen, a nationally known organization that pioneered food, health, conservation, and social issues.	Nellie Fitch Kingsley, Helen Palmer Dawes, Elizabeth Hawley Odell
She was instrumental in the successful campaign for Illinois women's suffrage.	Catharine Waugh McCulloch
Considered instrumental to the Chicago Literary Renaissance, she was an editor of "Poetry" magazine for 25 years.	Eunice Hammond Tietjens
She was the only woman honored in the United States Capitol's Statuary Hall from 1905 until 1958.	Frances E. Willard
She founded Fresh Air Home for Girls, a respite and residence for girls in Evanston that lasted for more than 50 years.	Mary Spencer Gardner
She served as the official hostess of the 1933 Century of Progress.	Helen Palmer Dawes
Through her leadership of the WCTU, she championed citizenship for immigrants, women's rights in the workplace, and child protection.	Anna Adams Gordon
She served as president of the Illinois Woman Suffrage Association for twelve years.	Elizabeth Boynton Harbert
She was the first female presidential elector.	Catharine Waugh McCulloch
She faced critics, discrimination, and legal reprisals because she provided women with factual information on the physiology of human reproduction.	Alice Bunker Stockham, M.D.
She founded The Cradle, an innovative adoption agency that has served families for more than 90 years.	Florence Dahl Walrath
As a U.S. Congresswoman, she advocated for civil rights and women's rights.	Marguerite Stitt Church
She wrote the legislation that first granted Illinois wives equal guardianship rights to their children.	Catharine Waugh McCulloch
She was the fifth American woman honored on U.S. postage (after Martha Washington, Pocahontas, Susan B. Anthony, and Louisa May Alcott).	Frances E. Willard
She helped set the stage for the coeducation movement that would transform women's opportunities and access to higher education.	Mary F. Geer Haskin
She owned the largest U.S. costume rental business of the early 20th century.	Minna Moscherosch Schmidt
She was one of the first American female composers to write an opera to be presented in the U.S.	Jan Van Ettan Andrews
She opened the American Home School for Girls in Berlin in 1886.	Mary Bannister Willard
Considered an important voice in the "Holiness Movement" of the 19th century, she was a pioneer in organizing women nationwide.	Melinda Truesdell Hamline
She helped establish the first Mother's Club in the nation, a precursor to today's Parent Teacher Associations.	Grace Jones Boring
She was instrumental in establishing Evanston Day Nursery, one of the first day care centers in Illinois. EDN served Evanston children for 101 years.	Anna Rew Gross
She co-invented the Dick Aseptic Technique, which prevented infant infections from contaminated powdered milk formula.	Gladys Henry Dick, M.D.
She organized the National Congress of Mothers in 1900, which later became the Parent Teacher Association.	Kate Way McMullen

Early Evanston women were leaders in the fields of education, law, theater, social services, health, art, music, social welfare, literature, medicine, and social justice.

