



TREASURY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

April 2022

NEWSLETTER

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THA Arrives on Social Media

The Treasury Historical Association (THA) is now on Social Media: LinkedIn, Instagram, and YouTube. THA has started posting historical stories regularly on these platforms.

In February for African-American History Month, THA posted videos about some of the influential African-Americans who have worked in Treasury and the story of the Freedman Bank building (formerly the Treasury Annex). For Women's History Month in March, THA posted interviews of former Treasurers of the United States: Bay Buchanan, Mary Ellen Withrow, Rosario Marin, Anna Cabral, and Jovita Carranza. Each woman reflected on her time at Treasury and shared her compelling story.

These videos are available to view on our YouTube channel any time. Access the channel by searching for "Treasury Historical Association" on YouTube. Please also click on the subscribe button. On LinkedIn, use: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/treasuryhistoricalassociation> Follow THA on the other platforms by searching for "Treasury Historical Association."

THA Lecture Series

The 2022 THA lecture series is still in the planning stage, Current plans include four lectures. Members will be alerted when it is time to register for these lectures.

In 2021 all lectures were virtual. One benefit was that lectures could be heard and seen by members who previously had not been able to attend a Cash Room lecture. In 2022, while lectures may again be virtual, it is possible some lectures could be held in the Cash Room.

Meanwhile, many lectures from 2019, 2020 and 2021 were recorded and are now posted on the THA website.

Treasury Women, 1795 – 1975

In 2021, Janet Yellen became the first woman Secretary of the Treasury. But women's firsts in working in the Treasury Department starting back in 1795 are less well known. Here are the achievements of some of these pioneers, as researched by women from 12 Treasury bureaus and 6 major Departmental offices.

1795 Sarah Waldrake and Rachel Summers were the first women hired by the Treasury. They were employed by the Mint at 50 cents a day as adjusters who weighed gold coins and adjusted their correct weight by filing the edges.

1835 Seven lady lighthouse keepers earned annual salaries ranging from \$350 to \$600. The administration of lighthouses was a Customs Service activity.

1861 Helen Bennett was the first woman hired to work in the Treasury Building. Mrs. Bennett carried out her ill husband's job of copying and recording and received her husband's \$1,600 annual salary.

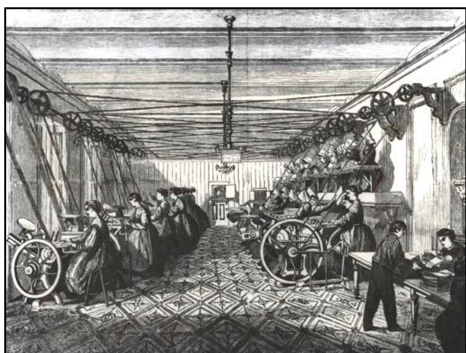
1862 Francis E. Spinner, Treasurer of the United States, requested authority from Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase to hire women to cut currency for both practical and economic reasons: "A woman can use scissors better than a man, and she will do it cheaper. I want to employ women to cut the Treasury notes." The first woman hired was Jennie Douglas. Spinner, the first government official to employ substantial numbers of women, paid them \$600 a year (\$50 a month), one-half to one-third the salary of male clerks.



Women Cutting Currency

1862 Sophia Holmes, the first black woman hired by the U.S. Government, was also employed by Treasury. Mrs. Holmes, a free native of Washington, worked as a charwoman in the Division of Issue at \$15 a month. She saved the division \$200,000 when she discovered that someone was trying to steal newly printed currency by hiding it in the trash to be picked up later. She showed Treasurer Spinner and he rewarded her by promoting her. Holmes received an official commendation from President Lincoln and a lifetime executive appointment as a messenger. She was the first Black/African American woman officially appointed to the United States Government Service. In all, Holmes worked for the Treasury Department for 32 years under nine different administrations.

The Civil War created great financial demands on the government. In July 1862, the nation's first income tax law was enacted and the Bureau of Internal Revenue was created. The first employees of the Bureau included eight female clerks.



Women Working at Printing Presses

1864 The Bureau of Engraving and Printing's work force consisted of 237 males and 288 females. Women cut and trimmed notes and examined printed bills for imperfections. Mrs. Willard A. Leonard, hired by the Treasurer as the chief counterfeit detector, won a nation-wide reputation. Referred to by the press as "The Female Sherlock Holmes," she gained fame as the most remarkable woman in government. In 41 years, she never made an error.

1865 Treasury hired Mrs. Helen L. McLean Kimball who, a decade later began a 20-year career as the Treasury's first woman librarian. She built up a valued collection.

The new Secret Service Bureau hired women for some clerical positions.

1870 Heads of government departments were authorized to appoint female clerks found "competent and worthy" to any of the grades of clerkship, with the compensation belonging to that class. This law influenced the employment of women in the federal government for 92 years. This law was interpreted as giving appointing officers the unrestricted right to consider men or women *only* in making appointments.

1871 Women employees in Treasury numbered 677; 23 were making \$1,200 or more a year, three received \$1,400. Treasury female employees included 56 lighthouse or beacon keepers.

After the great Chicago fire, six women in the Treasurer's office pieced together with extraordinary patience and care the charred remains of 100 cases of money, bonds, certificates, and Internal Revenue and postage stamps.

1883 The Civil Service Act established the merit system. Women were encouraged to compete on the same basis as men. A Vassar graduate, Mary Frances Hoyt, made the highest score on the first examination in 1883 and received the second appointment under the new system as a \$900-a-year clerk in Treasury's Bank Redemption Agency. The Civil Service Act did not end the men or women only interpretation of the 1870 act. But the merit system did end the pressure on top Treasury officials to hire the female friends of the politically influential.

1909 Mrs. Gertrude McNally Steward was a prime initiator of the regular meetings of the Women's Union, Bureau of Engraving and Printing. Mrs. Steward was largely responsible for the organization of the union and its development as a service institution offering a hospital guild, insurance and other benefits. In 1918 the union affiliated with the National Federation of Federal Employees.

1910 Margaret V. Kelly held an important position in the office of the Director of the Mint and drew one of the largest salaries paid to a woman by the government. Secretary of the Treasury Franklin MacVeagh

designated her Acting Director of the Mint in the absence of the bureau's two top officials.

1920 Bella Kahn became the first woman chemist in the New York Customs laboratory, which analyzed prohibited narcotics. Ms. Kahn, an expert in opium, hashish and cocaine cases, also testified in federal court.

1923 The Classification Act established the concept of "equal pay for equal work" irrespective of sex in the federal service. While the 1870 act had merely authorized equal pay, the new law made the concept a requirement.

1933 Nellie Tayloe Ross, former Governor of Wyoming, the first woman governor in the U.S., began a 20-year term as the first woman Director of the Mint. Mrs. Ross served the longest term as Director.

1934 The 114-year-old legal office of the Treasury, known as the Office of the Solicitor, was reorganized and renamed the Office of the General Counsel. Within a month of taking office in 1934, Treasury's first General Counsel appointed three women lawyers to the staff.

1935 Josephine Roche was appointed the first woman Assistant Secretary of the Treasury by President Roosevelt and proved to be a dynamic official during her eight years in office.

1938 Anita Wells, an economist, was hired as the first professional woman in the newly established Office of Tax Analysis.

1941-1942 With the outbreak of World War II and issuance of war bonds, the Bureau of Public Debt hired thousands of women to meet the workload. Women have comprised a large percentage of the Bureau's work force ever since.

1940s Women were desperately needed by the IRS as many male employees went to war. Of the 24,000 temporary appointments, 16,000 remained as permanent employees. Women were also hired for the first time to work in production at the Mint.

1949 Georgia Neese Clark was appointed the first woman Treasurer of the United States by President Truman. Treasurers have all been women since 1949.

1959 Irene Feagin Scott was the first woman in IRS' Chief Counsel's Office to be promoted to GS-15. Mrs. Scott was later appointed a Judge of the U.S. Tax Court.

1961 Margaret W. Schwartz was the first career woman promoted to supergrade in Treasury history. as the Director of the Foreign Assets Control Office. In 1965 when Secretary of the Treasury Douglas Dillon appointed the Department's first Advisory Committee on the Status of Women in Treasury, she chaired the Committee.

1965 Charlotte Tuttle Lloyd was Treasury's first woman Assistant General Counsel. Mrs. Lloyd was appointed by President Johnson to the GS-17 position, becoming one of the few women to achieve supergrade status in the Department.

1969 The Office of the Assistant Secretary for International Affairs (OASIA), in a personnel breakthrough, began hiring qualified professional women for training as Assistant and Financial Attaches and as economists to research international monetary issues.

1971 In an important ruling, the Civil Service Commission permitted women to hold law enforcement posts requiring the use of firearms. Customs became the first Treasury bureau to take advantage of this ruling and hired the first women sky marshals. Customs also became the first Treasury agency to hire women as gun-bearing special agents.

1975 Sue Steiner was named Treasury's first woman Treasury Financial Attaché and assigned to New Delhi, India.

The Secret Service employed 16 women agents who received the same training and assignments as men.

Abby Gilbert was appointed Treasury's Bicentennial Coordinator.

Anita Alpern was named Assistant Commissioner for Planning and Research, IRS, becoming the first in Treasury and one of only eight women GS-18s at that time.

Selections from *Treasury Women from Sarah to Anita, 1795 – 1975*, compiled by Abby Gilbert, Bicentennial Coordinator. The full report is available in the Treasury Library.

African Americans Helped Build the Main Treasury Building

Washington D.C. has nurtured many African American leaders since the capital moved from Philadelphia in 1800, including famous names as Benjamin Banneker, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Mary McLeod Bethune, Duke Ellington, and Charles Drew to cite a few. But largely forgotten is the work of many D.C. African Americans on major landmarks in the city, including the Main Treasury Building.

During the early 19th century, middle class African Americans helped build the Treasury Building. The story of these contributions deserves to be told.

The Treasury Building was the largest building project in early 19th-century Washington after the Capitol. The original T-shaped East and Central wings were constructed from 1836 to 1842. The South, West, and North wings were added between 1852 and 1869. The role of free African Americans in this construction is well recorded and enhanced by photographs.

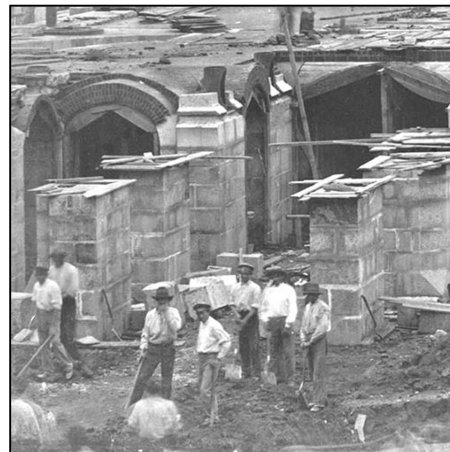


Cart Driver outside Treasury

While no records indicate any use of enslaved labor at Treasury, a number of free African Americans appear in the early employment rolls in both the skilled and unskilled categories. The 1840 Census lists John McCarty, a stone cutter on the East and Center wings, as a "free colored person." John Taylor and John P. White were employed as bricklayers, Warren Harris and James Lee as laborers, and John Mitchell as a cart driver.

While their careers are not documented, stone cutters and bricklayers would typically serve

apprenticeships and eventually earn "journeyman's" status or self-employment. Skills learned as slaves allowed some African Americans to eventually purchase their freedom.



Treasury Construction Workers

Photographs show an integrated workforce on the Treasury site and complement period records that capture African Americans physically constructing the Treasury Building. Their roles varied, as documented in the Washington D.C. directory listings. Some of the images depict African American workers hoisting columns into place in the South wing in the 1850's. Other images show them working on the foundation of the West wing in the 1850's, as well.

The photos by Lewis E. Walker, who served as the official building photographer, document the construction of the South wing in the 1850s and the West and North wings (1860 -1869), Walker's photographs also help document Treasury's African American history by capturing these workers on the job site. These photos are found in the collections of the American Antiquarian Society, Library of Congress, and National Archives.

While we may never know all the names of these free men of color, we can honor their contributions to constructing the Treasury Building.

This African American history article was contributed by THA Board member Monique Nelson who formerly served in the Treasury Curator's Office as the Public Tour Program Coordinator.

Returning to Treasury

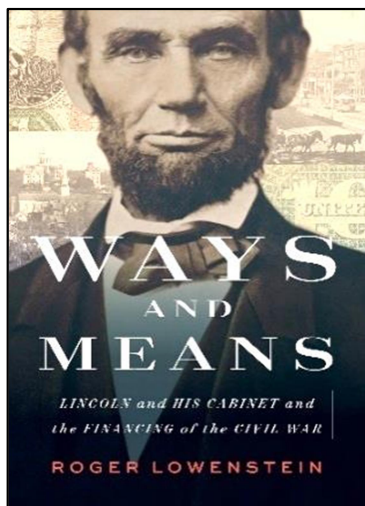
On March 11, 2020, Treasury staff was told to immediately start working remotely due to rising numbers of cases of Covid-19. After several postponements, Treasury began the transition back to the office just over two years later: on March 14, 2022.

During this period, a small number of critical staff and offices continued to work in the building, but the rest were required to work from home. Returning to the building was generally restricted to the need for certain administrative tasks or to obtain needed materials.

The transition period will end on May 20, and staff will generally be expected to be back on a regular schedule. While different offices have different requirements, it appears that more staff will work from home at least some days each week than prior to the COVID pandemic.

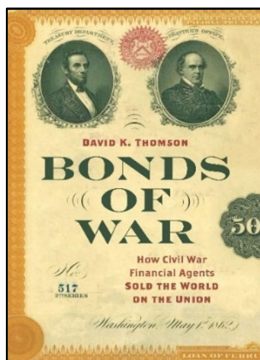
Planning for public tours has begun, but it will be at least several months before tours can actually begin. New docents will need to be recruited and trained. The actual timing will depend on when it is considered safe from a public health standpoint.

New Books on Treasury History



Ways and Means: Lincoln and His Cabinet and the Financing of the Civil War by Roger Lowenstein

Lowenstein gives a gripping account of how Lincoln and his Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase won the financial war against the South by better economic policies and by raising unprecedented amounts of money in unprecedented ways.



Bonds of War: How Civil War Financial Agents Sold the World on the Union (Civil War America) By David K. Thomson

This book examines the use of government bonds to raise funds for the Union war effort. The Jay Cooke & Company Philadelphia financial house was entrusted with the sale of these bonds both domestically and in other countries. Willingness to buy these bonds depended not just on the full faith and credit of the United States but also the success of its armies.

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THA President's Message

Happy Spring from the THA Board of Directors!

As summer approaches, your THA continues to seek ways to fulfil its missions of celebrating the Treasury Building and the history of the Department and promoting financial education.

Since our last newsletter, a new Board of Directors has been elected, which should allow the THA to continue its mission and expand into new areas, especially financial education and raising awareness of the Treasury and its role in the development of the United States.

Thanks to the hard work of Board Members Louis Margaglione, Joan Arnold, Roy Wyscarver, Monique Nelson, and Carter Evans, the THA is moving forward in getting its message out to the public at large. Short videos were produced for Black History Month and Women's History Month. Also, with the help of Consultant Julie Carter, several videos featuring past U.S. Treasurers were produced. These were put out on social media and can be found on the THA's YouTube channel.

Franklin Noll, Ph.D., President, THA

From the Editor

Thanks to Abby Gilbert and Monique Nelson for contributing material used in this issue. Special thanks also to Janet Auten for her careful editing.

Please send us your Treasury stories and suggestions or materials for future articles and topics of interest for the newsletter.

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