



# WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

## The History of Women's History

***When I started working on women's history about thirty years ago, the field did not exist. People didn't think that women had a history worth knowing.***

—Gerda Lerner, *Women and History* (1986; 1993)

Before 1970, women's history was rarely the subject of serious study. Today almost every college offers women's history courses and most major graduate programs offer doctoral degrees in the field.

### THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Two significant factors contributed to the emergence of women's history.

- The women's movement of the sixties caused women to question their invisibility in traditional American history texts.
- The movement also raised the aspirations as well as the opportunities of women, and produced a growing number of female historians.

### THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

- Since women rarely held leadership positions and until recently had only a marginal influence on politics, the new history, with its emphasis on the sociological and the ordinary, was an ideal vehicle for presenting women's history.

It has covered such subjects as the history of women's education, birth control, housework, marriage, sexuality, and child rearing.

### WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

- The public celebration of women's history in this country began in 1978 as "Women's History Week" in Sonoma County, California. The week including March 8, International Women's Day, was selected.
- In 1987, Congress expanded the celebration to a month, and March was declared Women's History Month.