

## Remarkable Southern Women

Written by Allen, Joy

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*Sally McMillen, former Mary Reynolds Babcock Professor of History at Davidson College was the featured speaker at the NC Dames Meeting of the West, held in Concord NC on November 8, 2017, at which time she presented a talk about Remarkable Southern Women.*

"They say well-behaved women rarely make history, but it is also true that many ill-behaved, activist women rarely make history, never receiving the recognition they deserve. Too often, women occupy a minor place in our nation's past, if they are found anywhere at all. Instead, the focus is more likely on wars, diplomacy, presidents, and traditional masculine roles as business leaders, cowboys, and military heroes. Until suffrage was granted to women nationwide in 1920, most could not vote and thus lacked any participation in public life. By law, tradition, and religious dictates, they were deemed inferior to men. Having access to higher education and professional careers was rare until the late nineteenth century. Women typically lived in the domestic sphere, dependent on their husbands and caring for their homes and the many children they bore.

But there were exceptions. I want to provide snapshots of a few remarkable southern women—"hidden figures," a phrase from the title of a recent movie revealing the contributions of three amazing African American women in NASA's early space program. The seven women I selected today herald from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—though there are many more remarkable southern women than I have time for today...."

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