



News Release

State of New Mexico
Historic Preservation Division, Department of Cultural Affairs
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Women's Accomplishments to be Honored with Historic Markers *Governor's panel seeks community input*

by
Tom Drake

Santa Fe — Stopping to read historic markers along New Mexico highways might lead a motorist to believe the entire state was settled by men. Of the 500 Historic and Scenic Markers—the large, brown, monument signs that provide maps on one side and history briefs on the other— only one fully mentions a woman's contributions to state history and she is Maria Martinez, the renowned potter from San Ildefonso Pueblo, and it is the pueblo that is the subject of the marker.

But men of every walk of life—a hanged train robber named Black Jack Ketchum; Billy the Kid's "grave site," the route Vasquez de Coronado took in search of the cities of gold; and Geronimo's Spring—are represented throughout the state, along with markers denoting geographic formations, early transportation routes such as the Santa Fe Trail and El Camino Real and numerous churches, pueblos and parks.

"When we traveled throughout New Mexico, we often stopped to look at the historic markers that dot the state's roadways," said Pat French, who is chairwoman of New Mexico Historic Women's Marker Initiative 2006 Selection Committee. "Rarely did any of the markers mention a woman, and when one did it usually was in the context of talking about the man who was the topic of the marker. Most of the women were unnamed."

That is about to change. Thanks to a legislative initiative, there is an opportunity for one woman from each of the state's counties and tribes to be the subject of an historic marker. The Women's Marker Initiative 2006 Selection Committee currently is looking to citizens across the state to come forward with nominations and submit them to tribal

governments and county managers by September 5, 2006. The respective governments will judge the nominations and forward their recommendations to the women's markers committee. The committee will review nominations and make recommendations to the governor-appointed oversight and policy panel, the Cultural Properties Review Committee for review and approval.

The marker program operates through a partnership between Historic Preservation Division and the state Department of Transportation, which decides placement, builds and installs the markers and when necessary, builds vehicle pull-outs for markers.

First Lady Barbara Richardson and Governor Bill Richardson were early supporters of the effort, which began when French, Alexis Girard and Beverly Duran—both co-chairs of the marker committee and members of the New Mexico Women's Forum— began working on the project in 2005. French said securing the necessary funds and cooperation of state government came about because of the early work of state Rep. Lucky Varela, D-Santa Fe, and Girard's and Duran's efforts to achieve bipartisan support for the new women's markers. First Lady Richardson, who is honorary chairwoman of the selection committee, had advised the women to seek Department of Cultural Affairs Secretary Stuart Ashman's support, as well.

Currently, the committee— composed of representatives of the New Mexico Women's forum, DOT, the All Indian Pueblo Council, the Association of Counties, the Commission on the Status of Women and HPD—is seeking nominations and urging community input from local women's organizations and other groups and individuals with knowledge of local history, and the contributions of women in particular. Nominations should be as close to 50 words in length as possible, providing biographical information and research sources for the committee and HPD.

Communities may turn to authorities on women's history such as local charters of the New Mexico Federation of Women's Clubs or the Daughters of the American Revolution. But French said after attending the CPRC's annual 2006 Heritage Preservation Awards Ceremony in May that groups like the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society, which won a Heritage Publication Award, and other organizations should get involved.

Marker text commonly is limited to 50 words and the person commemorated must be deceased. Suggestions for the placement of the markers are accepted and should be proximate to where the woman had her impact. Although HPD will review all text and research it for accuracy, persons submitting names and stories must provide documentation, although such information may be limited for pre-Territorial women. Submissions must include the woman's name, her county or lands, sources,

documentation and the sponsor's contact information. The deadline to submit a nomination is September 5. A downloadable form is available at the HPD Web site, www.nmhistoricpreservation.org through a link featured on the Home page.

All nominated women will be reviewed in the context of their times, and information on women not selected for the initial markers will be archived for later efforts. Mailed submissions can be sent to the county manager or tribal government and copied to Patricia French, Chair, Historic Women's Marker Initiative, 216 Washington Ave., Santa Fe, N.M., 87501. E-mailed submissions should be sent to karren.sahler@sothebysrealty.com. For easy access to existing marker text, visit HPD's Web site.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Tom Drake, Public Relations
Historic Preservation Division Department of Cultural Affairs
Bataan Memorial Building, Suite 236
407 Galisteo St., Suite 236
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 827-4067
tom.drake@state.nm.us
www.nmhistoricpreservation.org