

March 5, 2015

Women quietly do extraordinary things every day. To help shed light on the resilience and strength of Hoosier women and celebrate their accomplishments and contributions to history we are releasing an article every day in the month of March. These articles showcase how women have moved Indiana and our country forward and who inspire others to do great things in their own lives.

Women in Indiana have an important role to play. You can make a difference by:

- Learning more about the issues affecting women in Indiana.
- Voicing your opinion on issues important to you
- Serving as an advocate for women
- Mentoring another woman
- Join ICW's mailing list or social media outlets to be notified of upcoming events, programs and resources available to women

Go to www.in.gov/icw to learn more about the Indiana Commission for Women and their current initiatives.

Sources:

- **Indiana Governors' History Website**
(<http://in.gov/governorhistory/mitchdaniels/3324.htm>)
- **Indiana Historical Society**
(http://www.indianahistory.org/teachers-students/hoosier-facts-fun/famous-hoosiers/gene-stratton-porter#.VPXZdvnF_eQ)
- **Indiana State Museum**
(<http://www.indianamuseum.org/exlore/gene-stratton-porter-home>)

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Women's History Month 2015

Telling 31 stories in 31 days this March.

Gene Stratton-Porter (1863-1924)

Geneva Grace Stratton was born on a small farm near Lagro, in Wabash County, Indiana, on August 17, 1863, the youngest of 12 children. Her father, Mark Stratton, was a licensed Methodist minister and prosperous farmer. Gene's mother, Mary (Shallenberger) Stratton, became ill when her youngest was five and died in 1875.

At an early age, Gene had little formal schooling but developed a lively interest in nature and wildlife. When her family moved to the city of Wabash in 1874, she began to attend school on a regular basis and completed all but the last term of high school.

On April 21, 1886, she married Charles D. Porter, a druggist in Geneva, Indiana, who was 13 years her senior. The couple's only child, Jeannette Porter, was born in 1887. After oil was discovered on some farmland Mr. Porter owned, the family used the wealth to construct a 14-room home, which she designed herself, near the Limberlost Swamp.

Stratton-Porter soon began to photograph birds and animals in their natural habitat at Limberlost. Her photographs were printed in several national magazines. Encouraged by this accomplishment, she turned to writing fiction. Her first novel, *The Song of the Cardinal*, met with modest success, but her next book, *Freckles*, established her tremendous popularity with the reading public. She continued to enjoy popular acclaim with works like *A Girl of the Limberlost*, *Laddie*, *Michael O'Halloran* and *A Daughter of the Land*.

In 1913, after the Limberlost Swamp had been drained, Stratton-Porter moved to northern Indiana where she built a new home, "The Cabin at Wildflower Woods," on the shores of Sylvan Lake at Rome City. In 1920 she moved to California where she organized her own movie company and based a number of films on her books. Before departing Indiana, she wrote to the governor of Indiana, Warren T. McCray, to offer her beloved Wildflower Woods to the State as a bird sanctuary.

Stratton-Porter died on Dec. 6, 1924, in Los Angeles following a traffic accident and was buried in Hollywood Cemetery. In 1999, Stratton-Porter's body and that of her daughter were buried on the grounds of the Gene Stratton-Porter Historic Site in Rome City, Indiana.

Both the Geneva and Rome City homes are now State Historic Sites established to preserve and protect Stratton-Porter's legacy as naturalist, author, pioneer, photographer, movie producer, and Hoosier.

Biography provided by the Indiana Historical Society and obtained from the Indiana Governor's History website.