

That Wild Girl from Howard

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Sphex Club Paper Presentation

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This week beginning on Tuesday, March 1, 2016 became the first day of observance of Women's History Month in America. March is an annual declared month that celebrates and highlights the contributions of women in America. In February 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued a presidential proclamation during the week of March 8, 1980 as National Women's History Month. The proclamation stated, "From the first settlers who came to our shores, from the first American Indian families who befriended them, men and women have worked together to build this nation. Too often the women were unsung and sometimes their contributions went unnoticed. But the achievements, leadership, courage, strength, and love of the women who built America was as vital as that of the men whose names we know so well.

As noted by Dr. Gerder Learner, an Austrian born historian, was one of the founders of The History of Women. In 1963, At the New School for Social Research located in Greenwich Village, New York City she taught a course entitled Great Women in American History, which is considered to be the first course on Women's History offered anywhere. The New School was founded in 1919 by a group of progressive New York educators. For most of its history the school was known as The New School for Social Research.

The New School was renowned for its teaching and open intellectual environment. Learner played a key role in the development of women's

history curricula and was involved in the development of degree programs of women's history at Sarah Lawrence College (She taught there from 1968 – 1979) and also while there developed the first master's program in women's history. She launched the first Ph.D. program in Women's History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Eventually she taught at Duke University and Columbia University where she was the co-founder of Seminar of Women.

Therefore my paper presentation is one that is so relevant to the observance of this month which is Women's History Month.

In the summer of 2014 in preparation for a program and placement of a historical marker for Clarence W. Seay in front of his former home, 1300 Pierce Street. (Clarence W. Seay served as the Principal of Dunbar High School from 1938-1968. After retirement he taught a course at Lynchburg College and eventually was elected to the City Council), I was at a dear friend's home, Jane White- we all know Jane White. She is your friend and she definitely is my friend. We were talking about the number of historical markers placed in the 1300 and 1400 blocks of the Pierce Street Renaissance Historic District. On September 24, 2016, The Department of Historic Resources in Richmond, VA issued the following press release:

“ A State Historical Marker issued by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources that honors the career of Twentieth Century educator, Pauline Weeden Maloney, known as Lynchburg’s First Lady of Education will be dedicated this Saturday in Lynchburg. The dedication and unveiling ceremony begins 11:00 A.M. Saturday, September 26, 2015 at The Wayside Gospel Temple Church, located at 1309 Pierce Street. Speakers during the ceremony will be Lynchburg Mayor, Michael Gillette; Vice Mayor Ceasor Johnson, Superintendent of City Schools, Dr. Scott Brabrand, Shaun Spencer-Hester, director of the Anne Spencer House Museum, The Robert Higgins, pastor of The Wayside Gospel Temple Church and Jim Hare of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. After the ceremony at the church, Arelia Langhorne of the civic organization, The Links, Inc. will lead a procession of alumna members of The Links, singing group the Soulsters from the Hill, and those attending the dedication of the unveiling event.”

The marker was sponsored by the organization Weeden founded, The Lynchburg Chapter of The Links, Inc. in 1950 in observance of the 65th Anniversary of the chapter, 1950-1965. The occasion was a great historical day for the organization and most significantly for me.

Margaret Pauline Fletcher Weeden Maloney, always called Polly, was born in 1904 and grew up in Annapolis, Maryland. She was the daughter of

William and Eliza Fletcher and sister to her brother, Charles Fletcher. Her mother, Eliza was a former teacher turned Seamstress and her father, a Veteran of the Spanish-American War worked for the Naval Academy. He also was the oldest living member of the frigate Constellation's last crew.

Pauline Fletcher Weeden attended elementary school in Annapolis and Washington, D.C. and received a high school diploma from Morgan Academy in Baltimore, Maryland. The Morgan Academy was an extended arm of Morgan State University. (Historically Black College and University) The University still exists today. She earned her B.A. degree from Howard University and a M.A. degree from Columbia University. Her professional career was education. It is apparent from research that getting a college education was very significant to the Fletcher family and therefore Weeden attended Howard University because of its reputation in the late 19th and early twentieth century. Her brother, Charles became a Principal of a High School in Baltimore, Maryland.

Howard University in the 1920s—Margaret Fletcher (Weeden) became a student in 1922 at Howard University.

Howard University was founded in 1872. The school was originally conceived as a theological school in 1866. In 1867, Howard was chartered as a

university by an act of the United States Congress. Named after Oliver Otis Howard, a Civil War General who became the Commissioner of the Freedman's Bureau.

The Institution from the beginning was committed to graduate and professional education. Much more significantly than other institutions at that time of its founding. Many of the present Universities, i.e. Hampton were Normal schools. Howard established the first black law school in 1874. Also, the University has always held a long commitment to the study of disadvantaged persons in American society and throughout the world. The goal of the institution from its founding to the present is the elimination of inequalities related to race, color, social, economic, and political circumstances. Howard prepares men and women to advance social justice and the preservation of human liberty.

Yet, Howard University has always had the reputation for being the institution for privileged African American students in the early to mid-twentieth century, who considered themselves in a higher economic status compared to other working class people of color in America.

It was also at Howard that Weeden was inducted into the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, which was founded at the University in 1913.

In Harvard Law graduate, Lawrence Otis Graham's book, "Our Kind of People" published in 2000, stated "Founded in 1867, Howard is the most popular school among America's black elite, with many of its students third- and fourth-generation alumni. Because of the reputation of the undergraduate law, medical, dental, and other professional departments, Howard lays claim to more prominent black alumni than any other college or university. In fact, nearly one-third of all black physicians and dentists and about one fifth of all black lawyers in the United States are graduates of Howard.

Included among the alumni are such people as Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, Pulitzer Prize-winning writer and Princeton professor Toni Morrison, United Nations ambassador and Atlanta mayor Andrew Young, Virginia governor Douglas Wilder, New York mayor David Dinkins, U.S. senator from Massachusetts Edward Brooks, National Urban League president Vernon Jordan, TV actress Phylicia Rashad, Yale Medical School psychiatrist Dr. James P. Comer, Nobel Prize-winning United Nations undersecretary Ralph Bunche, and former mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly.

Although it is the largest predominately African American university in the United States, it has always had whites and other nonblack students among its enrollment.

Today, there are approximately 117 historically black colleges and universities, but only a few of them play a role in the upper black resume'. The three most prestigious in the group are Howard University in Washington, D.C. Spelman College and Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia.

Upon graduation from Howard in 1926, she accepted a position as a Speech teacher in a Junior High School in Winston Salem, NC. She later moved to Lynchburg,(not sure whether she met Dr. Henry P. Weeden, a Dentist in Winston Salem, NC or she met him in Lynchburg, VA because Dr. Weeden's first wife, according to research founded in Ancestry.com, his first wife Lula Weeden lived in the house at 1316 Buchanan Street.

She became Mrs. Margaret Pauline Weeden. In the early years in Lynchburg, VA, she was first a Social Worker with the government Works Progress Administration Program. According to an article entitled, The Works Progress Administration, in the American Experience Magazine "this program was a work relief program under Roosevelt's New Deal Program.

The program employed men and women, with only 13.5 percent of the employees being women. Women who worked in the program earned the same pay as men- \$41.57 a month, but in practice they were consigned to the

lower-paying activities of sewing, bookbinding, caring for the elderly, school lunch programs, nursery school, and recreational work. Men worked on bridges, airports, parks, built buildings and roads.

A historical publication, housed at the Jones Memorial Library cited..."In 1937, Weeden was employed by the Lynchburg School System to teach vocational civics and English at Dunbar High School. She held many positions: Visiting Teacher, Guidance Counselor, Guidance Director, and in 1953 she became the Vice Principal, working in that capacity until her retirement in 1970. Her strong motivation at Dunbar was centered around her words..." I had a competitive desire for Negro children—to see them succeeding as well as children of any other race. This was a driving force."

In her role at Dunbar, she made sure that the needs of students were met. It was her desire to have a Dunbar High School graduate in many of the leading HBCUs in the early part of the twentieth century and into the mid-twentieth century she had a strong desire to have a Dunbar graduate in each of the Ivy League colleges, and she proceeded to place them there. In a recent interview with Jacqueline Hamlar Early Taliaferro retired algebra and math teacher in the Lynchburg School system and who also taught for many years at Dunbar High School, stated that..."Mrs. Weeden was instrumental in getting her accepted into Fisk University in 1944" Jacqueline was a student at

Dunbar High from 1944 -1948. She further stated that in her senior year, she didn't know anything about Fisk University and also where the school was located. Her parents could not afford to send her to college, and especially to a school that was out of state in Tennessee. It was because of Mrs. Weeden that she got accepted and was able to attend for four years.

In Darrell Laurant's book "A City Unto Itself", the Late Rev. Haywood Robinson, Jr (also a Sphex Club member and attended Dunbar High School graduating in 1948) stated..."She would have been a unique personality wherever she lived. She became somebody to reckon with. She had the native ability to recognize and help channel the gifts of other people.

She lived on Buchanan Street near 14th, a big house that's still standing, and she had a practice of always having a student from Dunbar live with her. For two years I was that boy. It was a hard decision for me. But I grew up on White Rock Hill with seven brothers and sisters, and my parents encouraged me to do it. She was a Delta, a big black sorority, and she did a lot of entertaining.

Living in the Weeden home introduced me to a whole new world.---a black world, but different from what I'd known. She helped me get into Hampton Institute (now Hampton University) and we wound up serving on

the School Board together. She formed all kinds of alliances and she had friends in high places”.

Also in Laurant’s book, the late Christopher Edley-Dunbar High School graduate and the President and CEO of The United Negro College Fund and who raised \$550 million for black higher education during his 18 year tenure, was raised in poverty on Monroe Street by his mother (who worked as a domestic), wound up graduating from Harvard Law School. He remembered Weeden “begging a local businessman to give me clothes to wear to law school, so I wouldn’t be embarrassed. And I had been out of Dunbar four years by then”.

Linda Woodruff, who along with Owen Cardwell, were the first African American students to integrate E.C. Glass High School in 1962-63, expressed a different side of Pauline Weeden(Maloney). Woodruff stated that “she (Weeden) had too much power over her students. She had her favorites, and she decided whether you got into college or not.”

However, in the 1960s’ Mrs. Weeden helped get students in many leading predominantly white colleges and universities in America. Students such as Hyland Hubbard, Jr.(known as Hank and a Sphex Club member) into Bowdoin College in New Brunswick), Maine, Sherman McCoy into Cornell

University (undergraduate and graduate), Alfred Elliott into Lafayette University and then into military, James Giles into Yale University (presently a Virginia Judge residing in the Tidewater area), Wiley Harris into Yale University, Lemeul Lewis into University of Virginia, James Johnson into Wake Forest University, Melvina Pinn(Smith) into Defiance College in Ohio, Ocie Syndnor into Dartmouth, and yes, Hermina Walthall Hendricks into Defiance College, Ohio.

I can recall in the first two weeks of the fall semester of my senior year at Dunbar High School, Mrs. Weeden past me in one of the Hallways and stated for me to come to her office this week because she has something for me as to the college she wanted me to attend. She didn't tell me the name of the college. She also stated to me "don't ask me if it's coed, because it is". I was wondering how did she know that I wanted to attend a coed college.

I was a little bewildered, excited, and certainly nervous because she spoke to me, had a brief conversation in the hall, and then I had to start going to her office. For a few weeks I was a bag of nerves. She was very intimidating at that time.

Mrs. Weeden who was always very stylish, tall with an impressive size seemed to just tower above everyone. Of course, Mrs. Weeden helped me to

get into Defiance College with a full four year scholarship. Incidentally, she completed my financial aid forms, not my parents. I entered Defiance College, majored in Music, graduated four years later. My life at Defiance College was highlighted with some of the most exciting times of my early adulthood-- strong academic development in music, great professors, living amongst students who were different than my family background and culture and learning that we are more alike than different, and finally life- long college friends thanks to Mrs. Weeden.

Weeden's years in Lynchburg, VA was marked with much excitement and un-tireless efforts in developing a vehicle in Lynchburg that would enhance the plight of black youths and their families. Sometime in 1949, Mrs. Weeden developed an interest in creating a Chapter of The Links, Inc. in Lynchburg. In 1949 there were approximately 10-20 clubs that became Links, Inc. chartered along the Mid-Atlantic States.

Lawrence Otis Graham (Our Kind of People) further enlightens his readers about his mother being accepted into the Links, Inc. He states, " Later that week, my mother and every other woman in her crowd would have told you, getting accepted into the Links was a big deal, and it was not something you'd ever need to explain if you were in the company of the right

kind of people which didn't include blue color blacks, and other non-black people.

Late that week my mother was initiated into upper-class black America's most elite organization for women (at the time the ten-thousand women-strong Links incorporated. For fifty years, membership in the invitation only national organization has meant that your social background, lifestyle, appearance, and family's academic and professional accomplishments passed muster with a fiercely competitive group of who-while forming a cohesive sisterhood- were nonetheless constantly under each other's scrutiny.

Although not as old as other elite black women's groups like the Girlfriends or the National Smart Set, the Links is by far the largest and the most influential, founded by seven well to do black women in 1946 in Philadelphia, PA. It contributes millions of dollars to organizations like the United Negro College Fund and NAACP legal defense fund and supports hundreds of local charities and scholarship programs in the United States and abroad."

Beginning in 1949, Pauline Weeden wrote a letter to the National Office of The Links, Inc. in Philadelphia, expressing her interests of a Links chapter

in Lynchburg, VA. As a result, Weeden received a letter in March 1950 from the National President, Sarah Scott. The letter stated, "Thank you so much for the fine things you've said about our club. We need members like you and heartily welcome your application. As soon as it is returned, I shall submit it to members of the Executive Council and let's hope that without any red tape, your chapter can be ready for the Conclave in Atlantic City, April 8th." I certainly remember your name, and I know that as soon as I see you, I can place the name and face together. Your group can have no better sponsor than Julia Dilenger. We are very proud of her and her splendid achievement. Shall be awaiting an early reply. Sincerely, Sarah S. Scott, National President.

In the History of The Links, Inc. written by Marjorie Holloman Parker, states "When Sarah Scott and Margaret Hawkins of Philadelphia combined their efforts and ideas to found the first chapter of The Links, Inc., they set in motion a series of events and established standards of civic responsibility and participation that have helped to change the course of life in black communities across the United States.

World War II was over in 1946 leaving a tired, but grateful country in its wake; but paradoxically, this devastating experience had done some good. For the old questions and concerns of civil rights and racial

injustice finally seemed to emerge anew, claiming some of the attention of the politicians who had managed to ignore the existence of these issues for decades.

It was in this atmosphere that Sarah Scott and Margaret Hawkins summoned their friends together on November 8, 1946. They called on them “to link their friendship and resources to form a chain of strength which would then work to improve the quality of life for black citizens who were less advantaged both culturally and educationally.” Scott and Hawkins and their nine friends were married to prominent African American men. Their husbands were either physicians, lawyers, insurance executives, business executives. Pauline Weeden was the founder/organizer of the Lynchburg Chapter of The Links, Inc. in 1950. Also, Mrs. Weeden became the third National President of The Links, Inc. 1957- 1962. She followed the first two National Presidents who were the founders, Sarah Scott and Margaret Hawkins. Becoming the third National President is an indicator of the magnitude of Weeden’s influence in America.

The Lynchburg Chapter created many programs and opportunities that focused on the education of black children in Lynchburg. My first experience with The Links, was at a house in the 1200 block of Fillmore Street – across

from Robert S. Payne Elementary School. I was at the age of 8 or 9 and attended the Links Reading Center each Saturday morning sponsored by the chapter. A room on the second floor of the house was filled with hundreds and hundreds of books that black children in the varied Lynchburg neighborhoods could check out – read during the week and returned books on the following Saturday. I will never forget that enriching experience as a kid surrounded by many books that we could freely check out, read, with no charge. I recall the early days when many of us sat on the floor listening to Mrs. Weeden read to us.

For more than fifty years Mrs. Weeden dedicated her life to black youth through her work at Dunbar High School and The Lynchburg Chapter of The Links, Inc. Her initiatives and Link programs are too numerous to name except for one- The Pauline Weeden Maloney Step With Links Program in which many of us know it was her heart.

Throughout her professional work there was a fun side to her. She loved to play cards – Bridge, Pinochle, and Poker! According to Jacqueline Early Taliaferro, “Mrs. Weeden loved playing cards all the time. She belonged to a Bridge Club, and a Pinochle Club, which met once a month. Poker was probably every weekend. Mrs. Weeden was always one for having fun, hosting parties and card parties in her home at 1316 Buchanan Street

and eventually a new home built on Tolley's Lane. She, along with Early - Taliaferro and at least 12 friends would traditionally get together for much fun. Incidentally, Weeden was a strong card player. In fact there was a group comprised of 4-5+ friends that would have marathon poker games with other friends in Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, Maryland. Their Poker gatherings became regional gatherings each 5th weekend in the calendar year. This meant that a group would travel to either Washington, D.C. or Baltimore, Maryland. Groups from Washington, D.C. and Baltimore would alternately travel to Lynchburg for much fun, card playing, and delicious food.

Mrs. Weeden was not a cook, but she always hired women and friends to cook delicious meals and clean her house. Obviously she didn't have time to spend on those menial domesticated matters. Early-Taliaferro cited that even though she was a student of hers during her High School years, and then became a colleague of hers when Early was hired as a Dunbar High School Algebra and Math teacher, she became a part of the poker playing gatherings on weekends. "I think it was because I was good with numbers and could read cards very well" stated Early-Taliaferro.

Also, to assist in subsidizing her entertaining gatherings and upscale life style, her brother Charles (whom she had a very close relations to him) had a bank

account in Lynchburg so that his sister could have access to monies whenever she needed it so that she could live a certain lifestyle and enjoy her life”. Also, she would travel to Raleigh, North Carolina with a delegation from Lynchburg to Poker playing gatherings with her friends who happen to be professors at Central Virginia College and University.

Pauline Weeden Maloney lived a full and enriching life-even after her retirement. She served as the Vice Chair of the Lynchburg City School Board. First woman to be named Rector of Norfolk State University, a position she held until 1981. She was the first black President of the Virginia School Boards Association and the first black President of the Southern Region School Board Association, and numerous other boards. In Laurent’s Book, the chapter reflecting education and school board members, it states, “It takes a typical school board member two or three years to understand the budget, added Julius Sigler. I was no exception. Dick Gifford was one of the most visible board members during the 1960s. Pauline Maloney was another, her influence spanning two decades. The late Jim Candler stated, “ One of the highlights of my life was getting to know Miz (sic) Maloney. I remember when we built Heritage High School, we wanted Governor John Dalton to come to the dedication. Someone said, “We contacted the governor, and there’s no way he can come. His schedule’s booked. Pauline said, ”Give me

one day". She was a devout Republican, and the next day, we found out Dalton was coming. Knowing Pauline Maloney gave me contacts in the black community that I would never have had".

In conclusion, there are so many stories that many of us present today could tell about our experience with Mrs. Maloney... My Link sister Arelia Langhorne recalls the time when Mrs. Weeden Maloney was having an elaborate party at her home. She wanted Valerie, one of the daughters of Arelia and Howard, who at that time was approximately 8 or 9 years old to be a hostess at the party. Valerie's responsibility was to open the door and greet the guests. Of course little Valerie was a hostess – with her party hosting dress. None of us could tell Mrs. Maloney no in any response nor question why she would ask. We never dared.

Many of us today are so blessed to have had Pauline Weeden Maloney pave a way of opportunity for us that has affected our individual lives today. W. E. B. DuBois, a turn of the century historian and civil rights activists published a book in 1903, entitled, The Talented Tenth. His words reflects as to how the Negro will survive less than forty years ago being enslaved. His philosophy further reflects how people of color will be able to survive and be progressive in twentieth century America. These are his words, "The Negro Race like all races, is going to be saved by exceptional men. The problem of

education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races". He further expresses, "How then shall the leaders of a struggling people be trained and the hands of a risen few strengthened? There can be but one answer: The Best and the most capable of their youth must be schooled in the colleges and universities of the land. We will not quarrel as to just what the university of the Negro should teach or how it should teach it—I willingly admit that each soul and each race-soul needs its own peculiar curriculum. But this is true: A university is a human intervention for the transmission of knowledge and culture from generation to generation, through the training of quick minds and pure hearts, and for this work no other human intervention will suffice, nor even trade and industrial schools"

I believe Margaret Pauline Fletcher Weeden Maloney was one of the Talented Tenth that DuBois beckons to in the early 1900s. She entrusted a few of us to pick up her banner, be unafraid to face the challenges in our societies, and find creative solutions by being change agents. She truly was that "Wild Girl from Howard".

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