



Contact: Mariel Rosati  
Tel. [215.848.1690](tel:215.848.1690)  
Email: [mrosati@wyck.org](mailto:mrosati@wyck.org)  
Date: January 31, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **WOMEN'S HISTORY SERIES DEBUTS AT WYCK**

Dynamic Quaker women traversed the halls of Wyck Historic House, Garden, and Farm between 1690 and 1973, creating a legacy of innovation, education, and social reform. To honor and continue this narrative, Wyck hosts its inaugural Women's History Series during Women's History Month. This new series of compelling performances launches with Juliette Gordon Low, founder of the Girl Scouts, continues with Harriet Tubman, the most famous conductor of the Underground Railroad, and concludes with *Emma's Parlor*, a toy theater piece about the life and times of Emma Goldman who was born to a Jewish family in 1860s Russia. These intimate performances on Saturdays in March seek to educate, inspire, and open the door to new audiences at Wyck.

Jane Bowne Haines I (1790-1843) proved instrumental in creating Wyck's ties to education. As one of a group of Quaker women invested in making education more accessible, Jane helped to establish the Female Association Schools in New York City, founded to educate poor children. Wyck has an intricate sampler in its collection, given to Jane Bowne Haines I by Female Association School student, Lucy Turpen, in 1815. Lucy Turpen then went on to become a teacher at the New York African Free School.

One of Wyck's most dynamic women, Jane Bowne Haines II (1869-1937), inspired Wyck's choice of her contemporary, Juliette Gordon Low for this series. A graduate of Bryn Mawr College in 1891, Haines established the Pennsylvania School for Horticulture for Women in 1910, the first school in the nation for women to study horticulture. This school was founded just two years before the Girl Scouts came into being in 1912. Wyck's ongoing association with education and horticulture owes much to the memory of Jane Bowne Haines II. The school she began has since evolved into Temple University Ambler, which has a thriving program for those seeking degrees in Landscape Architecture and Horticulture. Like Jane Bowne Haines II, Juliette Gordon Low founded an institution that continues to change lives of women to this day. Low's ongoing global impact on girls will come to life in this presentation.

Juliette Gordon Low will be portrayed by accomplished historical interpreter, **Carol Spacht**. Spacht appears weekly as Betsy Ross at the Betsy Ross House for Historic Philadelphia, Inc. and often performs in the Philadelphia region, presenting interactive educational programs at schools,

libraries and civic organizations. She studied theatre at Villanova University, graduated with highest honors from Eastern University, and authored *Whitpaine's Creek*, a commissioned project on early Pennsylvania history. In addition to Juliette Gordon Low, as an historic interpreter, Carol also portrays Martha Washington and Hannah Penn and delights the smallest of children as Mother Goose.

The Wistar-Haines family's support of abolition inspires the Harriet Tubman performance. The family at Wyck established a collection of objects and papers that span the duration of nine generations of occupants. Among these objects, are an abolitionist plate, meant for intentional display at social gatherings to convey support for the movement, and an extensive collection of abolitionist pamphlets, indicating the family's membership and support of institutions dedicated to the cause of freeing slaves. The residents' subtle but clear stance on this issue is honored and brought to the forefront through the Harriet Tubman performance. Harriet Tubman (c 1820-1913) became the most famous "conductor" of the Underground Railroad to aid enslaved Africans escaping to Free states or Canada. During the Civil War, Tubman served as a nurse, scout, and spy for the Union army. Audiences will learn the familiar and the lesser known but equally awe-inspiring aspects of Tubman's life.

Tubman will be portrayed by compelling virtuoso, **Millicent Sparks**, an accomplished actor/writer/producer who has performed on local, regional and international stages, film and television. She was nominated twice for the Barrymore Award in Philadelphia for outstanding lead actor for her performances in *Fires In The Mirror* with Venture Theatre, and *Sty of the Blind Pig* with Freedom Theatre, and received the Best Actress award for her portrayal of Angel Allen in *Blues For An Alabama Sky* with St. Louis Black Repertory Company. She portrayed Billie Holiday in *Lady Day* at the Piccadilly Theatre in London, and in her own one woman show, *Lady Behind The Gardenia* at Freedom Theatre. She can also be seen in the film, *Beloved*. Ms. Sparks regularly portrays Harriet Tubman for school groups, community organizations, churches and special events.

*Emma's Parlor* reflects the physical and intellectual environment at Wyck in both form and content. To tell the story of activist and lecturer Emma Goldman, artists **Martina Plag** and **Lorna Howley** use everyday objects one might find in a parlor, of that same period, as playing spaces. A phonograph becomes a café filled with anarchists, a radio serves as Emma's lectern and a birdcage is becomes a prison. One could easily imagine these objects being pulled from the house itself. This creative telling of Goldman's life will spark audience intellect in the way Goldman herself sought, using the very room at Wyck that played host to some of Philadelphia's most enlightened thinkers. Encouraging and cultivating informed thought is integral to the history of Wyck.

The artists observe, "*Our zeal to reveal Goldman's life and beliefs as a free-spirited thinker who was exiled from the United States because of her outspoken views helped inspire this piece. As did co-performer Plag's shared immigrant, working class journey, of uncelebrated Jewish ancestry in America. Much like Goldman herself, our toy-theatre adaptation uses wit and humor to illuminate history from below. Toy-theatre presented itself as the perfect medium through which to explore this story, it allows us to focus in quickly at a small scale to address grand issues. And its inherent dichotomy of scales excites us very much and gives us much to push against.*"

Wyck owes the ability to tell each of these stories to Mary Troth Haines (1892-1983). It was she who decided to continue the family's legacy of education by turning the house over to the public, not as a museum, but as an open house, so that lovers of history, horticulture and architecture could learn from a house and grounds that had been consciously preserved and maintained over nine generations. In hosting this series, Wyck continues the legacy of these women and opens the door to new faces and new discussion.

These intimate performances have limited seating. Stay after the performance to enjoy light refreshments and friendly discussion. Tours of Wyck will be optional and free for attendees.

Visit [wyck.org](http://wyck.org) or call **215-848-1690** for tickets to any of the events.

**March 11:** Juliette Gordon Low, 11am-12pm (for all ages, but geared towards young audiences)

**March 18:** Harriet Tubman 11am-12pm (ages 9 to adult)

**March 25:** Emma's Parlor 1pm & 3pm. (ages 12 to adult)

Ticket price is per event:

\$20 General Admission

\$15 Friends of Wyck

\$10 for students under 25

Wyck is a National Historic Landmark house, garden, and farm in the Germantown neighborhood of Philadelphia that served as the ancestral home to one Philadelphia family for nine generations (1690-1973). Through the preservation and interpretation of this rare resource, the Wyck Association works to enrich and strengthen community life. To learn more, visit [wyck.org](http://wyck.org) or "like" us on Facebook.

###