

National First Ladies' Library Event
Remarks by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
Canton, Ohio
July 23, 1999

(Some remarks were cut off at start of tape.)

... (inaudible) to the McKinley's and to the library. I'm also delighted to be here again with Dr. Sheila Fisher, who has been an inspiration and a strong supporter and one of the reasons we are able to celebrate the library today.

And I'm particularly pleased to be here with two people whom I enjoy and admire so greatly—your Congressman and his general. Both Ralph and Mary Regula have contributed so much to preserving our nation's priceless heritage. And they are owed a great deal of thanks, not only by those of you who are represented by the Congressman, but from the rest of us as well. Because their contributions expand our understanding of historic preservation and extend our appreciation as to the much greater depth that historic preservation can and is playing in our nation's present and future.

As you may know, I came here this morning directly from the memorial service held for John Kennedy, Jr., his wife Carolyn, and her sister Lauren. I know that your thoughts and prayers, like mine and so many millions of Americans, are with these two families at this time of unbearable sadness and loss. As the President said the other day, "It is times like this that we really stop to recognize that as big and diverse as our country is, we can come together as a national family. We can come together in sorrow or in joy if it reflects the values that we honor most."

This afternoon, we're here to celebrate efforts to preserve for future generations some of that common American history that we all share and value so deeply. The story is not only of America's first families—in particular, First Ladies—but of families everywhere who come together, in good times and in bad, to make America what it is today. And as in most families, there are some who take on the special role of caretaker. Someone who makes sure that we keep and preserve our family photo albums and letters; who seeks to keep distant memories alive; and who won't let priceless pieces of our history—our nation's history—get lost or damaged.

Fortunately for all of us, Congressman Regula has taken on that role as steward, becoming one of the staunchest supporters in Congress on behalf of the national effort to "Save America's Treasures." It is thanks to his tireless leadership that Congress provided \$30 million in federal matching grants, enabling communities across the country and federal agencies like the National Park Service to preserve our nation's most significant treasures.

But as with most worthwhile endeavors, preserving America's treasures cannot—and should not—be solely a federal responsibility. Because after all, preservation in the United States has always involved both the public and the private sectors. Generous individuals, foundations, and corporations have always stepped forward. That is why we enlisted the National Trust for Historic Preservation as our non-profit partner for Save America's Treasures. And I'm delighted that as of this week, we have been able to raise \$34.2 million in private funds—and those private funds are supporting projects around the country that tell the stories of our lives as Americans.

Over the past year, I've had the privilege to visit some 30 sites which the National Trust and its partners are saving and preserving—from George Washington's winter headquarters on the Hudson River, to the ancient dwellings of the Pueblo Indians in the Southwest, to the Breed Street Shul in Los Angeles. Each of these American treasures is a living textbook, a glimpse into the past, and a lesson for the future. And were it not for these preservation efforts, each one might very well have been allowed to crumble away, taking a piece of our history with it.

So that is among the reasons that I am particularly pleased to be here in Canton today, where this community has made such a strong commitment to preserve its history—and our nation's legacy.

I have just visited the restored Saxton-McKinley House—the home of our 25th president and his wife, Ida. That house now houses the First Ladies' Library. If you have not been there yet, I hope you will take the time to visit this extraordinary place. It is a perfect example of a preservation partnership, as a federal agency, a foundation, and an innovative project combined to make this a living site.

I saw so much in my short visit, and I commend all of you for it. Although I have been something of a student of first ladies since finding myself in this position a few years ago, there were many things that I had never seen before—including some priceless photographs of those who served as first lady and hostess for our first presidents. I was also pleased to see that a precious family heirloom—Ida McKinley's silver inkwell—has recently been presented to the First Ladies' Library [by the daughter of Ida's grand niece, Mary Gunn]. And it now sits where it always sat, here in Canton and in the White House, on Ida's personal writing desk in the parlor there.

As I looked at that inkwell, I marveled at how 100 years ago, Ida would sit at that desk and correspond with her friends and family by dipping her pen in ink. Today we tap away at a keyboard that instantly links us to the world. One hundred years ago, we drove from place to place in a horse and buggy, and could only dream of flying to far-away places. This week, we commemorate the 30th anniversary of man's first walk on the moon and the first of our shuttle missions ever to be commanded by a woman. In 1900, women did not compete in professional sports, and today we celebrate America's Women's Soccer Team as the World Cup champions.

So as I looked at Ida's inkwell, I thought about how the role of women—and first ladies—has grown and evolved over this past century, and how much we still needed to learn about their lives, their achievements, and their aspirations.

That's why Mary Regula's commitment to create the National First Ladies' Library is so important. Because now, especially, we understand how critical it is to preserve and document that ever-evolving legacy of women's contributions to our nation. Today we've gathered here at the City National Bank Building, which, as Mary has explained, will be the future site of the First Ladies' Library Education and Research Center. And I'm very pleased that, as Kitty Higgins announced, this renovation has been designated as an official project of Save America's Treasures.

As I traveled to historic—and even prehistoric—sites around our country as part of our "Save America's Treasures" tour, again and again I have stood in a place preserved through the leadership of women—women like Mary. Almost a century ago, journalist Virginia McClurg and philanthropist Lucy Peabody persuaded the Colorado Federation of Women's Clubs to work to make Mesa Verde a national park. Ann Pamela Cunningham founded the Mt. Vernon Ladies Association to save George Washington's home. Alice Longfellow preserved her parents' home and belongings, including family papers and even the children's drawings. And today, more of us will be able to learn about the first ladies of our country because of the work and dedication of Mary Regula and all the other women who have worked with her, such as Sheila, and all the rest of you who are docents and contributors to this great project. And I salute and thank you very, very much.

What this project demonstrates is that as we approach the new millennium, we have a unique opportunity to expand our horizons and think more profoundly about what it means to preserve, and what values that preservation represents to us. Already, we are embracing more of our history and broadening our understanding of who did shape it. We're also widening the circle of who is responsible for taking care of and preserving that history. Saving our treasures is no longer a specialized or isolated practice of experts or curators. It is not even the province of just private citizens working by themselves alone. It is truly up to all of us, as you here in Canton have demonstrated.

Every community has a treasure in its own backyard that tells a unique story. And any American of any age can be a caretaker of our heritage, and thereby give a gift to our future.

As I was listening to the Pledge of Allegiance, I thought of the school children around America who have made such contributions. There were, for instance, school children outside of the Philadelphia area who learned about the Save America's Treasures campaign to save the home of Harriet Tubman, the courageous ex-slave who led so many other slaves to freedom. These students brought pennies to school every Friday and raised \$1,100 to help preserve that historic home. I think of the citizens of San Francisco who organized yard sales and sent in small donations to restore the beautiful Conservatory of Flowers overlooking Golden Gate Park, where families for generations had spent Sunday afternoons. And nearly a century ago, the more

than one million school children from around the world who raised \$500,000 to build the McKinley National Memorial, which I will visit this afternoon.

These are the kinds of efforts that have always represented the best of America. And I think about how all of us can be imaginative in contributing to this history. The President and I started the White House Millennium Council because we knew we wanted to do more to mark this important passage of time. Certainly, we understood that this would be an opportunity for great New Year's Eve parties. But more than that, it would allow us to take stock of who we are as Americans. And we chose as our theme, "Honor the past; imagine the future." That is what is happening here today.

I want to thank everyone who has made this gift to the future possible. I want you to stop and think about not only the tangible gifts—like the library and the soon-to-be renovated bank building—but even more important, perhaps, the intangible values that define us as Americans: Our responsibilities to one other. Our gift of freedom. Our commitment to respect and tolerate our diversity; to understand how unique America is. And our capacity to come together in sorrow and in joy to express the common values we honor most that bind us together.

One hundred years ago, President McKinley said, "Let us ever remember that our interest is in concord, not conflict, and that our real eminence rests in the victories of peace, not those of war." Those words—like our efforts to preserve America's treasures—honor our shared past. But they also serve—even a century later—as a blueprint for our common future.

I look forward to the lessons that will be learned and passed on through this library and the expanded understanding it will give us of the roles that these women played in our country's history. And by doing so, it will help to open our eyes to the kind of future that together we can imagine to make our country even greater. Thank you all very much.

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS FOR NATIONAL FIRST LADIES' LIBRARY WEBSITE EVENT
THE WHITE HOUSE
FEBRUARY 23, 1998**

Thank you. Welcome to the White House and the East Room. Today, we open the electronic doors of the first virtual library ever devoted to the lives and legacies of America's First Ladies. I'd like to thank everyone here who made this possible, especially: Mary Regula, the President of the National First Ladies' Library, whose vision and commitment helped bring us to this day; Historian Carl Anthony, whose scholarship has greatly enhanced our understanding of America's First Ladies; all the distinguished First Ladies of the states...you know what incredible examples your predecessors have set and you, in turn, have done so much to provide new opportunities and role models for those who will follow you.

We are also very fortunate to have with us today students from Jefferson Junior High School, as well as two First Grandchildren, Marshall and Walker Bush, who can help us better understand not only their grandmothers, but also the Internet for those of us less technologically evolved. And I want to say a very special welcome to everyone joining us via video conferencing at four different sites: The Stark State College of Technology in Canton, Ohio, home of the National First Ladies' Library; Lakenheath High School in Lakenheath, England; Baylor University in Waco, Texas; and the Model Secondary School for the Deaf at Gallaudet University right here in Washington.

As many of you know, my husband and I have recently started hosting a series of White House activities designed to commemorate the upcoming Millennium. Many of the First Ladies here have already started to do the same in their states. And we are calling on all Americans to join us. Because, over the next few years, we have an incredible opportunity in our communities and homes to have not just a celebration, but an on-going conversation...to really step back and take stock of who we are as a nation, what we value, and what we want to bring with us into the next century. The theme we have chosen for our Millennium activities is "Honor the past; imagine the future." And, when you think about it, that's really what we're doing here today.

I often tell the story of the famous Gilbert Stuart portrait of George Washington, which still hangs over to my right for one reason -- because one of my predecessors, Dolley Madison, saved it before the British burned down the White House during the War of 1812. She knew that this portrait -- like other treasures from our past -- is part of our common history as Americans. Too often though, that common history has left out the extraordinary contributions of women. Today's announcement is helping to change that.

As we start to celebrate women's history month next week, we think about the stories that must be uncovered and told...stories about the countless women who cleared the pathways that we now walk, some of them famous, most of them not. We think about my predecessors, the challenges they faced while they were here, the gifts they gave that are with us still. We see Lady Bird Johnson serving as the chair of Head Start. Frances Cleveland opening the White House to working women as guests for the first time. We remember Betty Ford talking openly about breast cancer. Eleanor Roosevelt championing human rights. Jackie Kennedy starting the White House Historical Association. And Barbara Bush working hard to improve literacy.

As I look at Marshall and Walker Bush, I think about how much they have been blessed -- not only with a wonderful grandmother, but also with the opportunity to get to know her and hear firsthand about her life. When they have children, the responsibility will come to them to pass down their Family's stories...just as it is our collective responsibility to learn about and pass down all of our nation's stories -- those of women and men, those of First Ladies and, one day, First Men.

History should not only encompass the contributions of all Americans...it also should be accessible to all Americans. Our daughter is clearly the Internet specialist in our house. And it shouldn't come as any surprise that it was Mary Regula's daughter who pointed out to her that it wasn't enough in this day and age to only house this comprehensive bibliography on a bookshelf. Her prescription was clear: We needed to go on-line to create a library of the future. Soon, I will be taking the first electronic stroll through this new virtual library. And, starting today, anyone in the world can type in [www -- dot --firstladies -- dot -- org](http://www--dot--firstladies--dot--org) and uncover nearly 40,000 books, articles, letters, manuscripts, journals and other literary works by and about First Ladies. With the click of the mouse, we are bringing history into the future and saving it for the ages.

No one has done more to make that possible than our next speaker. When Mary Regula's husband asked her to fill in for him and give a speech about President Lincoln, she chose to talk about Mary Todd. There was only one problem -- she couldn't find any information about her. Some people would have simply changed topics. But, thankfully, Mary Regula chose a slightly different path. She decided to create an entire library. As a student of history, she knew how important it is to preserve our past. As a former teacher, she knew how important it is to make sure those lessons survive in the hearts and minds of all our children and all of their children. And, as someone with boundless spirit and perseverance, she knew how to get it done. In only three years, Mary Regula took an inspired idea and turned it into a living institution that is now accessible to anyone in the world.

It is my great honor to introduce to founding chair and President of the National First Ladies' Library: Mary Regula.

[FYI -- After Mary and Carl Anthony speak, they will call you to the computer to unveil the official welcome on the home page -- which is a letter with a picture of you. After that is over, you should go to the podium to encourage people to use this website and bring news of it back to their states and communities; to tell them that they are free to come up now and try it out; and to thank them for coming]

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
VIDEO REMARKS FOR NATIONAL FIRST LADIES' LIBRARY
MAY 5, 1998

As honorary chair, I am delighted to be able to welcome all of you to this historic event celebrating the opening of the National First Ladies' Library. Not too long ago, I helped open the 'virtual' doors of this institution at the White House, and I am so pleased that the 'real' ribbon is finally being cut here in Canton, Ohio.

I'd like to thank everyone here who made this library possible. My friend Mary Regula, the President of the National First Ladies' Library, whose vision and commitment helped bring us to this day. Historian Carl Anthony has not only helped deepen our understanding of the role First Ladies have played in our nation's history. He has also been instrumental in getting this library off the ground. Appreciation to the countless others who have given so much of their time and energy to make this library a reality.

This unique American institution will give people from all walks of life the opportunity to learn about the important social, political, and humanitarian contributions our First Ladies have made over the years. Whether you are interested in Lady Bird Johnson's serving as chair of Head Start or Eleanor Roosevelt's role in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, you will find the resources and information you need right here in Canton.

I'm also pleased that the National First Ladies' Library will be reaching out to millions of Americans through its web page. Scholars, historians, students and teachers will be able to come here on 'virtual' visits from thousands of miles away, and learn from one another through the library's video-conferencing facilities. This library truly is "the library of the future."

The President joins me in congratulating all of you on this special and historic day.

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS FOR "FIRST LADIES SALUTE FIRST
WOMEN" GALA
RONALD REAGAN BLDG. & INT'L. TRADE CENTER
MARCH 16, 1999

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Thank you all very much.

I'd like to thank my friends Jane Alexander, Mary Steenburgen and Carl Anthony for that wonderful performance. Carl Anthony has certainly done more than any other scholar or historian to enhance our understanding of America's first ladies. And I'd like to acknowledge Barbara Walters for her contribution to tonight's program.

Before the development of the Internet, we learned much of our history from scribes who spent their time recording significant events or writing about the lives of famous people. This, unfortunately, is why we have been able to learn so little about the women who came before us. Few were famous and not much of what they did was considered significant by the historians of their day. This is also why what Mary Regula has done in creating the National First Ladies Library is so important. Without her vision and dedication, the Saxton-McKinley house might have been lost forever, along with a significant piece of our history. Thank you Mary.

What an inspirational group of women we honor here tonight... Beginning with my friend and one of this country's true "first women"-- Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. We'll also applaud the accomplishments of the first African-American woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for poetry, Gwendolyn Brooks; Elizabeth Campbell, founder and Vice-President for Community Affairs at W-E-T-A Public Television; Shirley Chisolm, the first African-American woman to be elected to the United States House of Representatives; and Sandra Day O'Connor, the first female Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court. Congratulations and thank you all for the doors you have opened for every woman in this country.

We are joined tonight by several other First Ladies.

Among them, I'd like to acknowledge Frances Hughes
Glendening, the First Lady of Maryland and Hope Taft, the First
Lady of Ohio. They co-chair the First Ladies of the States
Committee that has been organized to pursue the education and
historic preservation goals of the National First Ladies Library
on a state level.

Governor Glendening is also with us.

There's a former First Lady in the audience who has not only been a first lady, but she was also the daughter of one of my favorite first ladies, Lady Byrd Johnson. I'm speaking of course of Lynda Johnson Robb, the former First Lady of Virginia.

[I'd like to thank George Peapples and Ray Ivey for the generous support that General Motors and Consolidated Natural Gas have offered to this project.]

And of course the many members of Congress who voted funding for the Library, many of whom are here as well.

[Among the members here tonight are many women who have managed to penetrate the traditionally male bastion that is Capitol Hill: Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Mikulski; Congresswomen Shelley Berkley, Donna Christiansen, Eva Clayton, Diane DeGette, Maxine Waters, Marcy Kaptur, Sheila Jackson Lee, Carrie Meek, Patsy Mink and Nancy Pelosi. We are also joined tonight by Senator Mike DeWine, and Congressman John Dingell, Ernie Fletcher, Charles Gonzalez, Porter Goss, David Hobson, Dennis Moore, Donald Payne and Mike Simpson.]

And of course, lest I forget, the man who has offered
steadfast support to his wife at every stop along the road to
creating the First Ladies Library -- Congressman Ralph Regula.

[other notables in the audience: Sandy (Mrs. Jesse)
Jackson; Lura Lynn Ryan, First Lady of Illinois; Hovah
Underwood, First Lady of West Virginia and Judy O'Bannon,
First Lady of Indiana.]

Last night, as part of our on-going celebration of the Millennium, the President and I were pleased to host the Sixth Millennium Evening at the White House. In honor of National Women's History Month, our theme was the history of American women in the 20th century. Three distinguished scholars -- Nancy Cott, Alice Kessler-Harris, and Ruth Simmons -- spoke on women as volunteers and reformers, the struggle for women's rights, and women in public and civic life. These evenings are part of the national effort that we have undertaken to commemorate the turn of the Millennium by "Honoring Our Past and Imagining Our Future."

I should have a talk with Ida Saxton McKinley to find out more about what life was like at the turn of the last century. But I'm sure that, of all the changes wrought during the last hundred years, perhaps none has been more dramatic than the evolution of the role of women. And, as the role of women has changed, so has the role of First Lady.

Ida McKinley, our 20th First Lady and the wife of our 25th President, was a woman of great courage, who developed epilepsy at the age of 28. By the time she was 53 and her husband became President, she used a wheelchair to keep from falling and injuring herself. Nonetheless, at a time when people with seizures were routinely kept out of the public eye, she presided at state dinners and functions and traveled widely with her husband. And, during her four years as First Lady, she knitted more than 3,000 pairs of slippers for sale by charities.

Becoming First Lady offers many things, some anticipated and some not, some wonderful and some not. Among the opportunities is the platform from which one can try to effect change and highlight important issues. Among my predecessors who used that platform to great advantage, I think of Lady Bird Johnson, who was committed not only to beautifying America, but also served as chair of Head Start. Betty Ford who talked openly about her breast cancer. Former schoolteacher Abigail Fillmore, who pressured Congress to fund a White House Library. Jacqueline Kennedy, who did so much to preserve the history of the White House. And, of course, Eleanor Roosevelt, who worked tirelessly for civil rights, and chaired the United Nations Commission that drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Each of us is a caretaker of our nation's history and as we approach the new Millennium, it is up to each of us to honor that history. Last summer I toured 16 of America's treasured historical sites, from Virginia to Massachusetts. I started with a visit to the Star Spangled Banner here in Washington. I saw George Washington's Revolutionary War Headquarters in Newburgh, New York and Harriet Tubman's home in Auburn. I finished the tour with a stop at the Women's Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls, where the first Women's Rights Convention took place 150 years ago.

Like the Saxton-McKinley house, each of these American treasures is a living textbook -- a glimpse into the past and a lesson for the future. And like the Saxton-McKinley house, each has almost been allowed to crumble away, taking a piece of our history with it.

Thanks to Mary and all the rest of you here who have worked so hard to restore Ida McKinley's house and create the National First Ladies Library, we will be able to carry this important piece of our history -- and the lessons it can take with us into the next century.

Thank you all.

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