

# Historical Nonfiction



## Women of the Prairie State: 25 Illinois Women You Should Know

By Marty Darragh, Jo Pitkin and Others  
Illustrated by Lisa Greenleaf

RL 5.5 – ages 9 and up  
Interest level: grades 5 and above  
(136 pages)

These pioneers, torchbearers, and trendsetters of the Prairie State were everyday women who accomplished both personal and professional goals through their strength and determination.

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### Featuring 25 Illinois Women

**Mary Ann Bickerdyke:** *Civil War Nurse*

**Willa Beatrice Brown:** *Pioneer African-American Aviator*

**Jane Byrne:** *Chicago's First Woman Mayor*

**Mary Chase:** *Botanist*

**Loïe Fuller:** *Dance Artist*

**Aida Giachello:** *Hispanic Health Advocate*

**Jennie Rodgers:** *Civil War Soldier*

**Irene Hunt:** *Teacher, Writer, Newbery Medal Winner*

**Janet Jagan:** *First American-Born Woman to be President of a Nation*

**Mary Harris Jones:** *Fighter for Workers' Rights*

**Jackie Joyner-Kersey:** *World's Greatest Woman Athlete*

**Annie Turnbo Malone:** *Beauty-Products Pioneer*

**Geraldine McCullough:** *Welded Metal Sculptor*

**Michelle Obama:** *First Lady of the United States*

**Elizabeth P.W. Packard:** *Activist for the Mentally Ill*

**Jeanette Ridlon Piccard:** *Scientist and Priest*

**Florence Price:** *African-American Composer*

**Kathy Reichs:** *Bone Detective and Mystery Writer*

**Edith Spurlock Sampson:** *First African-American Delegate to the United Nations*

**Hannah Solomon:** *Faith and Service*

**Mary Harris Thompson:** *Determined to Help*

**Christiana Holmes Tillson:** *Prairie Pioneer*

**Jennie Ward:** *A Beautiful Flyer*

**Ida B. Wells-Barnett:** *African-American Crusader for Justice*

**Willye B. White:** *Track and Field Olympian*

# Tidbits from the Women of the Prairie State: Illinois



“**Mother**” **Mary Ann Bickerdyke** left her children with friends to bring supplies to Civil War soldiers. She nursed soldiers during the war and ran a boardinghouse for them when the war ended.



**Jennie Rodgers** stowed away on a ship to America as a cabin boy. She earned more money working as a man than as a woman and enlisted in the Civil War as Albert Cashier.



**Hannah Greenebaum Solomon** created the National Council of Jewish Women and held study circles to teach women and help people in need.



**Loie Fuller** created a new kind of dance movement using yards of swirling silk that would “glow” as she danced.



**Ida B. Wells-Barnett** helped start the NAACP and will have a monument built in her honor in Chicago.

**Annie Turnbo Malone** started a beauty products empire that led to beauty salons being opened in the Caribbean, Africa, South America, and the Philippines.



**Mary Chase** became a worldwide expert on grasses with only a grammar school education. She travelled the world to study plants and grasses—even travelling by mule in Brazil to conduct her research.



**Willie Brown** became the first African American woman in the US to get a pilot’s license passing her exam with a 96%. Later, she became the first African American woman to run for Congress.



**Irene Hunt** *Across Five Aprils* based on Civil War stories her grandfather told her.

**Jane Byrne** won the largest number of votes in Chicago history to become the first woman mayor of Chicago.



**Kathy Reichs** is a bone detective who has written books and produced TV shows based on her work as a forensic anthropologist. She even has a skeleton named Jones Bones in her house.



**Jackie Joyner Kersee** is named after Jacqueline Kennedy and has been called “the greatest female athlete of all time” for setting multiple world records in track and field.



**Michelle Obama’s** “Let’s Move” campaign encourages kids to exercise and make better food choices. Kids from Washington D.C. schools helped plant a vegetable garden at the White House to encourage healthy food options.