

Pioneering Women of Lake County Part 1

Let's open 2020 with a two-part series highlighting the lives and contributions of some famous women in the annals of Lake County history. Part I will examine the following four notable careers - Patricia Hange, Frances Jennings Casement, Cora Gaines Carrel and Ann Whitman.

Patricia J. Hange - Prop Girl

Graduating at age 17 from a local high school, Pat started working at Willoughby Airport. Gassing airplanes, greasing tailwheels, sweeping hangars, changing plugs gave way to increased duties as assigned for this first female aviation mechanic. Whether in the cockpit of a 1929 Douglas 0-38, Corsair F-2-G or PT26s, V77s,

Wacos and PBYs, Pat climbed in her career which was a most unusual profession for women at that time.

As the 1940s gave way to a new decade, Pat passed exams and entered the world of airplane races. When owner Cook Clelend closed the Willoughby Airport's doors to enter the Korean conflict, Pat secured an enhanced career at Thompson Products (later TRW). In time Pat acquired a shell of a Taylorcraft and rebuilt it. This spurred a new career as she paired up with future partner Harriet Hamilton to run their own flight school in Ashtabula, Ohio. The school began in 1960, relocated by 1962 and was open thru late 2006. Pat, the Prop Girl had a career that spanned more than 50 years in aviation mechanics. Additionally, she logged over 10,000 flight hours in planes and gliders, another interest acquired from a visit to Elmira, NY.

Pat's career merited not only induction into the International Women's Air & Space Museum at Burke Airport in Cleveland, Ohio, but also the Wall of Honor at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum. Pat Hange is the only woman to win inclusion for a career as an aviation mechanic, one that spanned more than 50 years.





Frances Jennings Casement - 1840-1928

Lake County was formed in 1840, the same year Francis Jennings was born. Some 88 years later, at the time of her death, this leading suffragette and women's voting advocate made history as a major figure in the 19th Amendment movement and passage in 1920. Frances was born in Painesville, Ohio, to a father who was a local teacher. She graduated from Painesville Academy in 1852 and the Women's Female Seminary (now Lake Erie College) in 1856.

Married to General Jack Casement in 1857, it was a chance trip to Wyoming in 1870 that launched her career. She met and took up a cause with Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. That cause was simply "Equal Rights." She formed a local county chapter in 1883 in Painesville. In



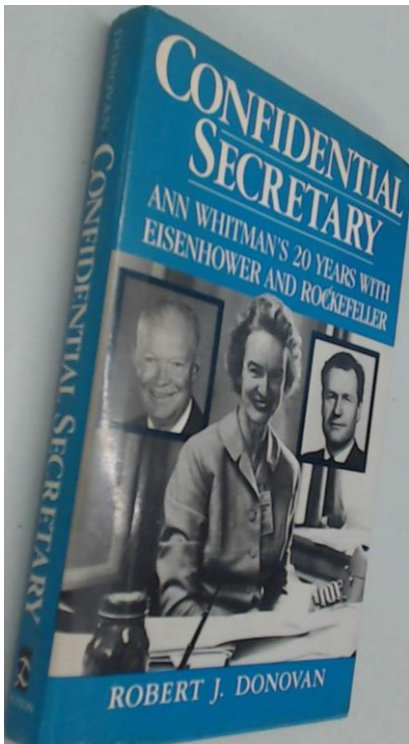
1885, her reach expanded and the Ohio Suffragettes were formed. Within three years, her influence was growing; and by 1890 she was at her pinnacle as a lead member of the National Suffragette Movement in the U.S. She championed many women's causes in her lifetime but the 1920 passage of the 19th Amendment stands alone in America lore. Her lovely Casement House still stands today and may be viewed while she resides in Evergreen Cemetery (section 10, row 21, grave 2). Both are in Painesville.



Cora Gaines Carrel - Historic Marker 23-43

One of the leading pioneers in Ohio political history, Cora's life spanned from 1860-1927. Her early years as a schoolteacher were followed by years as a county suffragette. The passing of the 19th Amendment led to her selection as the first woman in Ohio to serve on a city council. From 1921-1924, she spearheaded city planning and zoning ordinances in Willoughby, Ohio. That footprint is still in place today. A 1901 book of poems known as *Buckeye Ballads* highlighted Ohio's Centennial. In her later years, she held top positions in the Cleveland Press Club and Cleveland Women's City Club. Lake County and even Ohio political history would be remiss if early pioneer Cora Carrel's name was missing.





Ann Cook Whitman - Confidential Secretary (1908-1991)

Ann Cook was born in Perry, Ohio in 1908. Her early years included an education and college stay at Antioch College. She married in 1941. Ann Whitman's career aspirations changed when she took a position as a personal secretary to Mrs. David Levy. Mrs. Levy was a family member to the founders of Sears, Roebuck & Company. In 1952, she was persuaded by Dwight D. Eisenhower to become his Presidential Secretary. Her copious notes and archiving of his White House years were deemed significant in history circles.

In 1961, Eisenhower took her with him to assist in his Presidential Library in Gettysburg, Pa. Sometime later, Ann moved on to become the personal secretary to New York Governor and future Vice President Nelson Rockefeller. She retired in 1977 and passed in 1991; but her career was so important and noteworthy that a book entitled *Confidential Secretary* was written about her life and contributions to U.S. Presidential History. She is buried in Perry Township Cemetery.

From her obituary:

"Ann C. Whitman, an influential figure in the White House as the personal secretary to President Dwight D. Eisenhower and later as chief of staff to Vice President Nelson A. Rockefeller, died Tuesday at Morton Plant Hospital in Clearwater, Fla. She was 83 years old and lived in Clearwater. Mrs. Whitman died of heart failure, friends said.



"Mrs. Whitman routinely worked 12 hours a day, and often seven days a week. Among her chores was supervising the President's responses to correspondence, which reached hundreds of thousands of letters a year. Recruited in 1952, Mrs. Whitman, whose maiden name was Cook, was born in Perry, Ohio, and attended Antioch

College. As part of its work-study program, she went to the Institute for Child Guidance in New York City, became a secretary there and never returned to college. Her next job, which she held for 16 years, was as a personal secretary to Adele Rosenwald Levy, whose father was a founder of Sears, Roebuck & Company."

"There's no question she played a vital role in the Eisenhower Administration; he really depended on her tremendously," said Robert J. Donovan, author of "Confidential Secretary: Ann Whitman's 20 Years with Eisenhower and Rockefeller" (E. P. Dutton, 1988).

Two \$4,000 Dwight D. Eisenhower/Ann Cook Whitman Scholarships from the Eisenhower Institute are available annually to the students of Perry High School.

Submitted by Dan Maxson Local Lore by Max, 2010-2016 - Community Media Lab, The News-Herald - Volunteer Trustee, Curator - FHHS/ Fairport Harbor Lighthouse & Marine Museum - Volunteer Curator / Docent - Old Stone School, Concord Township