She Shapes History Opens October 5, 2019
Celebrating 100 Years of Women’s Suffrage at Berkshire Museum

[Pittsfield, MA] – She Shapes History will be on view at Berkshire Museum from October 5, 2019 through May 5, 2020. On Friday, October 4, a special public preview and reception will be held from 5:30 to 7:30 pm. The preview event will be free and open to the community during Downtown Pittsfield’s First Fridays Artswalk. She Shapes History is sponsored by Berkshire Magazine.

Centered around the 100th anniversary of American women winning the right to vote, She Shapes History shines a light on exceptional women, their work, and how their accomplishments changed American history. Highlighting women from the Berkshires and beyond, the exhibition explores how societal expectations and opportunities changed for American women from the early 1800s through present day as they marched into leadership positions, became activists, and entered business, science, and politics.

She Shapes History uses biographies of extraordinary women, including local heroes Elizabeth Freeman and Susan B. Anthony, plus fine art and historical objects from Berkshire Museum’s collection and on loan from Berkshire Historical Society, Hancock Shaker Village, and private collections, to trace the expectations of “women’s work” in America over the past 200 years, from the early 19th century homestead to the record number of women holding public office today.

Focusing on the struggle to gain equal rights and access for women in civic life, education, and the workplace, the exhibition highlights technological advancements and innovations that offered independent travel and economic opportunities for
women, like the inventions of the bicycle, sewing machine, and typewriter; and the
evolution of women’s daily wear from heavy, restrictive gowns to shorter skirts,
bloomers, and pants.

Objects on view in the exhibition include:

- An assortment of women's portraits spanning two centuries from Berkshire
  Museum's collection, including John Singer Sargent’s 1887 Portrait of Mrs.
  Raphael Pumpelly
- The 1934 Corona typewriter used by pioneering Berkshire Museum Educator and
  founder of the Museum’s Children’s Department, Miss Frances Palmer
- Antique farm implements from the collection of Hancock Shaker Village
- Examples of 19th and 20th century women’s garments from the collection of the
  Berkshire Historical Society
- A first edition copy of the 1898 memoir Eighty Years and More: Reminiscences of
  Elizabeth Cady Stanton
- World War I and World War II era posters that depict women’s participation in
  the war efforts
- And many more.

An integral part of the exhibition focuses on civic participation, demonstrating how
women’s voting, advocacy, and community organization has shaped our nation over
the past 200 years. The exhibit dives into the history of the American voting system, as
well as the techniques used by suffragists and women’s rights activists to sway public
opinion. Visitors will have the opportunity to make their voice heard by casting their own
ballot and participating in guided gallery programs that will include, among other
activities, the chance to design their own protest signs.

The opening of She Shapes History will be accompanied by a new program for school
groups titled We Shape History, designed in alignment with new-this-year Massachusetts
History and Social Studies Standards to feature “increased emphasis on civics at all
grade levels with particular attention to the contributions of women and men of all
ethnicities and backgrounds in the United States and the connections among world
cultures,” and offering expanded “examples of primary sources representing significant
texts, maps, photographs, and works of art.” This interactive program will educate
students on various aspects of American civics, including voting and citizenship. All
classes, regardless of grade, school district, or location, are invited to visit Berkshire
Museum free of charge thanks to the generous underwriting support of Greylock
Federal Credit Union, the Beauregard Family, and our community. Educators are
encouraged to visit berkshiremuseum.org/education or call 413.443.7171 ext. 336 to
plan their class trip today.

About Berkshire Museum

Berkshire Museum is located at 39 South Street (Route 7) in Pittsfield, MA. The Museum is
open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday noon to 5 p.m.
Admission is $13 adult, $6 child (under 18); free admission for Museum members, EBT
cardholders, and children age 3 and under. For more information, visit
www.berkshiremuseum.org or call 413.443.7171.

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