

A Brief History of Women at AAAS

For Women's History Month, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) recognizes a selection of women who have moved the needle further. Please download and share this timeline at your school, lab or workplace! Did we miss someone? Log on to the [AAAS Member Community](#) and let us know about a woman in the sciences who has inspired you!



1847

In addition to being AAAS' first woman member, **Maria Mitchell** was a AAAS Fellow. She worked to advance women's education and, as the first female American astronomer, used a telescope to discover a comet in 1847.



1873

Elizabeth Thompson was the first patron of AAAS. She was an American philanthropist who was interested in science, and she gifted \$1,000 to AAAS in 1873, which would be worth around \$21,000 today.



1910

Florence Bascom was the first woman to earn her doctorate from Johns Hopkins University, and she was also the first woman geologist to work for the U.S. Geological Survey. She was a lifelong member of AAAS, after joining in 1910.



1971

In 1971, AAAS Member **Mina Rees** became the first woman president of AAAS. Before that position, she worked for the Applied Mathematics Panel of the National Defense Research Committee during the second World War and also headed the U.S. Office of Naval Research after the war.



1974

In 1974, AAAS Member **Jewel Plummer Cobb** became the first African American woman to serve on the National Science Board, an important committee that supervises the National Science Foundation. Additionally, Cobb collaborated with Jane Wright, a renowned cancer biologist, to discover breast cancer treatments.



1975

Margaret Mead was the president of AAAS in 1975 and a key figure in AAAS' work to address social issues. Before coming to AAAS, Mead traveled around the world and wrote about anthropology. She also worked at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City for many years as a curator.



1983

Astronomer and AAAS Member **Margaret Burbidge** became the president of AAAS in 1983. Before that, she was the first woman president of the American Astronomy Society. Throughout her life, she has worked to provide opportunities for women in science.



1983

Barbara McClintock was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1983 in Physiology or Medicine, becoming the first female AAAS Member to win a Nobel. She worked on maize cytogenetics and focused on that research for the majority of her life.



1991

In 1991, after working to change the face of medicine throughout much of her career, AAAS Member **Bernadine Healy** became the first woman to direct the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Shortly after taking up her post, she started the NIH Women's Health Initiative, which carries out research on various diseases that affect women.



1992

Aboard the space shuttle Endeavour on Sept. 12, 1992, AAAS Member **Mae Jemison** became the first African-American woman in space. In addition to being an astronaut, Jemison was a Peace Corps Volunteer and a teacher. To this day, she is a strong advocate for science.



1997

Jessica Tuchman Mathews was a participant in the first class of AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellowships in 1973. She then became president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in 1997.



2019

As part of her \$25 million commitment to support women in STEM, philanthropist **Lyda Hill** and AAAS established the "IF/THEN Ambassador" program. This program will highlight women STEM professionals as role models to inspire the next generation of girls.

