



# Claretha Pierce

**Year Honored:** 2018

**Achievements:** Educator

Claretha (McKenzie) Pierce was born on May 23, 1937 in Lake City, South Carolina to Fred and Itlene McKenzie, who were both farmers. She was the fourth child born to this union.

Claretha's family was one of the few descendants from slaves that received 40 acres and a mule after slavery. She and her siblings still own a small remnant of the land and a portion was donated to St. John's Methodist Church, which still exists. Prior to migrating north, Claretha attended schools in Lake City, S.C., including Carver High School.

Like so many African Americans in the south during the 1950s, Claretha moved north to take advantage of better opportunities. In 1957, she initially came to Paterson, NJ for her sister's wedding. She decided to remain in Paterson because she was able to secure a job. She would soon meet and fell in love with George Pierce, who she married in 1963. Together they had six children; raised four nieces and nephews after their mom (her sister-in-law) passed away and adopted one child. Although she and her husband did not complete high school, Claretha stressed the importance of education and a strong work ethic to their children.

Despite being a working mother, Claretha always found the time to attend school events and connect with teachers regarding her children's education. "I served as my children's first teacher. I used educational television and found resources in the community to make sure they were exposed to new experiences. Additionally, I was a constant fixture in the school fighting for them to get the best education possible or to make sure they were trying their best," explained Claretha. Her results paid off, she has a son that is an engineer and another is a salesman; her daughters are managers and directors in the school system, as well as healthcare professionals.

Today, Claretha is retired but her love for children keeps her involved in the school system. She can be found in the halls of Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School. Today she advocates for her grandchildren and any child that needs her support. She is affectionately referred to as "the grandmother of the school."

Claretha recently founded the ***Pride & Joy Mentor Program*** for young girls ages 3 to 10. "I wanted to impress upon young girls the importance of faith, as well as offer them an opportunity to learn more about cooking; grooming and arts & crafts," said Claretha. It is her goal to have an impact on a new generation and teach them to continue her legacy by giving back when they become older.



# Eleanor Egg

**Year Honored:** 2018

**Achievements:** Athlete, dancer

Eleanor Egg was born February 3, 1909, in Paterson. As a child, she worked as an acrobat in her parents' Vaudeville act. Eleanor would balance atop a 10-foot pole that balanced on her father's chin. The family stopped touring when she was eight. She went to public schools, competing in several different sports.

In 1923, Eleanor began her track and field career with the Paterson Girls Recreation Program. Two years later, her team set an outdoor world record for the 4 x 100 relay. She later competed in the broadjump, setting a record in 1927. Eleanor was supposed to compete for the 1928 U.S. Olympic team, but he injured her ankle. Nonetheless, she became the city's most celebrated athlete in the years that followed. Paterson's silk industry took a big hit in the 1920s after the development of synthetic fabric, and suffered more during the Great Depression. Her celebrity was a major reason why the city built Hinchcliffe Stadium.

Eleanor commonly ran in the 100-yard dash and competed in the shot putt. At a national meet held in Jersey City in 1931, she defeated the famous defending champion Stella Walsh in the 100-yard dash. The city of Paterson honored her with a dinner and a commemorative plaque. The community always supported her, even raising money for her and her teammates to travel to out-of-state meets. Soon after, Eleanor reinjured her ankle, killing any chance she had of qualifying for the 1932 Olympics and effectively putting an end to her athletic career.

Eleanor won over 250 medals and trophies in local, regional and national Amateur Athletic Union competitions through the Paterson Girls' Recreation Association and the Duffy League. After her retirement, Eleanor coached a local girls' track club for several years. She married Charles Krattiger in 1935, and decided to become a dance instructor. She taught dance for the next 40 years at different studios, including her own. Eleanor also took up painting as a hobby.





# Hannah Silverman

**Year Honored:** 2018

**Achievements:** Labor Leader

Hannah (Silverman) Mandell, labor activist, was born January 28, 1896, in New York City. Morris Silverman, her father, was an American-born Jew of German parentage. Sarah (Sarna) Silverman, her mother, was a Polish Jew born in the manufacturing city of Lodz, where her family worked in textiles. There were thirteen children in the Sarna family. Hirsh Sarna, their father, brought his wife, Fannie and eight or nine children to the United States, where Sarah met and married Morris Silverman. Hannah was the second of their four children.

She became famous in 1913, when only seventeen, for her leading role in the Paterson, New Jersey silk strike of that year. Her life is obscure before 1913, and after 1913 it becomes obscure again. Only in the months during and immediately after the Paterson strike was she a public figure. In that brief period she became a symbol of what women could do in labor conflicts, if given the opportunity.

During the strike Hannah became a picket line captain and was arrested and released five times during the strike. Her natural talent for public speaking inspired the crowds she addressed and contributed to an understanding and appreciation of the plight of the striking workers.

International Workers of the World founder Bill Haywood called Hannah the “greatest little IWW woman in America,” and labor activist Helen Gurley Flynn called her “the heroine of this strike.” An assistant prosecutor, meanwhile, labeled her a “little agitator,” and a judge called her an “impudent girl.”

By the end of the strike, which began on February 25, some 24,000 workers had walked off their jobs, shutting down 300 silk mills. Silverman emerged as a leader of the strikers, who were seeking eight-hour workdays and minimum pay of \$12 a week, due to her public-speaking skills and passion. Addressing a crowd of 20,000 striking workers one Sunday she said, “I’ve been to county jail three times already, but they can’t keep me away from the picket lines!” The *Paterson Daily News* called Silverman “one of the leading lights in the present strike,” and *The New York Times* found her “pretty and intelligent” and a “match” for prosecutors in courtroom savvy.

Stretching over six long months, the silk-workers strike ended in defeat for the workers. It took until 1919 for silk mill employees to receive an eight-hour workday. Silverman’s labor activism ended with the close of the strike.



# Jennie Tuttle Hobart

**Year Honored:** 2018

**Achievements:** Philanthropist

Jennie was the wife of Vice President Garret Hobart. She was a philanthropist and community activist in New Jersey.

Born and raised in Paterson, New Jersey, she was the daughter of the prominent attorney Socrates Tuttle and his wife, Jane Winters. She married Garret Hobart in Paterson on July 21, 1869, at the start of his career as a lawyer and politician. They had two children, Garret Jr. and Fannie, who died in 1895.

In 1896 her husband was elected Vice President of the United States and the family moved to Washington, D.C.. As Second Lady of the United States, Hobart often served as *White House hostess* because the First Lady, Ida Saxton McKinley, suffered from epilepsy. Vice President Hobart died of heart failure on November 21, 1899. After his death, she returned to Paterson and became involved in community affairs. From 1887 to 1937 Ms. Hobart was the Vice President of the Memorial Day Nursery. She was also the Vice President of the Old Ladies Home from 1883-1922.

She was a close friend of Mrs. McKinley and rushed to Buffalo, New York, to offer her support to her when President McKinley was shot in September 1901.

In 1925, she donated her family's art collection to the Paterson Public Library and in 1927, she established the Passaic County Historical Society at Lambert Castle.



# Kelly Moss

**Year Honored:** 2018

**Achievements:** Women's advocate

Kelly is the daughter of Pam Moss & father Bobby Byrd. She is the eldest of four children. She attended the Paterson Public School System as a child she dropped out of high school later to return to school overcoming adversity, setbacks and disappointments.

Kelly attended Passaic County Community College, Barbour-Scotia College Concord NC, Thomas Edison State University and New Jersey Addiction Professionals. She worked in Perinatal Addictions for 18 years as a Specialized Women's Service Counselor and Specialist. Ms. Moss has worked as a Strengthen Families Counselor and as a Consultant to several Women Service Programs.

Kelly currently works at Heart of Hannah Women's Center, a faith based non- profit social service agency in which she is the founder. Heart of Hannah provides services for at risk women, girls and homeless families in transition on their journey to wellness & self-sufficiency. She also is the founder of the Center of Hope Hospitality & Learning Institute. Ms. Brown is currently the Co-Chair for The Paterson Women Empowerment Group. Kelly is an Ordained Evangelist and currently is a member of Paterson Assemblies of God under Dr. Rev. Bobby Moore.

She also has been recognized for her work in the arts. Kelly has written several plays but most noted for "*Yesterday I Died but Today I Lived*" which has been performed in the New York Theatre District nine times. Ms. Moss has developed a healing through drama program in 2000, which explores positive ways to address societal ills in the lives of women and children.

Kelly is also a founding member of several grassroots organizations such as Band against Neighborhood Destruction and Occupy Barbour Park in which she partners and collaborates with other grassroot groups to make a difference in Paterson.

Lastly, Ms. Moss has been recognized and awarded for her contributions in the community. Kelly remains humble and believes "*She can do all things through Christ who strengthens her. God is the source of all she is and do.*" Her daily motto she shares with herself and others is "*We are Stronger/Strongest at Our Broken Places.*"





# Louise Branthwaite

**Year Honored:** 2018

**Achievements:** Labor leader

Louise Branthwaite, skilled broadsilk warper, office worker and student at the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers in 1924 and 1925, was born on December 9, 1898, in Paterson, at the home of her parents, Max and Minna (Graf) Delling, built within a mile of the “Great Falls” of the Passaic River. Branthwaite was the fourth of five children and the third daughter born to the Dellings, both immigrants from Saxony, Germany, where maternal grandfather Carl Graf operated three woolen looms from his home. Max Delling was a skilled Jacquard broadsilk weaver, a trade he learned in this country. Branthwaite graduated from Paterson’s Elementary School No. 5 in 1914. She was the sole sibling to continue her family’s textile tradition by going into the silk” at age sixteen to learn warping. Branthwaite views her years at the warping beam with pride and sense of purpose.

Branthwaite was one of approximately 7,700 female silk workers in Paterson in 1917. Her father found her an edge-warping position in the Holzman’s Mill, a job that started her on warping, the skilled, respectably paid work she did continuously until 1931. Branthwaite, a single, teenaged daughter of immigrants who lived with her parents, was representative of young women “in the silk.” To the Delling family income she contributed the standard 90 percent of her wages, which ranged in her early years between \$12 and \$16 a week.

Without consulting her father or anyone else for that matter, she asked to join the newly organized Ladies Horizontal Warpers Union. Shortly after joining this union she quit the Holzman’s mill job for another ribbon-warping position that paid a few more dollars more. It was from that job in Maple Mill that she participated in a climactic 1919 industry wide strike, one that brought the eight-hour day to Paterson’s silkworkers.

Branthwaite remembered that warping tie silk at Arcola “went pretty regular.” Her eight-hour workday began with two bus rides, first one into downtown Paterson, followed by another out to the Riverside section. Dressed in a smock, called a “bungalow apron,” Branthwaite was at her warping beam from eight to five, five days a week, producing enough piecework to bring her a \$28-30 wage. But work was irregular. Branthwaite’s fellow warpers, all women, came from a cross-section of ethnicities in the local silk industry: English, German, Swiss and Italians. Female warpers earned less than male counterparts. Foremen were always males.

One of the greatest steps forward in Branthwaite’s life came in the summer of 1924 and 1925, when she attended the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers. Branthwaite had her confidence enhanced and perspectives broadened through courses in English, composition, public speaking, economics, history, psychology and other electives.



# Marcia Sotorrio

**Year Honored:** 2018

**Achievements:** Cultural Affairs

Marcia's daily dynamic agenda is combined with what she loves best "the ability to connect directly with the community" in her full time job as Community Relations Specialist / Director of the Division of Cultural Community Affairs & Special Events Coordinator for the City of Paterson; a job she has taken to heart bringing a better understanding of one another's diversity through cultural entertainment; she serves as well as liaison between the different communities and the various Departments in the City.

Ms. Sotorrio is the coordinator of the Labor Day Great Falls Festival, the Holiday Parade of Lights, the Easter Egg Hunt, the Mother's Day Breakfast, the City of Paterson Flag Raisings among other events; she also serves as a committee member in the African Heritage Parade Committee, the Puerto Rican Parade and the Italian Heritage Feast

Currently she is diligently working on the development of the Martin Luther King Memorial Plaza on Auburn (Freedom Blvd.) Corner of Governor situated across Bethel AME Church the last public stop of Martin Luther King, Jr. a week before his untimely assassination in Memphis, TN.

She is presently a Commissioner in the Passaic County Motion Picture and Film Commission and is also a Commissioner of the Passaic County Board of History and Tourism; an opportunity that is not underestimated and allows her to communicate the importance to understand one another through mutual respect; expressing that the strength & economic future of Paterson are its people/the diversity and the tourism potential of the Great Falls National & Historical Park; Passaic County the Hidden Gem!

Marcia's weekly radio broadcastings in conjunction with her work in the City have been part of her daily routine bouncing off one another and using the radio's airwave to promote Paterson in a positive way.



# Marie Poland Fish

**Year Honored:** 2018

**Achievements:** Marine biologist, oceanographer

Marie Poland Fish, an oceanographer and marine biologist whose research in underwater sound detection helped the United States Navy to distinguish schools of fish from submarines. To enable anti-submarine vessels properly to identify enemy targets and avoid attacking whales or schools of smaller fish, she recorded and analyzed the sounds of more than 300 species of marine life, from mammals to mussels.

She was a native of Paterson, N.J., and was a graduate of Smith College and received her doctorate in science from the University of Rhode Island.

In 1966, Dr. Fish was awarded the Navy's Distinguished Public Service Award, its highest decoration for a civilian, for her two decades of work in bioacoustics under contract to the Office of Naval Research. Most of her work was conducted at the University of Rhode Island's Narragansett Marine Laboratory in Kingston, which was founded by her husband, Dr. Charles Fish.





# Mary Augusto

**Year Honored:** 2018

**Achievements:** First woman mayoral candidate, community leader

Journalist, community leader and first woman mayoral candidate in Paterson, was born April 8, 1901, in Nicastro, Calabria, Italy.

On March 29, 1920, Augusto arrived at Ellis Island. She joined her siblings in their shared home in Paterson and worked in a silk mill where her brother-in-law was a foreman. During the next three years she went to school in Paterson in the evenings, taking the new American course and studying English at the International Institute for Young Women sponsored by the YWCA. She also studied business at the Columbia Shorthand and Business College in Paterson, receiving a degree in shorthand in 1923.

In 1924, at age 23, Augusto went to work as an editor-translator for *I Nuovo Mondo* (The New World), a New York City Italian-language daily newspaper. In 1928 Mary Augusto became a naturalized citizen. In 1931 she opened a neighborhood candy store and taught Italian and English at the Universal Institute in New York City. In 1932 she married Emilio Augusto, an Italian newspaperman.

The Augustos set up their home in the Dublin section of Paterson, once an Irish-German neighborhood but by the 1930s the home of a largely Italian population. It was from this base that the Augustos decided to run their own Italian-language newspaper, *La Voce Italiana* (The Italian Voice). Still in publication today, the weekly paper began on the kitchen table of their home. By the early 1940s *La Voce* was serving a potential market of 75,000 Italian-Americans in the northern New Jersey area, including 42,000 in Paterson alone. Italians constituted the largest foreign-born population in the city by this time.

In 1947 Augusto threw her hat into the ring as the Liberal-Progressive fusion candidate, the first woman to run for mayor of Paterson. Her platform included school reform, social service and welfare programs, including day care, housing reform and fiscal responsibility. Her slogan became “Vote with Gusto for Mary Augusto. She is remembered within the community as a courageous, reform-minded woman who demonstrated by her own actions her belief in the ability of women, the working class, and the Italian-Americans.



# Mary Danforth Ryle

**Year Honored:** 2018

**Achievements:** Philanthropist

She was born in Paterson, New Jersey, on January 8, 1833, the daughter of Charles Danforth, the designer and manufacturer of the first coal-burning locomotive engine.

Mary Danforth married William Ryle of Macclesfield, Cheshire, England, reputed to be the largest and wealthiest silk importer in the United States. William Ryle was the nephew of John Ryle, the "Father of the U.S. Silk Industry" in Paterson.

Throughout her life, Mary Danforth Ryle was always philanthropic. After her father's death, Mary Ryle donated the residence of her father to the city of Paterson to be used as the city's first library. She provided the funds to alter, furnish and equip the new institution. After the catastrophic fire of 1902, in which much of downtown Paterson was destroyed, including the Danforth Library, Mary Ryle once again donated the funds necessary to build the new Danforth Memorial Library located on Broadway in Paterson. Ryle contracted with Henry Bacon, who designed the Lincoln Memorial to build the new city library.

Mary Danforth Ryle was so loved by the citizens of Paterson that at the time of her death, on December 21, 1904, the funeral was one of the largest the city had ever seen. Mrs. Ryle was buried at Cedar Lawn Cemetery in Paterson.



# Mary Ellen Kramer

**Year Honored:** 2018

**Achievements:** Historic preservationist

Mrs. Kramer was born in Paterson. After graduating from Mary Washington College she earned a master's degree in clinical psychology from George Washington University and briefly practiced as a school psychologist.

Mrs. Kramer became active in civic affairs as the wife of Paterson's Mayor for 14 years, Lawrence (Pat) Kramer. In her first major issue, she led the efforts that blocked state plans to build a highway that would have destroyed some old silk mills.

After that success, she became the executive director of the Great Falls Development Corporation and worked to preserve the mills, which were built in the early 1800's and used the water power of the 77-foot-high Great Falls. The buildings were adapted to new uses, including the Paterson Museum, offices and artists' residences.

In 1976, President Gerald R. Ford visited the district to proclaim its national landmark status. That same year the National Trust for Historic Preservation gave Mrs. Kramer an award for her preservation efforts.

She started a new career in 1980 as the director of community affairs at William Paterson College in Wayne, N.J. There she was instrumental in founding the Wayne Chamber Orchestra, creating the annual Legacy Awards to raise scholarship funds, collecting more than \$300,000 to restore the Hobart Manor on campus and organizing a popular annual lecture series with speakers like Henry Kissinger, Norman Mailer, Alvin Toffler and Beverly Sills.

She also served on the boards of St. Joseph's Hospital and the Straight and Narrow drug and alcohol rehabilitation center, both in New Jersey.





# Minnie Douglass

**Year Honored:** 2018

**Achievements:** Champion roller skater, dancer

Minnie Radcliffe Douglass, champion roller-skater, dancer, choreographer and businesswoman, was born March 23, 1877, in Paterson, New Jersey. She was the only child of Edward and Anna (Hill) Douglass.

Considered a sickly child at the age of six, Douglass took up the newly popular sport of roller-skating as a restorative. Within six months, she was giving exhibitions at the Union Rink located on Broadway in Paterson.

Douglass began her formal roller-skating career on May 1, 1884, at age seven, at the Union Rink. For nine months, she toured many cities in the United States, earning \$15 per show, plus expenses for herself and her mother, who was her constant traveling companion. Newspaper clippings dating between 1884-1886 give her rave reviews for her performances. Because of this press coverage and the great public demand for her exhibitions, she commanded \$150 for a three-day show at Newport, NY, in November 1885. She toured as far west as Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri, where Frank James (of the infamous Jess James gang) is said to have attended one of her shows.

After her short but illustrious skating career, Douglass returned home to Paterson and was graduated in 1894 from St. Aloysius Academy, a Paterson girls school operated by the Roman Catholic order of the Sisters of Charity. At the academy, she was involved in class plays and received prizes for her paintings.

In her second public career, which centered around dancing, Douglass, excelled as both instructor and performer. During the years 1897-1916, Douglass operated a dance school for young children and high school students in Paterson. Her "Lilliputians," or young minstrel students, were a favorite with local audiences. Douglass organized fund-raising shows for local charities using her students as performers and during World War I her Red Cross dance classes raised enough money to purchase three ambulances for the war effort.

From 1916 to 1924 Douglass operated the family business, the Douglass Forge, on Spring Street in Paterson. By 1925 she had established a millinery shop known as the Band Box on Hamilton Street in Paterson. In 1936 the clothing business was moved to her home at 77 Ward Street and became known as Minnie R. Douglass, Women's Clothing. Douglass remained in the clothing business until her death in 1955.



# Rahsona Smith Elder

**Year Honored:** 2018

**Achievements:** Arts advocate

Rahsona was born and raised in the Northside ward, Paterson, New Jersey. She is a proud product of the Paterson Public School system. Rahsona was a Drama major and graduated from Rosa Parks School of Fine and Performing Arts High School in 1991. She went on to further her education at Fairleigh Dickinson University for her Bachelors of Arts Degree and Fordham University for her Masters of Social Work.

In 1998, she founded the InnerFaith Arts Center, Inc., (IPAC) a not-for-profit faith based arts center in her hometown, Paterson for children.

Under her leadership the arts center has professionally trained over 1000 youth through afterschool programs, summer camps, workshops, retreats, in the creative and performing arts genre. A fierce advocate for children and families, Rahsona has committed over 20 plus years of service to at-risk youth.

Her work with youth garnered her national attention where she was named and featured in 2003 in Today's Christian Woman Magazine Everyday Hero. Her community services includes: Vice Chair for the Paterson Education Fund Board of Directors, Advisor to Now Theater, Board Advisor to the Heart of Hannah Women's Center/Center for Hope Learning Center, Board Member/advisor for the certificate in the arts certificate program at Rutgers University. In 2011, she was appointed by Mayor Jeff Jones as Co-Chairwoman of the City of Paterson, NJ Grassroots Arts Commission.

In 2015, Rashona was honored and recognized for NJ's women history month by Assemblywoman Shavonda Sumter and Assemblyman Benjie Wimberly in Trenton for her service to youth and the arts in Passaic County. The record of her service was recorded in NJ State House.





# Tamara Lugo

**Year Honored:** 2018

**Achievements:** Educator

Tamara Rivera Lugo is a lifelong resident in our City of Paterson. She attended and graduated from Paterson Public Schools in 1985 and was a member of the Inner City Ensemble. She received her Associate Degree in Humanities from Passaic County Community College in 2007. She is the mother of ten children and grandmother of four.

She has worked for School No. 2 for 25 years. She started out as a volunteer and Home School Council President, and is currently the Secretary since 1997. Tamara is a compassionate advocate for our children and community. She works tirelessly volunteering and promoting resources available to our parents and youth. Paterson Public Schools awarded her Parent of the Year in 2013. Tamara was honored at the Paterson City Council in observance of the Hispanic Heritage Month in 2015. She is currently a Parent Trustee of the Community Charter School of Paterson School Board, the Community Outreach and Historic Representative for the First Baptist Church, a volunteer Girl Scout Troop Leader and a Herbalife Distributor.

Tamara truly loves Paterson. She is the author of *"10 Best Places to Visit in Paterson, NJ"* published in 2000 and is currently working on an updated version. She also wrote "In memory of Mom, Gladys Reyes", in 2013. Her article "Lou Costello Pool, Lou's Legacy Lives On" was published in 2015. Her passion for Paterson history led her to create a mini museum at the First Baptist Church of Paterson, established in 1824 in which many members were pioneers in the development of our government, schools and hospitals.