

Dear Santa: Please Bring Us A Women's History Tourism Trail

By [Olivia Twine](#) and [Marguerite Kearns](#) on [December 16, 2013](#)



PLEASE HELP, Santa. What we really want for Christmas is a women's trail.

When members of the U.S. Congress and the New York State Legislature open their doors in January 2014, chances are that they will have received notice of our holiday appeal.

The reason for asking Santa, Mrs. Claus and the elves for assistance is because of the urgent need for help in obtaining funding to advance women's trails on both the state and federal levels. Realistically Santa might not be able to deliver on trails by December 25th, but that's no reason to give up.

If the federal National Women's Rights History Project Act (which includes a Votes for Women auto trail) isn't reauthorized and funding approved by Congress, the idea of a women's trail in the "Cradle" of the women's rights movement in the Finger Lakes region may languish indefinitely. Heritage trails are a great idea, but we can't overlook the funding challenges.

The State of New York also has an expanded women's heritage trail that's been kicking around on the web site of the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation for ages. It needs study and a plan to link it to tourism and centennial campaigns. There may be some interest in reviving and funding the state trail during the 2014 legislative session. Rallying support in this direction will take determination and follow up.

What are the chances that Governor Andrew Cuomo will initiate planning for the 2017 suffrage centennial?

We imagine the Governor taking a lead in reminding representatives in both houses of the state legislature about the importance of reviving the state women's heritage trail. And what's the statistical probability that state government officials, including Governor Andrew Cuomo, will kickstart a planning process for the 2017 state suffrage centennial? No one knows for sure. Santa and Mrs. Claus are skiing up a slippery slope to deliver on a women's trail, either on the state or federal level.

An assessment by U.S. Representative Louise Slaughter (NY-28) is that of cautious optimism when it comes to a federal Votes for Women trail in the "Cradle" of the women's rights movement. Noemi "Ami" Ghazala, superintendent of the national park in Seneca Falls, NY, isn't certain about next steps for the federal Votes for Women trail now that the process has reached the "stakeholder" phase and no additional funding is in sight.

NYS Senator Betty Little (R-C-IP 45th District) is hopeful she'll be able to rally some support during the 2014 legislative session in Albany to boost past work on a state women's heritage trail.

And Pam Elam, Co-Chair of the Women's Heritage Trails Committee for the National Collaborative for Women's History Sites, adds that she isn't holding her breath about women's heritage trails and chooses instead to be realistic about what's likely to happen next.

Why are these trails so important?

The trails are essential in terms of directing travelers and tourists to key locations and promoting the rich cultural heritage of women's history in New York State. This could result in a potent economic stimulus for New York. Trail projects can translate into an effective way of educating young people (both girls and boys) about American history and honor the grandmothers, great-grandmothers, and other family members who put themselves on the line over a 72-year period (1848-1920) so that all American women have the right to vote today.

Politicians on the campaign trail are more aware than ever of how significant the women's vote can be in elections. But are they willing to walk their talk when it comes to funding women's trails? Because of the considerable speculation about the possibility of one or more women running for U.S. President in 2016, voters are only beginning to find out about the [long struggle to win a right](#) that's taken for granted today.

During the upcoming suffrage centennials in 2017 and 2020, the goal is to honor the courageous contributions of suffrage activists who did much more than dial phones to organize for the vote. Relatively little is known about the sacrifices they made to march in parades, stand on soapboxes to give speeches on crowded streets, face ridicule, and so on. More attention is given to suffrage lead-

ers and considerably less to the collective contributions of thousands of suffrage grassroots activists in New York State that it took to bring about the 1917 state victory.

Are suffrage centennials as important as support for rafting and wineries?

So far, tourism has definitely benefitted from the administration of a governor sympathetic to both history and tourism. Programs with the goal of attracting tourism to New York State received an unexpected funding appropriation of \$60 million in 2013 and more emphasis than ever on the Path Through History state initiative.

This attention to tourism benefitted New York State wineries, the Adirondacks, rafting, casino and food tourism, the St. Lawrence Seaway, eco and sustainable tourism. Considerable attention has been given to generic tourism advertising in subways, airports, train stations, and so on, as well as an outreach to LGBT travelers and substantial money pumped into attracting visitors to the state to enjoy sports events.

But what about developing and promoting a state women's trail? It's time for historic sites and a unique NYS women's trail to claim its place in the sun and land a piece of the action. Will New York State government officials climb on board? Let's see what happens in 2014, as an increasing number of citizens, both women and men, track this particular issue and spread the word about how action is long overdue.



Santa, bring us a women's trail!

from [Marguerite Kearns](#) PLUS



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This entry was posted in History, Public History and tagged Andrew Cuomo, Cradle of Womens Rights, Education, Gender History, Tourism, Votes for Women Trail on December 16, 2013 [<http://newyorkhistoryblog.org/2013/12/16/part-i-all-we-want-for-christmas-is-a-tourism-trail/>] by Olivia Twine and Marguerite Kearns.

About Olivia Twine and Marguerite Kearns

Marguerite Kearns and Olivia Twine blog at LetsRockTheCradle.com. Olivia Twine is a freelance writer specializing in cultural issues whose work appears in regional and local publications in the Hudson Valley. She also edits the website WomensSuffrage.org. Marguerite Kearns writes on the subject of women's history. Her website, SuffrageWagon.org is a multi-media educational platform featuring news and stories about the suffrage movement.

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4 thoughts on "Dear Santa: Please Bring Us A Women's History Tourism Trail"



Deborah Hughes

December 17, 2013 at 7:37 AM

Thank you, Marguerite and Olivia! We're sharing this with all our friends at the Susan B Anthony Museum & House! Let's get our legislators excited about our heritage trails!

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Roberta

December 17, 2013 at 10:36 AM

Why don't we all share this with [Governor Cuomo](#)?

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Larry Rogers

December 17, 2013 at 11:05 AM

The sad thing about your Christmas wish is how incredibly inexpensive your desires are. The vast majority of the important locations already have markers and most even have curated, interpretive info-boards.

The bare minimum the state could provide would be printed brochures (like the War of 1812, or NY Heritage Trail have) that provide maps to each place, and simple additional markers indicating that this or that place is on the trail and scan this QR code to learn more.

In fact, if the state fails to develop this idea and make it happen, the internet itself has some solutions to allow you or I to make this happen: crowd-funding. We don't have to come up with 20 or 30,000 on our own to do this (if even that much is needed), just some willing volunteers to distribute the materials once (and if) the campaign is successful.

If Santa Cuomo doesn't grant your wish, feel free to email me and we can design our own campaign. (Stop by my website for contact info.)

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Mindy Boffemmyer

December 18, 2013 at 6:33 PM

What you've said here is so true and important. Without these more "official" forms of recognition, people are left to self-design their visits, a prospect which requires knowledge that, alas, isn't properly valued in our schools or our culture at large. Case in point, my sister and I did this "tour" over the summer, and it is truly inspiring—an experience all Americans should have. But we had both been Women's Studies students, with prior historical knowledge—without which, I wonder if and how others find the more tucked-away treasures of this region.

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