



## **Notable Women of the Corridor**

By Wendi Blewett, DLNHC Museum Collections Manager

LEHIGH VALLEY - March is Women's History Month, a month to honor the contributions of women to American history. In researching our 2026 exhibition (yes, we're already working on our exhibition for the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence!), we've come across several women who were, in a word, revolutionary.

## **Anna Mae Hays**

Although Anna Mae Hays was born in Buffalo, NY, she spent her late childhood and teenage years in the Lehigh Valley. She graduated from Allentown High School in 1938. She then attended the Allentown City Hospital's School of Nursing. After graduation, Hays joined the Army Nurse Corps. She served in World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. On May 15, 1970, President Nixon nominated Hays as Brigadier General, three years after Congress allowed the rank to be given to women. She was the first woman to wear the stars of a General. When she was contacted by the press about her feelings on the promotion, it's reported that all she could respond with was, "My goodness." Two years later, after 30 years in the Army Nurse Corps,



Hays retired from the army. Hays passed away in 2018 and had chosen to be buried in South Whitehall Township with her parents, rather than in Arlington National Cemetery.

## Claire Smith

A native of Langhorne, Bucks County, Claire Smith has been a sports journalism pioneer for 40 years! She was the first female to report on Major League Baseball full-time, and the first Black female to be inducted into the writers' wing at the Baseball Hall of Fame.

During her time as a journalist for the Hartford Courant, she was sent to cover the 1984 National League Championship Series and was physically pushed out of one team's clubhouse because she was a woman. Major League Baseball Commissioner Peter Ueberroth put a stop to that – he ruled that any credentialed reporter was to



be allowed entrance to the clubhouses for interviews regardless of sex. In 1990, Smith became the first national baseball columnist for The New York Times and the second national baseball columnist in the country. She was the first woman and the fourth Black journalist to receive the Baseball Writers Association of America's Career Excellence Award. In 2023, she was the first Black woman to be awarded the Red Smith Award, an award given to a writer or editor who has made substantial contributions to the field of sports journalism.

Each of these women found their place in what was once a male-dominated profession. Their fearlessness and drive led them to excel in each of their chosen fields.