



Notable Women of California

WOMEN'S MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA



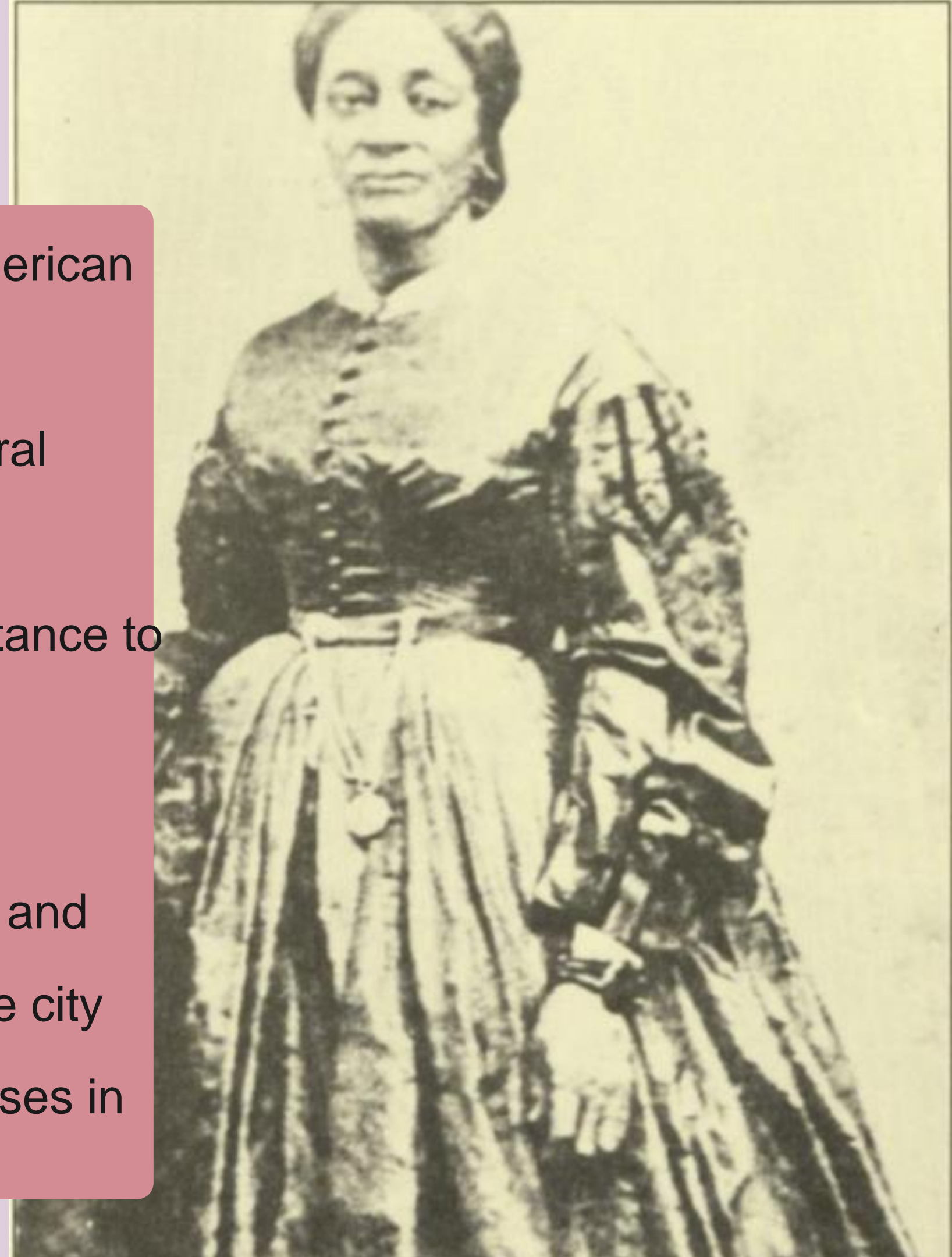
From the Gold Rush to Today

Women of The Gold Rush

Of the 40,000 people who arrived by ship in the San Francisco harbor in 1849, only 700 were women.

Mary Ellen Pleasant

- Arguably the first self-made millionaire of African-American heritage, preceding Madam C. J. Walker by decades
- Moved to San Francisco in 1852 and managed several exclusive men's establishments
- Known as "Black City Hall" due to her financial assistance to other blacks in the city
- Helped John Brown in his abolitionist efforts
- In 1868 Pleasant successfully sued the North Beach and Mission Railroad Company for denying her to ride the city streetcar, setting a precedent for future civil rights cases in CA



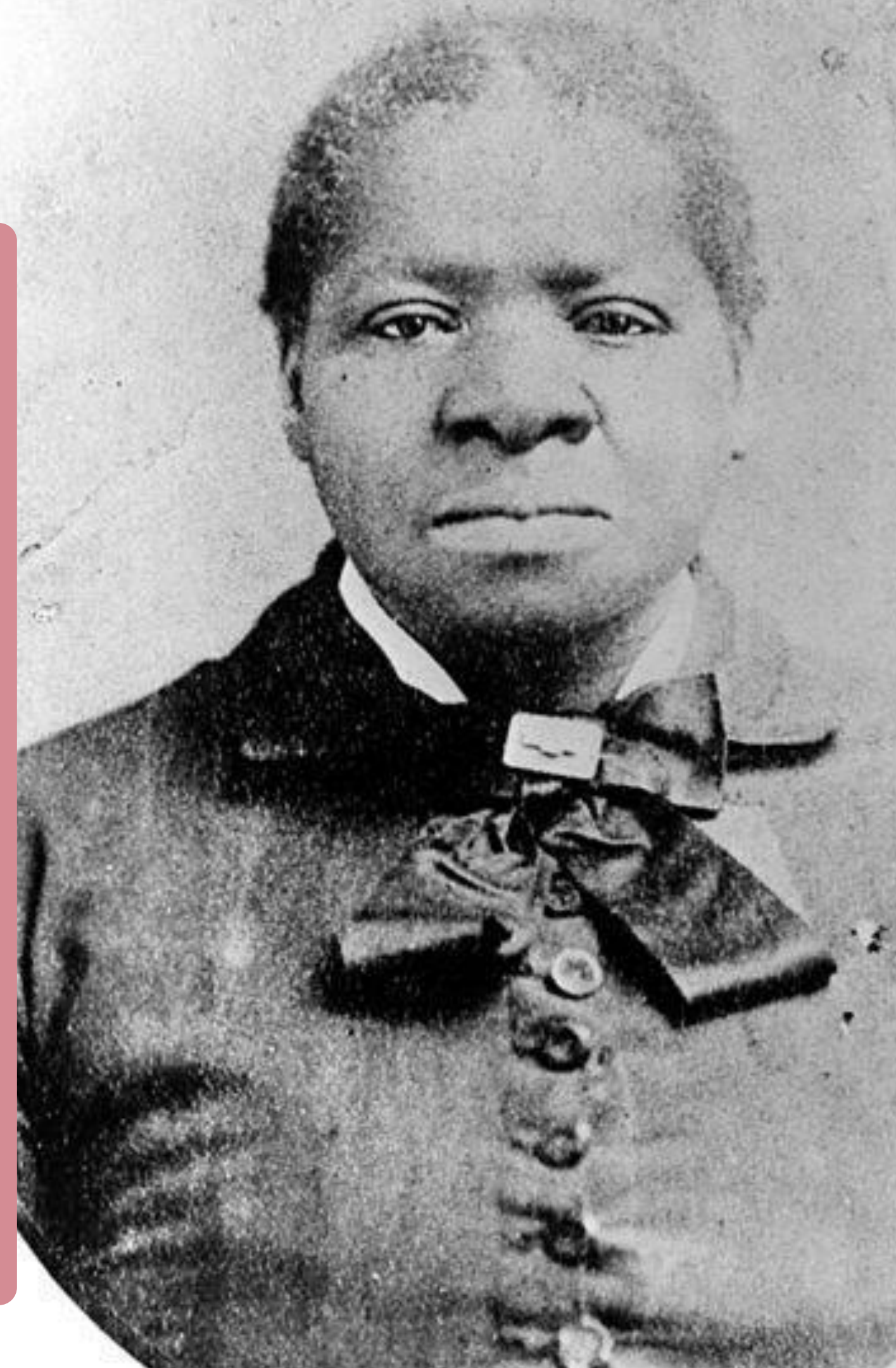
Ah Toy

- Within two years of arriving in San Francisco, Ah Toy went from being a solo operator to owning two brothels
- Charges reaquently brought against her of running “houses of disrepute,” even while her White counterparts were allowed to operate unobstructed



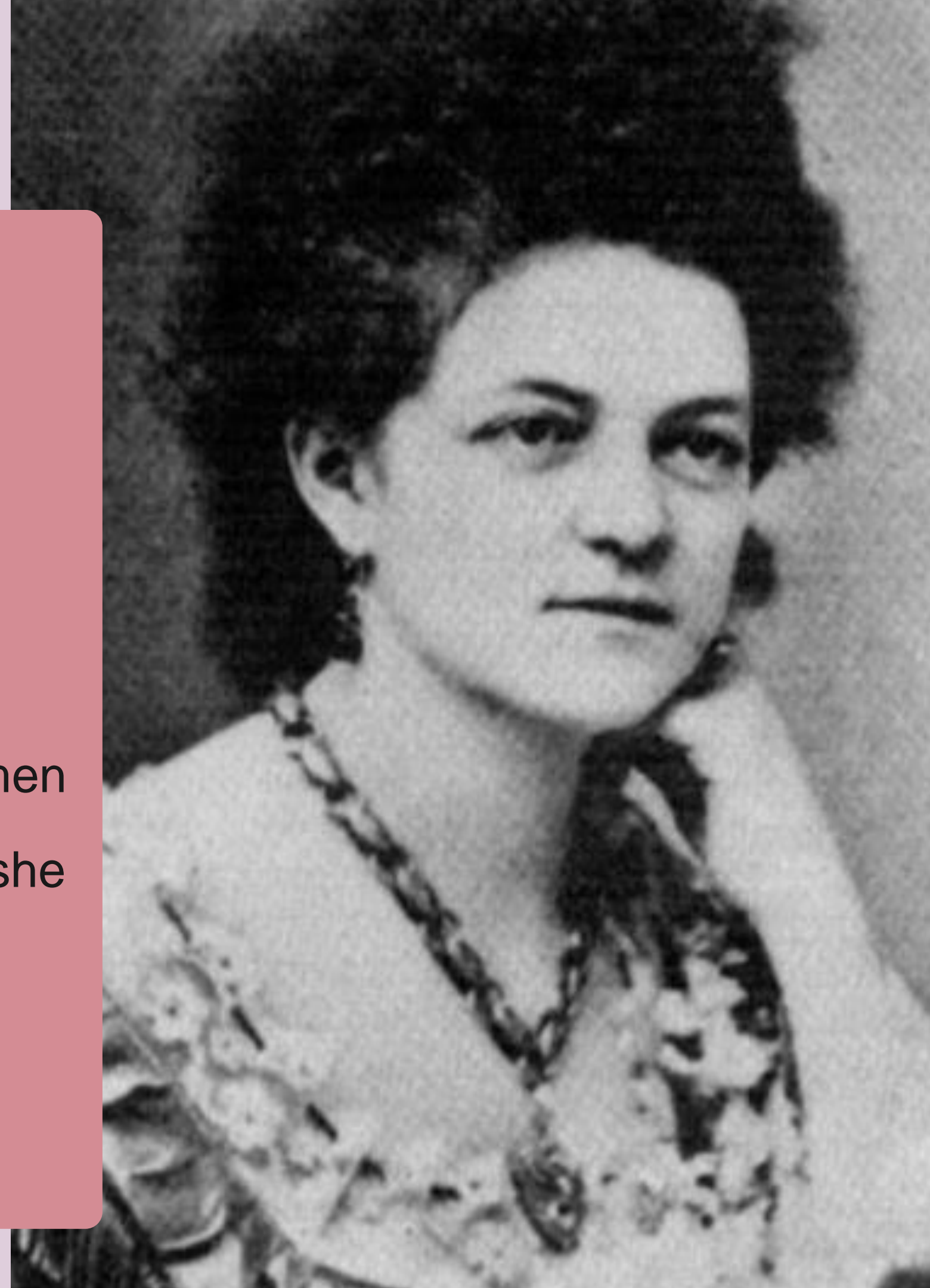
Bridget "Biddy" Mason

- A California court granted her and her daughters freedom in 1856
- One of the first African American women to own land in Los Angeles
- A midwife and nurse, risked her life to care for those affected by the smallpox epidemic
- Helped to establish the first elementary school for black children in Los Angeles



Eleanor Dumont

- Arrived in San Francisco at the beginning of the Gold Rush
- Worked as a card dealer at the Bella Union Hotel
- Gambling parlor was open only to well-kept men; women were not allowed, except for herself. Instead of beer, she served her customers champagne
- Became the madam of a brothel in the 1860s



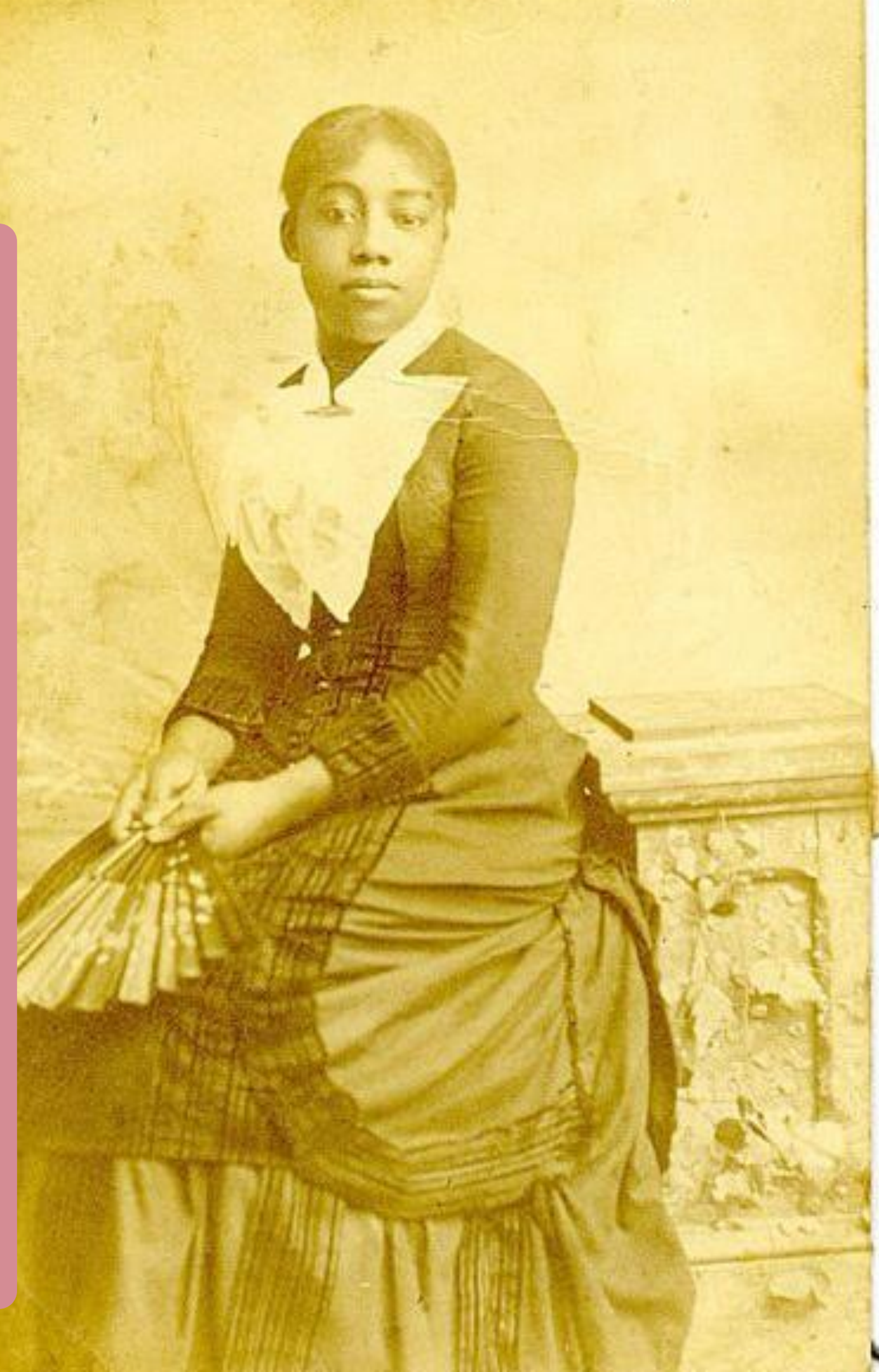
The California Suffrage Movement

On October 10, 1911, California became the sixth state where women could vote equally with men, nine years before the 19th Amendment enfranchised women nationally.



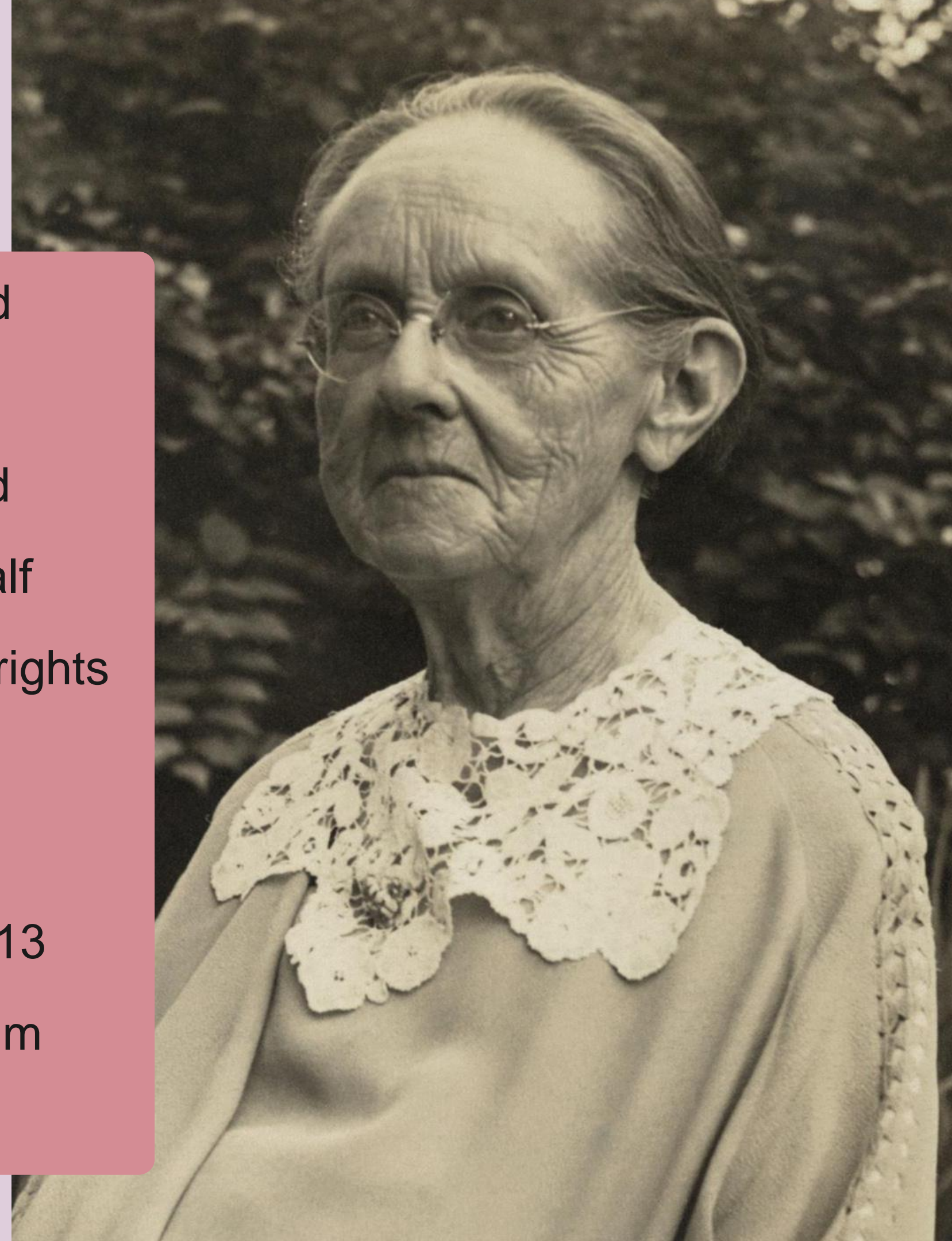
Lydia Flood Jackson

- Born in the Bay Area in 1862, her family was one of the earliest African American residents of Oakland
- First legislative chair and first citizenship chair of the California Federation of Colored Women's Clubs
- Activism took her all over Latin America and the Caribbean where she campaigned for women's rights and challenged women to fight against white male supremacy
- On her 100th birthday the city of Oakland honored her by proclaiming her as its "oldest living native". She passed away in 1963 at the age of 101



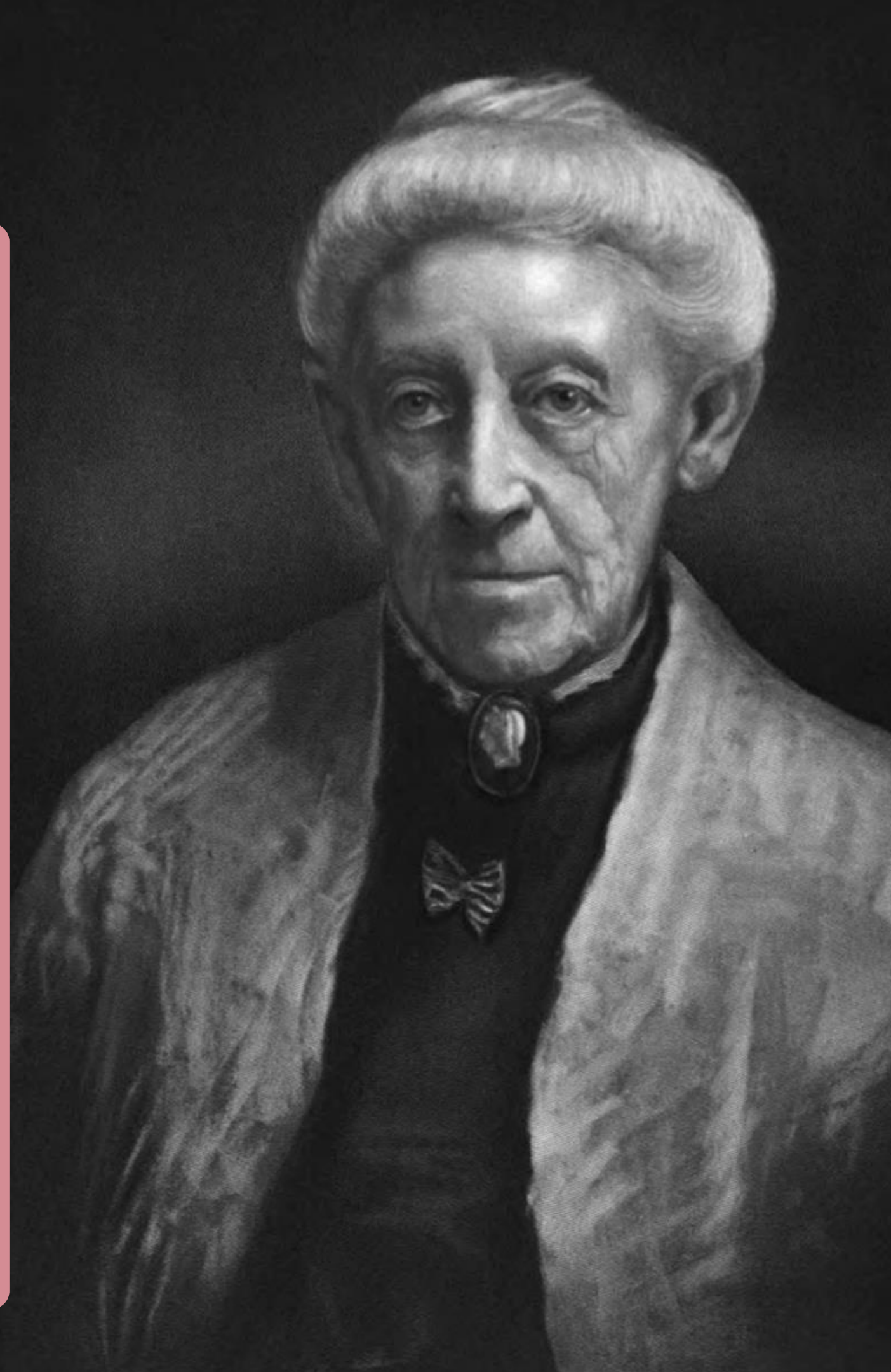
Alice Park

- Founder of the Women's Int'l League for Peace and Freedom
- One of California's leading suffragists and travelled around the state giving speeches on women's behalf
- Authored California law that granted women equal rights of guardianship over their children in 1913
- Delegate and speaker at the Congress of the Intn'l Women's Suffrage Alliance in Budapest in June, 1913
- November of 1915, Henry Ford invited her to join him aboard the Oscar II and help end World War I



Ellen Browning Scripps

- Founded the La Jolla Women's Club to expand women's public participation
- Provided for the world's largest aviary for the new Balboa Park
- Her contributions included the San Diego Community Welfare Building, the La Jolla playground (stipulating that it must be a free speech area), Scripps Memorial Hospital, and the Scripps Institution of Oceanography
- When Scripps Women's College in Claremont opened in 1926, she was 90 years old, and she referred to the institution as her "new adventure."



Heroines on the Home Front

Six million women entered the labor force during the war years, increasing the number of working women by 57 percent. They moved from their homes to war-production areas. More than 400,000 African American women left domestic service for industrial labor.

Margaret Chung

- First known American-born Chinese female physician
- Graduate from the University of Southern California Medical School in 1916
- Established one of the first Western medical clinics in San Francisco's Chinatown in the early 1920s.
- She treated many celebrities during her time at the hospital, including silent film star Mary Pickford.
- Developed friendships with many aviators by “adopting” over 1,500 “sons”
- Lobbied for the passage of a bill allowing women to join the military and Naval Reserve, the "WAVES"



The Real Rosie

- Women came from all over the country to work on assembly lines of defense production plants in San Diego, including Pacific Parachute Company and Convair
- Nationally, women made up 65% of the aircraft industry's workforce (compared to 1% in pre-war years)
- By 1943 it was common to see women working in shipyards, lumber mills, steel mills and foundries. They were welders, electricians, mechanics and boilermakers. (Photo of Mary Torres, Journeyman Welder at Moore's Shipyard, Oakland)



Trailblazers of the Silver Screen

Female writers, directors, and producers were pioneers of the silent-film era—but were pushed out of the industry as its influence grew. In 1920, women reached a peak in the film industry as they made up 22 percent of writers, directors, and producers in Hollywood

Lois Weber

- One of the most important and prolific film directors in the era of silent films
- Focused on controversial topics for the time such as birth control, abortion, planned parenthood, child labor, Jewish values, and capital punishment
- .In 1916 she become Universal Pictures highest paid director
- Her most famous work, *Where Are My Children*, about birth control, family planning, and abortion earned \$3 million in one day



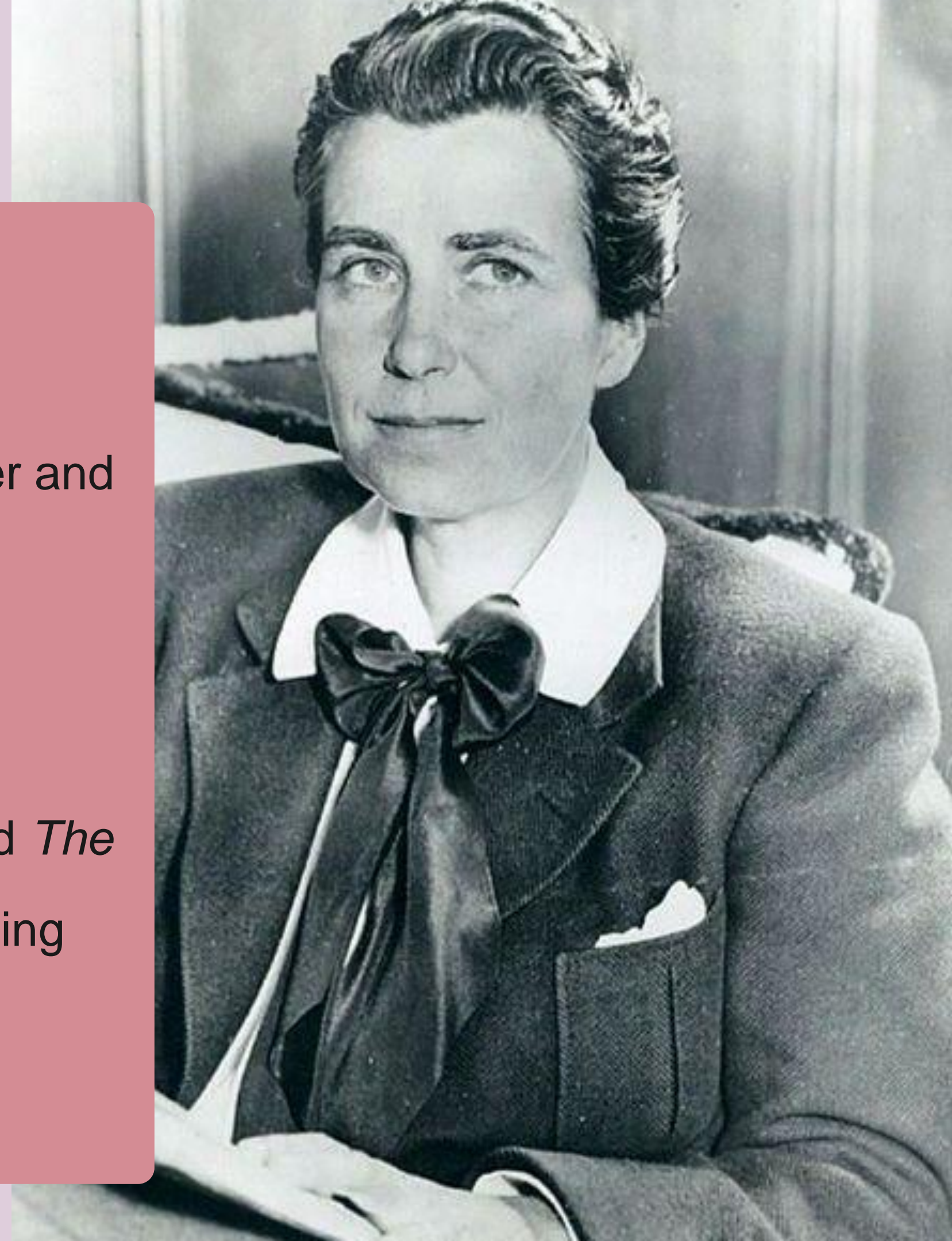
Mary Pickford

- Pioneer of early cinema and founding member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences
- Co-founded United Artists as an actor's rights advocate
- The first woman in Hollywood to earn a million dollars a year
- In 1910s and 1920s, she was believed to be the most famous woman in the world
- Created the Motion Picture Relief Fund, a charitable organization that offers assistance and care to those in the industry with limited or no resources



Dorothy Arzner

- First female director of Hollywood, began as a writer and editor within the industry
- Wrote scripts for women's studios such as Dorothy Davenport's Reid Productions
- Directed Paramount's first talking film in 1929 called *The Wild Party* - groundbreaking moment for implementing lesbian and queer tones to a film



Women in Politics

California women are famous for breaking the glass ceiling of leadership and political offices.

Clara Foltz

- First female lawyer on the west coast
- Denied entry to Hastings Law School inspired CA Amendment ""No person shall, on account of sex, be disqualified from entering upon or pursuing any lawful business, vocation, or profession."
- Pioneer of the idea of the public defender at Chicago World's Fair in 1893
- First woman to run for governor of California
- Helped author the Women's Vote Amendment in CA
- Founded and published the San Diego Daily Bee, and New American Woman Magazine



Charlotta Spears Bass

- Ran The California Eagle, an African American newspaper that focused on political activism and civil rights
- Used her paper to fight against Los Angeles' discriminatory hiring practices; the revival of the KKK; police brutality; and restrictive housing
- Ran for Los Angeles City Council in 1940s
- First African American woman to be nominated as the Vice President of the Progressive Party in 1952
- Monitored by the FBI, who viewed her as a potential security threat up until her nineties



Helen Gahagan Douglas

- Third woman and first Democrat woman elected to Congress from California
- Member of the national advisory committee of the Works Progress Administration
- Appointed by President Truman as an alternate United States delegate to the United Nations Assembly
- Championed various issues, such as civil rights, migrant worker welfare, women's issues, affordable housing, progressive taxation, and nuclear disarmament; "she was the first to sponsor an anti-lynching bill".





The Women's Museum of California is a place to learn and celebrate women's crucial role in history, honoring past achievements while recognizing the visionary women of today.

Your generosity ensures that WMC exhibits, programs and events will be here for you and generations to come. Thank you for becoming a part of preserving women's history.



**Become a
Member**