Women’s History Walking Tour

Women have a long and distinguished history at the University of Montana. The first two graduates were Ella Robb Glenny and Eloise Knowles. Of the seven original faculty members, three were women. The 1893 University Charter promised: “the instruction of young men and women on equal terms.” By 1903, women had their own building on campus. This tour celebrates many of the buildings—here and gone—where women made their impact at the University of Montana.

At UM, a 1912 brochure promised female students could experience “ideal conditions of student life” and “develop intellectual, social and spiritual powers through the inspiration of sharing study, recreation and generous endeavor with friends and fellow students.”
Memorial Row  
Dedicated: 1919  
UM planted 31 pine trees to commemorate University men killed in World War I. The trees also honored those who died of influenza, including five female nurses: Katherine Byrne, Lillian E. Halse, Mary F. Garrigus, and Leila Requam. Of head nurse Hazel Yoder, University President Edward Sisson wrote: “Of her it may be said as truly as of a soldier in battle that she fell in action in the defense of her country.”

Women’s Gymnasium  
Dedicated: 1903  
This wood paneled building served as the women’s gym from 1922-1957. Women often complained of sub-par facilities and opportunities. The building was demolished in 1956, but inequality persisted until the passage of Title IX in 1972 paved the way for improved equality in sports.

Women’s Gym  
Dedicated: 1929  
This floor above the Women’s Gymnasium included a women’s locker room, and served as the Women’s Athletic Center. The basement of the building served as the Women’s Physical Education Program, and was named after founding instructor Ethel Gilford.

Peterson Hall  
Dedicated: 1912  
Peterson Hall originally served as the College’s first women’s dormitory. After the construction of Wilson Hall in 1929, it was remodeled to serve as a dormitory for women graduate students.

Belle B. Turner Hall  
Dedicated: 1922  
Belle B. Turner Hall was named after the first Dean of Women at the University of Montana (1918-1929). The building served as the women’s dormitory until 1929, when Wilson Hall was completed.

Katherine Byrne Hall  
Dedicated: 1937  
Katherine Byrne Hall was named in honor of the first female faculty member to earn a Ph.D. from the University of Montana in 1911. The building was originally constructed as a dormitory for women, but was later remodeled to serve as a residence for faculty and staff.

UM Women’s Resource Center (WRC)  
Dedicated: 1976  
The Women’s Resource Center hosts workshops, events, and classes on topics related to gender and inequality.

University Museum  
Dedicated: 1925  
The University Museum is home to a collection of artifacts and specimens from around the world, including those related to the study of gender and inequality.

University Women  
Dedicated: 1913  
University Women was the first women’s group to be formed at the University of Montana. It served as a social and organizational hub for women on campus.

McGill Hall  
Dedicated: 1953  
The Women's Center Building (now McGill Hall) boasted “weaving, textile and clothing laboratories, foods and dietetics laboratories, a model kitchen laboratory, lecture auditorium, classrooms and offices” for the University's Home Economics department. The dedication speech praised UM women for their “great tradition of developed and inspired service to Home, to the State, and to their Country.”

Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library  
Dedicated: 1973  
Mike Mansfield represented Montana in Congress from 1942-1977. Mansfield often credited Maureen as one of the most influential influences in his life: she encouraged him to seek an education and leave the mines of Butte to pursue a career in first teaching and then politics. Many say Mike refused to have the library named after him unless his wife’s name preceded his own. A statue of the couple stands between the library and University Center.

For more on women at UM  
See http://exhibits.lib.umt.edu/women-in-politics/timeline/um