



A TIMELINE OF THE WOMEN  
WHO CHANGED AMERICA



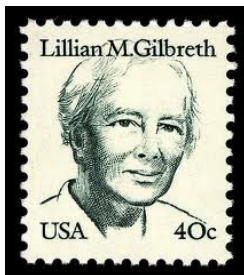
## November 2024 Her Story ENewsletter Engineering Legends

The early women engineers in the U.S. had to deal with a good deal of prejudice. They faced discrimination, disbelief that they could be engineers, and other hardships. But they persisted with determination; we are grateful for their accomplishments. In this month's newsletter, we feature the "First Lady of Engineering" Lillian Moller Gilbreth and another woman of firsts – Kate Gleason.



**Kate Gleason** worked in her family's tool making business – Gleason Works. She began her career at age 11 when her brother, Tom, died. By age 14, she was the Gleason Works bookkeeper. She became her father's indispensable assistant. In 1884, she entered Cornell University's engineering program, the first woman to so enroll. Before her first year was over, she needed to return to the family business, as her father could not afford the salary of the man who had been hired to take her place. By 1888, Gleason was on the road selling machines; by 1890, she was the Secretary-Treasurer of The Gleason Works, and its chief sales representative, a position she held until 1913. In 1893, while on doctor's orders for rest, she went to Europe and came back with machine orders. This was one of the earliest efforts at international marketing for any company in the U.S.

Gleason learned how to turn being a female in business into an asset. Her estate was used to establish the Kate Gleason fund, one of whose beneficiaries was the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). In 1998, RIT named its College of Engineering after her. Gleason attributed her success to "a bold front, a willingness to risk more than the crowd, determination, some common sense, and plenty of hard work."



"The First Lady of Engineering" **Lillian Gilbreth**, was an industrial engineer and expert in motion studies. She pioneered in recognizing the connections between engineering and human relations. Her ideas helped encourage the development of industrial engineering curricula in engineering schools and contributed to the growing field of career assessment.

Gilbreth developed many of her ideas and co-authored numerous books and scientific studies with her husband, Frank -- and while doing so, she had 12 children in 17 years. When she was widowed, she continued managing the company she and her husband had formed and put all of her children through college. Gilbreth applied the principles of modern business methods to the home and published two books about the topic as well as articles in popular periodicals. She used the techniques of motion analysis to design special equipment to make housework easier for individuals with disabilities. She was the first woman to receive the Hoover Medal for distinguished public service by an engineer. Gilbreth was the first woman elected to the National Academy of Engineering, has been featured on a U.S. postage stamp, and she has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

Kate Gleason and Lillian Gilbreth are among the more than 850 women profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*. Women's accomplishments continue to inspire and encourage us. Continue to help us tell women's stories!

Charlotte Waisman and Jill Tietjen

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