

7.7.15 Summit Council Meeting—Summit Historical Minute

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The **New Jersey Women's Heritage Trail** uses historic places to tell the collective story of famous women, and many of the more private women, who contributed to the agricultural, industrial, labor and domestic history of the state.

The Heritage Trail brings to life the vital role of women in New Jersey's past and present.

New Jersey is the first state in the country to undertake a statewide comprehensive survey of women's historic sites.

The Summit Playhouse, which was originally the Summit Free Library, is on the New Jersey Women's Heritage Trail because of the significant contributions of **Marjorie Cranstoun Jefferson**.

Marjorie Cranstoun Jefferson was a leader in the Little Theater Movement in the US. She co-founded this community theater in 1918 and directed more than 130 productions having been director for 51 years from 1928-1979. She lived to be 100 years old, born in 1887.

The name Marjorie Cranstoun Jefferson is synonymous in Summit with this community theater. Her personality and her approach to theater were different and unique in many ways. She insisted that the audience must be seated on time and that the curtain rise at the precise time listed in the program. She wanted everything in each production to be authentic to the period of the play, including the set design and the costumes. She did not allow the actors to have understudies in order to keep the performances at a very high level. The theater group she helped found began as a local effort to raise funds for war relief and is one of the oldest active community theater companies in the nation.

You can find out more about the theater at summitplayhouse.org and more about the NJ Women's Heritage Trail at njwomenshistory.org. The other Summit woman on the trail is Florence Spearing Randolph, social reformer and minister of Wallace Chapel, AME Zion Church. We will review her contributions at a future meeting.