



Timeline of Achievements

Catherine Filene Shouse (1896–1994) was a trailblazer in politics, education, and the arts. Take a look at some of her accomplishments.

1915–1918

Attended Wheaton College as WWI raged on; at age 21, she organized the first Intercollegiate Vocational Conference for Women to promote jobs for women with more than a high school education.

1918

Graduated from Wheaton College.

Appointed Assistant to the Chief of the Women's Division, US Employment Service, Department of Labor.

1919–1921

First woman on the Massachusetts State Democratic Committee and first female member of the Democratic National Committee.

1920

Wrote *Careers for Women*, published by Houghton Mifflin Company.

1923

Became the first woman to earn a master's in education from Harvard University.

1925–1929

Co-founded the Women's National Democratic Club.

1926

Appointed by President Calvin Coolidge, she became the first woman to oversee the Federal Prison for Women. There she implemented job training and rehabilitation.

1929–1945

Founded the Institute of Women's Professional Relations, serving as Chairman and organizing national conferences.

1930–1956

Purchased Wolf Trap Farm in Vienna, VA, eventually expanding from 53 to 168 acres.



1949–1968

Organized the General Clay Fund (1949–56) to support German youth.

First woman awarded Germany's Commander's Cross of Merit (1954).

Elected board member of the National Symphony Orchestra Association (1949) and served as Vice President (1951–68).

1951–1965

Served as board member for the National Arbitration Association (1952–63), Lincoln Filene Center at Tufts (1955–94), and Opera Society of Washington (1965–72).

Chaired President Eisenhower's Music Committee Person-to-Person Program (1957–63), producing national and international performances.

Appointed to the first Board of Trustees of the National Cultural Center (later Kennedy Center) by Eisenhower (1958), then reappointed by Kennedy and Nixon; she was a gift Trustee until 1994.

1961–1964

Donated 40 acres of her farm for the American Symphony Orchestra League headquarters (1961).

Active in Fairfax County cultural planning (1964).

1966–1971

Donated 100 acres and funding for the Filene Center to the US government; Congress accepted the donation in October 1966.

Groundbreaking took place in 1968 and the Filene Center opened July 1, 1971, with First Lady Pat Nixon in attendance.



1971–1984

Oversaw creation of The Barns at Wolf Trap (early 1980s) by relocating and restoring two 18th-century barns as an intimate performance venue.

After the Filene Center fire in April 1982, she spearheaded efforts to raise funds, including \$9 million in federal aid and \$15 million privately, to rebuild and reopen the venue in 1984.



1968–1994

Held leadership roles with Wolf Trap Foundation (Board member from 1968; Executive Committee chair from 1975).

1976–1994

Awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1977).

Named Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth II (1976), and honored as "Officier" in France's Order of Arts and Letters (1985).

Received the National Medal of Arts (1994).

2007

Inducted posthumously into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

2017

Honored with a Virginia Historical Marker along Trap Road, commemorating her legacy.

