



Making Women's History: The Essential Mary Ritter Beard

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Mary Ritter Beard can be considered the “founding mother” of the field of American women’s history. A visionary thinker, Beard devoted her life to reconstructing a history that had remained largely undocumented and unacknowledged before she began her groundbreaking work. She held a firm conviction that women had a far greater impact on history than male historians had ever recognized, and that a knowledge of their own history would enable women to realize their full potential as active members of society and agents of social change.

Today, Mary Ritter Beard is best remembered for her collaborative work with her husband, the historian Charles Beard, on such volumes as *The Making of American Civilization*. Her own pioneering work is, like the women’s history she championed, under appreciated, despite the fact that it influences the work of such well-known contemporary historians as Gerda Lerner, laid fundamental groundwork for the entire field of women’s studies, and has much to add to contemporary feminist debates regarding equality and difference, agency and victimization, and the conflicts between middle-class and working-class women.

Ann J. Lane’s essential—and accessible—selection includes full headnotes, a 70-page critical and biographical essay, and a new preface that assesses Beard’s legacy and the continuing relevance of her work. *Making Women's History* restores Beard to her well-deserved place at the core of early-twentieth-century feminist history and thought.

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