



# Women of Steel and Stone: 22 Inspirational Architects, Engineers, and Landscape Designers

*Anna M. Lewis*

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An inspiration for young people who love to design, build, and work with their hands, *Women of Steel and Stone* tells the stories of 22 female architects, engineers, and landscape designers from the 1800s to today. Engaging profiles based on historical research and firsthand interviews stress how childhood passions, perseverance, and creativity led these women to overcome challenges and break barriers to achieve great success in their professions. Subjects include Marion Mahony Griffin, who worked alongside Frank Lloyd Wright to establish his distinct architectural-drawing style; Emily Warren Roebling, who, after her husband fell ill, took over the duties of chief engineer on the Brooklyn Bridge project; Marian Cruger Coffin, a landscape architect who designed estates of Gilded Age mansions; Beverly L. Greene, the first African American woman in the country to get her architecture license; Zaha Hadid, one of today's best-known architects and the first woman to receive the prestigious Pritzker Architecture Prize; and many others. Practical information such as lists of top schools in each field; descriptions of specific areas of study and required degrees; and lists of programs for kids and teens, places to visit, and professional organizations, make this an invaluable resource for students, parents, and teachers alike.

## Women of Steel and Stone: 22 Inspirational Architects, Engineers, and Landscape Designers Details

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## **From Reader Review Women of Steel and Stone: 22 Inspirational Architects, Engineers, and Landscape Designers for online ebook**

### **Trish says**

Getting caught up in reading about amazing women! Loved the chapter on Julia Morgan, the one woman in this book about whom I already knew a little bit. The author did her homework. Each chapter is well-researched, very informative and full of fun little facts, too. (I didn't know that Julia Morgan made it through her projects by surviving on coffee and Hershey bars.) This would be a great book for my friends who have daughters or who teach. It's truly inspiring to read about women who overcame societal obstacles and rose to positions of prominence in their not-typically-female-friendly fields.

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### **Joanne says**

This book for young readers gives a quick synopsis of women who took on non-traditional careers, including the first registered female architect in Pennsylvania - Anna Keickline Wagner. I purchased this book because she designed several homes and commercial buildings in Bellefonte where I live. I liked this summary as out not only covered her career in "steel," but also her work as an intelligence worker. The background info for most of the women and their lives gives a taste of the diversity of "steel" careers. Some were quite interesting. others I barely skimmed

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### **Dede says**

Excellent book.

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### **Meg - A Bookish Affair says**

Architecture and engineering are both extremely fascinating fields to me. "Women of Steel and Stone" is made up of mini biographies of some females that have had a huge impact in the fields of architecture, engineering, and landscape architecture. This book definitely whetted my appetite to learn more about these amazing women.

While women have been involved in architecture and engineering for a long time (there was actually a woman included in the first 12 architects to take an official licensing exam in the United States), these fields have often been seen as a man's world and women have really had to fight in order to be included and to be successful in those fields. This book recounts their struggles and their successes. I really enjoyed reading about these women.

There were a couple architects and engineers that I recognized in this book but many more that were brand new to me. They were all super successful but many of them remain the unsung heroes of these fields. I especially enjoyed reading about some of the women who worked and contributed to their fields when many women did not work at all. I can only imagine how hard it must have been for these women to shake off what was expected of them and to go into these fields, which were not all that welcoming to women in the

first place.

As I said, I would love to read more about many of these women. One very nice feature of this book is that the author includes a little biography to tell you where to find more information on these women and their careers. I enjoyed this book overall!

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### **Cindy says**

This is wonderful collection of women who have made a difference for today's generation. Their journeys with struggles and achievements have paved the way for others. Excellent research and compelling introduction to accomplished women.

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### **Ben Truong says**

*Women of Steel and Stone: 22 Inspirational Architects, Engineers, and Landscape Designers* is written by Anna M. Lewis and pays homage to twenty-two amazing women who are creators and designers of the urban landscape – an industry that was once dominated by men. This book is divided into three chapters: Architects, Engineers, and Landscape Architects.

Lewis has written powerful, riveting, and concise biographies for each and every one of these women creators in the urban landscape. Lewis has meticulously written and researched the women rather well based on research from historical records and first-hand interviews. It was a rather interesting read and informative to me, because I am not well versed in this area of study. So reading anything about architecture is a learning experience for me.

All in all, *Women of Steel and Stone: 22 Inspiration Architects, Engineers, and Landscape Designers* is a wonderfully written book of mini-biographies about twenty-two amazing architects, engineers, and urban designers, who happens to be women. It is a good read and reference book for anyone who wants to learn more about women in history.

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### **Stacey says**

Great book that is full of role models for women engineers, architects, and landscape designers. Each chapter is about one women. It's well written and easy to pick up and just read one chapter or you can read the entire thing. It also has a nice variety of the women that are profiled. I learned so much.

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### **Sonja says**

I am not a big non-fiction reader, yet I quite enjoyed these brief profiles of gender-barrier-breaking female architects, engineers, and landscape designers. I was particularly fascinated by Anna Wagner Keichline, the architect and inventor who took a little break to be a spy during World War I, and with Emily Warren Roebling, who bad-assed her way into building the Brooklyn Bridge after her husband (the civil engineer hired for the job) was incapacitated by compression sickness. The stories are well-told and interesting. I did

find myself yearning for many, many more photos. Those that were included were grayscale and kind of dark. I wanted to see the buildings and bridges and parks they designed.

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## Regina Mastrogiacomo says

Excellent book about women in architecture, engineers and landscape designers, who designed buildings and gardens that are still with us today and are amazing to look at. One building that a woman built was, Hearst Castle, a fantastic and beautiful home.

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## Jill says

The author profiles 22 women who pioneered in architecture, engineering, and landscape design. The stories are probably eye-opening for many readers. You will undoubtedly recognize many of the names of the *men* for or with whom most of these women worked; this is because it was the men who ended up either taking or just receiving all of the credit for the achievements of the women.

For example, you may have heard the names of Frank Lloyd Wright, Robert Venturi, and John Roebling. But few people know that Marion Mahony Griffin established Wright's distinctive drawing style, or that Denise Scott Brown pioneered the urban planning innovations for which Venturi gets credit, or that Emily Roebling handled the position of chief engineer of the Brooklyn Bridge for most of its eleven years of construction because her husband was paralyzed and bedridden. Perhaps the only woman in this book from before the present day whose name has wide recognition is that of Julia Morgan, but that's because she actually worked alone on the famous Hearst Castle at San Simeon, California.

One aspect of these women's careers that probably won't surprise you is all the obstacles they faced from gender prejudice. Some universities even had gender quotas in architecture and engineering, because to admit women would be to "waste space" on students who would just get married and be mothers instead of professionals.

Most of these stories have relatively happy endings, because all of these women ended up as giants in their fields. For example, Norma Merrick Sklarek became the first black woman to be made a fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1980. In New York, she had done outstanding work at the firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. But when she moved to California, she was turned down for work 19 times before getting a job at Gruen Associates. She only later learned that Gruen had never before hired either a woman or a black as an architect. She ended up working there twenty years, and becoming the head of the architecture department.

There are great stories like that all through this book, and it is also quite up-to-date, including such contemporary stars as Zaha Mohammed Hadid, probably the most famous architect alive today, whose work is celebrated all over the world.

Better yet, the book is full of additional and very useful resources. There are lists of top schools specializing in these fields; notes at the end of each chapter with titles of books about each person; text boxes highlighting careers of women who are also notable but aren't covered by full chapters; and at the end, an annotated list providing (1) websites with programs for kids and teens on architecture and engineering; (2) great places to visit online; and (3) links to relevant professional organizations.

**Evaluation:** This is a truly interesting and even inspirational book. If you are a female, you will marvel at what you learn about these pathbreakers, and if you are a male, you will get insight into the distorted views of reality often promulgated by the dominant discourse.

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### **Karen says**

It was interesting.

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### **Tibby (she/her) says**

Women of Steel and Stone is a really good introduction to women in fields that are traditionally dominated by men. The mix of engineers, architects and landscape architects was really interesting and there was a lot of additional information beyond the 22 main women about other women and about the fields themselves.

There is still such a stigma of women in math and science fields so it's really important that we give young girls examples of women who have gone into these fields. And these women are an impressive set of examples! Here, though, is where my professional opinion of the book (kids will like this!) and my personal opinion (it wasn't the best fit) diverge.

As far as the intended age, it's definitely a book for older readers based on length and difficulty of text. However, it's really wonderful because each profile is a fairly short, quick read. I could see kids in middle and high school picking this up and putting it down as they have the time to read about the women. Books like that are so important for all these busy kids.

The women and their lives were really interesting and I can see kids connecting with the subjects. I, personally, wanted way more information and would have preferred that the author chose fewer profiles so she could focus more. But I really think that is coming from someone who is interested in how women have broken into male-dominated fields and someone who wanted to see more of how they balanced their personal (marriage and motherhood) lives with their professional lives that appeared to be very demanding. Will kids want to know all about that? Highly unlikely. I think for kids the book will pique their interest in the fields of architecture, engineering, and landscape design and in the women themselves. They might seek out more information beyond this book.

Lewis was really good about including a section at the end of each profile that gave the reader places to go to find more information. And it's quite the mix of resources. Within the chapters there were boxes that added little bits about other women who had impacts, but didn't get entire profiles. I found their placement (in the middle of paragraphs) very distracting and found myself skipping them. I think a side bar would have been better or even a chapter at the end of each section that had these brief asides aggregated. I know that's a design, not author issue, but that kind of stuff drives me nuts and if I am skipping it then kids probably will too.

My only other complaint is that I wanted a lot more pictures. There weren't very many (I'm guessing for space?) and the ones that are there have terrible captions that offer little to no information about how they link up with the women's careers, with their profession, or why they are important. Often buildings were talked about in the text, but there were no pictures to accompany it. Nonfiction for kids has to be engaging and it has to have more pictures than adult nonfiction. Kids are likely not to go out of their way to find

pictures of the buildings and structures these women have created. Pictures give an entry point for younger readers into the book and the topic.

The exclusion of women from these professions early on will really appeal to kids' sense of justice and I think it will hit home how far women have come and how far they need to go. Lewis includes a range of women from the early years of the professions to much more recent and contemporary women (both in terms of design and age). Many of the women she profiles are still alive and some are still working. By including this range you can really see how the professions have developed both in broad terms and in terms of including women and taking them seriously.

The introductions to each section were very interesting. Lewis details the history of the profession (most of them were not formalized until the late 1800s) and what it takes to get a degree or certification in each profession. She also includes lists of colleges that have highly regarded undergraduate and graduate degree programs. All in all a great book to dip in and out of and to whet the appetite of budding architects and engineers.

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### **Pam says**

With the recent emphasis on STEM education and careers for women, this book concept is important, however I found it boring... Several of the historic female subjects I was unaware of, and I liked the "Learn More" suggestions, but the individual biographies lacked a spark or vitality to keep my interest. I wonder if the biographies were edited too much to insure everything was politically appropriate for teens. As a retired mechanical engineer, I know that probably all these women faced tremendous barriers which would have made interesting and eye-opening stories. I did and I worked much more recently than most of them. Also if the women had spoken in their own voices, I suspect they could have conveyed more of the passion they had for their work and explained their challenges and accomplishments better. I am sorry to say I can't recommend this book to anyone, girls unfortunately too often think science and math are boring and this book will only prove that.

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### **Serene says**

What a great read!!! Reading these stories, which are totally inspiring, and reading stories of Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, etc., there's really not much differences between them. They were/are all confident, driven people who knew what they wanted to do and they did it, against all odds. In the Baha'i Faith, one of our core principles is the equality of women and men. Completely, already exists, women just have to take their rightful place. To advance humanity, to advance society, because putting down a group of people for any reason limits the advance of that society as a whole to their talents, skills and abilities. bahai.org

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### **Liz says**

Skimmed for non-fiction teen outreach. A little on the drier side with not to many pictures. One good thing was the each chapter covers one women so it would be a good resource for students to use to find someone to

do a report on and further research.

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