

# CELEBRATE Women's History



**"DON'T IRON  
WHILE THE  
STRIKE  
IS HOT"**

## KATE MULLANY

Kate Mullany (1845–1906) was an Irish immigrant who organized the nation's first sustained female labor union, the Collar Laundry Union in Troy, N.Y., in 1864. As president, she led a successful six-day strike to increase wages and improve working conditions. The play "Don't Iron While the Strike is Hot," written by Ruth Henry, commemorates the labor action. Prior to striking, the women worked 12- to 14-hour shifts, six days a week, washing, bleaching, starching and ironing shirt collars in oppressive heat, for about \$3 weekly. Mullany was later elected second vice president of the National Labor Union, the first woman to hold the post.

In 1998, the Kate Mullany House, at 350 8th Street in Troy, was declared a National Historic Landmark, became a National Historic Site in 2005 and part of the Women's Heritage Trail in 2006. Mullany was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in 2000 and into Labor's International Hall of Fame in 2016.