



The Statues of
**Frances Perkins
and Lucy J. Brown**
A Brief History



Ithaca, New York
August 17, 2024

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and Lucy J. Brown**
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On the Day of the Unveilings, August 17, 2024

Opening Event • INVITED TO SPEAK AT THE UNVEILING >

- Dr. Leslyn McBean-Clairborne (Emcee/Steering Committee Member)
- Hon. Lea Webb, Member, New York State Senate, 52nd District
- Hon. Robert Cantelmo, Mayor, City of Ithaca
- Hon. Daniel Klein, Chair, Tompkins County Legislature
- Kate de la Garza, Executive Director, Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc.
- Meredith Bergmann, Sculptor

Frances Perkins Statue • INVITED TO SPEAK AT THE UNVEILING >

- Dr. George Boyer (Emcee/Steering Committee Member)
- Dr. Alexander Colvin, Kenneth F. Kahn '69 Dean, ILR School, Cornell University
- Sarah Peskin, Board member and Chair Emerita, Frances Perkins Center
- Dr. Christopher Breiseth, Telluride House resident when Miss Perkins lived there and Board member and Chair Emeritus, Frances Perkins Center
- Tomlin Coggeshall, grandson of Frances Perkins and Board member, Frances Perkins Center
- Rev. Taylor Daynes, Chaplain, Episcopal Church at Cornell

Lucy J. Brown Statue • INVITED TO SPEAK AT THE UNVEILING >

- Dr. Constance Graham (Emcee/Steering Committee Member)
- Ken Glover, Community Activist
- Thys Van Cort, Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services (INHS) Co-Founder
- Johanna Anderson, President, Tompkins Community Bank, former Executive Director, INHS
- Rev. Mabel Welch, St. James A.M.E. Zion Church, Ithaca, NY
- Chavon Bunch, Executive Director, Southside Community Center
- Leslyn McBean-Clairborne, Steering Committee Member, Executive Director, Greater Ithaca Activities Center
- Glenda Walker, former INHS employee and friend
- Annie Carter, Cayuga Temple #54, Black Elks Forest City Lodge #180
- Louise Brown Harris, daughter of Lucy J. Brown
- Lucy J. Brown, statue honoree

The Beginning

In early 2021, an anonymous donor offered to fund the creation of two sculptures for placement in the City of Ithaca, wanting to create objects of beauty, and to be representations of people who have contributed to the well-being of the community, people under-represented as the subjects of public art. Ideally, the statues would be created by a well-regarded sculptor of renown.

The statues were to be a gift to the public, hosted by the Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services (INHS), an agency that has put the community's progressive values to work in developing quality housing within reach of people with limited means.

A steering committee was assembled to transform the donor's vision into a reality. Chaired by longtime Tompkins County Historian Carol Kammen, the group included the Executive Director of the Greater Ithaca Activities Center and former Tompkins County Legislator Dr. Leslyn McBean-Clairborne; Cornell professor of economics Dr. George Boyer; former administrator in the Rochester, Ithaca, and Elmira city school districts, Dr. Constance Graham; former Tompkins County administrator Joe Mareane; and INHS director Johanna Anderson. When Johanna left INHS to become President of Tompkins Community Bank, she was succeeded by INHS officials Patricia Paol-angeli and new Director Kate de la Garza.

Early in the process, the committee identified Frances Perkins as an ideal subject: the first woman to serve as a U.S. Cabinet Secretary, a driving force behind Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, and, in the twilight of her career, a lecturer at Cornell University and resident of Ithaca. Perkins personified a woman who understood the needs of the nation's poor, working people and the elderly. When given the opportunity, she brought to life the social and economic safety net we enjoy today.

The subject to be honored in the companion statue emerged quickly. Lucy J. Brown, co-founder of Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services and a lifelong Ithacan deeply involved on the local level to advance civil rights, affordable housing, and social justice was a perfect complement to Perkins and her work on the national level.

To then find a sculptor, the Committee reached for the top in recruiting an artist. Having recently seen the Women's Rights Pioneers statue in New York City's Central Park, Carol Kammen contacted its nationally renowned sculptor, Meredith Bergmann, to explain the vision for the Ithaca project. Ms. Bergmann quickly agreed to accept the Ithaca commission.

THE ARTIST

Meredith Bergmann

Meredith Bergmann has created some of America's most prominent and beautiful works of public art. Her monumental *Women's*



Women's Rights Pioneers, Central Park

Rights Pioneers sculpture in Central park, unveiled by Hillary Clinton in 2021, brings together Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. It is the only statue in the Park depicting real women. (Alice in Wonderland is the other statue of a woman). It is one of only six statues in all of New York City that represent women.

Bergmann's *Boston Women's Memorial* on Commonwealth Avenue celebrates Abigail Adams, Lucy Stone, and Phillis Wheatley as women who had an impact on society through their writing. They are life-sized and approachable, engaging those who visit.

One of her most recent major works is the *FDR Hope Memorial* on the southern end of Roosevelt Island in New York City. Here, Roosevelt is presented not as a political icon, but as a man in a wheelchair offering empathy and inspiration to a child with physical challenges similar to his own.

Many of Bergmann's sculptures are of women, people of color, and those who broke through barriers of politics, culture, and custom to bring positive change: Harlem Renaissance poet Countee Cullen, Rosa Parks, Ruth Bader Ginsberg, and Marian Anderson. The International Sculpture Center describes Bergmann's work as exploring "issues of history, social justice, race, human rights, disabilities, and the power of poetry and music."

Bergmann's full portfolio can be seen at www.meredithbergmann.com. It conveys a respect and love for the people the Steering Committee sought to celebrate in Ithaca.

THE SUBJECTS

Frances Perkins and Lucy J. Brown



Frances Perkins

Frances Perkins is a transformational figure in American history. Perkins was not only the first woman U.S. Cabinet member, serving through Franklin Roosevelt's entire 12-year presidency, she was a chief architect of the progressive policies of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal.

Inspired by her witnessing the horrific 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire that killed 146 sweatshop workers—mostly young women—Perkins overcame enormous gender barriers as she rose to serve

as New York State's Industrial Commissioner under Governors Al Smith and Franklin Roosevelt. Then, as a crippling economic depression was ravaging the nation, President-elect Roosevelt chose her to be United States Secretary of Labor. Although steadfastly supported by FDR, she had to overcome the caution of some of her male Cabinet counterparts and a dubious, contentious Congress to enact groundbreaking social programs to improve the health, safety, and economic well-being of all Americans.



Young Frances Perkins

The social safety net we now take for granted—social security, unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, the minimum wage, child labor laws, the 40-hour work week, and aid to dependent children—all arose from the "to do" list Frances Perkins took with her to Washington in 1933 and that is represented on the Perkins statue.

And Perkins was, for a time, an Ithacan. From 1957 to 1965 she was a lecturer at Cornell University and lived at the Telluride House which, at that time, was a scholarship residence for male students and a handful of visiting professors.

The question of who should be represented in the companion statue was informed by the Committee's desire to celebrate someone with deep roots in the Ithaca area and whose progressive influence was as important locally as Perkins was nationally. Quickly, Lucy J. Brown emerged as the obvious and worthy choice.

Lucy J. Brown has spent a lifetime as an effective champion of social equity and justice in Ithaca. Her passion for meaningful, systemic, institutional change led her to serve on the Ithaca City School District board, the Ithaca Housing Authority, the City's Board of Public Works, and the Ithaca Urban Renewal Agency.

A centerpiece of her career was as a co-founder of Ithaca Neighborhood

Housing Services, an organization that has, for 50 years, successfully delivered on its mission to provide quality housing otherwise out of reach for people of modest means.

And all the while, Lucy J. Brown, employed on Cornell University's administrative staff, counseled countless young Cornell students of color. In sharing their many personal insights into her influence and accomplishments, committee members Constance Graham, Leslyn McBean-Claireborne, and Johanna Anderson portrayed Lucy J. Brown as a woman of unparalleled impact whose contributions in Ithaca are broad, deep, and enduring.

Beyond any title or position, Lucy J. Brown was a lifelong agent of change--an ever-present voice for those otherwise shunted to the sidelines and an influential, respected presence when decisions were made. As represented in her statue, she was known to carry a pencil and pad on her many walks through Ithaca's neighborhoods to note her ideas and gather those of others. As Frances Perkins shaped the nation, Lucy J. Brown shaped the Ithaca community.



Lucy J. Brown, School of Human Ecology, counsels a Cornell student. 1977. Reprinted by permission of the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library



Lucy J. Brown

Both stand as representatives of so many others who, by their race, gender, or orientation, are often overlooked in public art and history.

The Statues

With the artist and subjects decided, the Committee turned to the question of what the statues should look like.

Realistic or abstract? The Committee favored a realistic depiction of Brown and Perkins, hoping the sculptures would be easy to relate to and identify with, and therefore inspirational to others who dared to embrace bold aspirations.

Monumental or life-sized? The Steering Committee chose to present Lucy and Frances life-sized and sitting on benches rather than larger-than-life and high up on pedestals. In doing so, the members sought to create a connection between Perkins, Brown, and those who visit and take a seat next to them. While monumental and historic in their accomplishments, Brown and Perkins were also very human. They learned from their experiences and interactions with a diverse array of others, including many whom others in power might ignore. The Committee believed the portrayal of Brown and Perkins should convey that connection, and that the transformational achievements of these women should inspire, not intimidate, those who take a seat next to them.

As Meredith Bergmann heard these thoughts, she began to sketch the contours of the two statues depicting Brown and Perkins each seated on a bench, leaning in to earnestly engage the person sitting next to her, Perkins with her "to do" list she carried to Washington, Brown with her ever-present pad and pencil.

With the Committee's vision established, the artistry of Meredith Bergmann took over. Beginning with sketches and progressing

through ever-larger and more detailed clay models, Bergmann brought Lucy and Frances to life. Through ink, clay, and bronze, Bergmann captured the life essence of both subjects—their presence, charisma, drive, and sincerity of interest as well as their moment in time.

Perkins is portrayed as a woman of the 1930's and 40's—a serious woman, dressed formally and primly. As always, she's wearing a tri-corn hat and her purse is nearby. (It has been observed that she dressed rather conservatively, as perhaps as a mother might—a strategy on her part to gain the respect and attention of the men who monopolized positions of power, for even boys listen to their mothers). As presented by the sculptor, she is leaning toward those who join her on the bench, with a look at conveys, inquisitiveness, empathy, and earnest interest.

Brown is represented as she chose to be portrayed—as a very contemporary woman, open, casually dressed, relaxed, and confident, eager to engage in conversation. She has come from a walk dressed in shorts and her ITHACA IS GORGES T-shirt, observing conditions in the neighborhoods and gaining insights from those she encountered along the way. As with Perkins, Brown is leaning in toward the person sitting next to her, clearly happy to share thoughts and exchange ideas.



Frances Perkins, Clay Model



Lucy J. Brown, Clay Model

When finished, the clay models created by Meredith Bergmann were moved to the Sincere Metal Works foundry in Amesbury, Massachusetts to mold and cast the bronze statues.

Talking Statues

To further enhance the experience of visiting the statues, the statues will be a part of the global Talking Statue network produced by Copenhagen-based David Peter Fox. The Talking Statues mobile device app allows visitors to listen to a narration about Frances Perkins or Lucy J. Brown via a QR code mounted near the statue or at www.talkingstatues.com. Several of Meredith Bergmann's other statues include this feature.

The Lucy J. Brown narration will be voiced by Lucy J. Brown herself, which may make it unique among the scores of Talking Statues across the globe.

Locations

Finally, the planning turned to where the statues should be placed. As the statues are a gift to the community, hosted by INHS, committee member Johanna Anderson helped guide the group to potential INHS locations that would allow high visibility and prominence for the statues.

Ultimately, and in consultation with Meredith Bergmann, the Committee and INHS selected an open area at INHS's Henry St. John's Apartments at the intersection of South Geneva and West Clinton Streets for the Lucy J. Brown statue and a parcel in front of INHS's Breckenridge Apartments on North Cayuga Street for the Frances

Perkins statue. Both sites are along well traveled streets and immediately adjacent to sidewalks. Their easy access beckons visitors to take a seat, snap a picture with Frances Perkins and Lucy J. Brown, admire the beauty of Ithaca's public art and, especially, appreciate the transformational role that marginalized and under-represented people like Lucy J. Brown and Frances Perkins have played in bending the arc of our history toward justice.

The Unveiling

The beautiful statues of Frances Perkins and Lucy J. Brown, borne of the vision of an anonymous donor, shaped by the Steering Committee and its partners, and brought to life by the brilliant artistry of Meredith Bergmann are being unveiled in ceremonies attended by numerous dignitaries and members of the public on August 17, 2024. As the statues are in two different locations, a procession honoring women in Ithaca led guests along Cayuga Street from the Perkins unveiling to the Brown ceremony.

Happily, Lucy J. Brown and her family plan to attend the unveiling of her statue. The work will permanently honor not only her many contributions toward a more just community, but the contributions of so many others like her whose lives are deeply consequential, but often overlooked by art and history.

BIOGRAPHY

Lucy J. Brown

I was born on September 5th, 1933 in the upstairs back bedroom at 511 N. Albany Street, right here in Ithaca, NY and, until November of 2019, I lived at 515 N. Albany Street. This changed when the 2020 pandemic forced me to move to Atlanta, Georgia to live with my daughters, Jennifer and Louise.



Lucy J. Brown, 2023

I spent 86 years in my hometown community that I love very deeply. Most of my free time was spent serving the greater good in order to make a positive impact on this city and its people. I truly believe that it's essential that people be involved in their neighborhoods, in their cities, states, regions, and in the world. Getting involved is really a basic human need.

When I was 15 years old, I began volunteering as the assistant secretary at Calvary Baptist Church and throughout my childhood, I was an active member in Calvary's Junior Choir. I love music of all kinds, especially jazz, and was taught to play piano by Miss Jessie Johnson, daughter of George Johnson, who was a barber and well known for his oratory.

I attended Central Elementary School, now Beverly J. Martin Elementary (named after a close friend of mine), Boynton Jr. High, and Ithaca High School. When I was 18 years old, I sat on my first committee for Community Affairs at Southside Community Center.

I married after graduating from Ithaca High School, went for further training in stenography and became the mother of four children. I became employed at Cornell University in the Department of Education (now Martha Van Rensselaer Hall). Although I was employed in an administrative role at Cornell, my function went far beyond my duties and I became a counselor and advocate for countless numbers of students.

During the turbulent '60s and '70s when students began demanding changes on college campuses, I witnessed the takeover by black students of Willard Straight Hall and supported the students who were protesting what they believed was Cornell's institutional racism, its biased judicial system, and its slow progress in establishing a Black Studies program. After 30+ years on staff at Cornell, I finished my tenure under the Dean of the School of Agriculture.

As a parent and someone who strongly believes that education can uplift and improve people's lives, I became involved in trying to insure that "every child who enters a school in Ithaca gets as much constructive learning experience as he or she can possibly receive...."

In 1970, I was a member of the Parent Teacher Association at Central Elementary and Ithaca High Schools while also becoming co-chairman of the Ithaca Black Board of Education. This group was formed in response to the widening achievement gap between white and Black students and to address the specific educational and cultural needs of children of color in our schools.

In 1973, I became a member of the Ithaca Board of Education because I felt "...strongly that parents must be involved in schools if they want their children to be successful."

1973 was also the year that Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Service (INHS) was formed. The initial premise of INHS was to reverse the decline of homes in downtown Ithaca by restoration over demolition.

Thys Van Cort and I were the co-founders of INHS, and we, along with others worked tirelessly to bring INHS to life. I remained an integral part of the organization for over 40 years and, in 2002, INHS established the annual Lucy J. Brown Leadership Award, "...given to community members who exemplify community spirit and activism."

I am an avid walker and I have walked through nearly every neighborhood in Ithaca. I carry a pad and pencil with me so I could write down things of interest and made notes of comments I'd hear from people, usually concerning their neighborhoods.

I have always worked to forge strong partnerships between our community and public and private institutions such as Cornell University and the Ithaca City School District. I served on the Ithaca School Board, the Board of Public Works, Common Council, Ithaca Urban Renewal, and on the Board of Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Authority (a position I held for 15 years).

I am a lifelong member in the Black Elks Forest City Lodge #180 & Cayuga Temple #54, also known as "the Lodge," which is an historically-black civic organization and is Ithaca's oldest remaining Black business.

I have traveled to other countries in the Caribbean and to South Africa, where I spent a month. This gave me the opportunity to see and learn about South Africa and our people with my own eyes and not rely on the negative images and narratives that are often shown through the media. Many of us come to places where black people outside of the US live with preconceived thoughts and ideas about their lives and about Africa.

When asked by others how I'm doing, I reply with a saying I live by: "I do the best I can with what I got."

— *As told by Lucy J. Brown to Dr. Constance Graham,
and Lucy J. Brown's daughters, Louise and Jennifer, 2024.*

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Frances Perkins

Frances Perkins was born on April 10, 1880 in Boston, Massachusetts. In 1902 she graduated from Mount Holyoke College and, after a few years of teaching, joined Jane Addams at Hull House, a prototype settlement house established among the immigrant slum dwellers of Chicago. In 1910, she earned a Master's Degree in economics and sociology at Columbia University, and took a job with the National Consumers League.

On March 25, 1911, a tragedy changed her life. She was an eyewitness to the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire in Manhattan, where 146 workers, mostly women and girls, died. Looking back, Perkins came to view this as the day on which the New Deal was born. A few months after the fire, she was appointed to the newly formed New York Factory Investigating Commission, where she worked with future U.S. Senator Robert Wagner and future NY Governor and presidential candidate Al Smith.

In 1919, newly elected governor Smith appointed her to the New York State Industrial Commission, and from then until 1932 she served as an advisor on labor issues to Governor Smith and subsequently Governor Franklin Roosevelt.

When Roosevelt was elected President in 1932 in the midst of a devastating economic depression, he asked Perkins to be his Secretary of



Frances Perkins

Labor. Although a great honor—there had never been a female member of the Cabinet—Perkins was torn about accepting the position. She did not want to break up her family or subject it to the publicity that went with such a position.

Perkins met with President-elect Roosevelt, telling him that if she was Secretary of Labor, she would pursue a wide-ranging program of labor legislation and economic improvement, including unemployment insurance, old-age insurance, federal child labor laws, a minimum wage, national health insurance, and more. She said to him: “Are you sure you want these things done? Because you don’t want me for Secretary of Labor if you don’t.” He said that he supported these programs as well, although he added that there were constitutional problems. “Well,” FDR said, “do you think you can do it?” Perkins responded “I don’t know but I want to try.”

Perkins accepted the appointment and served as Secretary of Labor from 1933 until after the death of President Roosevelt in 1945, making her one of only two members of the cabinet who served throughout FDR’s time in office.

Perkins helped to shape many New Deal programs, including the Fair Labor Standards Act, the National Labor Relations Act, the Works Progress Administration, and the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Perkins believed her most important accomplishment was the adoption of the Social Security Act. Perkins chaired the Committee on Economic Security, established by President Roosevelt in 1934 to propose a bill to further “the economic security of the citizen and his family through social insurance.” The legislation she proposed established not only old-age insurance (what we now call social security), but also national unemployment insurance, and Aid to Dependent Children. The original proposal to include national health insurance generated such intense opposition that it was dropped from the

report. Although the bill was opposed by various groups in and out of Congress, it passed both houses with large majorities and was signed into law on August 14, 1935.

Perkins' legislative achievements, which include banning child labor and establishing both a federal minimum wage and 40-hour work week, collectively represent what is now taken for granted as the federal social safety net. They helped redefine the role of the federal government.

Historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. described Perkins in these terms: "Brisk and articulate, with vivid dark eyes, a broad forehead and a pointed chin, usually wearing a felt tricorne hat, she remained a Brahmin reformer, proud of her New England background ... and intent on beating sense into the heads of those foolish people who resisted progress. She had pungency of character, a dry wit, an inner gaiety, an instinct for practicality, a profound vein of religious feeling, and a compulsion to instruct ...".

After the death of President Roosevelt, Perkins resigned as Secretary of Labor. She was appointed to the Civil Service Commission by President Truman, where she served until 1952.

In the spring of 1957, Cornell's School of Industrial and Labor Relations invited Perkins to join the faculty as a visiting lecturer. She ended up spending much of the rest of her life in Ithaca. For much of her time at Cornell, she lived at Telluride House, at the time an all-male selective residential community, and worshiped at St. John's Episcopal Church, less than a block from where her statue now stands.

Upon her death in New York City on May 14, 1965, U.S. District Court Judge and former Department of Labor Solicitor Charles Wyzanski, Jr. wrote of Perkins, "Her greatest achievements were in promoting Federal action and state cooperation in establishing a Social Security system to protect the unemployed, the aged, and the dependent. She

led the drafting of and lobbying for the Social Security Act of 1935—her greatest single contribution to American society."

Frances Perkins "sought to build a society in which all may live in health and decency." To recognize her accomplishments, in 2009 the Episcopal Church named Frances Perkins a Public Servant and Prophetic Witness, with a feast day of May 13.

— *George R. Boyer, June 2024*

Meredith Bergmann

For over 40 years, Meredith Bergmann has been making sculpture that deals with complex themes in an accessible, beautiful, and provocative way. Working within the tradition of narrative sculpture, she draws on her love of the history of art, literature, and mythology to make the past speak to the present. Blending the sensuality and power of representational sculpture with her own subtle sense of mischief, her work evokes multi-layered responses.

She works both on public monuments and on a private scale, exploring issues of history, social justice, race, human rights, disabilities, and the power of poetry and music. Her work has been shown in more than two dozen exhibitions and appears in over a dozen institutional collections. Her public commissions include the Boston Women's Memorial on Commonwealth Avenue in Boston's Back Bay 2003, the Women's Rights Pioneers Monument in New York City's Central Park 2020, the FDR Hope Memorial in Roosevelt Island, NY's Southpoint Park 202, and Something Is Being Done, a women's memorial for the historic center of Lexington, MA.

Bergmann's articles, essays, reviews, and poems have appeared in many journals, and she has worked as Production Designer for five fea-

ture films. Her work in a variety of genres has helped her focus on the essence of public art: what will be most nourishing and challenging for visitors to see and think about? How can the work inspire change?

Artist's Statement

Work for social justice and historical redress through my public art. My commissions include an 8' tall statue of Civil Rights icon and renowned opera singer Marian Anderson for a college in South Carolina, a heroic-scale portrait of the enslaved child Sally Maria Diggs ("Pinky," in 1860) for the Center for Brooklyn History, an allegorical female September 11th Memorial for the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, a memorial to the Harlem Renaissance poet Countee Cullen that addresses identity and race, and the FDR Hope Memorial for Roosevelt Island in a setting designed for use by people of all abilities.

I immerse myself in the world of my subjects, their histories, their individual sense of mission, and imagine what that all can mean to us and to the future. My practice is to seek out community and stakeholder views and sit with what I learn until I can find a way for the wishes of the community to potentiate my own artistic impulses and sculpt accordingly. That way my works can benefit from sustained community input without feeling like they were designed by a committee or losing the coherence of the original design. Through ongoing research and study I've been able to retain and deepen my enthusiasm for my subjects even when a project stretches over years.

I love making sculpture, and am happiest when my work can serve a purpose. Bostonians have put sweaters on Phillis Wheatley when the weather gets cold, and left notes of apology on the Boston Women's Memorial after the 2016 election. It gives me great satisfaction knowing that my sculptures make a difference in people's lives.



caption

Meredith lives in Massachusetts with her husband Michael Bergmann, a writer and director, and their son Daniel.

— For images of her work, please see Meredith Bergmann's website: www.meredithbergmann.com

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Tompkins County Historical Commission

This booklet commemorating the unveiling of statues of Frances Perkins and Lucy J. Brown was published by the Tompkins County Historical Commission in August 2024.

The Commission was created by Resolution of the Tompkins County Legislature on August 7, 2018 to advise the Legislature on all historical matters relevant to Tompkins County including commemorations, events, monuments, historical publications, and grant opportunities.

The Commission is composed of a diverse group of community members who share an academic, professional, or personal interest in local history. Among its many initiatives, the Commission encourages, sponsors, and publishes manuscripts such as this pamphlet that are intended to shed new light on unique aspects of the County's history.

Laura Johnson-Kelly, *County Historian and Commission Chair*

George Boyer

Ruth Groff

Susan Holland

S.K. List

Michael Lane

Marcia Lynch

Patricia Longoria

Cynthia Kramer

Joe Mareane

Leslyn McBean-Clairborne

Simon St. Laurent

Eve Snyder

The Statues of Frances Perkins and Lucy J. Brown

Borne of the vision of an anonymous donor, shaped by a local steering committee and its partners, and brought to life by the brilliant artistry of sculptor Meredith Bergmann, statues of Frances Perkins and Lucy J. Brown—two transformational women who lived and worked in Ithaca—are now a part of the cultural landscape of Ithaca and Tompkins County.

As the first women to serve in the U.S. Cabinet, Perkins broke through gender barriers and changed the nation through her work with Franklin Roosevelt to enact sweeping new social welfare programs ranging from social security to a federal minimum wage. Brown changed Ithaca and Tompkins County by giving voice and representation to marginalized individuals and communities and co-founding the Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services which has now been creating quality affordable housing for almost 50 years.

The beautiful statues of Frances Perkins and Lucy J. Brown stand in acknowledgment of the accomplishments of so many others who, by virtue of their race, gender, class, or orientation are often overlooked by history and public art.

How to Hear their Stories at Talking Statues



Frances Perkins
Or type
nyts.de/fp



Lucy J. Brown
Or type
nyts.de/lb

Where to See The Statues in Ithaca, NY

Frances Perkins

100 West Seneca Street
(Cayuga Street side)
outside Breckenridge Place Apts.

Lucy J. Brown

301 South Geneva Street
(corner of Geneva & Clinton Sts.)
outside Henry St. John Apts.