

# Coolidge Club Blast 1

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**Marian Anderson at Coolidge's Church**

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[This photo](#) of the great singer Marian Anderson was taken during World War II. Most of us associate Anderson's performances in Washington with her most famous one, the 1939 appearance [at the Lincoln Memorial](#). We recently stumbled across an article that

reminded us that the iconic contralto had performed in Washington even before the 1930s.

In November, 1925, Anderson sang at the first couple's church, First Congregational. *The Washington Post* reported on Nov. 8, 1925, that Miss Anderson would perform at the church in a benefit concert sponsored by the College Alumnae Club. The Club, an association of African-American female college graduates, provided scholarships for African-American girls hoping to attend college.

More reports came after the appearance. "There was a large audience of both white and colored people," later commented one of the period wire services, the *Preston News*. This was unusual in the still-segregated Washington of the 1920s. "Before my Window" by Rachmaninoff, "O Del Mio Dolce Ardor" (Gluck) and "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho," were among the pieces Miss Anderson sang. "Schubert's 'Wohin' was especially good," the *Preston News* reporter wrote.

That Miss Anderson appeared at First Congregational was no accident. [The church had](#) an abolitionist tradition and had over its past included African-American members, also rare in Washington, with church leadership helping to found Howard University. Coolidge's minister, the minister at the time of Miss Anderson's recital, was Jason Noble Pierce, described [in this post](#) at one of our favorite Coolidge sites, [crackerpilgrim.com](#).

Civil rights were a concern of Dr. Pierce's; indeed, within weeks of the Anderson appearance, Pierce preached in support of a then-controversial intermarriage, that of the already-legendary composer Irving Berlin (Jewish) to Ellin MacKay, the daughter of an Irishman with a silver fortune ("Coolidge's Pastor Jabs at MacKay," Jan. 11, 1926, *Rockford Republic*).

What about the Coolidges? What more about the church? Please share your knowledge.





## Coolidge Foundation Updates

Sharing the above bit of Coolidge and American history is our way of welcoming you to the Coolidge Club. These e-blasts will also keep you up-to-date with everything going on at the Foundation and help you stay involved. We are situated in Plymouth Notch, Vt., at the President Calvin Coolidge State Historic Site, where we work alongside the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation.

We have several exciting updates to share:

**Vermont Governor Peter Shumlin** just confirmed that on **April 8** he will join us to launch the Foundation's 2014 speaker series. This event is in partnership with Norwich University and will take place on Norwich's campus beginning at 4:00 p.m., with a reception to follow. Please join the Coolidge Foundation, trustee Sarwar Kashmeri and executive director Matt Denhart at the event.

This week we received a very generous gift from the trust of **Donald and Prudence Webb** to support our **presidential high school economic debate program**. The gift was arranged by **Thomas J. Amidon** of Stowe, Vt., who is the trustee of the Webb's trust. The gift will allow us to expand our program and involve more debaters, especially debaters from Vermont. Read our press release about the gift [at this link](#).

On **April 5**, our education director **Diane Kemble** along with Matt Denhart will judge at **Vermont History Day**. Thanks to donor Mimi Baird, the Coolidge Foundation will present a scholarship to a deserving young Vermonter.

Join us in Plymouth Notch on **April 12** from noon to 4:00 p.m. for a **Family Day** featuring a presentation on **presidential hats**. Education director Diane Kemble will have many hats on display. Special thanks to **Bill Jenney** and the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation for their help and for making some hats available from their collection.

On **May 5** we will celebrate the **U.S. Mint's** release of the **Coolidge Presidential Dollar Coin** with a special event at the **Union League Club in New York City**. Our speaker for the evening will be **James Grant**, the author, publisher and monetary

policy expert.

We have many events planned at **Plymouth Notch this summer**. We hope you will join us for many of them. These include:

- **Fourth of July** with a group reading of the Coolidge *Autobiography*;
- High school presidential debate on **July 8, July 10, and August 1** (please come and help judge);
- **August 1**: annual summer "Under the Tent" gala dinner in the evening;
- **August 2**: the Coolidge Foundation Annual Meeting and Plymouth Old Home Day with speaker **Reeve Lindbergh**.

Finally, be sure to tune into [C-SPAN's "Book TV"](#) this Saturday, March 15, at 10:00 p.m. to catch historian **George Nash** be interviewed by our chairman Amity Shlaes. The segment will re-air on Sunday, March 16, at 9:00 p.m. and Monday, March 17, at 12:00 a.m. (all times eastern).

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