

## WHY SHE'S FAMOUS

Betty Friedan's book "The Feminine Mystique" is considered one of the most influential nonfiction books of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. More than three million copies have been sold. In 1966, three years after the book was published, Ms. Friedan helped found the National Organization for Women to promote equal justice for women and men. She served as its president until 1970, and helped improve opportunities for women in education, politics, religion, medicine and the military. She wanted civil rights to include fairness for women as well as for people of different races, religions and countries.

Her other major books include It Changed My Life: Writings on the Women's Movement (1976); The Second Stage (1981); and The Fountain of Age (1993) and her memoir Life So Far (2000).

Developed with assistance from the  
Peoria Historical Society

### Something to think about:

- \* *What do you do if you feel shut out or unpopular? Have you ever written in your journal or diary or created a poem?*
- \* *Have you ever felt you were the only person with a problem, and then found that others shared your feelings and experiences?*
- \* *When you see a problem, do you want to work to improve things?*
- \* *What world problems might a young person work on today?*



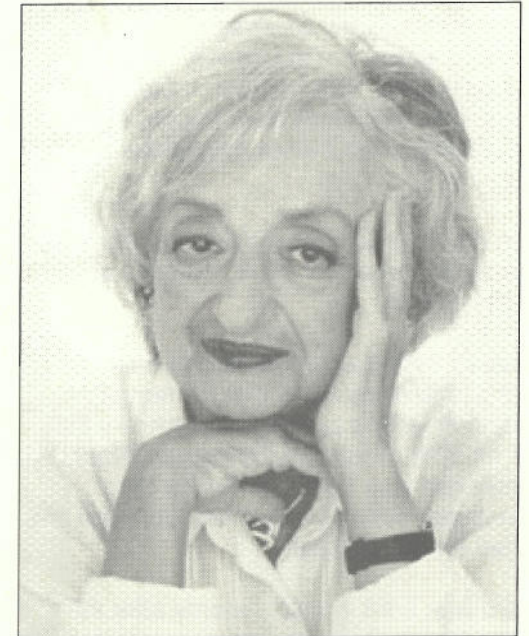
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# Betty Friedan

**Peorian, Author and  
Founder of the Women's  
Liberation Movement**



**1921-2006**

## HER EARLY YEARS IN PEORIA

Bettye Goldstein surely was the brightest student in her classes at Whittier Grade School in Peoria, Illinois and shared honors as one of the top students when she graduated from Peoria High School in 1938.

But even though she was editor of the school paper and won many awards, she was not considered popular. She blames the fact that she was Jewish and not as pretty as other girls. She was glad when she could leave Peoria to attend Smith College in Massachusetts. But her roommate at Smith, one of her classmates from Peoria, remained one of her closest friends throughout their lives.

Even after Bettye became famous, she returned to Peoria for class reunions and special events.

Because Bettye wasn't invited to many parties, she often spent time by herself, reading or writing poetry in a cemetery that was near her house on Farmington Road. Her mother had also been a writer for the newspaper, but had to quit her job when she started having children.

Bettye was born in 1921, shortly after the United States Congress gave women the right to vote. But it wasn't considered proper for married women to work outside the home when they had children. Bettye's mother found that very frustrating.

## COLLEGE AND BEYOND

Before graduating with highest honors from Smith College in 1942, Bettye changed her name to Betty, dropping the "e" from the end. She received a scholarship to study psychology at the University of California at Berkeley. She turned down a second scholarship to work on her doctorate degree because of pressure from a boyfriend. When she broke up with him, she returned to Peoria and then moved to New York City where she worked as a news reporter and editor.

In 1947, she married Carl Friedan, a theater director and eventually an advertising manager. They had three children and were living just outside New York City. She felt that being a stay-at-home wife and mother didn't give her a way to use her talents. When she gathered information from her Smith College classmates for a 1957 reunion, she discovered that those who were staying at home with their children shared her feelings about not having many career choices. Betty wrote an article about her findings, but no magazine would publish it. So she continued studying women's feelings, and in 1963 published her book "The Feminine Mystique."

By calling attention to the need for more choices for women, she helped improve women's lives around the world. Equal pay for equal work, maternity leave, and more job opportunities for women occurred because she wrote and spoke out about the need for changes.



## AWARDS, HONORS, CONTROVERSIES

Ms. Friedan received many awards and honorary degrees. She was a visiting professor at colleges and universities across the United States, from Yale, Harvard, and Columbia in the East to the University of Southern California and the University of California at Los Angeles on the West Coast. As a distinguished visiting professor at Cornell University, she conducted a three-year study on women, men, work, family and government policy. It was funded by a \$1 million gift from the Ford Foundation.

Ms. Friedan was often seen as impatient, controversial, angry and strong, even in her old age. She achieved success as a crusader for women, a truth teller and a powerful force.

She died in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 4, 2006 – her 85<sup>th</sup> birthday.