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WOMEN'S AMERICAN BIOGRAPHIES is a collection of full-scale biographies of more than 300 notable Americans. By a "full-scale" biography is meant an account of a person's life that provides something more than the basic facts—birth and death dates, titles of works, names of offices held, and so forth. The basic facts are indeed here, but we tried also to provide something more. Within the compass of an average of 350 words, we sought wherever possible to describe the individual's life, to place it in juxtaposition to other similar lives, and to set it in the context of surrounding events. In the case of scientists and inventors, for example, we made it a point to describe in some detail the individual's significant contribution to his field of research or to an industry; in the case of political figures, to describe in as much detail as possible the individual's actions together with their motivation and effects; and in the case of artists and literary figures, to assess the importance of their work.

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To that end, the biographies in this book represent what is, after all, only a very small sample of all the lives that have ever lived (and are still living). The editors are well aware of the limitations of this volume and question the inclusion of some subjects. They would like to include many more subjects to be considered for inclusion and to continue first-class biographies. The editors were greatly aided by a panel of reviewers who included Professor Kenneth S. Goussard of Louisiana State University (military history), Madeline Hagan of Oregon University (art history), Saul Benton of the University of California, Berkeley (science), Russell B. Nye of Michigan State University (literature and biography), and Milton Schales of John Jay College, CUNY (music). Harry Schales of the University of California at San Diego (business and economic history), and Donald W. Hill of the University of Chicago (religious and social history) are the two most important reviewers to be the editors, and they take responsibility for it. It is their hope to provide to their readers the criteria used to decide who should be treated.

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The most important criterion was whether "significant contribution" that is, no subject was included who, in the opinion of the editors, made a contribution of