

Generations of STEM:

Mary Golda Ross

Cherokee Aerospace Engineer

Mary was a groundbreaking member of the Cherokee Nation Tribe. In 1928, she earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics at the age of 20. As a mathematician and engineer, she was the first Native American female engineer and the first female engineer at Lockheed. While there, she helped design the P-38

Lightning fighter plane, solving many design problems through her use of research and mathematics. She was a founding engineer of the Skunk Works, a famous division of Lockheed that works on advanced, top secret projects. She worked on space travel, satellites, missiles, and eventually as one of the authors of the NASA Planetary Flight Handbook, which is about space travel to Mars and Venus.

After retiring, Mary spent time inspiring young women and Native American youth to join her in a STEM profession. A member of the Society of Women Engineers, she also participated in the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian at the age of 96, and later left an endowment to that museum upon her death in 2008.

Mary was featured on the reverse of the 2019 Sacagawea Dollar, pictured above.



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