

The Fredericksburg Area Museum (FAM) nominates the 20th century wedding gown of entrepreneur and World War II widow Blanche Russell Sabetty (1908-1976) for the 2024 Most Endangered Artifact contest. The garment which was described in a 1943 newspaper article announcing the wedding is a "blue and white voile dress, trimmed in lace, {which she paired with a} flower hat, white accessories and a shoulder corsage of white roses and gypsophila." Tragically, her groom, Corporal Lawrence Francis Sabetty was killed just two years later while fighting in the battle of the bulge. His name can be found on Fredericksburg's War Memorial. Blanche never remarried. Prior to wedding Corporal Sabetty, Blanche had earned degrees from both Mary Washington College and Fredericksburg School of Music. After his death Blanche worked as a college professor and accompanist before opening a dance school of her own. The Sabetty School of Dance offered classes for many ages in ballet, tap, and ballroom dancing in two Virginia cities. Blanche continued to work as an accompanist for performances at her schools. Today, Blanche's legacy lives on through the Russell-Sabetty Orchestra Scholarship, which is given to juniors and seniors of University of Mary Washington (formerly Mary Washington College) who demonstrate leadership in the UMW Philharmonic Orchestra. The preservation of Blanche Sabetty's wedding gown helps tell the story of female entrepreneurship and financial independence in the wake of loss and war. It also highlights a woman who contributed greatly to her community through the arts during her life and continues through her legacy