

Our Mission: To provide visibility and support for the gathering and dissemination of history about the roles and contributions of all Nevada women of every race, class and ethnic background.

*A Chautauqua -
Conversations with Three Nevada Women*

By Sue Davis

Our December 2025 program featured the Silver State Chautauquans portraying Pat Nixon (Kathy Drake), Helen Stewart (Nita Jameson) and Helen Delich Bentley (Barbara Fleischer). The Chautauquans dressed in period costumes and their presentations were impeccable! The audience, consisting of more than 30 people, was impressed by the performer's knowledge and asked many insightful questions about each woman's life.

Former First Lady, Pat Nixon, was born in Ely, Nevada but grew up in southern California. She discussed her experiences as First Lady, including visiting more than 100 countries. She was the first First Lady to travel to China and the Soviet Union, and also the first to enter a combat zone in Vietnam.

Helen Stewart's story is one of the most remarkable in Nevada history. She's often called the "First Lady of Las Vegas" because of the extraordinary role she played in



Left to right:
Betty Rose,
President of
Silver State
Chautauqua,
Barbara
Fleisher
(Helen
Bentley),
Kathy Drake
(Pat Nixon)
Nita Jameson
(Helen
Stewart)
Photo credit:
Sue Davis

shaping the valley's early years. She came to Pioche, Nevada with her husband in 1873. She spoke about her experience of being one of the few women in Nevada and living at their isolated Las Vegas Ranch and raising her five children. After her husband's death, Helen operated the ranch and by 1890 was the largest landowner in Las Vegas Valley.

Helen Bentley's journey is a powerful example of how a Nevada-born woman shaped national history through journalism, politics, and public service. Helen Bentley was born in Ruth, Nevada and was part of the large Serbian mining community. Her mother encouraged her to get an education and in 1941 she entered UNR and managed former Governor James Scrughman's Senate campaign and then went to Washington D.C. to work as his secretary. She was a journalist and was the first female newspaper reporter to cover the American Federation of Labor convention. She served as a reporter for The Baltimore Sun, and in 2006, the Baltimore Port was renamed in her honor.

NWHP Annual Report "By the Numbers!"

As we reflect on 2025, we are proud of our growth and commitment to provide visibility and support for the gathering and dissemination of history about the roles and contributions of all Nevada women.

165	NWHP members
9	NWHP Board members
30	Years as a non-profit organization
11	NWHP Programs
19	Biographies completed (including 5 First Ladies)
7	Oral interviews completed
4	Newsletters sent to members
6	Outreach programs for community organizations
3	Legacies posted on NWHP website
30	E-Blast communications sent to members
\$93,302	NWHP Total assets and liabilities
\$3,234	Individual donations to NWHP
\$10,750	Estelle J. Kelsey Grant

Also, the NWHP Website was refurbished and has a new look.

Letters to Nevada Daughters

Capture your family stories before they fade or disappear.

By Sue Davis

On February 14, 2026, the NWHP hosted a workshop with tips and ideas for preserving family memories and traditions. Instructors Patti Bernard and Sue Davis welcomed 17 participants and provided guidance as they navigated the NWHP website, which offered resources on writing family history.

Before the workshop began, participants introduced themselves and shared who or what they hoped to write about. Instructor Patti Bernard provided an example of how to begin a family memory which focused on a family holiday. Everyone received resources to begin documenting their family histories, which we hope they complete. We received such positive feedback from everyone that we hope to offer it again in the summer of 2026.

New Best Friend Forever - Carolyn McGowan Bernard

By Marcia Cuccaro

Carolyn, a fourth-generation Nevadan from Yerington, Nevada, married Don Bernard before graduating from UNR. They raised a daughter (Cobi) and son (Donald). In 1983, she and her daughter graduated from the University of Nevada. Carolyn worked as an educator in the Washoe County School District both before and after graduating college. She has dedicated most of her career to volunteering in many different roles. She was actively involved with volunteer activities throughout her school years in Yerington and later with Pi Beta Phi during college.

Post college, Carolyn helped found the Reno-Sparks Assistance League and went on to hold several national positions within that organization. She has served on the board of the Robert Z. Hawkins Foundation since 1990 and was named Chair in 2019. In 2017, she added Vice Chair of the Estelle J. Kelsey Foundation to her list of accomplishments.

In addition to her two children, she and her husband, Don, are the grandparents of six and great-grandparents of four.



Carolyn McGowan Bernard

Photo Credit: Bernard Family

From Our Research Desk - NWHP Oral History Program

By Patti Bernard

One of the most exciting updates to our website this year is the expansion of NWHP's Oral Interview/History Program, a cornerstone of our mission to capture the stories of women making history today. Launched in 2014 with support from a John Ben Snow Memorial Trust Grant capturing 14 interviews, the program grew by eight new interviews as of Dec. 2025 and now includes a vibrant archive of 60 oral histories. The project is funded entirely through contributions and grants, and we welcome any support to help it continue to add Nevada women's stories.

Our interviewees represent every corner of Nevada life—politics, history, medicine, environmental advocacy, community activism, and religious service. Just as important, they reflect the full diversity of our state. Women of Asian, African American, Caucasian, Native American, and Latino backgrounds have all shared their journeys, challenges, and triumphs with us.

Every story adds another thread to Nevada's tapestry, and we're proud to help preserve them. Interviews are available on our website as well as on the NWHP YouTube channel for wider public access. Each interview is transcribed, reviewed by the interviewee, and will be linked to their online profile. We also share these materials with libraries and historical repositories so they can add them to their collections.

I'd like to share a glimpse of some of the remarkable women we interviewed in 2025 whose stories we're preparing to add to our website. All but one are what we call "Nevadans by choice"—women born elsewhere who chose to make Nevada home and enrich their communities. Their reasons for coming here are as varied as the women themselves.

Karen Abowd has been a force in Carson City since she and her husband, Charlie, arrived in 1988 and purchased the beloved Adele's Restaurant. She jumped into community life right away serving as a Carson City Supervisor, lending her time to multiple boards, and championing local causes. Today, she's the President and Co-founder of the Greenhouse Project, now 16 years strong, which grows fresh produce for food-insecure residents and fills Carson City's main street with its signature summer flower baskets.

Dr. Catherine "Kay" Fowler, Emerita Professor of Anthropology at UNR, grew up in Utah, studied in Utah and Pennsylvania, and earned her PhD from the University of Pittsburgh in 1972. She spent more than four decades at UNR, focusing on preserving the cultures of the Native peoples of the Great Basin. A prolific author and lively storyteller, she continues to champion Native traditions. She is married to fellow anthropologist and archaeologist Dr. Don Fowler.

Dr. Karen Gedney, a New York native, became the first woman physician to serve in Nevada's men's prison system, overseeing inmate care in Carson City for three decades.

Unexpectedly assigned there in 1987 after completing her internal medicine residency at UNR, she stepped into the role just as the AIDS crisis was emerging and soon became a leading expert in managing the disease in prison populations. She is an author, public speaker and still champion of the humane treatment of prison inmates.

Pat Klos, a proud fourth-generation Nevadan, is an educator and librarian by training but a historian at heart. She founded the Historic Reno Preservation Society after leading groups of high school students through Reno's historic districts and showing them how those buildings tell the city's story—and why they're worth saving. What began as simple classroom walks grew into a leading preservation organization dedicated to protecting Reno's remaining historic structures from the wrecking ball.

Dr. Francine Mannix—who would become Reno's first woman pediatrician—came to Reno from California in 1953 and graduated from the University of Nevada in 1958. She returned after earning her MD from USC and completing her pediatric internship at Fresno General in 1973, all while attending medical schools when women weren't warmly welcomed into that profession. One of the more unusual ways she helped finance her education was serving as a "log person" at early KOLO TV, booking shows and placing advertisers in their 1 to 1 ½ minute commercial time slots.

Diminutive in stature but mighty in impact, Nevadan Rose Strickland has long been a leading voice for protecting public lands in Nevada and beyond. Trained as a sociologist, she followed her curiosity west, moving from Mississippi to Reno in 1970 to work for HUD/FHA. After meeting her husband, an avid outdoorsman, she threw herself into conservation work—first locally, then statewide, and eventually as a key Sierra Club spokesperson on Nevada and national public-lands issues.

Barbara Weinberg was born in Oregon and came to Nevada by way of California. Active in AAUW before her move, she arrived in Reno in 1972 when her husband took employment here and quickly reconnected with local AAUW women—leaders in the ERA movement, social causes, and political advocacy. Surrounded by kindred spirits and grounded in her lifelong involvement in the Jewish community, Barbara has gained the recognition as a thoughtful and effective social activist.

With leaders like these guiding and inspiring the next generation, Nevada's future is bright.

*When You Dare to Say Yes!
A Conversation with Jill Derby*

Saturday, April 18th, 2026 2:00 p.m.

NWF Conference Room, 770 Smithridge Drive, Suite 300

Members \$25/Non-members \$30 - Light refreshments will be served

Featured Historic Nevada Woman

Sarah Emeline (Emma) Mack

Work of long-time club organizer included issues of politics, suffrage, and government

At a Glance:

Vital Statistics:

Born Oct. 20, 1866, Nelsonville, Ohio

Died Dec. 5, 1947, Reno, Nevada

Maiden Name: Anderson

Ethnicity: Caucasian

Married: Orel Henry Mack; July 2, 1885; Seneca, Kansas

Children: daughters F. L. Wood and Effie Mona Mack, son Leon Mack, 5 grandchildren, 3 great grandchildren

Primary City of Work: Reno, NV

Major Fields of Work: Club organization, women’s suffrage leader



Sarah Emeline Mack

Photo Credit: Nevada Historical Society

**Researched by Patti Bernard
Written by Kitty Falcone**

Sarah Emeline (Emma) Mack was a giant in the Nevada women’s suffrage movement and local women’s club work during the first half of the 20th century. She left her mark on countless organizations in her adopted hometown of Reno, Nev., and raised three children, including Effie Mona Mack, a well-known historian and educator whose name graces the Social Sciences building at the University of Nevada, Reno.

Born Sarah Emeline Anderson in 1866 in Ohio, she moved with her family to Seneca, Kansas, where she graduated with honors from Seneca High School and then received her teacher’s certificate in 1882. In 1885, she married Orel Henry Mack, then in the furniture business. His brother, Judge C. E. Mack of Virginia City, Nev., had one of the best law libraries west of the Mississippi and convinced Orel and Sarah to come west. Orel worked in carpentry while he studied law and passed the Nevada bar in June of 1899.

While raising her three children, Emma became increasingly involved in women’s clubs in Reno, starting with the St. Margaret Society of the Congregational Church in 1902 and expanding outward from there.

In 1903, she was voted Nevada's Deputy Supreme Oracle of the Woodmen of America, a fraternal organization originally formed to help provide for widows and later morphing into an insurance company, and its "female auxiliary," the Royal Neighbors of America.

By 1907, she'd become active in the Twentieth Century Club of Reno, acting as the group's secretary and encouraging it to join a newly formed State Federation of Women's Clubs. In 1910, she was the state group's first vice president. She moved up to president, and was on a legislative committee of the group which successfully lobbied for new probation and truancy laws, as well as one allowing women to become Notaries Public.

As discussion of women's suffrage became a hot topic in the state, Emma took a larger and larger role in bringing it about. In 1911, she was voted second vice president of the Nevada Equal Franchise Society, which lobbied the legislature on suffrage's behalf.

Other topics always competed for her attention. In 1915, she and several other women wrote to Reno mayoral candidate Clarence Pierson, strongly urging him to refute the liquor industry, saying he should seek the "dissolution of the partnership between the city government and the liquor interests." "We believe that Reno should fully control the liquor business instead of having the liquor business control Reno," the women wrote.

Emma was active in party politics as well, and in 1915 was voted secretary of the Republican Women's Committee of Washoe County. In 1920, she filed to be a delegate to the state Republican Convention. That same year, she was chosen to represent the National American Woman Suffrage Association in Nevada on the ratification committee.

Also in 1920, she was asked by the Leslie Woman Suffrage Commission to write a Nevada chapter for a book on the suffrage movement across the country. She was the only member of the original state woman suffrage committee of 1908 who still resided in Nevada.

After passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, Emma's work to improve life for all Nevadans continued. In 1922, she was voted president of the Reno League of Women Voters. In 1923, she assisted in writing a history of the Nevada Federation of Women's Clubs and was its president for two years. During that time, she lobbied legislators on behalf of women's issues, including those involving property law. She helped organize the Reno chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and served as its regent in 1926 and 1927.

In November 1928, she was appointed an "Inspector of Election" for her precinct in Reno. Ten years later, she'd be appointed "Clerk of Election."

In April 1928, she lost her husband Orel after a short illness. A year later, she won the homesteading right on their Hill St. home and a \$60/month allowance. A mere three days after Orel's death, she was nominated to be one of eight vice presidents of the national D.A.R.

In February of 1930, she hosted a D.A.R. meeting where former governor James Scrugham spoke on the history of forts and trails in Nevada. During his administration, the D.A.R. was

made custodian of the historical site of Fort Churchill. At the meeting, he asked the group to work on the clear marking of that fort and other historical sites in the state.

Nevada was on the verge of becoming the only state in the union with legalized gambling in 1931. Emma Mack (usually identified as Mrs. O. H. Mack in newspaper articles of the day) and several other prominent women spoke out against the idea. At one committee meeting, they declared that Reno and Nevada should not “seek the riff-raff of the world,” according to the Reno Evening Gazette. Proponents at the meeting said gambling could not be stopped and should be legalized and licensed, which it was later that year.

In 1938, she was the Nevada president of “Pro America,” a Republican women’s club and in 1943, she became chairman of the Reno Unit of the newly organized American Women’s Voluntary Service, which did fund-raising activities to support things like furnishing a recreation room at the Reno Army Air Base.

On December 5, 1947, at the age of 81, Sarah Emeline Mack died in the hospital where she had been treated for five days. One of her surviving children, Effie Mona Mack had put together all of the documents her mother had written or collected through her amazing life. In August 1950, she presented them to the Nevada State Historical Society. It’s called the Sarah Emeline Mack Collection, and is available for research into the history of women in Nevada in the first half of the 20th century.

<https://www.nevadawomen.org/research-center/biographies-alphabetical/sarah-emeline-emma-mack/>

NWHP Legacy Website

By Marcia Cuccaro

The Nevada Women’s History Project (NWHP), an organization dedicated to preserving the history of Nevadans, created a LEGACY site where individuals can memorialize their loved ones. The site is located on the NWHP website (www.nevadawomen.org) under the heading, **Leave a Legacy**. Onetime cost to publish a Legacy is \$40, \$45 and \$50 depending on the length and media content you choose to include.

The site includes helpful hints to assist you in writing and a “save/stop/publish” option that allows you time to complete writing your Legacy. Once you are satisfied with what you have written, you click submit and once approved by the Administrator, the Legacy is online. If a friend wants to read the Legacy, a Google search of the name will take you to the specific Legacy. Individuals can also log into the NWHP website at any time to read the Legacy you have written as well as those of other Nevadans that have been published.

NWHP member, Patti Bernard, noted “By creating and sharing a Legacy you are keeping vital history alive and accessible to future generations.”

Community Outreach

By Sue Davis

Throughout the year, we are invited to deliver presentations to a variety of organizations. Some focus on sharing information about NWHP, while others highlight historical topics. In October, we presented at the Nevada State Railroad Museum and The 1701 Group (formerly the Assistance League). In November, we spoke to the Sparks Chapter of the Public Employees of Nevada. Altogether, these four presentations reached approximately 150 individuals and resulted in four new members joining NWHP from among those in attendance.

Best Friend Forever - Patti Bernard

By Mona Reno

A former history teacher and Washoe County School District principal, Patti's ancestors came to Nevada shortly after statehood. She is a graduate of Carson High School, and received both her bachelor's and master's degrees from UNR. Retired from her principalship for WCSD, and being quite aware of the lack of information on Nevada women readily available to the general public, Patti plunged into a 'second career' working with the NWHP in conducting oral histories and collecting other types of information on women throughout the state. Patti has researched 47 bios, researched and written 6 bios, researched 5 First Lady bios, researched and written 3 First Lady bios, 2 Legacies, and conducted 36 oral interviews.

Patti has been on the Board of Directors of the NWHP for over 20 years. She has been the recording secretary (5 yrs), First Ladies Web Bio editor (14 yrs), oral histories (13 yrs), President (6 yrs), Past-President (3 yrs), programs (5 yrs), and Jean Ford Research Center (4 yrs). Patti was the 2015 NWHP Woman of Achievement and was inducted into the NWHP Roll of Honor in 2019.



*Patti Bernard
NWHP Collection*

As required by the state of Nevada, all non-profit organizations shall hold their **Annual Board Meeting** in January to elect board members and complete the annual Charitable Solicitation Registration Statement. NWHP members were invited to meet the 2026 NWHP Board after the meeting which was held on January 13th, 2026.

2026 Board Members will include: President, Sue Davis; Vice President, Joy Orlich; Secretary, Marcia Cuccaro; Treasurer, Donna Knapp; Membership, Mona Reno; Newsletter, Carla Ford; Programs, Nancy Nagel; NWHP Historian, Kathy Noneman; Jean Ford Research Center, Patti Bernard.

NWHP Membership 2026

We Have 134 Active Members!

<p>Individual - \$40</p> <p>Cheryle Abbott Elain Alexander Byllie D'Amato Andrews Mary Baldecchi Tracy Caraway Vicki Carlson Janet Carnes Adelle Cerreta Dr. Linda Clements Patty Clock Shayne Del Cohen Kathy Drake Bonnie Drinkwater Gail Duwe Carleen Ernest Jacki Falkenroth Candy Fife Carol Galantuomini Carolyn Gardner Barbara Guerin Janice Hoke Betty Holcomb Beverly Hubbard Lisa Jayne Abigail Johnson Renee Kolvet Nancyann Leeder Lisa-Marie Lightfoot Sandra Mieser Jeanne Naccarato Michelle Peters new Doris Phelps Andrea Phillips Kelsey Piechocki Phyllis Pike Ron Reno Judith Reuter Rosalyn Reynolds Katherine Ross Anne Stilwill Maggie Thomsen Jane Tors Joanne Walen Rhonda Walker Holly Walton-Buchanan Chelsea White Mary Williams Carolyn Wilson Annette Wimmer</p>	<p>Family - \$70</p> <p>Karen and Steve Benna Catherine Cuccaro and Jeff Milligan Barbara and Dave Finley Kathy and Charlie Noneman Sue and Jim Smith</p> <p>Friend - \$100</p> <p>Alicia Barber Sandy Bitler Madeline Carpenter Nancy Cerceau Terry Cookro Sue Davis Helen De Marco Denise Duarte Claudia Fisher Barbara Fleischer Mary Lee Fulkerson Terry Horgan Carol Hunter Martha Keating Donna Knapp Marilyn Lewis Nancy Nagel Joy Orlich Diane Ross Barbara Wall Alicia Wright</p> <p>Best Friend - \$250</p> <p>Patricia Cafferata</p> <p>Best Friend Forever - \$1,000</p> <p>Marybel Batjer Dana Bennett Carolyn Bernard Patti Bernard - new Lynn Bremer Marcia Bernard Cuccaro Grace Davis Carla Ford - new Jacqueline Jones Vida Keller Catherine Magee Sandy Raffaelli Mona Reno Janet Ford Spelman Carole Tripp</p>	<p>Honorary</p> <p>Michelle Gardner - new Dawn Gibbons Betty Glass Dema Guinn Betty Hulse Sandy Miller Kathleen Sandoval Lauralyn Sandoval Kathy Sisolak Bob Stoldal Sue Wagner (deceased) Linda Wyckoff</p> <p>Organization - \$50</p> <p>AAUW – Reno Branch Churchill County Museum, Mel Glover DKG – Lambda Chapter DKG – XI Chapter Nevada Women’s Fund, Ila Friedenthal</p> <p>Donations Jan – Feb 2026 General Fund</p> <p>Patti Bernard Martha Keating Nancyann Leeder Nancy Nagel</p> <p>Endowment</p> <p>Mona Reno</p> <p><i>Thanks For Your Support!</i></p>
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Meet Board Member Carla Ford

"I have really enjoyed getting to know my mother through the eyes of the people in the Nevada Women's History Project."



By Sue Davis

Carla Ford, daughter of NWHP founder, Jean Ford, was raised in Las Vegas. After graduating from Valley High School she attended Reed College in Portland, Oregon and graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a degree in Chemistry. She subsequently attended the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore, where she graduated with honors and was named Nevada's Truman Scholar in 1977.

Carla completed her residency and then settled into internal medicine in the Boston area. As a medical student and resident, she worked overseas in Nigeria and India. Carla practiced in the Boston area for 30 years and then transitioned into reviewing records for medical malpractice issues.

Carla resides in Las Vegas for part of the year and on Plum Island, Massachusetts, for the remainder. Carla joined the NWHP Board in 2025 and she participates in NWHP board meetings remotely via Zoom. Carla enjoys outdoor pursuits, hiking in Red Rock Canyon, scuba diving and traveling. She has six adult children and six grandchildren. In 2025, she became a NWHP Best Friend Forever.

**Nevada Women's History Project
2026 Board of Directors**

Elected Officers

President: Sue Davis
Vice-President: Joy Orlich
Treasurer: Donna Knapp
Secretary: Marcia Cuccaro

At-Large Directors

Carla Ford
Kathy Noneman
Mona Reno
Nancy Nagel

Appointed Officers

Archivist - Mona Reno
Corresponding Secretary - Patti Bernard
Digital Communications Manager - Joy Orlich
Facebook Content Editors - Marcia Cuccaro and Mona Reno
First Ladies Biographies - Patti Bernard
Jean Ford Research Center - Patti Bernard
Membership - Mona Reno
Newsletter Editor - Carla Ford
Oral Histories - Patti Bernard
Programs - Sue Davis, Nancy Nagel, Joy Orlich and Patti Bernard
Website Biographies - Janice Hoke
Website Content Editors - Marcia Cuccaro and Mona Reno

Treasurer's Report

The Year-to-Date (YTD), as of 2/28/26, financial report shows a bank balance of \$68,765.15, \$0 liability, CD Endowment balance of \$22,579.52, and petty cash of \$50.00 . The total equity plus liability of the NWHP is \$91,394.67.

Donna K. Knapp-Treasurer



News

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nevadawomen.org
suffrage100nv.org



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NWHP Name Badge



Cost: \$16.38
Contact Mona at renomrl65@gmail.com with exact instructions for the requested name.

In this Issue

December Chautauqua	Page 1 and 2
NWHP Annual Report	Page 2
Letters to Nevada Daughters	Page 3
BFF - Carolyn Bernard	Page 3
NWHP Oral History Program	Page 4 and 5
Historic Woman - Sarah Emeline (Emma) Mack	Pages 6, 7 and 8
NWHP Legacy Website	Page 8
Community Outreach	Page 9
BFF - Patti Bernard	Page 9
Annual Meeting	Page 9
Membership	Page 10
New Board Member and BFF Carla Ford	Page 11