NWHP 2003 State Conference Focuses on Capturing Nevada Women

The NWHP's biennial Women's History Conference will be on Saturday, March 29, in Virginia City at the historic Fourth Ward School. The theme for the conference is Capturing Nevada Women, with the emphasis on how to find, record and preserve the stories of the women who have come before us and helped to make Nevada the place that it is today. The planning committee has worked hard to provide a diversified, entertaining and educational day for participants. Many topics will be addressed, and there are several special events planned, including lunch at the Gold Hill Hotel with an appearance by Margaret Breen of the Donner Party (a.k.a. Doris Dwyer from WNCC at Fallon), and a special performance by the Sparks Little Theater at Piper's Opera House of Emma Nevada. The complete schedule of events can be found on the registration form included in this newsletter.

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Award Winning Home Featured on March 22nd Open House Tour and Fund Raiser

AAUW and NWHP are sponsoring an Open House and Tour featuring the Benne home at 13330 Rancho Verde Dr., Reno. The date is Saturday, March 22nd, 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. This promises to be an enjoyable event. A flyer enclosed with this newsletter has details and a registration form. Cost is $45 per person. Sign up early as space is limited. Help support the Sarah Winnemucca Statue Project. $30.00 from each registration goes to the Statue Fund and is tax deductible.
The conference is open to all members of the Nevada Women's History Project. The evening dinner and entertainment are open to the public. The dinner is by reservation only, but tickets to the performance at Piper's Opera House may be purchased at the door.

For more information, contact Cherry Jones, 775 267-3410, or e-mail cljnqvuail@charter.net.

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NWHP North Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Northern Nevada Women's History Project will be Saturday, June 14 at the Franktown Grill of Thunder Canyon, 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.

Located on the Lightning W Ranch Road in Washoe Valley, members will be treated to a delectable luncheon after a delightful program.

Mark your calendars for this special occasion!

Carrie Townley Porter will lead a session on "Researching Women".
The start of a new year provides an opportunity to assess the status of the projects undertaken by the Nevada Women's History Project. There are many tasks needing accomplishment, so I have compiled a Wish List for 2003.

WRITERS NEEDED:
1. Our Web site committee is focusing this year on the writing of biographies for those thirty-one women on its list which have no biographies on the Web site. We need volunteers to choose a name to research and write the biography. Two biographies were submitted at the last Web Site Committee meeting. Eva Adams was submitted by Nancy Oakley and I completed the biography of Helen J. Stewart. How wonderful it would be if by the end of 2003 all the names on our Web site list were in red! Recording the history of Nevada's women has always been a major mission of the NWHP. We know that our Web site biographies are being used because of the numerous e-mails we get from people who are using them.

2. We have two of the four index lists on the Web site biographies. The alphabetical and geographical lists are complete. We need someone to index and write the proposed lists for categories of work and ethnic groups. This would be easy if ALL of our biographies were done.

3. Writers are needed for the Biographical Encyclopedia being produced by the Southern Region. Members who write a biography for the Web site can easily restructure the information for this important project, thus NWHP gets double duty from the research effort.

If you would like to help write biographies, but are unsure how to start, come to the NWHP conference in March or give Kay Sanders or me a call and we will help you get started.

NWHP is working with the Ely chapter of the Philanthropic Educational Organization (P.E.O.) to help them find information on sixty to seventy Nevada women who are or were members. They intend to write their biographies and NWHP will receive copies for our Jean Ford Research Center files. Our own Alice Pearson and Gertrude Gottschalk are on their list.

JEAN FORD RESEARCH CENTER:
Although NWHP has state-of-the-art equipment in the Jean Ford Research Center, there are many ongoing tasks still needed. We need members to help with filing our biographical information that many of us are clipping from newspapers in the state; typists to provide labels for the research files; members to work with researchers using our files and library; members to call in for telephone messages for a week at a time. Training for all of these tasks will be provided.

INTERVIEWERS:
NWHP needs members using either audio or video tape to interview the older women in their community so that we can save their histories. Kay Sanders and I worked with the Soroptimist International of Lovelock four years ago to initiate such a project in Lovelock. Our member, Carol Clanton, and the Lovelock Soroptimists interviewed over fifty women who grew up in Lovelock about what their lives were like. Since the video was made, eight of these women are no longer with us, but we do have their stories. This is a wonderful way to tell our Nevada women's histories.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Carrie Townley Porter, NWHP State President
News from the North

We have been planning for the Sarah Winnemucca Fund Raiser and the NWHP Conference to be held March 22 and 29 respectively. In this issue you will find information and invitations to both.

Carleen Ernest has worked on the fund raiser for almost a year and we are all looking forward to a wonderful time! My “Anne Martin” clothing should work well for the ‘20’s attire we are to wear. The timing has been planned to watch the sunset over the Sierras – truly spectacular from the home, Carleen avers.

Cherry Jones has chaired the Capturing Nevada Women conference committee – with the assistance of Isabel Espinoza, Mary Anne Convis and me. We are all excited about “Returning to the Roots of the Nevada Women’s History Project: Researching and Preserving Nevada Women’s History.” It will be interesting to find out what was the highlight of the day for those of us attending. Will it be the wonderful Fourth Ward School and its contents? Or will it be the Gold Hill Hotel and the luncheon? Is Piper’s Opera House with the Emma Nevada play to be performed there to be the event that triumphs as the highlight? Or, will some us be so excited by the programs that we actually get out there and do some real Nevada Women’s History Project work? It will be very interesting to learn the reactions of the participants to this wonderful conference.

Cherry Jones is planning a follow-up series for the conference – but I’ll let her tell you about that.

Our Annual Meeting is being planned for June 14th. Please save that date.

There are still a few 2003 NWHP calendars available at State Headquarters. Let us know if you are interested – I’m sure we would sell them at a discount, since you would miss January and the women’s team picture.

Holly Van Valkenburgh
Chair, Northern Region Steering Committee

News from the South

It is hard to believe that another year has come and gone already. Even more difficult to comprehend is the 74 degree weather in January, not that we are complaining about it here in the South. We will just enjoy it for as long as it lasts.

This year should prove to be an eventful one for all of us. We have set a goal of completing the first 100 bios, print ready, for the Women’s Biographical Encyclopedia by the end of the year. So many of our members have stepped forward and offered their talents as researchers and writers to help us accomplish this goal and I would like to thank them in advance for their hard work. Our chairman, Joan LeMere, was very ill in December and hopefully by the time you receive this newsletter she will be back to her energetic self. She will be scheduling regular “bio” meetings throughout the year. If you have not already volunteered and would like to help, please call Joan at 456-9242.

We missed all of you who did not attend our Winter Luncheon. Mary Gafford has written an update on the event. Our next luncheon will be on May 3rd, so mark it on your calendars now. SuKim Chung, the manuscripts librarian in the Special Collections Department at UNLV, will be our guest speaker. She will talk to us about the various and unique collections housed at UNLV, how to access them and, also, how we can contribute to the ever-growing research material. It promises to be an interesting afternoon. I hope to see you all there.

Many of you have commented about missing the Southern Region Newsletter and the good news is that it’s coming back this year. Look for the first issue about the beginning of April. Mitzi Johnson has offered to help with this endeavor. It was wonderful to see her at the luncheon looking healthy and fit. We have missed her so much and are thrilled that she is doing so well. We will be including a photo and order form for the Sarah Winnemucca jewelry and key chains in the newsletter for easy ordering.

In closing I would like to mention how much I appreciate and count on your comments and suggestions regarding our programs and the projects we are involved in. We always want an open line of communication with the members and to keep everyone as involved as possible. Thanks to everyone for their support.

Joyce Marshall, President
Southern Region Executive Committee
Membership Report

All members should have, by now, received notification to renew their membership for 2003. If for some reason you have not received anything in the mail, please just send your $25.00 to the P.O. Box with a note that you did not receive a letter, as it is possible that we have an erroneous address. Also, please include your phone number with your renewal and let us know if it is unlisted. This is very important so that you may be contacted in case of any changes in upcoming events.

We have, since our last reporting, seven new members; Joan Dimmitt, Kathleen Howell, Wynn Schottelkorb, Rosann Sirody, Elsa Torgerson, Rosalee O'Grady and Paula Mendenhall. We are pleased and excited that you have chosen to join us.

Kaye Gray

Southern Region

Luncheon: An Event of Recollection

NWHP Southern Region held its January 18, 2003 Winter Luncheon at the plush Golden Steer Restaurant located at 305 West Sahara. Jean Spiller, treasurer, handled the reservations and proudly announced that 31 ladies were in attendance to enjoy the ambiance of this nostalgic restaurant noted for offering elegant dining.

Southern Region President Joyce Marshall called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m. She brought the attendees up to date on the successful fund raiser luncheon for the Sarah Winnemucca Project that was held at the home of southern region board member Joan LeMere. The event brought in a profit of $620.00.

Mary Gafford introduced the guest speaker, Lori Lipman Brown. The topic was "My Reflections on Four Great Nevada Women: Ruby Duncan, Jean Ford, Florence McClure and Maya Miller." Honoree Florence McClure was in attendance and was introduced to the group. McClure was heralded for her valiant efforts in establishing the Rape Crisis Center and in exposing the deplorable conditions in the Nevada women's prisons. Of course, in addition to Lori's reflections, remembrances of NWHP founder Jean Ford brought forth recollections from many members present. Lori displayed photographs of all respective honorees.

Dr. Marlene Adrian of Women of Diversity Productions, Inc. who is also a NWHP member, videotaped the presentation by Lipman-Brown. Dr. Adrian is scheduled to include Florence McClure in her wonderful video series of Nevada women.

It was decided at the business meeting, which followed the speaker, that the next luncheon would take place on May 3rd at the same location.

Mary Gafford

Southern Region Position Available

As all of you know, Frankie Williams has moved to Texas and not only do we miss her very much, but her position as 3rd Vice-President and nominating committee chair is now available. Anyone interested in jumping on board, please drop a line to the P.O. Box and reference in the corner "VP Position." Or, better yet, you can call Joyce Marshall at work 895-2246 or at home 648-7042 and let her know that you are interested. The 3rd Vice-President arranges our meetings and because we have already set our next luncheon, this will be an excellent way to get involved without having to assume a great deal of responsibility in the middle of a term.
NWHP Roll of Honor

The Roll of Honor was introduced at the first NWHP biennial conference held in Reno on March 3, 1997. The purpose of this on-going project is to honor individuals and organizations who have "made a difference" in the gathering and dissemination of Nevada women's history...who have shown commitment and creativity that resulted in tangible contributions of published works, video collections, accessible research data and special services.

Honorees for Conference 2001 were: Margaret Wells Butts, Victoria Ford, Eleanor Gottschalk, Joyce Marshall, Jane Pieplow and the Churchill County Museum and Fritsi Ericson and the Nevada Women's Fund.

Honoree for 1999 was Jean Ford. Honorees for 1997 were: Isabelle Savin Blackman, Dr. Elaine Enarson, Mary Freeman, Dr. Patricia Geuder, Mary Ellen Glass, Dr. Anne Howard, Verde Hughes, Ron James, Lee Kosso, Jan Lovern, Celesta Lowe, Lee Mortensen, Dr. Sally Zanjani, Sylvia Ontaneda-Bernales, Nona Parkin, Helen J. Stewart, Margaret (Peg) Wheat, Dr. Jeanne Elizabeth Wier, American Association of University Women (Nevada division), Delta Kappa Gama-Alpha Chi State Chapter, Mesquite Club of Las Vegas, Nevada Humanities Committee.

Should you wish to make a nomination for 2003, please fill out the form in this newsletter.

Sarah Winnemucca
Statue Project
Update

Fund raising continues to raise the required money for the Statue Project. Our little tri-folds are working well for us. We have had donations from not just Nevada, but other states as well. Our balance in the donation fund is $32,358. We anticipate beginning the process of choosing the sculptor this spring. The AAUW in Reno is joining with NWHP to hold a fund raiser on March 22, 2003. See details in this newsletter. The Nevada State Daughters of the American Revolution have designed and are selling Sarah Winnemucca jewelry. Contact Mary Anne Convis or Carrie Townley Porter or the DAR to purchase these lovely items.
Web Site Features Jean Ford Special Collection for Citizen Action and Community Building

NWHP founder Jean Ford continues to have an effect and to be remembered by the people with whom she worked and organizations she helped create. The Jean Ford Special Collection for Citizen Action and Community Building is accessible via the Web site, www.lvccld.org/special_collections/jean_ford. This collection contains materials that center on the theme of citizen action, participatory democracy and community building. Prior to her death in 1998, Jean donated materials relating to community activism, grass roots political organization, politics and leadership to the Clark County Library District. The site includes a Collection Guide to assist in locating the various videotapes, publications and news clippings in the archive. Also available is information about Jean’s life, including interviews and narratives contributed by people who knew her or were affected by her activism. Jean served in the Nevada State Legislature both as an Assemblywoman and State Senator from Clark County where she made great contributions to the betterment of our state. Her many other accomplishments are too numerous to list in this article. As an advocate for libraries, parks, and preservation of women’s history, Jean’s work continues to evolve.

The Web site was funded by a grant from the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) through the Nevada State Library and Archives and was created to help individuals or groups access government at all levels and to participate in grass roots community and political processes. The Clark County Library opened the Jean Ford Special Collection Room at 1401 E. Flamingo Road in Las Vegas in 1997.

Sales Items Now Available in the North

The beautiful pins, key chains and earrings that the D.A.R. commissioned to be created as part of their support of the Sarah Winnemucca Statue Project now are available in Reno. Carrie Porter has received a supply of these items to sell. The pins and key chains are priced at $10.00 each and the earrings (both clip and pierced) sell for $15.00 a pair. Please contact her at (775) 857-2050 if you are interested in making a purchase, or call Mary Anne Convis at (775) 888-9867.

All proceeds from the sales will go toward the Project. Southern Nevada members can make purchases by calling Joan Dimmitt at (702) 242-9012.
Bertha C. Knemeyer

Born: October 30, 1885
Died: Unknown at this time
Race/nationality/ethnic background: Caucasian (German)
Primary city and county of residence and work: Elko (Elko County)
Major fields of work: education, (teacher, principal, Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction)
Other role identities: civic leader, lecturer

Biography:

Bertha C. Knemeyer (known affectionately as B.C.K.) belongs to Nevada and to the West. Born in Carson City on October 30, 1885, during a brief visit by her family to the area, Ms. Knemeyer was the daughter of one of that sturdy group of German immigrants who settled in Carson and Mason Valleys from the 1870s through the 1890s. Her father, Franz H. Knemeyer, and her mother, nee Marie Heidtage Springmeyer, came to the fertile Carson Valley in 1882 at the instigation of relatives and friends who had preceded them. The family settled permanently in Mason Valley after spending a few years in "Old Empire" on the Carson River, where Bertha's brother, Edward, and sister, Erma, were born, and Carson City.

Bertha received her early education in a little country school. Quiet and shy, but very bright, she displayed a definite talent for and interest in mathematics. She was determined to make something of herself in spite of hard times and difficulties. Bertha recalled two outstanding teachers who inspired her with the will to learn and with an interest in the world about her. Defying all obstacles, Bertha earned the equivalent of a high school diploma by being tutored by Dr. G.E. Leavitt, who took it upon himself to teach the girl everything he knew—mathematics, Latin, science, and German.

In 1902, after completing her education with Dr. Leavitt, Bertha applied in person to the University of Nevada in Reno without a single actual high school credit. At first they turned her down—how could she presume to ask to be admitted? But, again, her determination, and the intelligent charm that made others want to help, led her to one who recognized her potential and was willing to give her a chance. Dr. Thurttell, professor of mathematics, agreed to be responsible for the girl while she was at the University. Dr. Stubbs, the president of the University, proved to be kind and understanding, and there were others whom Bertha remembered with gratitude. One was Dr. J.E. Church, a long-time professor of classical languages, and later famous for his snow surveys. These men became her personal friends and advisors.

During her campus years, she was also active in Delta Rho, a local sorority later to become a chapter of Pi Beta Phi, and was a member of Phi Kappa Phi, a scholastic honor fraternity.

Following her graduation in 1906 as the youngest member of her class, Bertha began a thirty year professional career in Elko County. She became a teacher in the local high school. Not only did she teach her beloved mathematics, she taught German, Latin, science, and physical education. It became evident that the new young teacher was one of those rare individuals who inspired others to learn.

By the time she was thirty, she was appointed Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction for northeastern Nevada, the first woman in the state to hold that position. During these years as Deputy Superintendent, she traveled to every town in her district. She told many tales of the rides about the countryside, in all sorts of weather, and over miles and miles of terrible roads, in her old Model T Ford, and of her encounters with the various problems that arose in the tiny schools of those early days. She felt her adventures were exciting as well as satisfying; through it all she left a trail of wonderful, loyal friends whose kindness at

Photo courtesy of No. Eastern NV Museum-Elko

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Hospitality helped her over rough spots, and whose friendships she cherished for years.

During these years, which coincided with World War I, Bertha became the target of discrimination by those who were resentful of her German origins. A younger brother was still in Germany—he had been too young to travel to America—and many bigots felt Knemeyer's ties to Germany were too strong. For Bertha, this period of her life represented a time of sheer endurance.

In 1919, Knemeyer resigned her Deputy Superintendent position to become teacher and principal at Metropolis High School; a year later, she accepted the opportunity to become principal of the new high school in Elko, a position she held for fifteen years. During that time, the student population expanded from eighty in 1920 to two hundred in 1936. Although Bertha's duties expanded proportionately, she continued to reserve for herself the privilege of teaching the classes in higher mathematics.

Knemeyer was loved by faculty and students alike. She was as equally concerned over her finest, most promising students as she was those who was somewhat more recalcitrant. A wrong-doing by one of her students was a personal blow to B.C.K.; she was known to spend hours of patient effort to make the culprit see his/her weakness and mend his/her ways.

Not content to confine herself entirely to the improvement of her school and her pupils, Ms. Knemeyer worked zealously with the community as a whole. She was instrumental in bringing Chautauquas and, later, other lecture series to Elko.

Bertha acquired a master's degree by attending several universities during summer sessions, including Harvard, University of Chicago, University of California at Berkeley, and the University of Berlin. She was elected a delegate to the Convention of the World Federation of Education Associations in Geneva, Switzerland, and in 1934, was elected one of the twelve national vice-presidents of the National Education Association.

Bertha was an active citizen in Elko, her adopted home. She was a charter member, in 1912, of the Elko Twentieth Century Club, a member of Chapter A, the first P.E.O. Chapter in the state of Nevada, and a member and Past Matron of the Elko Chapter No. 17 of the Order of Eastern Star. She was also an excellent bridge player and entertained frequently at small gatherings in her home.

An outspoken person, Bertha faced a major crisis in 1935; she was asked to resign her position of twenty-nine years because she took a strong stand in favor of scholastic standings over athletics. Heartbroken by the request to resign, she rallied when most of the community called a mass meeting and submitted a petition with over 1,000 signatures demanding she keep her job. She stayed for another year, then retired with full pension to which completion of thirty years of teaching service entitled her.

Following her retirement in 1936, she traveled throughout the world, pursued a Ph.D. program at Columbia University, taught once again at the Chadwick School in Rolling Hills, California, the Montezuma School for Boys in Los Catos, and finally at the Sarah Dix Hamlin School for Girls in San Francisco. She was convinced that girls were as bright at mathematics as boys, when given the chance, and found them to be the best workers. She retired again in 1950, but became a speaker on the methods for teaching mathematics.

Once "truly" retired, she traveled to Europe again and to Asia for the first time. She was gone for over six years before returning to the United States. She settled in San Francisco, and traveled less often although she attended a reception in her honor in Carson City in 1961.

Although Bertha never married, never had biological children to carry on, her mathematical mind has without a doubt found immortality, first through her nephews and grand-nephews, and also through her "intellectual descendants," mathematicians and scientists of the next generation, totally unrelated by blood, but in whom the germ of genius was planted, perhaps years before, by B.C.K. Above all, she left a legacy of hundreds, perhaps thousands of students, whose intellectual as well as moral attitudes will be on a much higher plane than they would have been, had not Bertha C. Knemeyer exerted her influence on some intellectual or biological ancestor.

(Biographical sketch by Sally Wilkins from published article by Gertrude Badi)

Sources of Information:
Volunteer Researchers and Writers Needed

Our 2003 New Year’s Resolution is: Encourage research and writing of biographies of Nevada women to increase the number of completed biographies on our NWHP Web site. The Web Site Committee recently made this solemn pledge and are now acting upon this resolution. Therefore, we will be actively recruiting and encouraging our members to select someone to research, obtain the instructions from our Web site on writing biographies, do the work, and send the completed bio (with a photo if possible) to our Web site editor. How’s that for a new twist on New Year’s opportunities?

Therefore, you have been advised that you may be called upon, or better yet, after reading this article, be inspired to contact us with the person of your choice. I have a few suggestions for you to peruse. These are some Nevada women whose names appear on the Web site but as yet have nothing more to offer. Their names, followed by locations within our state, are: Martha Barlow, Mineral Co., Florence Humphrey Church, Washoe Co., Joanne De Longchamps, Washoe Co., Una Reilly Dickerson, Washoe Co., Mary Eldridge, White Pine Co., Mary Hall, Eureka/Lander Cos., Fannie Gore Hazlett, Lyon Co., Ida Browder Mountford, Clark Co., Florentina Nostrossa, Eureka Co., Yolande Jacobsen Sheppard, Washoe Co., Helen Rulison Shipley, Washoe Co., May Bradford Shockley, Nye Co., Lucy Van DeVenter, Washoe Co., Julia Viani, Mineral Co., Gue Gim Wah, Lincoln Co., Edith West, Lyon Co. Of course, you have the choice to select someone else as long as they fall within our guidelines.

We’re off to a good start as of January since six additional biographies are either completed or are on the drawing board with researchers and authors committed to the task. Please consider joining this worthwhile endeavor and help make our 2003 New Year’s Resolution a successful one. Any questions, please contact me at (775) 747-1740 or e-mail: ksanders@unr.nevada.edu.

Kay Sanders, Chair
Web Site Committee
Potpourri

Thanks to:

- Bob Harmon, Nevada Department of Cultural Affairs, for coordinating the donation by Sierra Pacific Power Company of 3,000 Sarah Winnemucca Statue Project trifolds.

- Virginia Terry, PEO member in Ely, who has informed Carrie Porter that they plan to write 60 to 70 biographies of Nevada women from White Pine County to be completed by their 2004 State Conference. After the conference they will provide NWHP with copies of these biographies.

Moved:

- Frankie Williams, our staunch, hard-working, creative member from Las Vegas, is now a Texas resident. She has moved with her husband to Robert Lee, Texas. Her new address is: 183 Thomas Lane, Robert Lee, TX 76945. We wish her all the best in her new location and encourage her to stay involved with NWHP.

Announcement:

- Our members will be interested to know that a new book, You Know You're A Nevadan If..., by Guy Clifton with illustrations by Marilyn Melton, contains this quote: "You went on a bus trip around the state with Jean Ford exploring Nevada women's history." Copies of this book are available exclusively through the Nevada State Museum.

Correction:

- In our thanks to Adam Baker for the contribution of his painting of Sarah Winnemucca a line was dropped from the article. The sentence should have read: "We have a banner that has a pocket for the painting. We have used this banner in the parade at Goldfield and the Nevada Day parade. The painting is available for other Sarah Winnemucca functions. Adam can be contacted at 775-882-6322.

Please inform the State Membership Chair and your regional membership Chair of any changes in your address, phone number, and/or E-mail address. Kaye Gray's address is: P.O. Box 12184, Las Vegas, NV 89112. In the North please also notify Kathleen Noneman at: NWHP, 770 Smithridge Dr., Suite 300, Reno, NV 89502.

Articles for the May 2003 newsletter are due to Newsletter Editor Kay Sanders no later than April 25, 2003. E-mail her at ksanders@unr.nevada.edu.

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Individual Membership • Dues $25/Year

Name ____________________________________________
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Home Phone ___________________ E-Mail ____________

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President or Director _______________________________________
Mailing Address _______________________________________
City/State/Zip Code _______________________________________
Phone ___________________ E-Mail ___________________ 

Name of Representative to NWHP __________________________

Mail to: NHWP, 770 Smithridge Dr., Ste. 300, Reno, NV 89502

Visit the Nevada Women's History Project Online at www.nevadawomen.org

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Elsa Torgerson
Rosalee O'Grady
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