The Genesis of NWHP

By Janet White

It began quite simply, a phone call or two, then a few more. Many, many questions, some with no answers. Some suggestions on where the required information might be found. Always more questions than solutions. Who was she? Where was she born and where did she live? When did she come to Nevada? Why did she come here? Who was the first Nevada woman to obtain the license, pass the bar, practice medicine, work her own mine, run her own ranch? The dry creek of information was flash-flooded with questions.

To Jean Ford, the woman to whom these questions were addressed, it was clear that times were a'changing and women’s lives were demanding to be acknowledged, researched, written.

In 1991, Jean was appointed Acting Director of Women Studies at the University of Nevada, Reno. In the spring of 1992 she designed and taught a new course: “Nevada Women on the Frontier.” Around that time, UNR professors Steve Lafer and Steve Tchudi, who had initiated “Reading and Writing the West” as a Summer Institute for teachers, engaged Jean to design and coordinate some creative bus tours for this class. So, it seemed quite logical that if anyone had questions about Nevada women, Jean Ford would know the answers.

In 1993 the phone calls poured like a cloudburst from the desert sky, and Jean was inundated. Since the history of women was being researched across the nation, why not here in Nevada? The idea of a clearinghouse on Nevada women’s history was first discussed at a weekend retreat hosted by Beverly Hubbard at Meeks Bay, Lake Tahoe.

By the spring of 1994, a small nucleus had formed and the first documentation of the Nevada Women’s History Project appeared: A single typewritten page headed, “Nevada Women’s History Project,” with a notation at the top in Jean’s handwriting, “concept paper, revised 6-1-94.”

This brief paper stated a proposal: November 11, 1994 to discuss “the feasibility and desirability of creating an organization to carry out some special projects relating to Nevada women’s history.” Additional instructions were mailed on November 5, 1994 concerning the Tahoe retreat.

But Nevada weather interfered, not uncommon in November, and the business meeting was held instead at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Northern Nevada on Del Monte Lane in Reno. Earlier that day about 50 women and men had gathered to hear Linda Dufurrena speak of her oral history projects in Humboldt County and show slides of her photography of Northern Nevada. The “agenda for November 11, 1994” unfolded as discussion and brainstorming through the afternoon and evening explored organization, purpose, programming, types of roles available for
Members representing organizations were Pat Salandra (American Business Women’s Association), Bobbie Talso (Delta Kappa Gamma, Lambda Chapter), Vikki Ford (Friends of UNR Library), Mary Lee (League of Women Voters of Nevada), Penny Whalen (Greater Reno Zonta Club) and Fritsi Ericson (Nevada Women’s Fund).

More monthly meetings followed. At the September meeting, Jean Ford reported membership included 44 individual members, 14 organizations and 9 state agencies; the By-Laws Committee presented a draft of organizational by-laws for consideration, the Program Committee reported on oral history and archives workshops, a summer teacher institute for 1996, a monthly Research Roundtable, and plans were finalized for NWHP participation in the Nevada Day Parade in Carson City on October 31, 1995. Additionally, the Newsletter editor set a deadline for copy for the Inaugural Issue of the NWHP newsletter. So, here we are: The Nevada Women’s History Project. As a cloudburst of membership is welcomed, our passageway to success is guaranteed by dedication, participation and joy.

As the current Chair of the Nevada Women’s History Project I am proud to read this article by Janet White and see that we are following true to the original focus and goals of the founding Steering Committee. We continue to be a clearinghouse for Nevada women’s history for all Nevada women. Moving toward a digital clearinghouse through our new website, in development, we are broadening the focus of the current NWHP website to include the work of other organizations. Every decision the current Board of Directors makes is run through the filter of the original goals of the NWHP.

I chuckled a little when I read that the Nevada Women’s Fund agreed to be the fiscal agent for the NWHP “until full organization was achieved," which was accomplished in 2014, 20 years after that agreement was made. We thank the NWF for their patience.

Mona Reno, Chair NWHP
On a beautiful fall day, we met at historic Rancho San Rafael to learn about Reno educator, poet and author, Mary S. Doten. The program was preceded by a delicious luncheon of a variety of homemade soups, salads, antipasti and desserts provided by NWHP members.

Lynn Bremer, who recently published a two volume anthology of Mary’s known writings, presented an informative and insightful portrait of this woman who became one of early Reno’s most beloved educators, and who was honored by having an elementary school named after her shortly before her death in 1914. Mary’s role in education was well known, but until Lynn set out to research and compile her numerous short stories, poems, lectures and essays, her literary skill went unrecognized.

By recounting a brief history of Mary’s life and reading several selections of her writings, Lynn drew a picture of a woman who experienced the hard scrabble life on the Comstock and later wrote of those experiences from a woman’s perspective. Some of her short stories, arguably, can match the quality of any written by her husband.

Mary came to Nevada in 1870 and married Gold Hill newspaper owner, Alf Doten in 1873. She accompanied her husband to several Nevada communities before finally settling down in Reno with her son and two daughters as a teacher and administrator in the Reno school system. She was active in women’s suffrage, became a revered education leader, as well as an author and lecturer. Although her husband, Alf Doten is more well-known because of his diaries that were later edited into a multi volume series by Walter Van Tilburg Clark, thanks to Lynn, Mary Stoddard Doten’s contributions to Nevada’s history will finally be recognized.

By Patti Bernard
New Members

Friend—$100
Dorothy M. Nocita

Individual—$30
Peggy Hamel
Maggie Thomsen

Honorary Members

Bonnie Bryan
Mary Anne Convis
Dawn Gibbons
Betty Glass
Gertrude Gottschalk
Dema Guinn
Kathy List
Sandy Miller
Catharine Sanders
Kathleen Sandoval
Linda Wyckoff
Sally Zanjani

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Best Friend - $500
Marcia Cuccaro

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Barbara Finley
E. Nell Fozard
Cherry Jones
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Catherine Cuccaro & Jeff Milligan

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Debbie Smith
Patricia Tripple

Holly Van Valkenburgh
Sue Wagner
Sharon Walbridge
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Kathleen Winters

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Cheri Abbott - $30
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Anonymous - $250
Donald & Carolyn Bernard
- $100
Patti Bernard—$30
Helen DeMarco - $20
Jim & Betty Hulse - $100
Cherry Jones - $50
Jan Loverin - $20
Dorothy Nocita - $100
Kathy Noneman - $45
Arlene Oakes - $70
Jeanell Pevey - $20
Mona Reno - $200
Maggie Thomsen - $10
Patricia Tripple - $100
Holly Van Valkenburgh - $200
Sue Wagner - $25

Thank you All!
You are Critical
to the Success of the
Nevada Women’s
History Project!

Save the Date!!

2016 Pink Tea
Inside the
Governor’s Mansion

May 28, 2016
2pm
Profiles of Members

Marcia Cuccaro

Marcia Bernard Cuccaro has been a member of the Nevada Women's History Project since March of 2005 when her sister, Patti Bernard, encouraged her to join the contingent of Nevada women who were traveling to Washington, D.C. for the dedication of the Sarah Winnemucca statue. Marcia has served as Vice-President of NWHP and most recently as Recording Secretary. She also has been active in writing biographies of Nevada women for inclusion on our website – www.nevadawomen.org.

Marcia, like her siblings, was born at St. Mary’s Hospital in Reno, NV. Her family lived in Ely, Nevada until Marcia was 5 years old when the family moved to Carson City, NV, population 4,700. When she was 8 years old, her father was appointed Warden of the Nevada State Penitentiary and they moved to the big stone house located within the prison walls. Murderers and burglars became some of her best friends. Marcia graduated from Carson City High School and the University of Nevada. She became a Social Caseworker with the State Welfare Department and moved to Las Vegas, Nevada. It was there she met her husband and subsequently moved back to Northern Nevada. Two children, Catherine and Kevin, were born from that union. Marcia worked as rehabilitation counselor and manager for the State Industrial Insurance System for twenty years and retired from Nevada’s Department of Aging where she was employed as the statewide Resource Development Chief. She enjoys writing, biking, hiking, gardening, lunching with friends and tutoring English to non-English speaking adults. She believes women’s history has long been neglected and is working to ensure women’s contributions to this State are documented for future generations. She is very willing to help members and non-members alike write histories of their moms, grandmothers and aunts.

Help NWHP capture histories that contributed to Nevada’s success.

List of 16 Historical Nevada Women
Whose Biographies Have Not Been Written as of January 2016

Listed below are the names of 16 historical Nevada women whose biographies have not been written. If you see anyone that you would be interested in researching and writing about, please contact Kay Sanders at 775-747-1740. Also, if you have someone else in mind, please get in touch with Kay.

Margaret Wells Butts
Sonja DeHart Cochran
Lois Evans Davis
Jean Dini
Veronica Gennesee
Nell Harbarger
Mary McLaughlin Hatton
Effie Mona Mack
Sister Fredericka McGrath
Maya Miller
Ellen Clifford Ney
Martha Elizabeth Sanford
Alice Lillian Thompson
Marie Triguero
Julia Viani
Florence Anker Young
Featured Historic Nevada Woman:
Dr. Olga Constantina Lord Kepanidze

At a glance:
Born: 1897
Died: Mary 27, 1976
Race/nationality/ethnic background: Russian - Caucasian
Primary city and county of residence and work: Reno (Washoe)
Major field of work: Medical Doctor

Dr. Kip, as we always called her, was born around the turn of the century in Irkutsk, Siberia. One day in her memoir she would lovingly relate the many pleasures of a happy childhood in a family of eight children. As a young teenager, she made the long journey by train to enter medical school in Moscow, though she would later transfer to the medical school in Irkutsk.

The cataclysm of the communist revolution was soon to come. The White Russian army was on the run, including two conscripts, her brother Sergei and her sweetheart Vladimir. The remnant in Irkutsk surrendered after a five day battle in December, 1919. She later wrote: “Changes came about gradually. First of all, food disappeared as if a magician had swept his black cloth over the land.” Her struggle to live and help her family during the revolution ensued. In medical school far from home, she survived on a thin gruel of cabbage and potatoes and dreamed of food. She learned how to make winter boots from old winter coats and cardboard. These could be exchanged for food and firewood. The people stripped clothes from the frozen bodies of soldiers, unburied in the Siberian winter. Kip studied by the light of a rag wick floating in a pan of fat. Extreme inflation made money worthless. She read unspoken questions in the faces around her. “Is there any way out of this unbearable misery? Our backs cannot bend lower – our feet will not walk further – our stomachs are empty – our children are dying. How soon?”

Deeply in love with Vladimir, Kip parted from him in a railroad station. Promising “I will be back,” he jumped on the moving train, holding the door with one hand and waving with the other. In fact, he would never be back. The defeat of the White army compelled him to flee to Manchuria, and Kip would not see him again for three years. Then, giving up her family, her country, and a promising career in medical research, Kip went to Manchuria with sixty gold rubles for emergencies sewn by her mother in the hem of her coat and married him. They lived six years in Manchuria, where Kip later said she saw diseases unknown in the western world.

They immigrated to America in 1930. Kip passed the California State Board Medical Examination, though many foreign doctors failed. She was the only woman in the test group. Now she could practice medicine in America. Vladimir continued his studies. This period in San Francisco may well have been the happiest of her life. She enjoyed the tasks of running their home while practicing her profession.
This joyful time came to an abrupt end when Vladimir died after a car accident. Kip was shocked. Many years later she wrote, “I have not gotten over it yet.”

An invitation to undertake anesthesia in Reno in 1935 offered a welcome change of scene. For the next decade she devoted herself to anesthesia, becoming an American citizen in Reno in 1937. Except for a brief return to San Francisco, she lived for her remaining years in a modest house across the street from St. Mary’s Hospital, giving anesthesia in the mornings, with the afternoons devoted to family practice. Often she cared for several generations of a family. When she was invited to the International Cancer Conference in Moscow, she briefly returned to Russia after an absence of thirty-eight years and visited with the surviving members of her family. She saw much to interest her in the new Russia. Returning to Reno, she enjoyed many short trips to Yosemite and other scenic locales. She died in Reno from what the medical colleagues caring for her called a “tired heart” on May 27, 1976.

Researched and written by Sally Zanjani. Posted to Website March 2015

Sources of Information:

U.S. Census 1940, Reno, Washoe County, Nevada.


Memoir by Dr. Kipandze, Private collection of Sally Zanjani

Recollections of Sally Zanjani. 2014

Newspaper research by Arline Laferry. 2012

Financial Report

As of the end of the year - December 31, 2015 - financial report shows a bank balance of $36,745.75 and a net income of $10,283.21. With fixed assets totaling $2,939.27 (for office furniture and equipment) the total assets of the NWHP is $39,685.02.

As we are getting close to year end . . . it should be noted that NWHP does have a $4,345 outstanding liability for the cost associated with the web design that is currently being done by Tangerine Design & Web.

Jon Hamel, Treasurer

Stories From Stead Air Force Base

NWHP has formed a committee to gather stories about women who worked at Stead AFB, were stationed there, or were married to airmen stationed at the base.

The Reno Airport Authority opened its Stead History Museum this past summer, but they have no information about the women of Stead. NWHP plans to correct this deficiency and we need your help.

Please contact Kathy Noneman if you have information or artifacts to share. kathycharlie@sbcglobal.net
Sierra history: The strange tale of stagecoach driver Charley Parkhurst

By Mark McLaughlin
Sierra Sun, Lake Tahoe July 11, 2015

TRUCKEE, Calif. — Western stagecoach companies were big business in the latter half of the 19th century. In addition to passengers and freight, stages hauled gold and silver bullion as well as mining company payrolls.

Stage robbery was a constant danger and bandits employed many strategies to ambush a stagecoach. Thieves rarely met with much resistance from stage drivers, since they had passenger safety foremost in mind.

The gang was usually after the Wells Fargo money box with its valuable contents. Passengers were seldom hurt, but they were certainly relieved of their cash, watches and jewelry.

ONE OF THE BEST

Before the completion of the transcontinental railroad over Donner Pass in 1868, the only transportation through the Sierra was by stage.

Rugged teamsters held rein over six wild-eyed horses as they tore along the precipitous mountain trails. The stagecoaches were driven by skilled and fearless men who pushed themselves and their spirited horses to the limit.

One of the most famous drivers was Charles Darkey Parkhurst, who had come west from New England in 1852 seeking his fortune in the Gold Rush.

He spent 15 years running stages, sometimes partnering with Hank Monk, the celebrated driver from Carson City. Over the years, Pankhurst’s reputation as an expert whip grew.

From 20 feet away he could slice open the end of an envelope or cut a cigar out of a man’s mouth. Parkhurst smoked cigars, chewed wads of tobacco, drank with the best of them, and exuded supreme confidence behind the reins. His judgment was sound and pleasant manners won him many friends.

One afternoon as Charley drove down from Carson Pass the lead horses veered off the road and a wrenching jolt threw him from the rig. He hung on to the reins as the horses dragged him along on his stomach.

Amazingly, Parkhurst managed to steer the frightened horses back onto the road and save all his grateful passengers.

NO PATIENCE FOR CROOKS

During the 1850s, bands of surly highwaymen stalked the roads. These outlaws would level their shotguns at stage drivers and shout, “Throw down the gold box!” Charley Parkhurst had no patience for the crooks despite their demands and threatening gestures.

The most notorious road agent was nicknamed “Sugarfoot.” When he and his gang accosted Charley’s stage, it was the last robbery the thief ever attempted.

Charley cracked his whip defiantly, and when his horses bolted, he turned around and fired his revolver at the crooks. Sugarfoot was later found dead with a fatal bullet wound in his stomach.

www. legendsofamerica.com/we-trailblazerlist4.html
In appreciation of his bravery, Wells Fargo presented Parkhurst with a large watch and chain made of solid gold.

In 1865, Parkhurst grew tired of the demanding job of driving and he opened his own stage station. He later sold the business and retired to a ranch near Soquel, Calif. The years slipped by and Charley died on Dec. 29, 1879, at the age of 67.

A few days later, the *Sacramento Daily Bee* published his obituary. It read; “On Sunday last, there died a person known as Charley Parkhurst, aged 67, who was well-known to old residents as a stage driver. He was in early days accounted one of the most expert manipulators of the reins who ever sat on the box of a coach. It was discovered when friendly hands were preparing him for his final rest, that Charley Parkhurst was unmistakably a well-developed woman!”

NOT LIKE OTHER MEN, ER, WOMEN?

Once it was discovered that Charley was a woman, there were plenty of people to say they had always thought he wasn’t like other men.

Even though he wore leather gloves summer and winter, many noticed that his hands were small and smooth. He slept in the stables with his beloved horses and was never known to have had a girlfriend.

Charley never volunteered clues to her past. Loose fitting clothing hid her femininity and after a horse kicked her, an eye patch over one eye helped conceal her face. She weighed 175 pounds, could handle herself in a fistfight and drank whiskey like one of the boys.

It turns out that Charley’s real name was Charlotte Parkhurst. Abandoned as a child, she was raised in a New Hampshire orphanage unloved and surrounded by poverty.

Charlotte ran away when she was 15 years old and soon discovered that life in the working world was easier for men. So she decided to masquerade as one for the rest of her life.

The rest is history. Well, almost. There is one last thing. On November 3, 1868, Charlotte Parkhurst cast her vote in the national election, dressed as a man.

She became the first woman to vote in the United States, 52 years before Congress passed the 19th amendment giving American women the right to vote.

Reprinted with the permission of the author. Tahoe historian Mark McLaughlin is a nationally published author and professional speaker. This article is from his book *Sierra Stories: True Tales of Tahoe*. His award-winning books are available at local stores or at thestormking.com. You can reach him at mark@thestormking.com. Check out Mark’s blog: tahoenuggets.com.

Membership Report
January 2016

Hello members,

It’s that time of the year to renew your membership. The membership is for a calendar year, January to December.

If you have renewed, “Thank you!”

If you have any questions in regards to membership, please contact me at 775-851-1260 or Christianne_Hamel@msn.com

Christiane Hamel, Membership Chair

Happy New Year!

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In Memory of Sarah Sweetwater

In 2014, NWHP collaborated on a project with Women of Diversity, Inc., a southern Nevada nonprofit women’s organization. They had received a substantial grant to conduct oral histories of approximately 75 Nevada women as part of Nevada’s Sesquicentennial anniversary activities. Since our statewide organization is based in Reno, NWHP volunteered to conduct oral histories in the northern counties. The interview team was composed of Gwen Clancy, Mona Reno, Patti Bernard and Tess Opferman.

Sarah Sweetwater, of Elko, was on our list of interviewees. Arriving at her studio/house was an amazing experience. Her small, typical, 1950s house stood out from the rest of the neighborhood by a rather unusual second story addition and sun porch that Sarah later proudly proclaimed was heated by solar energy and partially built by her.

This gracious lady warmly greeted us and I immediately felt like I had known her for years. As we entered the porch area, I was transfixed with the amount of art displayed in that very small area that begged further examination. Consisting of both her art and that of other artists, I wandered from painting to pottery, to sculpture, to three dimensional arts that covered every inch of wall and floor space, and competed with plants that also hung from the ceiling.

If the sun porch was the preview, each succeeding room in the house proved to be a main attraction. There were thousands of objects done by her, her students and fellow artists on every inch of wall space, and she could tell the story of each, and of its artist. In her kitchen was a two foot, unfinished, clay sculpture of civil rights activist Rosa Parks. I was so moved by Sarah’s simple explanation of her great empathy with the woman and how she hoped to express Rosa’s indomitable spirit by the position of her pose.

During Sarah’s interview one could easily discern her passion for people and her love of teaching. A full list of accomplishments would run pages, but some of the most important, to her, would be her involvement in West Africa and India to help with polio inoculations, founding the Art Department at the Great Basin College in Elko, her early courses of Pioneer Arts and the hosting of Crafts Folk-life Festivals that led to the founding of the world recognized Elko Cowboy Poetry Gathering. She was the recipient of many awards but in the end she considered herself simply “Sarah Sweetwater, artist”.

We videotaped that interview in September of 2014. In November of 2015 she died. Her oral history is now available on the Internet for anyone to see and gain inspiration by what one woman did with her life. [www.nevadawomensvirtualcenter.org Nevada Women’s Legacy Videos]

When anyone asks me why I am so passionate about obtaining as many oral histories of Nevada women as quickly as we can obtain funding, my mind immediately goes to Sarah Sweetwater.

Time is a precious commodity.

By Patti Bernard
NEVADA WOMEN’S HISTORY PROJECT
Membership Form
(Membership is for January thru December of each year)

Thank you for your ongoing support of the Nevada Women’s History Project. Our new year is here and it is time to renew your membership. You are vital to maintaining our educational website of women’s biographies and interviews, having special events and to offset the operational costs of the NWHP.

Please notice that we have added a lifetime membership category, Best Friend Forever. Membership comes with an event discount and a newsletter. All levels of membership may be tax deductible since NWHP is an educational non-profit.

Membership Levels

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Send this membership form to:
Nevada Women’s History Project
770 Smithridge Drive, Suite 300, Reno, NV 89502
**NWHP WOMEN IN NEVADA HISTORY**

SECOND EDITION

We need NWHP members, their friends, their book clubs and their civic organizations to visit regional museums throughout the state to see if new publications about Nevada women are available for consideration for the new edition. The same goes for community organizations, including school fund-raising projects that might have resulted in publications. Visits to local bookstores, churches, and libraries may also lead to relevant discoveries.

To help with the effort, the first edition has been scanned and is now available online for everyone to consult. The book is linked on this Webpage in the “Historical Resources” box:


The form to suggest books for including in the second edition is on [www.nevadawomen.org](http://www.nevadawomen.org) in the Regular Features.

For more information and to submit suggestions contact Betty Glass at glass@unr.edu.