Title: Woman as Citizen: Oregon Women Define and Defend Economic Equality

Description:

This session examines the historical perspectives and life experiences of three Oregon women who argued and fought for women's full economic citizenship from the last quarter of the nineteenth century through 1917. Sheri Bartlett Browne begins with the intellectual discourse of Frances Fuller Victor, whose fiction and prose essays articulated economic inequality as a cornerstone of patriarchy and economic justice as the foundation of full citizenship. Jean Ward then charts the development and evolution of Dr. Mary Thompson's understanding of the connections between women's rights and economic equality as she courageously lobbied the U.S. Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections in 1878 for a federal suffrage amendment. Janice Dilg concludes this session with an analysis of early twentieth-century social justice activist Caroline Gleason. As Oregon women joined a national conversation about the centrality of economic parity to women's full citizenship, Gleason's work to secure a living wage for women illuminates the gendered cultural and political philosophies that defined and limited the concept of economic justice.

Session Contact:

Sheri Bartlett Browne
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Session technology needs:

laptop, projector, and screen (we can provide a laptop, if necessary)
Title: "All Work and No Pay": Frances Fuller Victor Advocates for Full Economic Citizenship

Description:

Frances Fuller Victor was a prolific and popular nineteenth-century author in multiple genres, but her achievements did not erase the omnipresence of economic deprivation and exploitation. Over the course of her life, she had endured two failed marriages and spent forty years living alone. Having left her family and friends when she relocated first to San Francisco in 1863 and then to Portland the following year, Victor established herself as an engaging travel and fiction writer, an astute social critic, and a deft regional historian. However, she faced endless financial challenges as a "lone woman," frequently receiving little or no pay for the literary and historical manuscripts she provided to newspapers, journal editors, regional historians, and publishers. Particularly demonstrated in her short stories and women's rights essays, Victor's precarious circumstances provided energy and anger to explore further women's economic disfranchisement.

Writing in the 1870s, Victor attacked the "social system" -- men's economic, legal, and political dominance -- as a multi-pronged anchor weighing down women. But rather than asserting the primacy of the ballot to effect social change, Victor instead devoted more of her thinking to the importance of women's economic power and independence. Urging women to "investigate for themselves" the roots of their second-class status, she argued that economic oppression was the cornerstone of women's subjugation within a patriarchal system; economic equality was, therefore, central to the achievement of women's full participation as citizens.

Presenter:

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Title: “Women Are Educated in the School of Want”: Mary Anna Cooke Thompson and the Invention of Economic Citizenship for Women

In January 1878, Mary Anna Cooke Thompson of Oregon was the only woman from the Far West to address the U.S. Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections regarding the proposed woman suffrage amendment. Three years earlier, in Minor v. Happersett, the U.S. Supreme Court found that, although women were citizens, citizenship was disconnected from the franchise; Thompson argued that the political power conferred by the ballot was essential for woman’s full citizenship and for social and economic reform. The occasion was the first time an Oregon woman addressed a congressional committee on the question of citizenship and woman suffrage.

This paper examines Dr. Mary Anna Cooke Thompson’s role in inventing economic citizenship for women, at both the regional and national levels. Thompson, Portland’s first female physician and a central figure in Oregon’s women’s rights movement, gave her 1878 speech during a nine-month journey from the West Coast to the East Coast, lecturing along the way on a host of reform topics, including the rights of labor and woman’s economic situation. Drawing upon her knowledge of the “want and poverty” of the many, as well as her commitment to “the labor class” and the unemployed, Thompson sought the “direct power” of the ballot to right economic wrongs. Three questions are central to this analysis: Why and how did Thompson challenge gendered constructions of society, including female citizenship? How did she determine that women understood class differences and economic deprivation? What was her vision of a newly invented economic citizenship for women?

Presenter:
Jean M. Ward, Professor Emerita of Communication
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**Title:** “To realize what they have a right to ask for”: Caroline Gleason and Oregon’s Minimum Wage Law as a Path to Women’s Economic Citizenship

**Presenter:**
Janice Dilg  
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Portland, OR 97212-4135  
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**Presentation:**
In 1913, fifty years before Congress passed the first Equal Pay Law, Caroline Gleason, an early twentieth century Catholic social justice activist, began her reform work to ensure the passage of a minimum wage law for wage earning women and minors in Oregon. Mindful that Oregon's male citizens had just extended the right to vote to their female compatriots in 1912, Gleason understood that women needed economic equality to access their full rights of citizenship. In fact, suffrage and economic equality are inextricably intertwined in any political discourse and historical interpretation of female citizenship in the Pacific Northwest, and the nation.

This paper will examine the role Caroline Gleason played in developing legislation to address the economic inequalities of women wage earners. Working first through the Oregon Consumer’s League, and then the Oregon Industrial Welfare Commission, Gleason identified, and sought remedies for, women’s unequal wages. Her work occurred amidst resistance to women working for wages at all, and especially for a living wage, which was viewed as a threat to the dominant social order. Her reform work took place within explicitly gendered political and cultural philosophies of the time. Whether women were “different” than men or their “equals” permeated every aspect of Gleason’s work on economic reforms. How were those philosophical differences manifested in Gleason’s approach to her social justice work? And, how did society’s varying and evolving perspectives on the difference versus equality argument shape women’s access to economic citizenship in the early twentieth century?

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Academic Experience

Associate Professor of History & Women’s Studies, Tennessee State University (Nashville, TN), 2008-.
Assistant Professor of History & Women’s Studies, Tennessee State University (Nashville, TN), 2003-2008.

Selected Publications


Education


Selected Scholarly Book Reviews


Selected Conference Presentations


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660 SW Evans St.
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College Teaching and Administrative Experience
Professor Emerita of Communication, Lewis & Clark College, 2006-
Taught at Lewis & Clark College for 42 years, 1964-2006.
Assistant Dean and Associate Dean of the Faculty, Lewis & Clark College, 1983-87.
Chair, Department of Communication, Lewis & Clark College, 1974-77, 1980-82, 1996-98.
Cofounder and Director of the Gender Studies Program, Lewis Clark College, 1984-87, 1989-98.
Director of the Inventing America Program (general education), Lewis & Clark College, 1998-2002.

Education
Dissertation: “Women’s Responses to Systems of Male Authority: Communication Strategies in the Novels of
Abigail Scott Duniway.” 2 vols. Sonja K. Foss, advisor
M.S. University of Oregon, Speech with Honors, 1964.

Selected Publications

“The Noble Representative Woman from Oregon’: Dr. Mary Anna Cooke Thompson.” Oregon Historical Quarterly 113:3 (Fall 2012): 408-429.

“Dr. Bethenia Owens-Adair.” Book chapter in Eminent Astorians, introduction by
Stephen Dow Beckham and published by the Daily Astorian, November 2010.
Entries for Ulrich Hardt, et al., eds., Oregon Encyclopedia of History and Culture (Portland State University and the Oregon Historical Society, 2008-2010). Abigail Scott Duniway,
Dr. Bethenia Owens-Adair, Dr. Mary Anna Cooke Thompson, Margaret Jewett Bailey,
Tabitha Moffat Brown, Minnie Myrtle Miller, Dr. Mary P. Sawtelle. See entries online at
www.oregonencyclopedia.org


Selected Conference Presentations

“Not a Bundle of Dry Goods and Millinery’: Dr. Bethenia Owens-Adair and Her Quest for Women’s Rights,”
Western History Association Semi-Centennial Conference, Oakland, CA, October 16, 2011.


Selected Media

Contributor and advisor to Abigail Scott Duniway, Oregon Public Broadcasting Production

Book Manuscript in Process
The Life and Journal of Dr. Mary Anna Cooke Thompson (1825-1919)
EDUCATION:
2000 B.A. in History, Portland State University, summa cum laude
1980 Journeyman Cabinetmaker, State of Oregon/Millmen & Cabinetmaker’s Apprenticeship Program

EMPLOYMENT:
2009-present Century of Action, Oregon Women Vote, 1912-2012, Project Director, Oregon’s woman suffrage centennial and collections initiative, create educational website, public programs, exhibits, and events, project of the Oregon Women’s History Consortium
2008-present Oral History Liaison & Oral Historian, US District Court of Oregon Historical Society. Coordinate all volunteer and professional oral histories; conduct all facets of research, interviews, and post-interview production; liaison with Oregon Historical Society.
2006-present Adjunct instructor, Portland State University, Monumental Women Senior Capstone. Students create content of significant women for our community partner, the Walk of the Heroines, and honoring Portland women on the Women City Builders website.
2008-09 Project Historian, Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard Gateway and Heritage Marker Project, PDC. Provide all background research, historical materials, and write all content for Master Concept Plan through completed installation of heritage markers on the history of Albina neighborhood.
2006 Project Development, Center for Columbia River History, Vancouver, Washington. Develop speaker panels and conduct outreach for regional history conference; coordinate development of library education program on Celilo Falls history. Assist in writing grants to fund programs.
2003-05 Assistant Editor, Oregon Historical Society Press, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon. Performed all facets of production from proposed manuscripts to competed books including. Coordinated publication schedule with editorial staff, liaison between OHS Press, book manufacturers and printers, and authors. Coordinated all aspects of book reviews for the Oregon Historical Quarterly.
PUBLICATIONS:

2012  *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, “From Coverture to Supreme Court Justice Women Lawyers and Judges in Oregon History,” Research Files (Refereed) Fall 2012 113:3


2009  *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, “‘For Working Women in Oregon’: Caroline Gleason/Sister Miriam Theresa and Oregon’s Minimum Wage Law.” (Refereed)


2003  *Journal of Women’s History*. Symposium on the Greater Portland Area YWCA, “Uncovering ‘the Real Work’ of the Portland YWCA, 1900-1920.” (Refereed)

RELATED PROFESSIONAL SERVICE:

2013-2015  National Collaborative for Women’s History Sites, Board of Directors, Women Heritage Trails committee.

2009-present  Oregon Women’s History Consortium, Founder, Board of Directors, Treasurer, a 501 (c) 3 non-profit consortium dedicated to fostering scholarship of Oregon women’s history and coordinating the centennial of woman suffrage: [www.centuryofaction.org](http://www.centuryofaction.org)

2006-present  Northwest History Network, Portland, Oregon. Founding associate and Board member of 501 (c) 3 non-profit consortium of history professionals. [www.northwesthistory.org](http://www.northwesthistory.org)


2007-09  Architectural Heritage Center/Bosco-Milligan Foundation: Board of Directors: liaison to Education Committee, Collections Committee.


AFFILIATIONS & MEMBERSHIPS:

Architectural Heritage Center, Education Committee
Know Your City
National Collaborative for Women’s History Sites
National Council of Public Historians
Northwest History Network, Board of Directors
Northwest Oral Historians Association
Oregon Historical Society
Western Association of Women Historians