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# RWSA NEWSLETTER

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March

2023

## RWSA 2024 - Call for Presentations and Papers

**Gendered Advocacy and Activism, Shaping Institutions and Communities**

**Rural Women's Studies Association Triennial Conference**

**Hosted by Arkansas State University, Jonesboro, Arkansas, USA**

**May 15-19, 2024**

Recent challenges to civil rights in various locations internationally bring to mind equity in rural communities which has a separate set of challenges to those of urban areas. Yet, historically activism rooted in rural areas can result in broader change on both regional and national levels. Challenges activists face in pursuing change include a conglomeration of isolation, underfunded education, failing infrastructures, geography, poverty, demographics, lack of health care, low employment, and low wages. Rural activists then require focus and approaches that address their specific needs. In *Worlds Apart*, attorney and civil rights advocate, Angela Glover Blackwell stated, "equity is the antidote to the plight of isolated, disinvested communities...including rural communities." Do activists focus on equity as a goal?

In consideration of recent events and movements, the theme of the 2024 Rural Women's Studies Association conference, Gendered Advocacy and Activism, Shaping Institutions and Communities, emphasizes the central role that women and individuals of all genders and sexualities have played and continue to play in shaping and reforming our institutions and communities. This potentially includes the exploration of such subthemes as: advocacy, education, agriculture, health, reproductive rights, mental health, LGBTQIA+, politics, poverty, race, ethnicity, religion, and Women's Rights issues.

Founded in 1997, [RWSA](#) is an international association for the advancement and promotion of research on rural women and gender in a historical perspective. RWSA welcomes academic scholars, public historians and archivists, graduate students, and representatives of rural organizations and communities to be association members and conference participants.

RWSA promotes and advances farm and rural women's/gender studies from a historical perspective by encouraging research, promoting scholarship, and establishing and maintaining links with organizations that share these goals. Worldwide, the association aims to encourage research, to promote existing and forthcoming scholarship, and to establish and maintain links with contemporary organizations around the interests of rural women, rural communities and the rural environment, including farming and the agricultural sector, from a gender perspective. RWSA welcomes public historians and archivists, graduate students, and representatives of rural organizations and

communities as conference participants and members, in addition to academic scholars from diverse fields, including sociology, anthropology, literature and languages, Indigenous Studies, visual and performative arts, and history.

Presentations take many forms at this RWSA conference. Possibilities include workshops, panel sessions, interactive sessions, roundtable discussions, poster presentations, open-mic discussions, performances, readings, and audiovisual presentations.

The theme, Gendered Advocacy and Activism, Shaping Institutions and Communities, encourages exploration of several sub-themes:

- Grassroots activism
- Advocacy
- Women's rights, including reproductive rights
- LGBTQIA+ rights and identities
- Health, including mental health
- Education
- Politics
- Environment
- Race and ethnicity

Other presentations or papers on any other topic related to rural women/gender/sexuality are also welcome. Please submit the following information by **15 April 2023**:

1. Title of paper/session/workshop/performance (working title is acceptable).
2. 250-word description/abstract of paper or proposed session/workshop, etc.
3. Brief vita/biography of presenter or session participants, and complete contact information for all.
4. Indicate whether or not you grant permission for RWSA to publish your description or abstract on the [RWSA blog](#).

Most concurrent sessions will be 90 minutes. Past sessions have typically included three presentations followed by discussion. If your proposed session diverges from this standard format, please indicate that in your proposal. We will notify all applicants whether or not we can accommodate your presentation or session by October 2023.

Submissions should be sent electronically to: [rwsa2024@gmail.com](mailto:rwsa2024@gmail.com).

If it is not possible to send your proposal electronically, please send by regular mail to the following address if you are submitting from the Americas:

Cynthia Prescott  
Department of History and American Indian Studies  
University of North Dakota  
221 Centennial Dr., Stop 8096  
Grand Forks, ND 58202-8096 USA

Submissions by post from elsewhere in the world should be sent to:

Tanya Watson  
24 Owentarglen  
Rivervalley, Mallow,  
Co. Cork, P51WR2E Ireland

For information on travel grants and letters of invitation, contact Cherisse Jones-Branch at [criones@astate.edu](mailto:criones@astate.edu).

For additional information on the RWSA, please go to the organization website, <http://www.ohio.edu/history/rwsa/>

## RWSA in Jonesboro, Arkansas, USA – hosted by Arkansas State University

### Message from Dr. Cherisse Jones-Branch

I am excited to welcome you to Arkansas State University, to Jonesboro, and to the mid-South. We are located an hour and fifteen minutes from Memphis, Tennessee. Lodging is available at Embassy Suites, Red Wolf Convention Center located on Arkansas State University's campus (<https://www.hilton.com/en/hotels/jbrjoes-embassy-suites-jonesboro-red-wolf-convention-center/>), and potentially in campus residence halls.

There's much to see in Jonesboro and the surrounding area like:

- Southern Tenant Farmers Museum, Tyronza, Arkansas (<https://stfm.astate.edu/>)
- Parkin Archeological State Park (<https://www.arkansasstateparks.com/parks/parkin-archeological-state-park>)
- A-State Equine Center (<https://www.astate.edu/college/agriculture-and-technology/equine-center/>)
- A-State Farmers Market on Saturday from 9-1 (<http://www.asuregionalfarmersmarket.org/>)
- Hemmingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center in Piggott, Arkansas (<https://hemingway.astate.edu/>)

There are plenty of places to eat:

- Houlihan's at Red Wolf Convention center (<https://houlihans.com/Jonesboro>)
- Free breakfast at Embassy Suites
- Other restaurants around town

Craighead County is dry:

- Alcohol is available in restaurants
- Situated between two wet counties

# Announcement

## International Women's Day is March 8!

International Women's Day is a global holiday celebrated annually on March 8 to commemorate the cultural, political, and socioeconomic achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality. In 2023, the focus is on #EmbracingEquity #IWD2023.



**For more information on International Women's Day:**

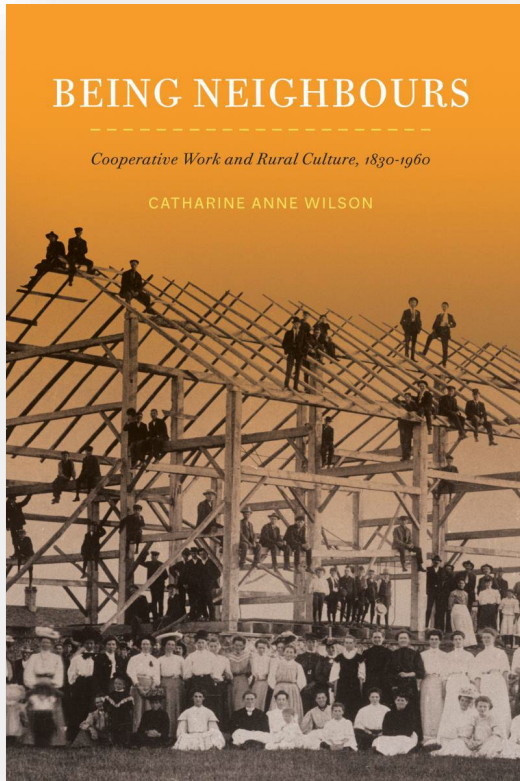
<https://www.internationalwomensday.com/Theme>

# Member News

## New Books & Articles

### ***Being Neighbours: Cooperative Work and Rural Culture, 1830–1960***

By Catharine Wilson



Throughout history, farm families have shared work and equipment with their neighbours to complete labour-intensive, time-sensitive, and time-consuming tasks. They benefitted materially and socially from these voluntary, flexible, loosely structured networks of reciprocal assistance, making neighbourliness a vital but overlooked aspect of agricultural change. *Being Neighbours* takes us into the heart of neighbourhood – the set of people near and surrounding the family – through an examination of work bees in southern Ontario from 1830 to 1960. The bee was a special event where people gathered to work on a neighbour's farm like bees in a hive for a wide variety of purposes, including barn raising, logging, threshing, quilting, turkey plucking, and apple paring. Drawing on the diaries of over one hundred men and women, Catharine Wilson takes readers into families' daily lives, the intricacies of their labour exchange, and their workways, feasts, and hospitality. Through the prism of the bee and a close reading of the diaries, she uncovers the subtle social politics of mutual dependency, the expectations neighbours had of each other, and their ways of managing conflict and crisis. This book adds to the literature on cooperative work that focuses on evaluating its economic

efficiency and complicates histories of capitalism that place communal values at odds with market orientation. Beautifully written, engaging, and richly detailed and illustrated, *Being Neighbours* reveals the visceral textures of rural life.



## ***Uses and Representations of ICTs in Argentine Agriculture: Rethinking Space from Virtuality***

By Marina Poggi and Ximena Carreras Doallo

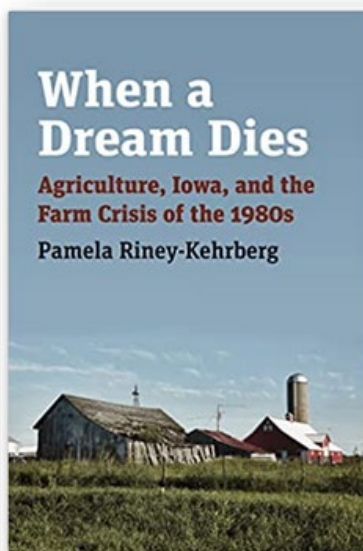


The chapters that make up this collective work intend to address the uses and representations of ICT in the Argentine agriculture, rethinking space —today more than ever— from virtuality.

The set of perspectives that this book provides constitutes valuable tools for thinking about the virtual rural space. Reading the processes of ruralization of the city and rural urbanization in terms of the digital divide is in tune with the ways of approaching the complex social ecosystems of rural areas. Thus, the regional data together with the local and specific data of each territory are what can help us to look at and analyze this complex reality from different areas.

## ***When a Dream Dies: Agriculture, Iowa, and the Farm Crisis of the 1980s***

By Pamela Riney-Kehrberg



Agricultural crises are not just events that affect farms. When a Dream Dies explores the Farm Crisis of the 1980s from the perspective of the two-thirds of the state's agricultural population seriously affected by a farm debt crisis that rapidly spiraled out of their control. Riney-Kehrberg treats the Farm Crisis as a family event while examining the impact of the crisis on mental health and food insecurity and discussing the long-term implications of the crisis for the shape and function of agriculture.

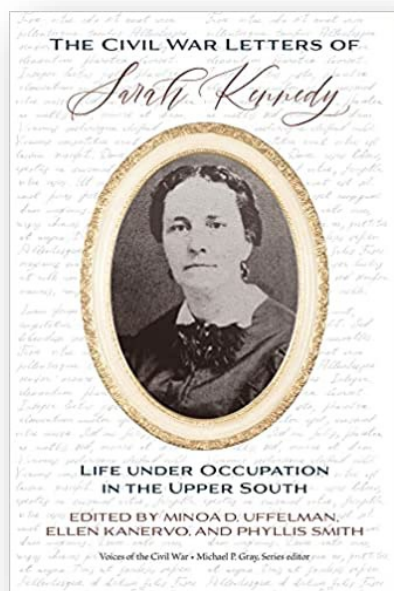
## **Article in *Agricultural History* (2022) 96 (4): 512–530: “Farm Crisis/Identity Crisis: Letters from 1980s Iowa”**

By Pamela Riney-Kehrberg

The Farm Crisis of the 1980s was not just an economic crisis, but an identity crisis for the two-thirds of Iowa farm families that risked losing their livelihoods. Confronted with a situation that was well outside of their control, they sent thousands of letters to government officials, asking for, and sometimes demanding, answers. Many of those letters expressed puzzlement, anger, and disappointment as writers tried to explain how the hopes and dreams of a lifetime had slipped through their grasp. They expressed deep frustration with politicians, consumers, and even other farmers who did not understand or sympathize with the stresses imposed by markets, environmental forces, and government policy that first encouraged borrowing and expansion, and then punished those who had followed that advice. Although the Reagan administration eventually responded, it was not before a significant number of farmers had left, or been removed from, their land.

## ***The Civil War Letters of Sarah Kennedy: Life under Occupation in the Upper South***

Edited by Minoa D. Uffelman, Phyllis Smith and Ellen Kanervo



At the outbreak of the Civil War, Sarah Kennedy watched as her husband, D.N., left for Mississippi, leaving her alone to care for their six children and control their slaves in a large home in downtown Clarksville, Tennessee. D. N. Kennedy left to aid the Confederate Treasury Department. He had steadfastly supported secession and helped recruit local boys for the Confederate army. *The Civil War Letters of Sarah Kennedy: Life under Occupation in the Upper South* showcases the letters Sarah wrote to her husband during their time apart, offering readers an inside look at life on the home front during the Civil War through the eyes of a slave-owning, town-dwelling wife and mother.

Featuring fifty-two of Sarah Kennedy’s letters to her husband from August 16, 1862, to February 20, 1865, this important collection chronicles Sarah Kennedy’s personal struggles during the Civil War years, from periods of illness to lack of consistent contact with her husband and everything in between. Her love and devotion to her family is apparent in each letter, contrasting deeply with her resentment and harsh treatment toward her enslaved people as Emancipation swept through Clarksville.

# RWSA Blog Submissions

We invite submissions to the RWSA blog (<https://ruralwomensstudies.wordpress.com/>). We accept everything from book excerpts to informal reflections about research, activism, and rural life. Our blog posts typically range from 200 to 2,000 words in length, and photos or other visuals are appreciated. Send contributions and queries to Cynthia Prescott ([cynthia.culver@gmail.com](mailto:cynthia.culver@gmail.com)).



## About the RWSA

Founded in 1998 as an outgrowth of the Sixth Conference on Rural and Farm Women in Historical Perspective, the Rural Women's Studies Association is an international organization for the advancement and promotion of farm and rural women's gender studies in historical perspective. The Association aims to encourage research, to promote existing and forthcoming scholarship, and to establish and maintain links with contemporary farm and rural women's organizations. The RWSA aims to encourage scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds and countries to communicate about their research and all other activities that are supportive to the Association's goals.

### RWSA Officers

#### Co-Chairs

Cherisse Jones-Branch, Arkansas State University  
Cynthia Prescott, University of North Dakota

#### Co-Secretaries

Pamela Riney-Kehrberg, Iowa State University  
Lynne Benson, UMass Boston

#### Treasurer

Jenny Barker-Devine, Illinois College

#### International Membership and Communication Coordinators

*Pacific* – Katie Cooper of Te Papa Tongarewa/  
Museum of New Zealand

*Canada* – Jodey Nurse, University of Waterloo

*Europe* – Margreet van der Burg, Wageningen  
University, Holland & Tanya Watson, National  
University of Ireland

*Africa* – Olubunmi Ashimolowo, University of  
Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria & Oluwaseun Boye,  
Ogun State Government

*U.S.* – Tracey Hanshaw, Washington State TC &  
Yvette Blair-Lavallais, Memphis Theological  
Seminary

*South America* –

*Asia* –

### RWSA Officers Cont.

#### Emerging Professional & Graduate Student Coordinators

Maggie Weber, University of Wisconsin-Eau  
Claire

Kendra DeHart, Sul Ross State University

Karissa Patton, University of Saskatchewan

Diane McKenzie, University of Lethbridge

#### Newsletter Editor

Margaret Thomas Evans, Indiana University East

#### Fundraising

Cynthia Prescott, University of North Dakota

Sara Morris, University of Kansas

#### Web Master

Katherine Jellison, Ohio University

<https://www.ohio.edu/cas/history/institutes-associations/rwsa/index.cfm>

#### Social Media Coordinators

Cynthia Prescott, University of North Dakota

Maggie Weber, University of Wisconsin-Eau  
Claire

### Share Your Work on the RWSA Blog

<https://ruralwomensstudies.wordpress.com/>

We invite submissions to the RWSA blog, which publishes on a wide range of topics related to rural women, gender and sexuality. We publish scholarship and book reviews as well as more informal reflections. We also seek to highlight rural activism. Posts typically range from about 200 to 2,000 words. Send submissions and queries to Cynthia Prescott at [cynthia.culver@gmail.com](mailto:cynthia.culver@gmail.com)

### Send Us Your News!

RWSA members would appreciate hearing of your accomplishments, awards, changes in employment, publications, and research discoveries or needs. We welcome announcements from institutions and organizations regarding historical holdings, job openings, and events. Send submissions to Margaret Thomas Evans [margevan@iue.edu](mailto:margevan@iue.edu)

We plan to have two issues per year – fall and spring.

RURAL WOMEN'S STUDIES ASSOCIATION  
MEMBERSHIP FORM

MEMBER INFORMATION

FIRST NAME

LAST NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
AFFILIATION

\_\_\_\_\_  
MAILING ADDRESS (please circle: Work or Home)

\_\_\_\_\_  
CITY

STATE

ZIP / COUNTRY CODE

\_\_\_\_\_  
COUNTRY

E-MAIL PHONE FAX

MEMBERSHIP AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO RWSA:

ANNUAL DUES are \$10.00 for students, non-academics, and adjunct and part-time faculty; \$25.00 for tenure-track faculty; and \$50.00 for contributing members.

JOAN JENSEN-MARY NETH FUND: RWSA welcomes contributions to the Joan Jensen-Mary Neth Fund to help offset registration fees for invited speakers and international participants. Memorials may be made to the Fund as well. Please designate the name of the person being memorialized.

DUES: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please circle: Annual \$10; Annual \$25; Contributing \$50)

JENSEN-NETH FUND: \_\_\_\_\_ IN MEMORY OF \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail a personal check or international money order made out to RWSA to:

Jenny Barker-Devine, RWSA Treasurer  
Dept. of History, Illinois College  
1101 W. College Avenue  
Jacksonville, IL 62650

**(RWSA is a 501C-3 non-profit organization and all donations are tax deductible.)**