
RWSA NEWSLETTER

March

2024

RWSA Conference May 15 - 19 2024

Gendered Advocacy and Activism, Shaping Institutions and Communities

Rural Women's Studies Association Triennial Conference

Hosted by Arkansas State University, Jonesboro, Arkansas, USA

The conference theme, “Gendered Advocacy and Activisms, Shaping Institutions and Communities,” explores recent challenges to civil rights in various locations internationally, in rural communities. Analyzing how historical activism rooted in rural areas can result in broader change on both regional and national levels, various presentations will emphasize 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.

<https://ruralwomensstudies.org/rwsa-2024/>

Registration: Conference sessions will take place on the Arkansas State University campus. We estimate that conference registration will cost US \$150, which includes all conference sessions, the Sunday tour, an opening reception, 4 lunches, and several snacks. We also encourage you to join or renew your membership in our organization. You may do so at the same time you register for the conference.

<https://ruralwomensstudies.org/rwsa-2024-conference/>.

Hotel: A block of hotel rooms will be available to conference participants at the [Embassy Suites by Hilton, Jonesboro Red Wolf Convention Center](#), in Jonesboro. Hotel rooms containing either 1 King-sized or 2 Queen-sized beds will cost \$134 US per night plus taxes (or approximately \$150/night including taxes). The hotel provides a free breakfast and evening reception to all hotel guests. If you would like to share a hotel room with other conference participants, we encourage you to post a roommate request on [this spreadsheet](#).

Jensen-Neth grant recipients should email their roommate preferences to RWSA2024@gmail.com. All other conference attendees should contact the hotel directly to reserve a room (telephone: +1 870-619-4482). Ask for the “Rural Women’s Studies Association” room block rate.

Travel: The closest airport is Memphis International Airport in Memphis, Tennessee (79 miles to Jonesboro, Arkansas). If you would like to share a rental car from the Memphis airport, you may indicate this via the Shared Rides tab on [this spreadsheet](#).

Silent Auction Contributions Sought:

We will hold a silent auction at the May 2024 conference to raise funds for our Jensen-Neth travel grants. Authors, please ask your publishers to contribute copies of your books and other books on rural women's studies. Conference attendees, please consider donating items to the auction. Handicrafts and cultural artifacts are particularly popular.

Questions? Email ruralwomensstudies@gmail.com.

Arkansas State University is located on land traditionally inhabited by the Quapaw. This community occupied this area for many generations before being forcibly removed and relocated to Oklahoma. Despite this injustice, the Quapaw managed to preserve many of the traditions essential to their cultural identity. Information describing the Quapaw traditions and beliefs can be found at <https://www.quapawtribe.com>. Acknowledging the theft of land and lives of indigenous peoples like those of the Quapaw, is a step toward decolonization. The continuance and preservation of these cultures and communities helps to reverse the erasure of original peoples. This is an acknowledgment of the structural racism and colonialism that is present in academia and society at large. Through empathy, cooperation, and action strides can be made to create a more equitable reality.

Local Arrangements Committee: Cherisse Jones-Branch

Program Committee: Cynthia Prescott (Co-chair), Tracey Hanshew (Co-chair), Ashimolowo Olubumni, Oluwaseun Boye, Margaret Evans, Cherisse Jones-Branch, Tanya Watson, and Catharine Wilson

Special Events:

Wednesday, May 15 from 3:00 – 5:00 pm film screening and discussion: *Hillbilly* by Sally Rubin

Wednesday, May 15 from 5:00 – 6:30 pm Opening Reception

Friday, May 17 from 12:00 – 2:00 pm SMART Reproduction Presentation

Friday, May 17 from 7:00 – 9:00 pm film screening: *Women's Work: The Untold Story of America's Female Farmers*— a documentary film by The Female Farmer Project™ along with KRCreative Strategies Studio

Saturday, May 18 from 12:00 – 2:00 pm Lunch and RWSA Business Meeting; the next Berkshire Conference

Saturday, May 18 from 4:00 – 6:00 pm Maria Cristina Moroles and Lauri Umansky: *Águila: The Vision, Life, Death, and Rebirth of a Two-Spirit Shaman in the Ozark Mountains, A Reading and Discussion*

Sunday, May 19 from 9:00 – 11:00 am Field Trip: Visit the Arkansas State University Farm – Agricultural and Teaching Research Center. Please RSVP when you register for the conference.

Keynote Speaker:

Thursday, May 16 from 12:00 – 2:00 pm Luncheon and Keynote Speaker: Sarah Eppler Janda, Cameron University: "To Speak So Forthrightly as to Offend: Expressions and Consequences of Gendered Activism on the Prairie."



Announcement

International Women's Day is March 8!

International Women's Day 2024 campaign theme: "Inspire Inclusion."

- For International Women's Day 2024 and beyond, let's Inspire Inclusion.
- When we inspire others to understand and value women's inclusion, we forge a better world.
- And when women themselves are inspired to be included, there's a sense of belonging, relevance, and empowerment.
- The aim of the IWD 2024 #InspireInclusion campaign is to collectively forge a more inclusive world for women.



Collectively, let's #InspireInclusion for women and girls everywhere.

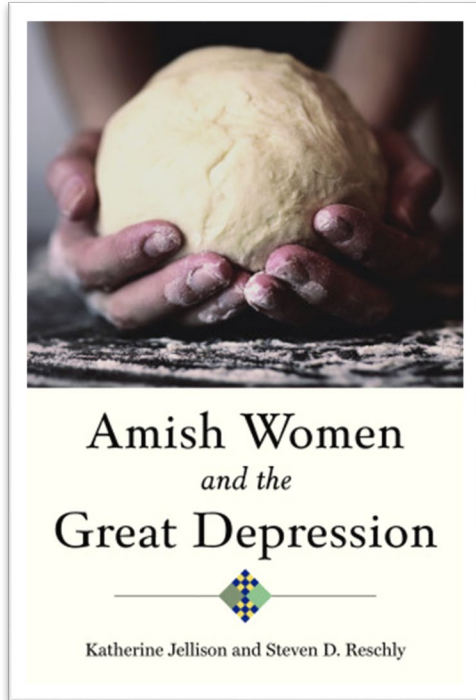
For more information on International Women's Day:

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

Member News

New Books, Articles, & Awards

Katherine Jellison and Steven D. Reschly



A detailed look at how Amish women sustained family farming during the Great Depression.

At the end of the Great Depression, the US Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE) designated the Old Order Amish of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the most economically and culturally stable agricultural community in the nation. In *Amish Women and the Great Depression*, Katherine Jellison and Steven D. Reschly examine the integral role that Amish women played in this Depression-era success story.

Making unprecedented use of quantitative data as well as qualitative accounts by and about Amish women, Jellison and Reschly reveal how Amish women sustained family farming during this devastating time. Using information from the federal government's 1935–1936 Study of Consumer Purchases (SCP), they closely examine the quantitative data related to Old Order Amish families and their neighbors in Lancaster County. SCP investigators approached women in these families to learn about household spending habits, farm crops and income, farm and household equipment, family size, home production, recreational practices, and dietary habits.

Jellison and Reschly analyze the production and consumption activities of Amish women and their families as well as comparative data about the practices of their neighbors.

Amish Women and the Great Depression also incorporates a variety of qualitative sources to enliven the statistical analysis, including Old Order Amish women's diaries and memoirs; newspaper accounts by and about Amish women; government reports and related correspondence about the Lancaster County Amish; oral histories with elderly Old Order Amish people about their experiences in the 1930s; an oral history with Walter M. Kollmorgen, the author of the 1942 BAE study of Old Order Amish community stability; and photographs by New Deal photographers. This unique portrait of Depression-era farm life provides a historic look into the farming practices and daily lives of Amish women.

Katherine Jellison was named a Presidential Research Scholar at Ohio University, 2022-2023.

Kathryn Beasley

Kathryn Beasley's article in the *Alabama Review*, "I am planning to buy a new Buick Coupe next year': Rural Women and Alabama's Curb Markets, 1923-1929," won the Southern Association for Women Historians (SAWH)'s annual A. Elizabeth Taylor Award. This award is for the best article published during the preceding year in the field of southern women's history.

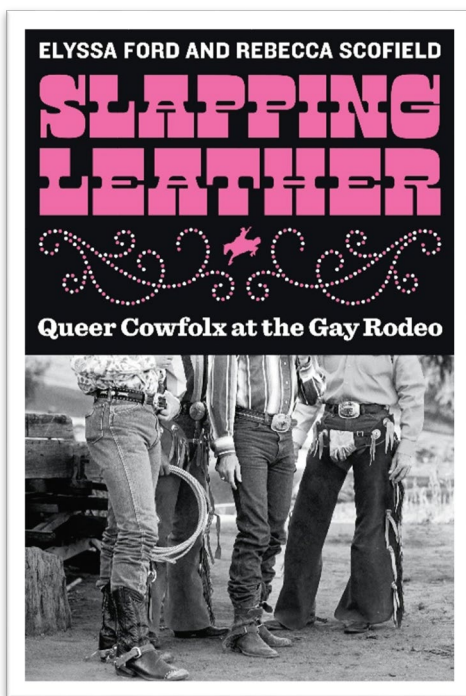
Lily Nagengast

Lily Nagengast, a second year PhD student in American Studies at UT Austin, recently published an article in *Feminist Media Studies*, "From Farmer's Wife to FarmHer: Representing Agrarian Feminism in the Twenty-First Century," <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2023.2297167>.

Kelly McMichael

Kelly McMichael published, "Rural Women and the Gendered Socialization of Local Political Offices in Rural Texas Counties," *West Texas Historical Review* 98 (April 2023), 8-21. This article won the "Mrs. Percy Jones Award for Best Article in the West Texas Historical Review, 2022.

Elyssa Ford and Rebecca Scofield



Campy and competitive, gay rodeo offers a community of refuge that straddles the urban and rural. Since the mid-1970s, gay rodeos have provided space to both embrace and challenge the idealized masculinity associated with the iconic cowboy of the US West. *Slapping Leather* traces the history and growth of gay rodeo over the decades, demonstrating how queer cowfolx have fought to build a community where LGBTQ+ people can escape discrimination in both mainstream rodeos and broader society.

Yet not all LGBTQ+ groups have found full acceptance in gay rodeo. Originally formed by gay men for gay men, the rodeo has at times perpetuated historically problematic ideas about the US West, the iconic cowboy, and the meaning of masculinity. Despite the gay rodeo's credo of acceptance, its history reveals complicated relationships with straight rodeo, gender stereotypes, and women competitors. Drawing from multiple archives and over seventy oral history interviews, historians Elyssa Ford and Rebecca Scofield demonstrate how amid these tensions, participants, volunteers, and spectators continue to redefine the performance of the cowboy and national belonging.

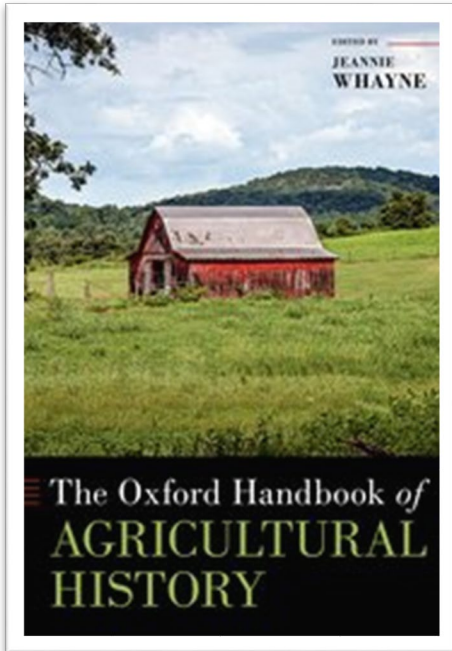
<https://uwapress.uw.edu/book/9780295752129/slapping-leather/>

Pamela Riney-Kehrberg

Pam was awarded the James C. Giesen Award for Excellence in Teaching Rural and Agricultural History from the Agricultural History Society.

Pam also has a chapter in Jeannie Whayne's book (see below), "Women in Agriculture."

Jeannie Whayne



Jeannie Whayne's long-awaited *Oxford Handbook of Agricultural History* will be published in early 2024. Authors familiar to RWSA – including Pamela Rhiney-Kehrberg and Claire Strom – have chapters in the volume.

Agricultural history has enjoyed a rebirth in recent years, in part because the agricultural enterprise promotes economic and cultural connections in an era that has become ever more globally focused, but also because of agriculture's potential to lead to conflicts over precious resources. History is replete with stories of armies standing or falling as a result of their supply of agriculturally produced commodities. Civilizations have likewise succumbed because of famine or crop-related pestilence, highlighting the critical nature of agriculture to both regional and global society. The importance and fragility of agricultural systems will come into much greater focus because of climate change in the twenty-first century, something farmers the world over have begun to reckon with. As its implications are manifested in droughts and floods that hamper crop production, urban people will become ever more conscious of their own reliance upon agriculture.

The contemporary critical evaluation of agriculture reflects a transition from a framework that celebrated the positive aspects of the evolution of agriculture to one that also explores its negative implications, such as the emergence of intensive and extractive agriculture that has worked to the detriment of indigenous peoples and disrupted traditional political economies.

Whayne presented two papers at the Agricultural History Society Conference in June 2023 in Knoxville, Tennessee: "Opportunities and Challenges for 21st Century Farm Women," and "Does a Picture Really Paint a Thousand Words?: Using Photographs to Interpret Agricultural History, Environmental Impact, and Climate Change."

Whayne also presented a paper at the European Rural History Organization in Cluj-Napoca, Romania in September 2023. Also in September 2023, she gave the keynote address at the Italian American Studies Association as well as a panel presentation: "Rethinking Shadows Over Sunnyside."

She continues to work on her book on Memphis as a Cotton Entrepot and its relationship with environmental change in Arkansas delta cotton-producing counties, and she is preparing a Thirtieth Anniversary edition of *Shadows Over Sunnyside* for publication in the *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*.

Maureen Thompson

Maureen participated in a Virtual Student Federal Service with the Veterans Administration during the Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 semesters. After graduating with her Ph.D. in May 2023, she worked on the Library of Congress's "Archives, History and Heritage Advanced Internship" program on a project titled, "Discovering African Americans in the Blair Family Papers." In December 2023, she began working for the Veterans Administration as the first historian at the hospital level in Tuskegee, AL. She is archiving materials and writing a comprehensive Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System history. Because such noteworthy civil rights history occurred on these grounds, she is working with a National Historical Landmark committee to recognize the facility and to create a visitor's center.

Cathy Wilson

Cathy Wilson, former Co-Chair of the RWSA, is now Professor Emeritus at the University of Guelph, having retired in January 2024 as the Francis and Ruth Redelmeier Professor in Rural History. Her book *Being Neighbours: Cooperative Work and Rural Culture, 1830-1960*, published in 2022 by McGill/Queen's University Press, is the winner of two awards for the best book in Ontario History (the Ontario Historical Society's J.J. Talman Award and the Champlain Society's Chalmer's Award). It was also a finalist for the Canadian Historical Association's Best Scholarly Book in Canadian History Prize.

Cherisse Jones-Branch

Cherisse Jones-Branch, Arkansas State University recently published " 'Arkansisters': Engaging in Self-Help Activism as a Holistic Praxis," in the Winter/December 2023 issue of *Arkansas Review: A Journal of Delta Studies*.

She also gave a talk titled "Charleston and Rurality," in February 2024, as a part of the 1967 Legacy Scholars Signature Series at the College of Charleston, South Carolina.

Cynthia Prescott

Cynthia Prescott will give a keynote address at the "Monuments Fall: An East-West Exchange" workshop at the University of Southern California in April.

RWSA Blog Submissions

We invite submissions to the RWSA blog (<https://ruralwomensstudies.wordpress.com/>); it soon will relocate to the new RWSA website: <https://ruralwomensstudies.org/>) 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).

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

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

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

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Jenny Barker-Devine, Illinois College

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Museum of New Zealand

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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 &
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South America –

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Cynthia Prescott, University of North Dakota

Maggie Weber, University of Wisconsin-Eau
Claire

Share Your Work on the RWSA Blog

<https://ruralwomenstudies.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

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@iu.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.)