RURAL WOMEN'S STUDIES ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Spring 2026

BRINGING TOGETHER SCHOLARS AND ACTIVISTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD TO SHARE RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY ON RURAL WOMEN, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY.

CHAIR'S CORNER



It's hard to believe it's already been almost 2 years since we gathered in Jonesboro, Arkansas! Our leadership team has been meeting quarterly since the Jonesboro conference to review our organization's bylaws and leadership structure and to prepare for our next triennial conference.

2027 CONFERENCE

Mark your calendars for the upcoming **joint conference of the RWSA and the Agricultural History Society**, to be held in Grand Forks, North Dakota, USA, from June 1-5, 2027.

This joint conference will bring together two interdisciplinary organizations that explore rural cultures around the world in all time periods. The Agricultural History Society is an international organization established more than a century ago that hosts an annual conference and publishes a quarterly journal. They interpret the term "Agricultural" broadly to include all things rural in all times and places. Many RWSA members are also part of AHS, and find themselves having to choose between attending RWSA and AHS in our conference years. Here is your chance to attend both!

Together, we invite scholars and students, artists and scientists, and community practitioners to explore the theme **"Identities, Landscape, Boundaries"** through traditional panels, roundtables, posters, film screenings, and live performances. See the Call for Proposals in this newsletter. Proposals will be due September 15, 2026, with a priority deadline of June 1 for those who need additional time to arrange visas or travel funding.

We are planning opportunities to gather around shared meals and shared interests, as well as to discover local history, including touring a missile silo and the nation's only state-owned flour mill. Conference sessions will be held on the beautiful campus of the University of North Dakota, with both dormitory housing and hotel options available.

Grand Forks, North Dakota, and her sister city of East Grand Forks, Minnesota, together constitute a vibrant college town of about 65,000. Their historic downtowns bridge the Red River of the North, which is lined with a 2,200 acre Greenway featuring a campground with full hook-ups and 20 miles of multi-purpose trails. Weather in early June is typically sunny, with highs in the low 70s (22° C) and low humidity.

Grand Forks is located on the North Dakota-Minnesota border, and about 75 miles (120 km) south of the US-Canadian border. That puts us a 1-hour drive north of Fargo, North Dakota, and roughly 3 hours south of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

I encourage you to consider combining your trip to AHS-RWSA 2027 with the 2027 Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, Gender, and Sexualities—fondly known as the "Big Berks"—to be held the following week (June 10–13, 2027) in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Minneapolis is about a 5-hour drive from Grand Forks, and home to a major airport hub. Consider exploring the lovely northwest Minnesota Lakes District on your way from RWSA to the Berks.

RWSA LEADERSHIP

The RWSA bylaws are due for some updating. In particular, we are reconsidering the structure of our board and senior leadership positions. We plan to bring proposed bylaws changes to our business meeting at the 2027 conference. If you would like to be involved in these conversations and/or participate in conference planning, please let us know at RuralWomensStudies@gmail.com.

I am looking forward to seeing all of you in June 2027 in Grand Forks!

Cynthia (Cindy) Prescott
RWSA Co-Chair

STAY IN TOUCH!

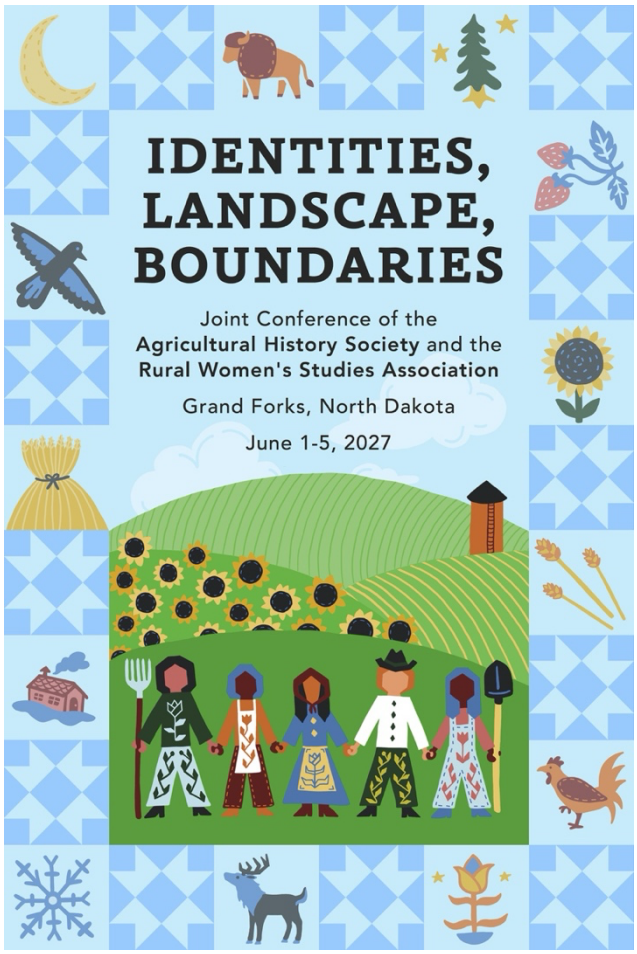
WEB: ruralwomensstudies.org
BLOG: ruralwomensstudies.org/blog/
EMAIL: ruralwomenstudies@gmail.com

- Instagram: @ruralwomenstudies
- Twitter/X: @RuralwomenSA
- Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/rurwom

CALL FOR PROPOSALS
2027 AGRICULTURAL HISTORY SOCIETY & RURAL WOMEN'S STUDIES ASSOCIATION

JUNE 1-5, 2027,
GRAND FORKS, NORTH DAKOTA, USA

THEME: IDENTITIES, LANDSCAPE, BOUNDARIES



For their joint 2027 conference, the Rural Women's Studies Association and the Agricultural History Society invite scholars and students, artists and scientists, and community practitioners to explore the theme **"Identities, Landscape, Boundaries."**

Boundaries—whether physical, political, social, cultural, or ecological—shape how people define themselves and their communities. They mark divisions between places, professions, and identities, while also creating dynamic spaces of exchange, negotiation, and transformation. This theme invites participants to examine how boundaries are made and remade, crossed and contested, and how those processes affect rural lives, landscapes, and livelihoods across time and place.

We welcome papers and panels that engage with literal and figurative boundaries, including but not limited to topics such as transnational and regional borders; farm and town relationships; environmental and ecological change, the borders of race, gender, class, and sexuality; and the boundaries of ownership, belonging, and representation.

By bringing together the insights of agricultural, environmental, and rural women's history, this conference aims to illuminate the shifting identities, power dynamics, and connections that emerge where people, ideas, and environments meet at the borders.

Possible theme-related proposals might include—but are not limited to—the following topics:

- Life on the border, i.e., trans-national borders, state borders, community borders, reservation borders
- Life between borders, i.e., farm/town relationships
- Relationships between professions, i.e., sustainable vs conventional farmers
- Explorations of "big" boundaries of race, religion, politics, gender, sexuality
- Contesting and negotiating borders
- Climate change and shifting ecological borders
- The boundaries of ownership -- exploring land use, ownership, and dispossession
- Queer ruralities and reimagined borderlands
- Agricultural practices, policies, and trade as boundary-making
- Digital borders and rural connectivity
- Land, water, and ecological boundaries
- Seasonal, temporary, and invisible borders of labor
- The borderlands of belonging
- Imagining and representing rural borders
- Boundaries of memory and storytelling

While both organizations urge scholars to submit papers, panels, and presentations that relate to the conference theme, submissions on other topics are also welcome.

ABOUT THE AHS

The Agricultural History Society was founded in Washington, DC in 1919 "to promote the interest, study and research in the history of agriculture." Incorporated in 1924, the Society began publishing a journal, *Agricultural History*, in 1927. The term "agricultural history" has always been interpreted broadly, and the Society encourages research and publishes articles from all countries and in all periods of history. Initially affiliated with the American Historical Association, the Agricultural History Society is the third oldest, discipline-based professional organization in the United States. Currently the membership includes agricultural economists, anthropologists, economists, environmentalists, historians, historical geographers, rural sociologists, scientists, and a variety of independent scholars.

ABOUT THE RWSA

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.

Both organizations welcome academic scholars from diverse fields, public historians and archivists, graduate students, practitioners, and representatives of rural/agricultural organizations and communities as conference participants and members of our organizations. We look forward to proposals for individual papers, full panel sessions, posters, roundtables, and what we are calling 'novelty' sessions that could include films, performances, practitioner discussions, and more.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS:

Deadlines

- June 1, 2026 – Early submission deadline (recommended if you need additional time to arrange international travel visas)
- September 15, 2026 – Regular deadline

Presentation Formats

- Full panels
- Roundtables
- Novelty Sessions (i.e., film, performance, etc.)
- Individual papers (recommendation: please submit to and review the Collaboration Spreadsheet to identify similar papers and form a full panel)
- Posters

Submission

- All submissions must be made using THIS FORM before September 15, 2026.
- Submissions received by June 15, 2026, will receive a response by August 15, 2026.
- We will notify all applicants of the status of their application by December 1, 2026.

For most submissions, you will need your paper title and abstract, and presenter name/position/affiliation/email address. These materials for all papers, plus the session title and abstract are needed for full panels and roundtables. To submit a panel or roundtable, you will need to identify one person to gather and submit the entire panel/roundtable.

Most sessions will be 90 minutes. If you wish to deviate from the normative session length or style, please detail your preferred format in your proposal. Please include any audiovisual or other technological needs with your proposal.

This will be an in-person conference in Grand Forks, North Dakota, USA. By submitting a proposal, you are committing to participate in person at the date and time assigned should your proposal be accepted.

AHS and RWSA are able to provide a limited amount of Jensen-Neth grants that will cover conference registration and housing in the university dorms. The Jensen-Neth grant application is available HERE. Deadline to request a grant is September 15, 2026.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE:

- Elyssa Ford, Northwest Missouri State University (chair)
- Joe Anderson, Mount Royal University (AHS)
- Karen Scholthof, Texas A&M University (AHS)
- John Seitz, Tennessee Wesleyan University (AHS)
- Mary Curtin, University of Limerick (RWSA)
- Corrina Neal, Arkansas State University (RWSA)
- Jodey Nurse, McGill University (RWSA)

QUESTIONS?

Contact Info: Elyssa Ford, ebford@nwmissouri.edu

2024 -2027 RWSA OFFICERS

RURAL WOMEN'S STUDIES ASSOCIATION CO-CHAIR

Cynthia Prescott, University of North Dakota

OFFICERS & CHAIRS

Secretary: Hillary Loomis, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

Membership Chair: Lynne Benson, University of Massachusetts-Boston

Treasurer: Jenny Barker-Devine, Illinois College

Travel Grants Chair: Corrina Neal, Arkansas State University

Website Manager: Jodey Nurse, McGill University

Newsletter & Blog Editor: Jennifer Helton, Ohlone College

Social Media Coordinators: Beatrice Adams, Wooster College & Pamela Walker, University of Vermont

International Membership and Communication Coordinators:

- Pacific–Katie Cooper, Te Papa Tongarewa/Museum of New Zealand
- Canada–Jodey Nurse, McMaster University; and Meighan Mantei, Carleton University
- Europe–Margreet van der Burg, Wageningen University: and Mary Curtin, University of Limerick
- Africa–Olubunmi Ashimolowo, University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria; and Oluwaseun Boye, Nigerian Institute of Public Relations, Ogun State Chapter, Nigeria
- United States–Tracey Hanshew, Eastern Oregon University

Graduate Student Coordinators and Emerging Professionals Coordinators

- Corrina Neal, Arkansas State University
- Diane McKenzie, University of Lethbridge
- Sydney Giacalone, Brown University
- Meighan Mantei, Carleton Universit7

INNOVATIONS IN TEACHING

SCAN ME

NCHS Museum
WWII Interviews

NCHS Oral Histories: Nodaway County Veterans

The Nodaway County Historical Society in Missouri has conducted dozens of interviews with WWII veterans from across the rural, northwestern Missouri region, and through work with a public history class under **Elyssa Ford** at Northwest Missouri State University, these are now publicly available on the NCHS Museum website. Approximately 80 of these interviews, abstracts, and full transcripts can be found using the QR code to the left.

Rural Missouri Cemetery Projects

For the last nine years, students at Northwest Missouri State University have worked with history professor **Elyssa Ford** to research the people buried at Oak Hill East Cemetery and Ohio Cemetery, both located in rural northwestern Missouri. This material is now available online and can be accessed using the QR codes below.

SCAN ME

Oak Hill East
Cemetery Project

SCAN ME

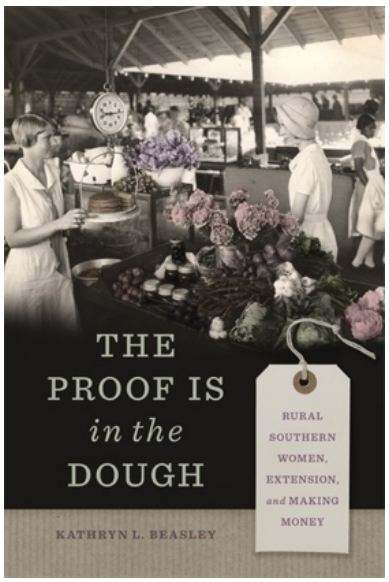
Ohio Cemetery
Project

MEMBER PUBLICATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Cynthia Prescott's article "Mormon Handcart Memory" appears in the spring 2026 issue of *Journal of Mormon History.* She also contributed a chapter "Pioneer Monuments: Informing Public Debate" in *Public Humanities: Engaging Community, Empowering Civic Discourse, and Reshaping Academia*, ed. Molly Todd and Jason E. Cohen (Michigan State University Press, 2026).

Rena Henderson published a review of Untold Intimacies: A History of Sex Work in Aotearoa, 1978-2008 in the Journal of Gender Studies, Volume 35, Issue 4.

Elyssa Ford authored a Comparative Review of 4 books: "Queer Women in Twentieth Century America," in the Journal of Women's History 37:2 (Summer 2025): 141-148. She has also recently accepted a position at Washington State University and will start as an associate professor of history there in the fall.



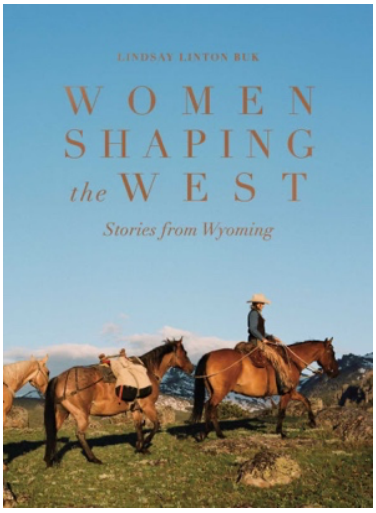
Kathryn Beasley reports that she is the featured speaker for Auburn University's Draughon Seminars in State & Local History for 2025-2026.

Her article, "'"Le-Ko, Crest-More, and Labels of Success: How Eulalia Stephens Created a Canning Industry in the Florida Panhandle, 1921-1963" was published in The Florida Historical Quarterly (vol 102, no.3 (Winter 2024))

She continues to stay busy with book talks and events, including being interviewed for the New Books Podcast for her 2025 book, *The Proof is in the Dough: Rural Southern Women, Extension, and Making Money*,

Say hello at this year's Agricultural History Society conference, where she will be presenting a paper.

Photographer Lindsay Linton recently published *Women Shaping the West*. This work features Lindsay's essays on Wyoming life and her gorgeous photos of 25 extraordinary Wyoming women. Along the way, she asks important questions about the ways in which women have shaped the history and culture of the American West. RWSA member **Jennifer Helton** had a great time serving as historical consultant.



RWSA VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Want to get more involved in the RWSA? We would be grateful for support in the following roles. Email ruralwomenstudies@gmail.com to find out more.

2030 Conference Host: We are looking for a site to hold our 2030 conference. If your institution would be interested, please let us know!

RWSA Co-Chair: We are searching for a co-chair to assist the President with managing the organization.

2027 Conference Silent Auction Coordinator: We need a volunteer to coordinate this important fundraiser.

2027 Conference Program Committee Members: We would love a few more volunteers to support the development of the 2027 program and agenda.

CALL FOR RWSA BLOG SUBMISSIONS

Looking to get your work out into the world? We invite submissions to the newly reformatted RWSA blog.

Writing a blog post is a great way to publicize your recent work, promote your event, spread the news about upcoming grant opportunities, and practice writing for the public. Grad students are especially welcome!

We invite submissions on any topic related to rural women, gender and/or sexuality. We accept book excerpts, conference abstracts, and informal reflections about research, activism, and rural life.

We are also looking for posts on archives, research opportunities, and teaching resources.

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 Jennifer Helton jhelton@ohlone.edu.

RWSA MEMBERSHIP FORM

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:

- Income under US$50,000 – $10.00
- Triennial Dues (conference to conference)–income under US$50,000 – $30.00
- Annual Dues–income US$50,000+ – $25.00
- Triennial Dues (conference to conference)–income US$50,000+ – $75.00
- Annual Dues–Contributing Member – $50.00
- Triennial Dues (conference to conference)–Contributing Member – $150.00

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 AMOUNT ENCLOSED: _____

JENSEN-NETH FUND DONATAION: _____ 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.)