



# Project News

NEVADA WOMEN'S HISTORY

## Calendar

### Northern Nevada Schedule

**JUNE 17** – "Women's Works in Progress" workshop; Carson Plaza Retirement facility, 2120 E. Long, Carson City; 10 AM to noon. For information email Cherry Jones: [cljnvquail@charter.net](mailto:cljnvquail@charter.net).

**JUNE 20** – Lecture and slides, "More than Petticoats: Remarkable Alaska Women" by Cherry Jones; Gold Hill Hotel; Buffet Dinner, 5:30 to 7 PM, Program, 7:30 (dinner and program \$15, program only \$5). For reservations call 775-847-0111.

**JUNE 24** – Northern Region Steering Committee Meeting; Thunder Canyon Country Club, Washoe Valley; 9:30 AM.

**JUNE 24** – Northern Region Annual Meeting and Luncheon; Thunder Canyon Country Club; 11 AM - 1:30 PM; Dr. Wendy Calvin of the Mars Landing Project will talk about her experiences in the science field. See newsletter insert for reservation information.

**JULY 15** – "Women's Works in Progress" workshop; NWHP Office, 770 Smithridge Dr., Suite 300, Reno; 10 AM to noon. For information call Holly Van Valkenburgh at 775-884-4246.

**JULY 22** – Wildflower Hike. Probable area will be Winnemucca Lake, Carson Pass off of Highway 88. For information or to sign-up contact Kay Sanders at 775-747-1740 or email [ksanders@unr.nevada.edu](mailto:ksanders@unr.nevada.edu).

**AUG. 19** – "Women's Works in Progress" workshop; Carson Plaza Retirement facility; 10 AM to noon; For information call Bonnie Dietrich at 775-882-4248.

### Southern Nevada Schedule

**MAY 13** – Luncheon Business Meeting; Marie Callender's Restaurant; 4800 So. Eastern Ave. Social 11:45 AM; Luncheon \$20, includes salad, entree, pie and beverage; 12:15PM; Program: A SALUTE TO NWHP CHARTER MEMBER 97 YEAR-OLD BILLIE BATES. Installation of officers to follow. For reservations call 648-9415 or 837-6584.

**MARCH 25-SEPT. 1** – Sarah Winnemucca Statue Exhibit; Nevada State Museum and Historical Society; Lorenzi Park. On view are the three runners-up of the statues entered in the Sarah Winnemucca Statue Competition along with the now famous statue entry by Benjamin Victor. For more details call 702-486-5205.

## NWHP 8th Conference Highlights

A dedication of the third Sarah Winnemucca statue, held at the Reed Whipple Cultural Center in Las Vegas, kicked off the 2006 NWHP State Conference on March 25th. It was an impressive ceremony with the Presentation of Colors ceremony conducted by the Centennial High School Navy Junior ROTC Color Guard. Following the National Anthem sung by Ben Litvinoff, an invocation was led by LeRoy Spotted Eagle, Southern Paiute tribal spiritual leader.



Destiny Carroll and Hannah Low receiving Trailblazer Awards from Joan LeMere.

NWHP State President Joan LeMere welcomed everyone and was followed by remarks from Congresswoman Shelley Berkeley, Oscar Goodman, Mayor of Las Vegas, and Benjamin Victor, artist and creator of the Sarah Winnemucca statue. Kathleen Clemence was thanked for coordinating the dedication event. Beautifully culminating the afternoon affair was LeRoy Spotted Eagle's Native American blessing of the statue and Megan Koumis's lovely rendition of God Bless America. A delicious catered reception rounded out the afternoon.



Bernice Fischer  
NWHP Award Recipient

"Stand Up and Be Counted" was the theme of the 2006 NWHP State Conference held the next day, March 26th, in the historic Mesquite Club. Joan LeMere presided at the luncheon event. Members from both the North and South regions participated in the exciting conference which was dedicated to the pioneer women who worked for women's rights, particularly the right to vote.

Teresa Bell, League of Women Voters, was the keynote speaker who emphasized the long

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## Another Successful Pink Tea

It was a cold and rainy day - the first time we have held a Pink Tea that the weather wasn't great. But once inside the Mansion, it was easy to forget the weather outside. We are privileged to have such a beautiful Governor's Mansion and even more privileged to have a First Lady who shares her home with us.

This year the Pink Tea was a fund raising event for the Mammovan. First Lady Dema Guinn chose women's health as her focus for the event. The fund raising was our way of thanking Dema for her support for the Sarah Winnemucca Project. We couldn't have done it without her help. Our North Region Chair Cherry Jones shared information about our organization. Mrs. Guinn shared the history of the Mammovan and the fact that it is saving lives. Paula Guzman told us more about the Mammovan and thanked us for our efforts.

I cannot close without thanking John from Grandma Hatties for the wonderful food. Last but not least, a big hug and a thank you to the two "Judys" who have been so wonderful to work with. They make an event at the Mansion special.

*Mary Anne Convis*



## “Women’s Works in Progress” Workshops

Would you like to learn more about how to portray one of Nevada’s historical women, either by doing a Chautauqua or living history performance? Or would you like just to give a lecture about her?

Are you interested in writing biographies that could be put on our website or in the next volume of the encyclopedia?

Would you like to participate in the “Letters From Nevada’s Daughters” so that researchers in the next century will be able to find information about the women who are living in Nevada today?

If your answer to any of these questions is “yes”, or even “maybe”, then join other women who are working on projects. Starting in June, on the third Saturday of each month we will meet together and give each other support and suggestions for whatever project about Nevada women is brought to the workshop.

We will alternate meeting in Carson City one month and Reno the next. Our first meeting will be June 17 at Carson Plaza, 2120 E. Long St., Carson City, from 10 AM until noon. In July we will meet in Reno at the NWHP office, 770 Smithridge Dr., Suite 300 on Saturday the 15th, from 10 AM until noon. On August 19 we will be back at the Carson Plaza.

For more information contact Cherry Jones, [cljnvquail@charter.net](mailto:cljnvquail@charter.net); Holly Van Valkenburgh, [hovava@juno.com](mailto:hovava@juno.com); Carrie Porter, [tpareno@charter.net](mailto:tpareno@charter.net) or Bonnie Dietrich, [kitchersonrhody@aol.com](mailto:kitchersonrhody@aol.com).

*Cherry Jones*

## NWHP State Committee President's Message



My two year service as your State Committee President will come to an end as of June. It was my privilege to serve you during a wonderful time. As an organization we were the women who Nevada will remember that dedicated Nevada's second statue in the United States Capital in Washington, DC. The citizens of Nevada will also remember that our organization raised the money for that statue of Sarah Winnemucca, and also dedicated statues of Sarah in Carson City and Las Vegas. We have made it possible for all citizens of Nevada to have the opportunity to view the statue and learn about this wonderful woman. It was only because of all of your diligent work that the Sarah Winnemucca Project culminated last month successfully in Las Vegas. It has truly been an experience that has enriched my life. I served you with a stellar steering committee who like myself always considered the welfare of Nevada Women's History Project. I was the lucky one. During my administration I received many notes of encouragement and congratulations from various individuals within the organization. I thank each of you for them. Receiving a note from one of your peers is truly the best kind of affirmation that a President can receive. There are a few individuals that I need to mention. I thank them personally as I could not have been successful without their help:

Kathleen Clemence for her work as my Parliamentarian, and for Chairing both the Dedication in Washington, DC and in Las Vegas, NV; Kathy Noneman who always answered her phone and responded no matter what I needed; Mary Gafford, who served as my sounding board and State Secretary; Kay Sanders, who is constant in her efforts on the Newsletter month after month and year after year; Nancy Sansone who keeps my counsel. As for the rest of you members who are out there doing your assigned tasks, thanks to all of you also, "You were the wind beneath my wings."

In friendship,  
*Joan LeMere, State Committee President*

### Book Review:

## *Through The Glass Ceiling, "A Life in Nevada Politics"*

by Sue Wagner with Victoria Ford

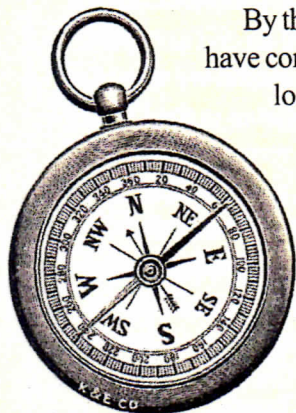
Sue Wagner's long awaited oral history is finished, and both Sue and member Vikki Ford can be justifiably proud of their endeavors. Its production was made possible by an anonymous donor's gift to the Nevada Women's History Project. To celebrate the publication by the UNR Oral History Department, the project hosted a reception and book signing at Austin's which was attended by over 100 people.

Vikki is able to capture the spirit and personality of this remarkable woman who began her political career by running for the Nevada Assembly in 1974. Sue joined the other two women who were already known as Nevada's women politicians: Mary Gojack and our own founder Jean Ford.

Sue Wagner later became a Nevada State Senator and then served as Lieutenant Governor. She has spent a lifetime advocating for women and children and championing their causes. Sue candidly discusses a life which has been marked with triumphs and tragedies. Her husband Peter Wagner supported her political career and helped her campaign until his death in an airplane crash in 1980. Sue suddenly became a working, single mother of two. Vikki Ford's sensitive questioning produces a vivid account of this remarkable woman and her indomitable spirit. Sue goes on to describe her life in politics, and then the horror of her own airplane crash in Fallon which led to her long fight to regain her health. Any person interested in the political history of Nevada will enjoy reading this Oral History of a modern pioneer woman of courage and fortitude. I hope that we can continue our partnership with the UNR Oral History Department and produce more of these personal accounts.

*Kathleen F. Noneman*

## News From The North



By the time you get this newsletter we will have completed our springtime events and be looking forward to summer. Certainly we will be welcoming the summer weather!

We congratulate our Southern Region for successfully bringing to publication the biographical encyclopedia, *Skirts That Swept the Desert Floor!* Some of us were lucky enough to get our copies

when we traveled to Las Vegas last month for the dedication of the third Sarah Winnemucca statue, which will be installed in a prominent spot in the new Las Vegas City Hall. The book is a beautiful tribute to 100 women from Nevada's past. If you want to purchase a copy check with your local bookstore or contact one of our members from the South. Good work from Joan LeMere, her committee members, Mary Gafford and Nancy Sansone, and all those writers who contributed biographies!

When we praised the book at our annual Pink Tea at the Governor's Mansion, one of our new members from Austin, Nevada, Elizabeth Rassa (who was dressed in a gorgeous Victorian ensemble) reminded us that "when the skirts swept the desert floor, they smelled of sagebrush!" What an appropriately Nevada sentiment!

The North wrapped up its involvement with the wonderfully successful "Sarah Winnemucca Project" by spending three days the first weekend in May "In the Footprints of Sarah Winnemucca". This year's Silver State Sampler took us to the places here in northern Nevada that were pertinent to Sarah's life, as we visited Genoa, Carson City, Virginia City, Fallon, Lovelock and Winnemucca. Thanks for all the hard work of Patti Bernard and Isabel Espinoza.

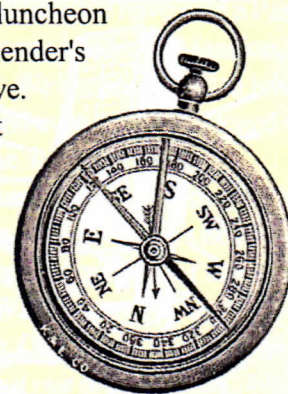
Now we are looking forward to our ongoing projects of "Letters From Nevada's Daughters", getting more biographies up on our website and ready for Volume 2 of the biographical encyclopedia, and setting up a speakers' bureau to provide Chautauqua and living history presentations for schools and organizations. I encourage all of you to think about what you can do to contribute to these projects, or to any other way of spreading the word about the amazing women from Nevada's colorful history.

I have just finished doing research for a book on some of Alaska's remarkable women, and found that there is a bond between Alaska and Nevada. Since both states were home

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## News From The South

NWHP-So. Region held its luncheon business meeting at Marie Callender's Restaurant at 4800 So. Eastern Ave. on Saturday, February 25 at 11AM. With resignation of So. Region President Anne Reck, Acting President Mary Gafford called the meeting to order. Invocation was given by Nancy Sansone. Pledge was led by Pat McNutt.



After a lavish lunch, Super Summer Theatre Board member of twenty-two years Anne Brew spoke on the history of this non-profit organization that has been presenting plays and musicals out at Spring Mountain Ranch State Park for thirty years. Also, Anne related how one can volunteer out at the ranch and help the SST Board. She gave an update on the entertainment for 2006: *THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER* in June; *RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET* in July; *BELLS ARE RINGING* in August. An added treat for September this year is to be the PG rated drama *NOISES OFF*.

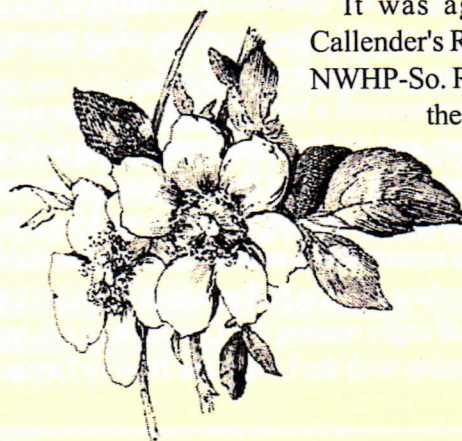
NWHP State President Joan LeMere spoke briefly on the upcoming NWHP State Conference of March 25-26, 2006. She reminded everyone of the dedication of the Sarah Winnemucca Statue at 3 PM on Saturday, March 25.

A business meeting followed. Nominating Committee Chairman Pat McNutt and her committee selected for next term the following slate of So. Region officers:

President: Jane Olive  
1st Vice President: Mary Gafford  
2nd Vice President: Betty Miller  
Recording Secretary: Doris Drummond  
Corresponding Secretary: Jean Spiller  
Treasurer: Su Kim Chung

It was agreed that Marie Callender's Restaurant would be NWHP-So. Region's location for the May, 2006 meeting.

*Mary Gafford*



## Featured NWHF Member Billie Mitchell Bates



On January 13, 1912, Billie Mitchell was born to Flora May Saylor Mitchell and Oliver W. Mitchell. This family resided in Aldrich, Missouri, a town that met the same fate as St. Thomas, Utah as both no longer exist. Billie, being a stubborn Capricorn, showed her determination to “make a difference” from her birth on. Billie and her brother grew up in a railroad town located in a farming community. Her brother worked at a mill to supplement family income. Being a serious student, Billie was determined to go to college and study to be a teacher. After high school graduation she picked strawberries to earn enough money to attend Springfield State College in Springfield, Missouri for one semester. Summers prior to her sophomore and junior years she “candled” eggs in a produce house.

After three years of college, Billie took a teaching position in a one-room schoolhouse. She lived with her parents and walked six miles round trip to this grades one to eight country school. Billie returned to Springfield State College after teaching two years. There she completed her Bachelor of Education degree. Upon completion of college, Billie accepted a high school teaching position in a very prosperous railroad town located between St. Louis, Missouri and Memphis, Tennessee, only three miles from the Mississippi River.

At age 24, Billie met her husband-to-be. Actually, her brother was working on Russell Bates family’s cattle ranch near Manhattan, Kansas. He introduced Russell to Billie. It was a whirlwind courtship. Billie became Mrs. Russell Bates on July 26, 1936. They were married at the Aldrich Missouri Southern Methodist Church by her uncle, Reverend Clyde Saylor. The newlyweds lived on the Bates Ranch. Billie, of course, lost her teaching position as she was a “married woman.” From July to October of 1936, Billie and husband Russell resided at the ranch with his mom. Then the three headed for California and rumored “better times.”

In Bakersfield, Russell acquired a position building roads after a short stint in Los Angeles. Their first daughter Cornelia was born there. While living on a small farm of about two acres in Bakersfield, the Bates family was blessed with the birth of a second daughter, Laurel Jeanne. With added demands for more milk, the family purchased a cow from the Herbert Hoover Ranch which was adjacent to their property.

World War II broke out. The Wilber family, best friends of Billie and Russell, told about the availability of work at Hoover Dam in Nevada. This news led the Bates to move to McKeeverville (now Lakeview), an area named after the Dam’s mess hall cook. This was a squatter’s area, controlled by the National Park Service. Russell found work as a rigger. He installed generators in the Hoover Dam powerhouse. Hoover Dam had been built to protect California’s Imperial Valley (which then was known as the “Bread Basket of the U.S.A.) from flooding by the Colorado River.

All went well for the Bates family until near Easter of 1943. An industrial accident at the Dam left Russell unable to work. He drew disability for three years. This inadequate income caused Billie to need to find work. Thus in 1945, Billie went to work for the Bureau of Reclamation, an agency of the Department of the Interior, at Hoover Dam. She began in personnel. Her business skills learned during her college years were an asset. Soon she was selected to be the personal secretary to the project manager. She held this position for 30 years - from 1945-1975. During that time she worked for six different project managers whose job it was to oversee Hoover Dam operations.

In 1950, the Bates family, which included the mother of Russell Bates, moved to a house in Boulder City. They were allowed to rent it from the U. S. Government because of Billie’s job. In 1956, they purchased the land that the house was on and in 1960 the government sold them the house as well. This is where Billie still resides.

Billie’s daughter Cornelia graduated from Boulder City High School in 1959. She went on to receive a doctorate of music from Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. Her daughter Laurel Jeanne graduated from BYU in 1964.

Billie Mitchell Bates has continued to “make a difference” in her community over the years. She has contributed to the Boulder City community she loves so dearly. A member of her local LDS church, she is proud to have reared her family in a small town which at one time boasted of a mere 3,000 citizens and no casinos. She feels Boulder City is a good place to raise a family

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# NWHP 8th Conference Highlights

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effort women put forth to win the right to vote. A special recognition was given to two young Las Vegas students, Destiny Carroll and Hannah Low. They, after reading about this long struggle, initiated a movement to have a national holiday declared honoring that achievement. They started a petition and gathered signatures to start this process. Congresswoman Shelly Berkeley proposed legislation to honor suffragettes with a national holiday. The League of Women Voters got involved and several other organizations joined in to help promote their goal.

Several awards were given including honoring Bernice Fischer, Philanthropist; Dorothy Huff, Journalist; Rosie O'Grady, Daughters of the American Revolution; and Kathleen Clemence, NWHP. Trailblazer Awards were presented to students Destiny Carroll and Hannah Low by President Joan LeMere for their inspiring project to have a national holiday declared. Hannah's

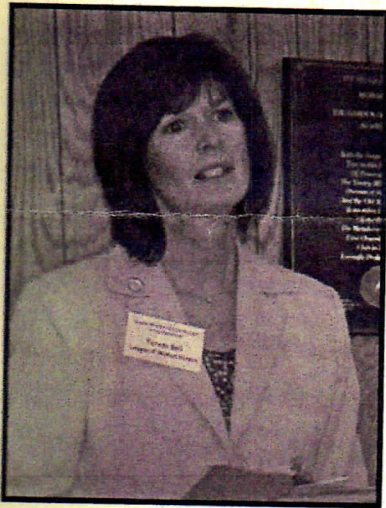


NWHP State Committee Members At Meeting in Las Vegas

mother also spoke about the girl's dream.

Roll of Honor nominees were inducted by North Chair Cherry Jones. They are Dr. Marlene Adrian, Video Producer; Jan Cleere, Author; and Eileen Cohen, Oral Histories Author and Living History Presenter. Dr. Adrian was the only recipient able to attend.

Kathy Noneman announced the new slate of officers for the State Committee. Joan LeMere thanked the members for their support during her tenure as President for the past two years.



Teresa Bell - Keynote Speaker



Joan LeMere, State President and Nancy Sansone



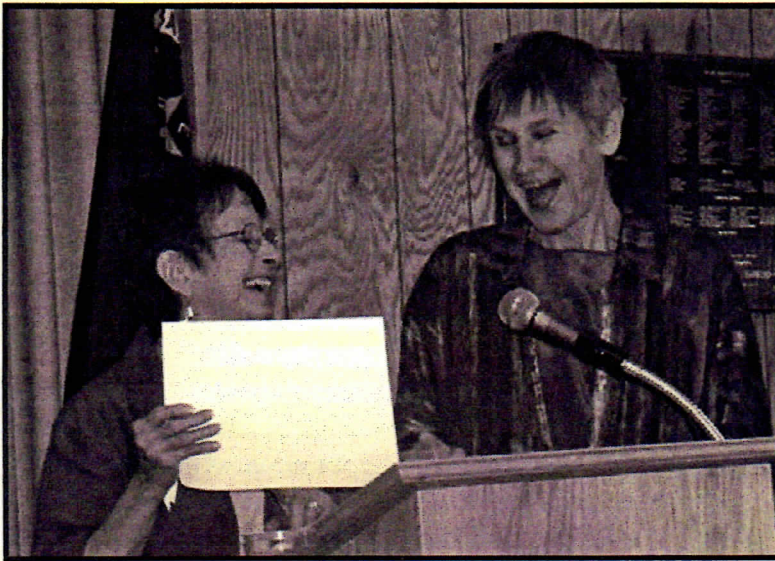
Kathleen Noneman Announcing New State Officer Slate



Jane Olive Incoming South President



Betty Miller Nominee for 2nd Vice-President, So. Region



Cherry Jones presenting Roll of Honor award to Marlene Adrian



Joan Fragakis, Mary Ann Hantout, and Doris Drummond

## Washington, D.C. Stanchion Wording Chosen

The State Steering Committee reviewed the suggestions for the inscription on the Nevada flag stanchion at the Women in Service to America Memorial at their recent meeting. They chose: "The Nevada Women's History Project Salutes All Nevada Women Who Have Served Their State And Country". Our organization has already paid for the rights to this inscription. Our thanks to Rose Stuart for spearheading this project. Now who wants to organize a trip to Washington, DC for a ceremony?

Kathy Noneman

## News from the North

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to mining boomtowns at different times, many miners traveled back and forth between the states following the strikes. It was interesting to see familiar names crop up in different stories of mining towns around Alaska. And there seems to still be a connection between the two states. So many people have told me that they have lived in Alaska, or have relatives in Alaska now, and it seems as if "everyone" has traveled there!

At one book signing a man came rushing up to me and asked if there were any women in my book from Moose Pass. When I said yes, he asked if I had written about "Alaska Nellie", and upon receiving an affirmative answer told me excitedly, "I knew her!" At another signing a woman asked about Mary Carey. When I said that she was too young to be included in the book but that I had stayed at the hotel she built, the woman was delighted, because she, too, had stayed there, and actually had known Mary.

A friend of Holly Van Valkenburgh's, Noriko Low, was visiting and asked me if by any chance I had written about Clara Rust. Surprised, I said yes, wondering about Noriko's connection. It seems that she had been researching an Alaska pioneer and one of her contacts had sent her several bits of information. Among them was a letter to *Alaska Magazine* regarding her pioneer subject and the letter was from Clara! My goodness--it really is a small world.

Well, enough of shameless self-promotion. (But if you are interested, my book is *More Than Petticoats: Remarkable Alaska Women*, and should be available at your local bookstore). I am off to Alaska and will be there until September spending fun times with my grandson. (And, of course, my son, daughter-in-law, daughter and son-in-law, too.)

Wishing you a wonderful summer!

Cherry Jones, Chair, No. Region  
Steering Committee

# Featured Historic Nevada Woman

## Felice Cohn

**Born:** May 14, 1884

**Died:** May 24, 1961

**Race/nationality/ethnic background:** Jewish

**Primary city and county of residence and work:** Carson City (Ormsby), Goldfield (Esmeralda Co.), Reno (Washoe)

**Major fields of work:** law, politics (political activist, federal appointee, advocate of children's and women's issues)

**Other role identities:** education (teacher), woman's club leader

### Biography:

Felice Cohn was born May 14, 1884, in Carson City, Nevada, to Morris and Pauline Sheyer Cohn. Her grandfather was Rabbi Sheyer in Carson City.

Morris, a merchant and land owner, established a creamery and introduced alfalfa raising in Ormsby County (now Carson City). Felice grew up with one brother and three sisters and attended school in Carson City. She was an exceptional student, and included in her records are three teaching certificates dating from 1894 to 1903. The first certificate, to teach first grade, was issued to her when she was eleven years old! An amusing account describes "this slip of a girl being sent to a remote school

where she was frequently picked up by her students and tossed around." She didn't last long in the teaching profession. Her parents were convinced she should be allowed to attend the university, which is what she wanted to do all along.

Felice enrolled at the University of Nevada in Reno for a year and then also went to Stanford University. She was in the graduating class of 1899--which would have made her fifteen years old. Whether or not she actually graduated is unclear because she also graduated from the Nevada Business College in 1899. For the next several years, plagued with ill health, she studied law. In 1902, at the age of eighteen, she was admitted to the bar through the U.S. District Court, Ninth District, in Carson City. She was the youngest person to achieve that distinction at that time.

Felice's first cases were focused on land issues, patenting

mining claims and other mining matters. She practiced in both Goldfield and Carson City. In 1906 she became the first woman assistant district attorney, and in 1907 she served as a court reporter for the famous State Bank and Trust Company case. Why would a successful attorney suddenly become a court reporter? Apparently there was no one to do the lengthy and complicated court reporting. The case lasted four years with one man's testimony being recorded for over 146 days. She remained court reporter for a number of years but also practiced law in Carson City during that time.

The Federal government employed Miss Cohn as assistant superintendent of public sales of land, and she travelled all over Nevada, Montana, Colorado, and other western states in the performance of these duties. Working in this capacity, she recognized women and the work they were doing as public officials and as homesteaders. In May, 1908, she was admitted to the District Court of Appeals in San Francisco.

An interesting description of Felice is provided in the Goldfield News of August 15, 1907. Not only does this present a physical description of her, but also indicates something about the prevailing attitude toward women in this profession. The article states,

"...Miss Cohn is a slender woman of average height, with dark hair and liquid black eyes which flash with interest as she talks. There is nothing about her appearance or manner to suggest that she is at all masculine nor does her simple white costume have anything about it to suggest that she has ceased to be a woman in becoming a lawyer. Her voice is well modulated and pleasing, and she speaks with a pleasing simplicity and directness. She would not be noticeable for any peculiarity that would suggest that she was other than a well reared woman of refined tastes...."



Photo Credit: NV Historical Society Reno

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## *Featured Historic Nevada Woman: Felice Cohn*

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Vitaly interested in the welfare of women, Felice Cohn became involved in suffrage rights for women in 1911. She was one of the founding members of the State Equal Franchise Society and chaired the legislative committee during the 1911 legislative session, lobbying effectively during that time to see the successful passage of the resolution she had drafted: "There shall be no denial of the elective franchise at any election on account of sex." People were amazed at the ease with which the resolution was passed, due in part to her efforts. Though the resolution passed in 1911, there was still a lot of work to be done by many women before it would be passed in 1913 and placed on the Nevada ballot for final passage. Felice Cohn and Anne Martin disagreed on how to accomplish this work, Anne being more militant than Felice. Both were very visible in Nevada and in Washington D.C. as the campaign heated up. In a national magazine called *Leslie's Weekly* in July 31, 1913, an article stated, "and like the great majority of woman suffragists in this county, (Felice Cohn) does not believe in militant methods."

It is important to note that we are not talking guns and aggression here; we are talking about pushing for a federal amendment with parades and demonstrations, etc. In 1916 Felice was involved in chartering a Non-militant Equal Suffrage Society and the Nevada Voters' Club, both with members numbered in the hundreds.

In February, 1916, Felice went to Washington D.C. to do some work related to land issues for the Department of Interior. She stayed, however, for a March ceremony where she was admitted to practice law before the Supreme Court, the fourth woman in the nation to be given that privilege. From March through May there were numerous newspaper accounts of her in Washington and New York. Various letters, invitations, newspaper clippings, etc. indicate that this woman, for all her accomplishments, also worried about what she wore, enjoyed dancing, and was impressed with meeting the President. She was honored by a reception given by Vice-President Marshall and his wife, was the houseguest of Mr. and Mrs. Clay Tallman, the Commissioner of the General Land Office, and was honored to have a seat in the reserved section of the Congressional Gallery during her visit.

Nevada's Senator, Key Pittman, had introduced more than two thousand land bills in Congress during his tenure, with only fifty failing to pass, and the Pittman Land Bill became a leading issue of his campaign for re-election in 1916. Felice Cohn agreed to speak on the measure to explain its content and effect in Yerington on November 5, 1916. It was quite the social occasion. Following this, she returned to Washington, D.C. to appear before the Department of the Interior on several land matters. She was becoming well known in powerful political circles in both the East and the West. In 1918, Cohn was appointed as hearings attorney for the U.S. Land Office, again a first for a woman; in this capacity, she worked with several Western states in selling lands at auctions.

In 1922 Felice opened a law office in Reno, and in March of 1926 was appointed U.S. Referee in Bankruptcy for the District of Nevada, an unsolicited honor, where she served three terms (eight years). During her terms she had an outstanding record of having her decisions reversed only twice. Then she became involved in the notorious "Owl Drug Case" when the Owl Drug Store Company voluntarily declared bankruptcy. She was not reappointed when her term expired in 1934 (she refused to testify in the Owl Bankruptcy). Almost simultaneously with the appointment of a new Referee, Reno attorney George S. Green, Jr., Cohn received word of her appointment as National Chairman of the Committee on Ethics of the National Association of Referees in Bankruptcy.

A substantial portion of Cohn's private law practice involved divorces, but she also worked with child labor issues, foster homes, adoption, and other legislative issues adversely affecting women and children. She was quite outspoken nationally about the divorce laws in Nevada and staunchly supported them. She said in a speech in New York, "Nevada has been criticized for her divorce laws, but it is due almost entirely to the need of relief by the citizens of other states that we find ourselves the 'cure' center of the world. ...They came to Nevada because the laws of their own states afforded no avenue of escape from an intolerable condition, brought about most often by incompatibility and nothing more." At that time, different states had different divorce laws and one could be married in one state, become divorced/single in another, and be committing bigamy in a third. Her law offices were in the Mapes Building in Reno and her residence in Reno was at 118 West Street.

Cohn ran for public office several times. She was a candidate for State Assembly in 1924, for Reno City Attorney in 1927, and ran against the well-known and very popular District Judge John S. Belford in 1952, but was unsuccessful each time.

Another substantial involvement for Felice was with the American Red Cross effort during the war. She was one of the founders of the Nevada Federation of Business and Professional Womens' Clubs, and its first President in 1936, and obtained a \$15,000 grant from the legislature to establish a permanent home for the Nevada Historical Society. She was active in the Nevada

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## *Karen Benna hosts the perfect event!*



High on a hill overlooking the Double Diamond Ranch area, the exquisite Arts and Craft styled home of Steve and Karen Benna was filled (over 50 attended) with renewing, and potential new members of the Nevada Women's History Project (NWHP). Named the "Herstory" event, the weather provided a rare beautiful February day. With many of our members being accomplished women's history authors, tables were full of our members' books for browsing.

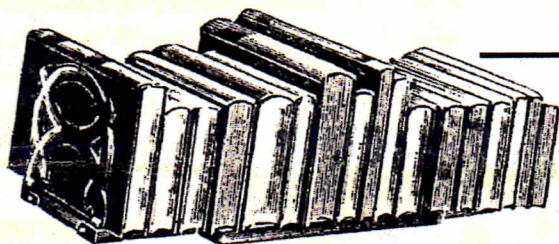
New member Marci Hill said, "I had a wonderful time. I love the strong, warm and interesting women that make up the Nevada Women's History Project.

Mostly a social event to thank our members, food and fun was in great supply. It was also an opportunity for existing members to invite friends and family interested in learning about NWHP. Information on upcoming plans for the next few months and in the future were presented. "Herstory" was also an opportunity for our membership to give their NWHP Steering Committee feedback on what our membership wants to see happening in the organization.

Having spent the last five years focused on the Sarah Winnemucca Project, after a lot of work and success, we're ready for new challenges. NWHP membership is filled with many intelligent, talented women and leadership needs their many ideas to give us direction. We put a statue in Washington D.C., but with the ongoing and endless NWHP mission, there is much more to accomplish for all Nevada women.

Next year-be there and bring your friends!

*Lisa-Marie Lightfoot*



### *Featured NWHP Member:*

#### *Billie Mitchell Bates*

*continued from page 5*

as it offers numerous youth activities.

Billie has been a community activist for about sixty years. A student of Robert's Rules of Order, she has taught numerous workshops on parliamentary procedure. She belongs to the National Association of Parliamentarians. Since 1989 Billie has been a member of the Valley of Fire Chapter NSDAR. She is a charter member of the Nevada Women's History Project. She displays with pride her certificate of appointment by Governor Miller. She is also a member of ITC and the Boulder City Arts Council. In 2005 Billie was honored as a 50 year member of the American Association of University Women.

Truly, Billie Mitchell Bates has come a long way from that little town of Aldrich, Missouri that no longer exists. She has been true to herself, to her family, and most importantly to her God. Proudly Billie Bates can say, "I did it my way."

*Mary Gafford.*

### *Featured Historic Nevada Woman:* *Felice Cohn*

*continued from page 9*

Federation of Women's Clubs, National Association of Women Lawyers, the American Women's Voluntary Services, the Reno YWCA, and the Nevada and California Bar Association. She was also involved in the B'nai B'rith organization for many years.

Felice Cohn died in Reno on May 24, 1961. The evidence shows that she was consistently involved in the legal profession as a persistent and quiet voice shaping and supporting issues to better the quality of life for women and children in Nevada. She demonstrated a certainty that women have a role in whatever fields of endeavor they wish to pursue and a belief that opportunities would only grow in the future.

*(Biographical sketch by Jean Ford from research papers by Janet White and Janet Wright.)*

#### **Published Works:**

- Cohn, Felice. "Women of Nevada Interested In Politics." In Benheim, Max. *Women of the West*. Los Angeles: Publisher's Press, 1928.

#### **Sources of Information:**

1. Felice Cohn Papers, 1884-1961, Nevada Historical Society, Reno.
2. White, Janet, Unpublished research paper, 1995.
3. Wright, Janet, Unpublished research paper, 1996.

## **Congratulations to:**

- Cherry Jones, North Region Chair, for the publication of her book, *More Than Petticoats: Remarkable Alaska Women*. She has held numerous book signings including one in Virginia City at the Mark Twain Bookstore.

## **Announcements:**

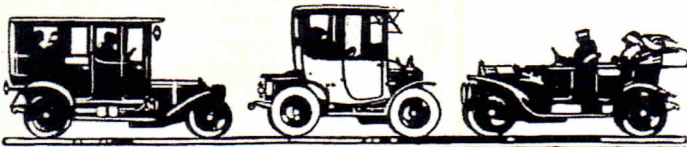
- **NWHP Newsletter Editor Position** - We are taking applications for the position of Editor of the NWHP Newsletter. Interested members should contact the current editor, Kay Sanders, for information about this volunteer job. The newsletter is published quarterly. Kay will continue as editor until a replacement is found but has decided to retire after eight years effective January 2007. Please call her at 775-747-1740 or email at: [ksanders@unr.nevada.edu](mailto:ksanders@unr.nevada.edu). A job description is available.

## **Request for Research Help:**

- I am working on a project about girls in Nevada. I need information about 10 or 12 girls who, before they were 17, did something unusual or had something unusual happen to them. They are to have been born before 1950, and hopefully, even earlier than that, to give a picture of Nevada as it was – and what the lives of children were like. Contact Cherry Jones at 775-267-3410 or email her at [Cljnvquail@charter.net](mailto:Cljnvquail@charter.net).

## **Omission:**

- In the lead article of the February issue, NWHP members who have helped out by substituting as editor of our newsletter should have included Michelle Lord and Jane Olive.



PLEASE INFORM THE STATE MEMBERSHIP CHAIR AND YOUR REGIONAL MEMBERSHIP CHAIR OF ANY CHANGES IN YOUR ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER, AND/OR E-MAIL ADDRESS. KAYE GRAY'S ADDRESS IS: P.O. BOX 12184, LAS VEGAS, NV 89112. IN THE NORTH PLEASE ALSO NOTIFY GRACE DAVIS OR CARRIE TOWNLEY PORTER AT: NWHP, 770 SMITHRIDGE DR., SUITE 300, RENO, NV 89502.

Articles for the August 2006 newsletter are due to Newsletter Editor Kay Sanders no later than July 28, 2006. E-mail her at [ksanders@unr.nevada.edu](mailto:ksanders@unr.nevada.edu).

# NWHP Leadership

## **NORTHERN REGION STEERING COMMITTEE:**

Cherry Jones: Chair  
Lisa-Marie Lightfoot: Vice-Chair  
Holly Van Valkenburgh: Treasurer  
Patti Bernard: Secretary  
Kay Sanders: Communication Co-Chair/Newsletter Editor  
Lisa-Marie Lightfoot: Communication Co-Chair  
Isabel Espinoza: Finance Chair  
Carrie Townley Porter and Grace Davis: Membership Co-Chairs  
Mary Anne Convis: Project Review Chair  
Carleen Ernest, Martha Gould and Karen Benna: Program Chairs  
Kathy Noneman: Past Chair

## **SOUTHERN REGION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Jane Olive: President  
Mary Gafford: First Vice President  
Kaye Gray: Second Vice President  
Pat McNutt: Recording Secretary  
Jean Baker: Corresponding Secretary  
Su Kim Chung: Treasurer

## **NWHP STATE COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Joan LeMere: President  
Cherry Jones: First Vice-President  
Kaye Gray: Second Vice-President  
Mary Anne Convis: Third Vice-President  
Elsa Torgenson: Treasurer  
Mary Gafford: Secretary  
Carleen Ernest: Northern Region Representative  
Joan Fragakis: Southern Region Representative  
Denise Yoxsimer: Nevada Women's Fund Representative  
Kay Sanders: Editor for State Newsletter  
Lisa-Marie Lightfoot: Webmaster  
Mary Anne Convis: State Project Review Chair

WEBSITE: [www.nevadawomen.org](http://www.nevadawomen.org)

## *Some NWHP News Contacts*

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### **Kay Sanders**

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**Membership Application**  
Individual Membership • Dues \$25/Year

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Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

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Organization \_\_\_\_\_

President or Director \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Representative to NWHP \_\_\_\_\_

Make a Donation to NWHP:  Amount sent

Mail to NWHP: North members - 770 Smithridge Dr., Ste., 300, Reno, NV 89502  
South members - 8109 Bay Pines Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89128-6771

*New & Rejoined  
Members*

- Joanne Booth
- Joetta Brown
- Donna Clontz
- Nancy Downey
- Jessica Evans
- L. J. Evora
- Judy Frederick
- Judy Heitzenrader
- Marcie Hill
- Helen Hoyt
- Claudia L. King
- Jane Lehrman
- Dianna Lloyd
- Hope Meek
- Linda Karen Miller
- Rosalie O'Grady
- Cynthia Dianne Pickett
- Elizabeth Rassiga
- Blaine S. Rose
- Stina I. Schloss
- Jill Stovall
- Betty Tate
- Holly Tollefson
- Sally Warthen