

# Introduction

We are pleased to offer this *Encyclopedia of Women in the American West* as part of the Sage family of reference books. We intend this volume to be used by the reading public in conjunction with other Sage publications, particularly Angela M. Howard & Frances M. Kavenik's *Handbook of American Women's History* (second edition) published in 2000. Because our focus is regional and follows this Sage reference work of greater breadth, we strongly advise our readers to consult both works in terms of fully informing research and knowledge in the growing field of women's studies.

For us the West is west of the 100th meridian. This is where explorers, pioneers, and present-day environmentalists confronted the fact of aridity. We know this is a contested definition, and in our book *Where is the West?* (2001) we set out the scholarly debate regarding the changing definition of what constitutes the West.

Your editors have traveled a long scholarly path to this point. Professor Bakken benefited from the insights of William L. O'Neill in the 1960s as he pioneered women's history at the University of Wisconsin and from the scholarship of and friendships with Anne Butler, Betsy Jameson, Sandra Mathews-Lamb, Glenda Riley, Janet Schmeizer, Sherry L. Smith, Sandra VanBurkleo, and Kelly A. Woestman in the three decades that followed. Professor Farrington studied women's history as part of American legal history in the 1980s and benefited from the counsel of Glenna Matthews and Glenda Riley, who expanded her scholarly reach and inquiry. She has taught women's history at a variety of institutions and continues her scholarly inquiry as part of that instructional enterprise. In 2000 we produced

a six-volume work titled *The American West*, with one of the volumes titled *The Gendered West*. *Encyclopedia of Women in the American West* continues our mutual quest to capture the lives of women in the West and to contextualize their experiences and contributions to American society.

We recognize that our selections for this encyclopedia are limited amid a rapidly growing field of women's history, women's studies, and feminist studies. Even within the West, a field with explosive scholarly tendencies since the 1980s, we have attempted both a selective and a suggestive set of entries. Some of the entries are topical, others biographical. Some entries survey the existing literature and provide a research bibliography. Debra Hansen of the San Jose State University School of Library and Information Science provides such an entry on women's clubs in the American West. Some of the entries pull together existing historiography and put forward research findings. Danelle Moon's work in librarianship in California is suggestive of the potentialities of such research. Our authors have produced some material not in print in any venue. Others have reworked fields of long-term scholarly interest. We trust that the combination will be useful to all readers, and encourage interest in further research. In that light, we have an entry on research strategies in the Appendix and encourage all to read it before entering the pages of our enterprise.

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