

Preface

In 1983 the first Western Women's Conference convened in Sun Valley, Idaho, to address the omissions and absence of women in traditional western history. This conference marked the first national meeting devoted to western women's history and launched the publication of *The Women's West*, edited by Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson (1987). These pioneering scholars provided a springboard for future histories focused on western women and laid the foundation for future studies navigating the spectrum and diversity of women's experiences in the West. As noted by Armitage and Jameson, the influence of Frederick Jackson Turner's "frontier thesis" in 1893 portrayed western history as "one-dimensional and historically inaccurate and incomplete" (3-6). The histories of American Indians, Hispanics, Asians, individual families, and all ethnic and social classes of women were left out of Turner's rough-and-tumble "wild West."

The success of western women's history as a separate yet integral part of western history and U.S. history is a testament to the scholarship of these early

pioneers. The articles in this encyclopedia contribute to the growing body of literature documenting the diverse lives of women in the West and the nation. Some of the topics explored include the clubwomen's movement, politics, prostitution, women homesteaders, suffrage, mining, agriculture, rodeo women, literary women, conservation, emigrant experiences, librarians, and research strategies locating primary and secondary resources.

Through these articles, the *Encyclopedia of Women in the American West* brings together an array of experiences, and like its predecessor publications, hopes to advance continued scholarship in western women's history, to develop new methodologies for analysis, and to locate new materials that will allow for inclusiveness and a broader, more accurate understanding of women's contributions to western and American history.

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