1998

Stars in the big sky | A collection of Montana's remarkable, forgotten women

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The University of Montana

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STARS IN THE BIG SKY
A collection of Montana's remarkable, forgotten women

by

Betsy Cohen

B.A. William Smith College, 1986
presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts
The University of Montana
1998

Approved by:

Chairperson

Dean, Graduate School

Date
This master's paper, Stars in The Big Sky, includes four separate pieces united by one theme: Montana's Forgotten Founders. The first piece, Out of the Kitchen and Into the Fire, is the story of Emma Ingalls, Montana's first woman publisher. The second, Quiet Conquerors, is a collection of biographical sketches of unique women who have gone unnoticed by history. The third, Reluctant Rebel, is an interview with Stevensville resident Marina Weatherly, on her work writing the life story of deceased Montana resident Susie Yellowtail, the first Native American nurse. The fourth is an interview with Mary Murphy, a noted women's history author, on the Leisure Women of Butte at the turn of the century.

Forgotten, unknown, or just plain ignored, Montana's pioneer women have been largely passed over by historians for their role in forging this state's proud and resourceful heritage. This paper is a collection of stories and research I have gathered over the last two years, in my career as a graduate student and as a reporter for The Montana Standard in Butte. It is an effort to help remember some of the women that have cleared the path for all of us.
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OUT OF THE KITCHEN AND INTO THE FIRE

Montana's wild and raucous character during the late 1880s proved to be fertile ground for a legion of pioneer women.

Nurtured by new-found self reliance, a skill these immigrants rarely used in their former lives in the tamed eastern states, pioneer women spun a new definition for femininity, womanhood and "women's work."

A handful of these adventurers were particularly influential in getting women out of traditional domestic roles and into the political ring as outspoken and effective community leaders.

Other than caring for their homes, women across the country typically had no salary-earning options other than prostitution, or working as a domestic servant.

In Montana, the pioneer woman bucked that trend and created her own paths for financial gains and community-wide respect. Montana women led the nation-wide charge for gender equality. Ella Knowles, a Hamilton, Mont., resident, became the first woman lawyer in the state after being admitted to the Montana Bar Association in 1888.

In gaining entry into the legal profession, Knowles faced formidable obstacles, not the least of which was law itself.

"The territorial statutes were specific about the gender appropriate to the practice of law, and it was not Ella's," wrote historian Paula Petrik in her book "No Step Backward: Women and Family on the Rocky Mountain Frontier, Helena, Montana 1865-1900."1
"In 1889, with little trouble but serious debate over women's rights, Montana lawmakers amended the statute, making women eligible for the bar," Petrik wrote.2

After a few years in a successful law practice, Knowles was appointed assistant attorney general in 1892.

In 1883, Maria Dean marked yet another step in redefining women's roles by becoming the state's first woman physician. Dean also became Helena's chairman of the county board of health, and a member of the school board--appointments typically bestowed upon communities' prominent men.3

Women in the late 1800s gained the greatest ground in working outside the home in teaching professions.

So great was their progress in the field that two Helena women, Bertha Reilly and Mrs. William Greenleaf, were offered university professorships in 1895 but declined to accept the work because the annual salary of $1,000 was too low.4

"When women's activities finally received notice, the journalists in the mid-1800s portrayed them as socialites, as the standard-bearers of the new civic and social morality, and as civilizers of the untamed frontier."5

Among those women who stood out of the pack of pioneer women was Emma Ingalls.

With only a few years of formal education, Emma was the chief-push behind northwest Montana's first daily newspaper, which began publishing in 1889.6

Her life as publisher, editor and reporter of the Interlake daily
newspaper in Kalispell, Mont., and then as a two-term state legislator for Flathead county, was dedicated to improving the life of women and the residents in her community.

Along with her husband, Clayton, Emma helped mould the political voice of the paper. She used her reporting skills to dislodge a corrupt judge from his post, gentrify her readers and convert the Flathead area from its wild, hard-drinking life-style to a more family oriented community.

For all of her influence in Kalispell, and her campaign efforts to elect Jeannette Rankin, the state's first woman legislator, Emma's story has been lost to history.

In order to flush out the few remaining traces of her life, this article will attempt to compare what little is known about Emma to her contemporaries in Helena and Butte.

Because there is such little documentation about Emma's work, and just a few copies of the Interlake during Emma's tenure, 1889-1892, her unique life can only be brought to light by examining the similarities and contrasts of other Montana pioneer women.

In Montana's history, Emma's star may not shine as bright as Jeannette Rankin's, or as brilliantly as those of Dr. Dean or Ella Knowles, but it was nonetheless strong enough to light the path for other Montana woman journalists, nearly 100 years later.
Out of the Kitchen

Nineteenth century cultural ideals defined women as submissive, self-sacrificing, moral and devoted to the home, hearth and husband.7

The women of Butte and Helena, Montana's largest cities in the late 1800s, came to the frontier directly from their homes and families in the east.8

"They resumed their lives in rough-and-tumble mining camps, accepting the 19th century's mission: to provide a home for their husbands, to rear their children, and to re-create the genteel domestic world--that is to "keep house."9

Although Emma was devoted to her husband, Clayton, and their two children, Bernice and Adella, "keeping house" meant keeping the couple's newspaper afloat.

While the Helena area could boast of nearly 17,000 people at the turn of the century with a lucrative mining industry, the Flathead area, with a little more than 1,000 residents, was just beginning to develop.10

The area's modest population was laying the ground work for prosperous businesses in the ranching mining and timber trades. Emma wasn't particularly noted for her domestic qualities. When she wasn't tending to Clayton's severe asthma or to her two children, Emma was all business.

She was outspoken, opinionated and known across the Flathead for her biting commentary.

"Her most important part was shaping the policy of the newspaper, making it an organ not alone for boosting the beauties of the Flathead, but
in morally influencing readers to correct abuses in the civil life of the community," wrote G.M. Houtz, editor of *The Journal*, the *Interlake*’s rival during the 1890s.\(^\text{11}\)

"She was a clever and interesting writer, forceful, and on occasion wielding a caustic pen."\(^\text{12}\)

When Clayton’s illness became debilitating in 1890, Emma took over its management. The paper did not have a decidedly political bent, but rather, its overriding voice was more a reflection of Emma’s personal views.

Emma was an opinionated woman, and she shared those opinions with all who would read her paper. She stood for women’s rights, the temperance movement, civility and justice.

Unlike her more affluent sisters in Helena and Butte, Emma lived in a more rough-hewn community.

"It was said that many people who took up homesteads or preemption claims were fugitives from justice with a price on their heads. But in those days no questions were asked and if they made good, they had their chance," wrote Emma, in an essay in the late 1920s.\(^\text{13}\)

Homesteader or not, Emma made sure that those who did not make good were held accountable for their actions.

One corrupt, whiskey-drinking judge named C.M. Sheppard felt the long stroke of Emma’s pen.

"A stranger who was crossing the street was shot in the back. He was taken to Langerman’s saloon and Sheppard was sent for. He proceeded to go through the dead man’s pockets. He first found a $20
gold piece, which he carefully set beside him, then came a six-shooter," Emma reported.¹⁴

"The judge became indignant and said, 'What's this, what's this?' He picked up the $20 and said, "Case closed." The court then adjourned and reconvened in Foy's bar across the street."

After reading Emma's account of Sheppard's methods of justice, the community became so incensed, they petitioned the county commissioners to remove him.

Emma recounted the story years later in an essay, writing: "The justice of that day will long be remembered. The law was strictly administered for the benefit of the Justice of the Peace. Judge Sheppard's court became notorious as "The Supreme Court of the Flathead," not because of the justice of his judgements but because of his unique fashion of always rendering a decision in favor of the last drink of whiskey, often adjourning court to drink it." Emma knew Sheppard was an "able, intelligent man who had been destroyed by alcohol," Murphy said. "For the good of the community, he had to be removed and Emma had the courage to see that it was done."

With the help of Emma's reporting, Sheppard was charged with "consorting with thieves and gamblers, pandering to the lowest element in town... his presence a menace to the good order and public welfare." On Nov. 12, 1891, Sheppard was removed from his post. Although Emma's professional life was unusual for women at that time, Emma's background neatly fits with the state's prevailing statistics of life on the frontier.

The women who came and stayed in Helena and Butte during the
late 1800s were predominantly white easterners, middle class, married, and were nine years younger than her husband. Emma was born in Wisconsin, raised in Iowa, and moved to Montana with Clayton in 1886 with enough money to buy property and build a newspaper from scratch. She was four years younger than Clayton.

Because of widowhood or divorce, 15 percent of the pioneer women were without a spouse in 1880.16

"Survival for women alone on the frontier meant entering the labor force, and many of them found employment or filed sole tradership," Petrik wrote. "In either case, marital disruption was a hallmark of the pioneer women cohort."

The biographies of Mary Lavanash, Fannie Spencer, Catherine Ming and Mary Ann Eckert are variations on the theme of bereft women and show how a husband's absence often pushed women into new roles.17
Starting the Spark

Several patterns run through the stories of the frontier women that differentiated them from their eastern counterparts. Montana's pioneer women had a marked inclination to make a life for themselves apart from their marriages. They shared a great propensity toward employment, they were dedicated to improving their community through activism and by leadership, and they shared their indifference to traditional lifestyles, which gave them the freedom, within bounds, to live as they chose.¹⁸

For the pioneer women who stayed and survived on the frontier, the age difference between husbands and wives made itself felt by the 1890s.

By then Helena had a coterie of rich widows.

"An interesting feature of this list of taxpayers," wrote one Helena reporter on the tabulation of citizens with taxable assets above $10,000, "is the large number of women who are comfortably 'fixed' and who as a rule are widows."¹⁹

By 1900, 16 percent of these widows comprised the elite tax bracket, and 12 of the women proudly called themselves capitalist.²⁰ Absences, not divorce or death, led Catherine Ming to become one of the state's first prominent businesswomen.

Catherine's husband, John, had a stockyard operation in Miles City and investments across the West.

"Catherine became his agent and learned the intricacies of management. John shared all of his business affairs with Catherine and
frankly advised her on more than one occasion to go slowly: 'Don't depend on me for some time to do much up there.'”  

Catherine took John's advice. In 1883 she and her mother, Jeannette Cole, filed sole traderships as commercial brokers while Catherine continued to supervise her husband's mining affairs.

After John died in 1887, Catherine continued on with the business dealings and died in 1920, a wealthy woman with financial forays into Alaska and California.22

Over in Kalispell, Emma's life reflected Catherine's moxie, and Catherine's strength to work successfully in a traditional male arena. And she did so without Clayton.

In 1892 Emma and Clayton were forced to farm out the paper. Clayton's declining health consumed Emma's full attention.

It was decided to incorporate the paper as a stock company. The Ingalls retained a controlling interest, but employed P.N. Bernard as editor and circulation manager.

Although Emma continued as the paper's publisher, her energies were consumed by Clayton.

The couple decided the stress of running the day-to-day operations of the Interlake were too taxing on Clayton, so they moved away from the burgeoning town to their 160-acre ranch on the outskirts of Kalispell.23

After Clayton died in 1898 at the age of 41, Emma was left to reinvent her life. While the paper continued to grow and prosper over Bernard's day-to-day reign, Emma threw herself into making the family ranch thrive.
As president of the newly-formed Sorosis Club, Emma banded together with Kalispell's founding mothers to help educate and inform farm women of new developments in the agriculture industry. "Many women were at that time left to tend the homestead when their husbands left the valley to work in the mines in Butte in order to earn money. The club was an early support group for women, an opportunity for a chance to get together socially and to learn valuable lessons in development of the farm and orchard industries."24

Gifted with a curious mind, and unflagging self confidence, Emma studied crops and agricultural irrigation techniques. She installed a ditch system which drew water from springs in the foothills on the western side of the valley. The result of her research was a profitable new crop for the valley, with innovative irrigation.

"Emma was faced with putting the ranch on a paying basis. She had made a study of irrigation and alfalfa raising and was determined to try it out. She had the water brought down from the hills back of the ranch for irrigation and the fields of alfalfa grew. This was the first of either for the valley," wrote Cora Marsh, in a 1932 interview with Emma in the newspaper, Montana Women.25

Emma's ranch was also noted for being one of the first fruit-producing orchards in the Flathead valley.

In 1914 Emma handed over the bulk of the ranch responsibilities to W.T. Winston, the husband of Emma's eldest daughter, Bernice. Adella, her youngest daughter, died of epilepsy in 1910, two years after Clayton died.
Although she still had controlling majority interest in the *Interlake*, Emma no longer wrote for the paper or participated as publisher. Instead, she turned her energies to an emerging political groundswell which she felt passionately about: women's rights.
Into the Fire

"In the early 1900's, women were of little significance in the fields of politics and political rights. Emma could now give her attention to the wrongs she perceived in these areas," Murphy said.26

"Her personal emancipation caused her to believe that all women should be able to take their place as equals in the decisions that were made which had any effect on their lives," she said.

Active in the Republican Central Committee of Flathead County, Emma served as secretary and chairperson.

She was instrumental in creating educational outlets for women in Kalispell to become more knowledgeable and therefore have an informed opinion to help shape the community.

Emma's legacy lives on today in Kalispell's Century Club, a community service organization which she helped found.

Before 1889, when Montana was governed by territorial law, women could not vote at school elections or on tax levies, even if they owned taxable properties.

Even when Montana gained statehood, they were deprived of those limited rights.

"Emma and her suffragettes could not tolerate this affront. They lobbied the Montana Legislature relentlessly to obtain for women the right to vote. In 1913, the legislature capitulated and deleted from Montana law the hated word, 'male' as prerequisite for voting in Montana,"27 said historian Sylvia Murphy.

By then the gale of the suffragette movement was gaining heat
along with its momentum, and Emma threw herself headfirst into the raging storm.

In 1916 Emma was elected to the Montana Legislative Assembly from Flathead County. She was joined at the state legislature by another woman, Maggie Smith Hathaway, a Democrat from Ravalli County.

Together the women walked into the history books as the first Montana women to be elected to the state House of Representatives.

In her historic role, Emma had the singular honor to mark another historic moment, by introducing the Women's Suffrage Amendment in the House of Representatives.

But not all Montana pioneer women were initially supportive of the suffrage movement or of women's participation politics. The winds did not all blow in the same direction.

Emma's contemporary, Elizabeth Chester Fink, the wife of Robert Fink, the editor of the Helena Herald daily newspaper, was outspokenly against suffrage.

Even though she worked as a copy editor at the paper, Elizabeth's views on women's suffrage were very conservative.

Although Elizabeth freely discussed philosophical topics with the influential men in her city and state, and discussed the newspaper's business affairs with the Herald's manager, she was not an early advocate of women's suffrage.

When Emma Ashley, the territorial governor's wife, came to a dinner party at the Fink's in the early 1880s, Elizabeth wrote to her sister: "Everything passed off nicely except that Mrs. Ashley would
introduce her favorite topic of women's rights and argue on the subject till everyone was weary."\textsuperscript{28}

As time marched on and suffrage became a hotly debated issue, Elizabeth continued to remain critical of women's participation in state and national politics.

She viewed suffrage as "potentially damaging" to women's "moral superiority."\textsuperscript{29}

Elizabeth's prevailing opinions began to reform, somewhat radically, after she became the mother of five children.

Unlike Emma, Elizabeth did not have a supportive marriage. Her ideal of woman as the reigning force of the domestic and moral front began to alter. Once meek and unadventurous, Elizabeth found an independent streak forged out of a near-nervous breakdown. "Her displeasure at Robert's ability to come and go as he pleased crystallized into resentment: 'It doesn't seem right for them to have all the pleasure when we poor mothers stay at home and take care of the children.'"\textsuperscript{30}

Despite Robert's protest, Elizabeth left the children and her husband for a two week retreat at the White Sulfur mineral spring resort. Her outing turned into more forays, and despite her mother's and her husband's objections, Elizabeth began painting lessons, and took herself, without children, to Connecticut to visit relatives.\textsuperscript{31} Although Elizabeth began to support women's suffrage, she remained opposed to women's political candidacy.

"After hearing a speech by attorney general candidate Ella Knowles, Elizabeth wrote: "It was simply disgusting. She swung her
arms and opened her mouth and yelled. No other word expresses it."32
Clearly the two women, Emma and Elizabeth, thrust into nearly identical
situations differed radically in their philosophies.

But then, Emma was a trailblazer in nearly every area of her life. The collection of her letters and correspondence at the Montana Historical Society depicts a woman who was well informed of current events, sincere in learning more about contentious issues, and who worked hard to keep in touch with her constituents.

It is clear that Emma was considered a state leader for women's rights.

In 1919, during Emma's second term in the House, Emma was influential in pushing through a bill to establish a long-term care facility for homeless and troubled girls.

She also helped to rewrite the state's Mother's Pension Law, making it easier for single women with dependent children to get government relief.

After declining to run for a third term in 1921, Emma was asked by Governor Joseph Dixon to head the northwest district of the Child Welfare and Animal Control Agency—an interesting combination. These new responsibilities for the remarkably independent Kalispell woman included overseeing and traveling five counties.

That same year, Emma was asked to speak at the National League of Women Voters convention in Des Moines, Iowa. At the convention she spoke about her concerns: children and welfare issues. As the Flathead County chairman of the Republican National Committee, Emma
was invited to attend a luncheon with former President Herbert Hoover and Montana's elite Republicans. She continued her work with the local Republic party well into the 1930s.\textsuperscript{33}

Although Emma did her share of leading, she did follow some prevailing winds.

"Despite the region's innovation, women's suffrage in the West stood on conservative, not liberal or radical legs," Petrik wrote. "At the same time, suffragists played to nativist and racist fears and promised a sure corrective to the growing number of foreign-born voters."\textsuperscript{34}

Emma was no exception.

In hand-written notes, Emma was adamant about killing the O'Day Bill of 1932, a bill which supported open immigration to the United States.\textsuperscript{35}

She, too, was caught in the rising tide of the communist threat. Propaganda sheets which circulated at the time said the bill provided that religious views or philosophical opinions against war would not debar aliens from taking out American citizenship.

"The Griffin Bill was successfully opposed, however, by patriotic people, and Mr. Griffin having died this past January, it was at once reintroduced by Representative Caroline O'Day, friend of Miss Perkins and of Mrs. Roosevelt. It is, of course one of the many efforts to circumvent or destroy the immigration control that is so greatly needed if we would keep America safe for Americans."

Emma made sure that Republicans on the national level were sent copies of the Kalispell flyers.
"Thank you very much for sending the two sheets of Communistic literature being distributed. We will be glad to have as much of the material as possible," wrote a high-ranking Republican woman, Mrs. Lowell Hobart. "It will be so convincing to hold these sheets in one's hands in speaking before a group. When they see if they can't help but believe."36

Emma also disapproved of the Kerr Bills which granted discretionary power to the Secretary of Labor and the Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization. Emma's Republican women's contingent believed the bill "held up deportation of undesirable aliens."

From Emma's historical files, it is clear that many of Emma's contacts and acquaintances were unabashedly opinionated. Leading the anti-immigration charge was Mrs. Lowell Hobart, with whom Emma frequently corresponded.

In one letter sent to Emma, Mrs. Hobart states, "We do not want foreign standards instead of American standards! We do not want Communism instead of constitutional government! We do not want bills enacted which bring about these very questions!"37

Even after her years in the legislature, Emma remained active in her community, helping win votes for school superintendents, railroad commissioners, writing letters of confidence to hopeful labor board candidates, and other such offices.

Not only did she keep busy, she used her influence judiciously. In one telling letter, Emma--returning to her reporting roots--challenges the author of a request:
"I received a letter and propaganda slips purporting to represent the "Law Enforcement League" and quoting you. There were no names used and the letter was not on printed stationery. Just signed "committee," not even a post office box given. Now I want to do all I am able to for the right things, but I cannot write letters boosting a man whom I know nothing outside of an occasional line in the papers on the strength of the request of men or women given thru an organization that I have no means of knowing as authentic."\textsuperscript{38}

While continuing to represent the Republican party, Emma worked as the printing clerk for the legislature from 1929 to 1934, retiring at age 75 due to bad eyesight. She died in 1940 at the age of 80.
The Fire Burns Bright

Emma was both a woman of her time, and a pioneer among pioneer women. She helped tame the wild West by using the power of the press—her press. Her remarkable self confidence combined with her keen curiosity and sense of justice made her an unstoppable force. While Montana's history is sprinkled with famous women like Jeannette Rankin and Ella Knowles, Emma's legacy, although less flamboyant, remains.

Her paper, the Interlake, continues in print today. It is the oldest, continuously published daily newspaper in the state. And her valley, now famous for its fruit orchards, flourished thanks to Emma's innovative irrigation systems and her orchard, the first bruit bearing trees in the Flathead.

Although she had the honor of introducing the national suffrage amendment in the state house of representatives, Emma quietly continued to improve the lives of women and children.

She worked tirelessly for gender equality, starting with the Mother's Pension Law and creating a state school for delinquent girls.

In a 1932 interview Emma said she did not find her life remarkable: "God put me on His anvil and hammered me into shape. The things that seem so hard to bear at the time have proven to be stepping stones to a large, richer life."39
QUIET CONQUERORS

Barbed wire, ranchers, miners, trappers and cowboys are all too often given the credit for "taming the West." And in our state's written history there is very little said about the women who helped build our communities. Because of the relative scarcity of literature on Montana women, their stories risk being lost to history and Montana's cultural memory.

In honor of Women's History Month, the following profiles of Montana women is a tribute to the countless number of them who have helped shape the character of this state. A special thanks to Brian Shovers, reference historian at the Montana Historical Society Library, Diane Sands, a historian of women in Montana, Laurie Zimorino, Betty Biehl (Mary Atwater's daughter), Marilyn Peterson (Emily Shope's granddaughter), and Marina Weatherly for providing research, stories and photos.

Emma Ingalls, 1860-1940:

One of the first women to serve in the Montana Legislature, Emma represented Flathead County for two terms, from 1917-1921. With Maggie Smith Hathaway, Montana's other woman legislator, Emma wrote the first "equal pay for equal work" legislation in the U.S. She has the honor of introducing the national suffrage amendment in the House for ratification. Emma and her husband, Clayton Ingalls, moved to the Kalispell area in 1889 and established the weekly Inter Lake which is in operation as the Daily Interlake today. She was involved in all aspects of
running the newspaper. Her research work on the history of the Flathead area was published in the book "The Pioneers." Ingalls was born in 1860 in Racine, Wis. She died in Kalispell in 1940.

**Mary Atwater, 1878-1956:**

Thought of as the "dean" of American handweavers, Atwater is considered the catalyst who, from her ranch in Basin, Mont., helped to resurrect the dying art of weaving. Atwater established the Shuttle-Craft Guild and Weaving Shop there, teaching the interested and the unemployed how to weave for profit. Atwater's research of historic patterns helped keep those patterns from being forgotten. She published weaving patterns in her Shuttle-Craft Build Bulletin and in her book "Shuttle-Craft Book of American Handweaving." Atwater was listed in "Who's Who in America" in 1932. She also published a recipe book, and a mystery novel.

She married Maxwell Atwater, a mining engineer, in 1903. Mary was born in Rock Island, Ill. in 1878. The Atwaters moved to Basin in 1914, and though she lived in mining towns all over the West with her husband, Atwater always considered Basin her home. She was also part of the group of women who helped Jeannette Rankin get elected to the Senate.

**Alice Greenough Orr, 1904-1995:**

Daredevil, Bronc-rider, "Queen of the Rodeo." Orr was the first woman voted into the Cowgirl Hall of Fame. Born into a rodeo family from Red Lodge, Orr began her professional rodeo career in 1919 and
became a saddle bronc rider. She won rodeo titles in America and Australia. Her outstanding talent brought her in contact with such celebrities as Will Rogers, Ernest Hemingway, and the Queen of England. Her success in the rodeo arena paved the way for other women to become professional rodeo riders, and horsewomen.

**Emily Shope, 1872-1965:**

Along with her sister, Claudia, and her husband, Alex Tillinghast, Shope helped found the first school for the deaf in Montana. Born in North Carolina, Shope came to Montana in 1882 by train. At the time, she was too poor to own a pair of shoes and had to remove a pair from a dead and buried relative (after family helped her exhume the body) in order to ride the train to Butte. Shope was finally able to buy a new pair of shoes after teaching for a year at the "Deaf and Dumb School" of Boulder. Shope taught, cleaned, and supervised the 30 children at the school for three years, leaving to raise seven children with her husband, rancher Ira Shope. After Ira died in 1912, Emily was forced to sell their home and 200 acres. Although she never attended college, she believed in education and moved her children to Missoula so that they could attend the University of Montana. With the sale of her property and the help of relatives, Shope bought a house and supported her family by taking in boarders, and ironing. All of her children graduated from UM. Her son, "Shorty" Shope, became a nationally acclaimed western genre artist.

**Virginia Foster, 1916-1993:**

An advocate for open space in the late 1960s, Foster worked to
protect the environment in Missoula, in the state of Montana and the West. Her research work on Montana's State Air Pollution Control Legislative Study Committee was instrumental in helping to pass the Montana Clean Air Act in 1971. Foster also served on the Federal Water Pollution Control Advisory Board. Along with other members of the League of Women Voters, Virginia helped write the book, "The Great Rivers of the West," which examined use of the Columbia River and advocated a comprehensive plan to protect the river while accessing its hydroelectric capacities. In 1954, Foster was invited to the White House to attend an environmental conference "Natural Beauty." She was a history teacher at Sacred Heart Academy for 18 years and was president of the Montana State League of Women Voters, president of the Missoula Council of Camp Fire Girls and a member of the Missoula City Zoning Adjustment Board. She was also state chairman for National Library Week, and served on the State Committee for Better Courts.
THE VOICE OF A RELUCTANT REBEL

Susie Walking Bear Yellowtail liked to wear a six-inch wide leather belt that was almost a symbol for her life—strong, enduring and imposing. She was a woman to take seriously, and people did. Yellowtail was a nurse, ambassador, political activist, mother, healer and cultural bridge.

"I knew her since I was a little kid," said Marina Weatherly, a Stevensville woman who interviewed Yellowtail over a period of six months before her death in 1981 and is preparing Yellowtail's story for publication. "I considered her my grandmother, but when I was asked to go and interview her, I have to admit I was intimidated just thinking about her, and her big belt and her solid frame."

Yellowtail's life was dedicated to improving health and education standards for Native Americans. Her journey took her from the Crow Indian reservation to the White House and Buckingham Palace. Born in 1903 in Crow Agency of Crow and Oglala Sioux parents, Yellowtail became the first registered Native American nurse. She graduated from Boston City Hospital School of Nursing in 1923 and returned to Crow Agency to work in the Crow Agency Indian Hospital.

"Susie did not set out to be a political activist, but after working with the white doctors at the Crow hospital, and seeing the non-consent sterilization surgeries they were performing on the Crow women--she got mad," said Weatherly.

Three children and 20 years later, Susie joined state health advisory boards and helped to implement change on the Crow reservation, and worked to improve reservation life around the West.
"She was a very direct, outspoken person and didn't sweeten the hard realities of reservation life. And that got her attention from the surgeon general, and ultimately from President Nixon," Weatherly said.

In the early 1950s, Yellowtail and her husband, Tom, traveled throughout Europe and the Middle East on a goodwill tour sponsored by the U.S. State Department to promote an understanding of Native American cultures.

She was appointed to the Montana Advisory Committee on Vocational Education in 1959. The following year Yellowtail was appointed to President Nixon's Council on Indian Health, Education and Welfare. She was also appointed to the Indian Health Advisory Committee by the U.S. Surgeon General. In 1987, Yellowtail was named to the Montana Hall of Fame.

"An important aspect to Susie's work is that she was really acting in a traditional role for Crow women. She was looking out for the well-being of children and families," Weatherly said.

"The unique thing, though, is that she was doing this work in a mostly male, white world."

Though life on Indian reservations has not changed drastically from the time Yellowtail lobbied for reform, one legacy Yellowtail left behind is a strong role model for future generations, Weatherly said. "There are young, bright, educated Native American women who are following in her footsteps--taking a stand, speaking out, starting with the family unit."
When Butte's working women took to the city's rowdy night-time streets in the 1920s, not as prostitutes, but as equal citizens, the community's cultural life was forever changed.

"They expanded the boundaries of what women can do and still be considered respectable," said Mary Murphy, former archivist for Butte-Silver Bow County.

More women entered the work force after World War I than any other time in American history, Murphy said.

"Earning wages gave them more control of their lives and opened up more forms of amusement," she said.

"Here in Butte, they went out in large groups to movies, to dinner and they went dancing." They bobbed their hair, wore short skirts, smoked cigars, and stayed out all night long at local speakeasies, activities, Murphy said, that for the most part were only engaged in by prostitutes a decade earlier.

"But these were respectable women, not prostitutes, and they were not considered disreputable," Murphy said.

Not only did these women find a new sense of freedom, but their wage earning and spending changed the face of Butte.

"Suddenly the city is no longer serving a single male labor force," Murphy said.

"By the end of the '20s, for the first time the majority of men in Butte are married and the city makes a concerted effort to be more appealing to families," she said.
In her recent book "Mining Cultures: Men, Women and Leisure in Butte, 1914-1941," Murphy examines the new Butte of the 1920s. "When I worked in the archives, over the years I became fascinated by questions of what happened in Butte in the 20s," she said in a phone interview from Bozeman.

Murphy now is an associate professor at Montana State University, where she teaches history of the American West, Montana history and history of American women.

"Most of the recorded history (of Butte) covers up to World War I," Murphy said. "I wanted to see what happened to the "Richest Hill on Earth" during the depression."

Specifically, Murphy said, she wanted to know what people did when they weren't working.

What she found was that while single, working women were changing the cultural and economic culture of Butte, families and children had very few places to go for recreation.

"Alleys and mining dumps were the only places for children to play," Murphy said. "The Columbia Gardens was a great amusement park but it was still a special treat to go there--it was far away from Uptown."

"Though Butte failed to really keep families during the '20s and '30s, there was a permanent change in women's roles," she said.

"They were no longer seen as a potential prostitute if they wore short skirts or bobbed their hair or were out late at night. And they became a valued part of the city's work force."
END NOTES

OUT OF THE KITCHEN AND INTO THE FIRE


2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., 21.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., 23.


7 Petrik, No Step Backward, 60.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.


11 Ibid., Vol. 5, 39.

12 Ibid.


14 Ibid.

15 Petrik, No Step Backward, 63.

16 Ibid., 64.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., 21.

19 Ibid., 67.

20 Ibid.
21Ibid., 66.

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23Murphy interview.

24Montana Historical Society, Ingalls' collection.

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27Ibid.

28Petrik, No Step Backward, 81.

29Ibid., 83.

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32Ibid., 81.

33Montana Historical Society, Ingalls' collection.

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Emily Shope:
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Virginia Foster:
Mayhew Foster, Virginia's husband, March 1996, Interview by Betsy Cohen.
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THE VOICE OF A RELUCTANT REBEL

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MONTANA'S LEISURE WOMEN

Mary Murphy, author of Mining Cultures, April 1997, Interview by Betsy Cohen.
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BOOKS


NEWSPAPERS

Flathead Monitor
Helena Herald
Interlake
Missoulian
Quiet conquerers

History sometimes looks past half of the faces that made Montana what it is

Emily Shope helped found Montana's first school for the deaf.

Barbed wire, ranchers, miners, trappers and cowboys are all too often given the credit for "taming the West." But in our state's written history there is very little said about the women who helped build our communities because of the relative scarcity of literature on Montana women, their stories risk being lost to history and Montana's cultural memory.

In honor of Women's History Month, the following profiles of Montana women is a tribute to the countless number of them who have shaped the character of this state.

A special thanks to Bruce Shawyer, reference historian at the Montana Historical Society Library, Davae Seals, a historian of women in Montana, Laurie Zimorino, Betty Biehl (Mary Atwater's daughter), Marilyn Pfennern (Emily Shope's granddaughter), and Mary Weatherly for providing research, stories and photos.

By BETTY COHEN

Emma Ingalls, 1865-1940. One of the first women to serve in the Montana Legislature, an Indian agent's wife, a Wyoming woman's rights activist and a Montana senator, Emma Ingalls was a woman ahead of her time.

Emma was born in 1865 in Tennessee and married Thomas Ingalls, a Civil War veteran, in 1887.

In 1889, she moved to Montana with her husband and became the first woman appointed as an Indian agent in the Montana Territory. She worked for six years to improve the lives of Native American children.

In 1904, she was elected to the Montana State Legislature, becoming one of the first women elected to a state legislature in the United States.

She served two terms, from 1911 to 1919, and was known for her outspokenness and her advocacy for women's rights.

Emma Ingalls died in 1940, leaving a legacy of service to her community and to the women of Montana.

By BETTY COHEN

Virginia Foster was one of the state's earliest advocates of open space planning.

As a member of the Montana Land Use Planning Advisory Committee, Foster worked to preserve open space and natural resources for future generations.

Virginia was born in 1919 in North Carolina and moved to Montana in 1942 after marrying her husband, Frank Foster.

They settled in Missoula, where she worked for years in the public schools, eventually becoming a principal.

Virginia's interest in preserving open space began early in her career, and she continued to work on these issues throughout her life.

In 1996, she was named to the Montana Hall of Fame, and her contributions to the cause of open space planning in Montana were recognized.

By BETTY COHEN

Susie Yellowtail: The voice of a reluctant rebel

Susie Yellowtail devoted much of her life to improving health and education for Native Americans.

Born in 1943 in Crow Agency of the Crow Indian Reservation, Yellowtail became the first registered Native American nurse. She graduated from Boston City Hospital School of Nursing in 1963 and returned to Crow to work in the Crow Hospital.

"I did not set out to be a political activist," she said in 1981. "It just happened." She started writing articles for the Crow newspaper and became more involved in politics.

Yellowtail served as a member of the Montana State Health Advisory Board and was appointed to the Montana State Board of Health by Governor Tom Corcoran.

In 1981, she was named the "Woman of the Year" by the Montana Women's Health Care Coalition.

By BETTY COHEN

Mary Atwater was the "dean" of American handweavers.

Mary Atwater was born in 1916 in Rock Island, Ill. She was a native of Illinois and grew up in a family of artists and craftsmen.

Atwater was a renowned handweaver and a founding member of the Shuttle Craft Guild and Weaving Shop.

Her work was widely exhibited and included in numerous collections.

Mary Atwater died in 1993, leaving behind a legacy of artistic achievement and dedication to the craft of weaving.

By BETTY COHEN
Cooperation spells success
Weekend sporting events bring out best in volunteers

The MONTANA STANDARD
Monday, March 3, 1997
50 cents

Even good girls took to Butte streets in the 1920s

On Wednesday, a woman was later taken to the hospital (No one was hurt in the incident), prompting administrators to ask volunteers at the boys' basketball tournament that packed the Altitude Sports Center to its rafters (Butte police) was called to investigate fund raising with the Butte Civic Center to its rafter's (Butte police) was called to investigate fund raising with.

About the photographs

TOP: Irene Crossen, left, and Judith Straathof of the Netherlands help clean up at the U.S. High Altitude Sports Center. The Dutchman and the Japanese women lost the team pursuit to the Americans in the World Junior Speedskating Championships.

ABOVE: Jae-Bong Choi leads South Korea in the men's 1,500 meters event during the World Junior Speedskating Championships.

Tales from the campaign trail

Some find Gore's tactics heavy-handed

By Brian Conner
Of the Montana Standard

WASHINGTON - Vice President Al Gore played a central role in raising millions of dollars for the 1992 campaign, making direct solicitations that some Democratic donors found heavy-handed.

A former campaign adviser said Senate further asked for calls asking direct requests for contributions.

Clinton would not make direct solicitations, Gore said. But Gore's campaign aides never made such direct requests for contributions. The newspaper reported that the president.

As politicians wrangled over how to address the growing rev.

The Post said the three previous elections in 1990 and 1992 that Gore was so aggressive.

As the campaign finance.

But Gore did it. Unless he got on the ballot.

The newspaper report that the nation's money bag containing the.

There were no injuries reported.

The suspect's description is.

The alleged robber was last seen wearing an orange shirt, blue jeans, black and white shoes, and a dark-colored short-sleeved shirt with a hood and a bag.

Anyone with information is asked to call Crime Stoppers at 47-11719.