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WOMEN OF THE WEST PROGAM featured at National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center

Baker City, Oregon - - - The National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in Baker City, Oregon will host two programs by Dr. Sandra Schackel, Associate Professor of History at Boise State University. The lectures are scheduled for Sunday, June 8 and Monday, June 9. Both programs will be presented at 1:00 pm in the Leo Adler Theater located inside the Interpretive Center.

Dr. Schackel earned her doctorate in history from the University of New Mexico. In addition to her professorship, she is the author of "Social Housekeepers: Women Shaping Public Policy, New Mexico 1920-1940." Her special interests are Women's history, and the history of the American West. Combining these interests, as a social historian, she will enrich our knowledge with a slide presentation on the factual roles of women as they journeyed westward over the Oregon Trail, and a second lecture on the historical fictionalized roles of women portrayed in western films.

On Sunday, June 8 "We Had Nothing To Lose And We Might Gain A Fortune: Women and Families on the Oregon Trail" examines women's diaries and journals as a rich source for the study of trail life and form the basis of this slide presentation. Entries speak of the everyday life and hazards of their journeys. These brave women, eager to take their chances in unfamiliar territory, dreamed of a new world that would bring them freedom, happiness and prosperity. Their writings tell us of the nightmares they endured on this dusty trail...such as a baby falling out of the wagon, loss of family possessions while crossing swollen creeks, the death and burial of a loved one.

On Monday, June 9 Schackel will present "The Reel West: Women in Western Films." Most of us know about the male film legends of the American West such as John Wayne, the Marlboro Man, and The Lone Ranger. But who were the female counterparts, and what role did they play in the development of the filmic west? Female actors such as Lillian Gish, Marlene Dietrich, Barbara Stanwyck, and Jane Fonda helped portray western women in stereotypical ways: Gentle Tamers, sturdy Pioneer Helpmates, Hellraisers and Prostitutes. These stereotypes will be examined with a look at the role of gender in these popular film genres. Do movies mirror the culture? If so, are the depictions of nineteenth century western women applicable for today? Schackel will conclude with a discussion of the Western in the 1980's and 90's, asking the question, "Has the Western outlived its 'usefulness' in American Culture?"

The National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, operated by the Bureau of Land Management, is located 5 miles east of Baker City, Oregon on Highway 86. Take Exit 302 from I-84. The Center is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. Admission for adults is \$5. Seniors are \$3.50. Children 15 and under are free. Federal passes are accepted. Visit oregontrail.blm.gov for more information about the Center, or call 541-523-1843 for updates on programs and events.

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