Center for Greater Southwestern Studies and the History of Cartography

Center Speakers Series

Helen McLure, Southern Methodist University

“Regulating Society by the Whitecap Method': Mob Violence in Nineteenth-Century America"

When modern Americans think of mob violence, they usually associate it with the lynching of African American men in the South or white male horse thieves in the West. But crowds of men, women, and children performed a wide variety of violent attacks on their fellow citizens from the colonial period through the mid-twentieth century. Lethal and non-lethal crowd actions multiplied and flourished across the United States during the nineteenth century. A distinctive form of brutal but non-lethal mob violence called “whitecapping” originated in the Midwest during the 1880s and spread rapidly across the country. “Whitecaps” assaulted male and female victims of all races and ethnicities, but women became particularly prominent in this wave of collective violence. This study explores the gender, age, racial/ethnic, and class dimensions of whitecapping in the nineteenth-century United States and examines it in the context of the economic, political, social and cultural shifts that transformed the nation following the Civil War. Thousands of crowd attacks occurred in every region of the country during the period, yet this phenomenon largely has been forgotten today.

A former UT-Arlington graduate, Helen received a B.A. and M.A. in History before entering the doctoral program at Southern Methodist University. She received her Ph.D. from SMU last year, writing her dissertation on violence against women and children in early Texas. She is currently a visiting lecturer at SMU, teaching courses in U.S. history and the Nineteenth century American West.

Dr. McLure is the author of several articles, including “‘With the Past Let These Be Buried’: The 1873 Mob Massacre of the Hill Family in Springtown, Texas,” which appeared in the Southwestern Historical Quarterly. For her work on mob violence against women, she has been awarded research prizes from the Coalition for Western Women’s History and the Western Historical Association.

Details:
Date: Tuesday, March 29th
Time: 2:30-4:00 pm
Location: Central Library, 6th Floor Parlor
Light refreshments will be served

For More Information Contact:
The Center for Greater Southwestern Studies
817-272-3997 or swcenter@uta.edu

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