The Oregon Historical Society “Summer of Citizenship” Series

CITIZENSHIP IS complicated and urgent. Throughout our nation’s existence, the concept of citizenship has been changed regarding who and to whom it applies, impacting people’s lives in real and significant ways. Its history therefore presents an inviting theme for exploration by the Oregon Historical Society. The people of what is now called Oregon have continually remade this place in accordance with their beliefs and experiences. Their changes have included a sense of who belongs here and who does not, even when those ideas were not explicitly tied to the notion of citizenship. The region’s longest inhabitants related to the land through acts such as carving and painting rock images, seasonal burning, carefully harvesting and cultivating various animals and plants, and telling stories about how the world was prepared for human beings. Elders and other leaders made determinations about when and where certain activities could take place, how disputes were to be resolved, and who could be involved in particular rituals. When newcomers came, they brought different understandings of who belonged here, and they told new stories about the land. They changed it through physical works, marking spaces with fences and on maps, drafting treaties to define ownership, and developing the workings of industry and bureaucracy. They eventually brought the ideas of a young republic, one that proclaimed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness while at the same time fully applying those rights only to men of European ancestry, as implied or clearly articulated in the nation’s founding documents. Treaties, wars, court cases, immigration, termination and self-determination, individual resistance, acts of Congress, and a wide array of events, decisions, and ideologies have fueled an ongoing renegotiation of what is means to be an American and who has access to that identity.
Oregon's state constitution was forged in the heat of a nationwide debate over slavery, a debate that erupted in civil war just two years after Congress accepted Oregon's statehood in 1859. The white men who crafted and voted on the state constitution chose to enter that debate by excluding both slavery and free African Americans from the state (they also included exclusions on women, Asians, Native Americans, and Hawaiians). The legacy of those exclusions is still deeply felt today, even as Oregon's population rapidly shifts alongside thriving indigenous communities. As they crafted the state's founding documents during the mid-nineteenth century, Oregonians lived and worked on lands that had only recently been legally relinquished by tribal nations through treaties with the U.S. government. Today, there are nine federally recognized Indian tribes in our state as well as significant indigenous communities along the Columbia River at Celilo Village, within the Chinook Nation, and living in the urban center of Portland. Portland, Oregon, is often recognized as one of the whitest cities in America, and yet people of color represented over 25 percent of the population of Multnomah County in 2008 — and, more significantly, 45 percent of the students in county public schools in the 2009–2010 academic year. Carrying the weight of history into a new century defined by rapid demographic changes, Oregonians must continue to make intentional choices about the meaning of citizenship.

Through our “Summer of Citizenship” lecture series, the Oregon Historical Society sought to inform public understanding and debate over citizenship rights and responsibilities with a wide variety of historical and contemporary perspectives. Inspired by an exhibit schedule that educated visitors about U.S. Presidents, the Civil Rights Movement, and the service of Nisei soldiers during World War II, the lecture series brought together ten of the region’s top scholars and civic leaders to speak on various aspects of citizenship. Talks ranged in topic from the Louisiana Purchase to early action for gay and lesbian rights to Freedom Schools to movements against compulsory vaccination. All touched on the relationship among individuals, government, and community, asking listeners to consider how citizenship itself has been shaped by events, laws, and beliefs throughout our shared history.

The three talks that follow — by Marcela Mendoza, Andrew Fisher, and Kimberly Jensen — are a sampling of that series, offered here as both record of the public lectures and documentation of research in progress. All three speakers considered ways that people have requested, used, and defended their citizenship. In talks on new citizens (naturalized immigrants) and Native Americans, Mendoza and Fisher explored themes of citizenship complicated by the dual allegiance to two places, two homes, two identities. Mendoza drew on social science research that explores why immigrants become U.S. citizens to help us understand how citizenship relates to the notion of belonging. Although by the early twentieth century many Indians considered themselves members of sovereign Tribal nations, Fisher noted that, at the same time, “many Indians had come to insist that they should have some say in the government that arbitrarily imposed its authority on them through federal laws, judicial decisions, and bureaucratic regulations.”

Who can “have some say” continues to be fiercely debated in contemporary discussions about voting rights and requirements. The U.S. Supreme Court handed down a decision in June 2013 that effectively gutted the landmark 1964 Voting Rights Act. Here in Oregon, a proposal to automatically register citizens to vote was debated and narrowly defeated in the state Legislature, and former Gov. Barbara Roberts drew attention to that proposal in her “Summer of Citizenship” talk covering the broad history of voting rights in Oregon.

In her lecture opening the series, Jensen revealed that, as a result of federal legislation, some Oregon women who were born in the United States lost their U.S. citizenship. During World War I, the Wilson administration considered all German citizens “enemy aliens,” required them to register with the government, and monitored their actions. Citizenship legislation in place meant that U.S.-born women in Oregon who were married to German citizen men were also treated as “enemy aliens.” Jensen’s talk clarified the extent to which rights are not guaranteed to anyone — especially during wartime. As news stories continued to break this year regarding spying by the National Security Administration, Jensen’s talk took on additional salience. She explained that the newly registered alien women were “kept under surveillance by state and local officials.” That surveillance, she continued, “raised questions about the relationship between civic rights and national security in wartime and beyond.” Jensen found that many women resisted classification as aliens and the government surveillance that went with it. The importance of civil disagreement is reflected in Mendoza’s statement that “civic agency, then, is the idea that belonging is put into action when people are engaged in activities for, with, on behalf of, or even against others.” Here, Mendoza claims that community is at the center of citizenship, asserting that while community does not necessarily mean consensus, it does require engagement.

The Oregon Historical Society is grateful to the scholars and civic leaders who offered their time and knowledge to our Summer of Citizenship series, and we look forward to ongoing conversations about the ways individuals and groups, policies, bureaucracies, and beliefs have aided and fought against one another in the ongoing attempt to identify who is to be included in “the people of the United States” identified in the opening phrase of our Constitution.

— Eliza E. Canty-Jones
Citizenship and Belonging in Uncertain Times

by Marcela Mendoza

Marcela Mendoza presented this talk on September 15, 2013, and was one of ten regional scholars featured in the Oregon Historical Society’s “Summer of Citizenship” series. This essay is a record of her presentation and ongoing research on civic integration and belonging in the lives of Latin American immigrants in the United States.

NATIONAL BELONGING MATTERS

In early April 2013, Eliza Canty-Jones at the Oregon Historical Society asked me if I would like to participate in a series of talks on citizenship during the summer. Of course I agreed and started to think on how to approach the topic from my experience as a naturalized citizen. At that moment I had something different in mind, but just two weeks after receiving her request, the tragic event at the Boston marathon occurred. We (you and I) all started to read and listen to reports about the details of what happened and people’s responses to the tragedy; we also began to learn more about the personal stories of the perpetrators. That is why I titled this presentation “citizenship and belonging in uncertain times” — I mean uncertain as in “unsettling” because things are not supposed to be that way. Immigrants usually want to belong; those who have chosen to come to a new country usually make their best effort to integrate. For the most part, immigrants want to be part of the nation. At least, this appears to be true for the majority of those who, like me and my family, have emigrated from Latin America.

Psychologists say that all people want to “belong” to something.1 “Belongingness” is an emotional human need of being accepted as a member of a group, a feeling of “fitting in” and being valued for who one is. In the context of democratic states, national belonging refers to a subjective dimension of being part of the nation.2 The person who wants to belong is expected to express commitment and loyalty to a common purpose — to the nation’s values, culture, history, and way of life. The collective call for commitment and loyalty is strong; immigrants can feel it and natives can communicate it in myriad ways too.

When people say that someone “belongs,” they are bringing to light certain implicit membership requisites, expressing the difference between a person being included or excluded from the collectivity. Thus,
becoming a member requires effort on the part of the immigrant, such as acquiring language proficiency, learning about values, and striving for cultural integration. Failure to integrate could be viewed with suspicion and would be considered a reason for social marginalization. When for any reason someone’s behavior provokes rejection, and it is thought that the person does not fit, people might say: “she is a stranger/foreigner and doesn’t belong here.” Many people think that it is impossible to be loyal to two different countries and “divided loyalties” are a potential threat to the security of the state.

BELONGING TO A NATION

Many authors maintain that a political society is a partnership among those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are yet to be born. Individuals who believe they have special obligations to their community — to their family, cultural group, or country — often believe they have duties to past, present, and future generations as well. Since the nation exists as a historical community, philosophers say, it can be interpreted as “a community of obligation” — the forebears worked to build and protect the nation, and those who are born into it inherit an obligation to carry on the founders’ work. They see themselves as responsible for taking steps to ensure that the traditions, institutions, and values that define their community will continue to exist in the next generations.

Therefore, being part of a nation-state (or being admitted as “naturalized” members) requires the people to trust/believe in the nation’s history and traditions; if citizens fail to pass down public institutions to their descendants, they can be blamed for harming the nation’s interests.

WHAT IS REQUIRED FROM A PERSON TO BE ENTITLED TO BELONG?

In the case of citizenship, when people talk about membership rights and responsibilities, and the politics of belonging, the central question is: What is required from a person to be entitled as a citizen, belonging to the collectivity?

This question can elicit multiple answers, as the many dimensions of citizenship are articulated in complex ways. For example, admittance to the citizenry as a naturalized member affirms the right to be treated as equal, not to be excluded on the basis of discrimination or prejudice. The invitation to participate assumes that the new citizens will accept a certain lifestyle, engage in everyday relations with others, and participate in civic life. Then, new members will have a stake in the life of the community and its future.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A “CITIZEN”?

Citizenship in a democracy (a) gives membership status to a nation-state; (b) gives civil identity to members; (c) communicates/shares a set of values, a commitment to the common good of the nation; (d) involves the right to participate in political life; and (e) implies gaining and using knowledge of laws, processes, and systems of governance.

For example, civic identity calls for respect for the symbols, ideas of love for, and loyalty to the common good. Civic agency includes active participation in political activities such as voting, involvement with political parties, and civic volunteering. By participating in social networks and cooperative problem-solving with fellow citizens, immigrants gain social capital — a sense of cohesiveness and unity that is central to the civic values of citizenship.
LEARNING ABOUT DEMOCRATIC IDEALS

According to different authors, civic virtues include independence, open-mindedness, the capacity to discern and respect the rights of others, the ability to evaluate the performance of those in office, and willingness to engage in public discourse. Civic virtues are also described as self-sacrifice, loyalty, and respect for the law. Civic education communicates democratic ideals and traditions, teaches about the country’s history and institutions, and advocates the importance of practicing rituals that affirm unity (such as reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and singing patriotic songs) — all symbols, icons, and traditions that provide a sense of community. Those civic skills enable citizens to engage in productive dialogue around public problems, build consensus, and work cooperatively. Civic agency, then, is the idea that belonging is put into action when people are engaged in activities for, with, on behalf of, or even against others.

To me, as many others have said before, loving the United States is encouraging dialogue and cooperation, allowing dissent, and relentlessly striving for fairness. Exercising my citizenship means engaging in the messiness and troubles of a pluralistic democracy that may not always work well for all citizens but is constantly trying to improve itself.

WHY DO MIGRANTS WANT TO BECOME CITIZENS?

Among many reasons people naturalize, the most cited in the literature are: (a) family decisions (the United States is where they are going to make their life and where their children were born and have grown up); (b) desire to sponsor a relative; (c) simplifying travel or not having to hassle about immigration documents and visas; (d) showing commitment to or pride in the adopted country; and (e) obtaining the right to vote and influence policies. People have also said that they obtained citizenship to be eligible for government jobs. For example, only citizens can work for the U.S. Postal Service, and citizenship is required for the good jobs at airports.

Caroline B. Brettell led a 2006 project to interview hundreds of immigrants in a southwestern city of the United States, and the verbatim testimonials that she published resonate with what I have heard through the years from Latin American immigrants who became naturalized citizens:

I wanted to become committed to this country. To stay as an LPR [legal permanent resident] is to be neither here nor there. To take citizenship is a statement of commitment and security.

[Another said:] It was going to be better for the kids and that is what motivated us. It gives you advantages and you feel more secure. . . . The U.S. is our adopted homeland and we want to contribute to the community.

[Another said:] It was hard for me to give up my citizenship of India. . . . But then I realized that I would never go back. My wife and children could not live there easily. So I came to the conclusion that I was living in the United States, that I should exercise my right to vote and make a difference. This was not a consequence of my feelings because it was hard emotionally — but of realizing that it was the right thing to do.

For many migrants in the United States, the reasons to naturalize are symbolically expressed in their desire to obtain the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness “for ourselves and our posterity” that they read in the Declaration of Independence and the introduction to the Constitution.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN AMERICAN?

When asked about the meaning of becoming an American, the immigrants interviewed by Brettell gave similar answers to many others. One immigrant who arrived in the United States in 1980, for example, said: “It means I have been upgraded . . . from economy to first class.” Other individuals said:

America is a country of opportunity. It is a place where children will have the most freedom. I have found this to be the case. America allows you to practice in your own way and to achieve community objectives.

[Another said:] Freedom is big, freedom to be who you are, freedom to pursue happiness . . . allowing an individual to pursue whatever makes him happy no matter what his religion and sexual preferences, etc. You are allowed to be what you want to be within correct limits.

[Another said:] It means that one has opportunities, the chance to prosper and get an education. The education must come first. Things can be accomplished in El Salvador, but it is harder.

[Another said:] In the United States a person that was considered poor in El Salvador lives like a rich Salvadoran.

EMOTIONAL AND INSTRUMENTAL BONDS

First-generation immigrants experience strong bonds to two countries at the same time, but the content and meaning of those bonds are different. Their country of origin is usually associated with emotional ties, a sense of roots, and identity that also involves family ties and cultural belonging. Their new home country is instead associated with a less emotional, more instrumental sense of belonging based on everyday life experiences, sometimes expressed in terms of social participation.

For individuals, emotional bonds are important in making the decision of obtaining a new citizenship. Many consider it difficult to give up their previous citizenship, with all that is implied in terms of identity and cultural
heritage. It is like losing part of one's identity. It may also separate a person from relatives in their country of origin. Another aspect of those emotional bonds is a (more or less realistic) desire to return to the country of origin.

A Mexican woman employed as a case worker at a nonprofit organization that provides human services to recent immigrants once said to me: “We have our home here, my husband and I work, we take our children to school and to day-care, we have two cars, go shopping, and pay taxes. We feel part of the community and would like to become citizens, but giving up our Mexican nationality feels like betrayal. We grew up in Mexico, have family and friends there. I visit my mother often and still feel at home there, but I am getting tired of being asked every time about my visa. I may have to apply for an American passport.”

People might argue that migrants have to make up their minds: “If you care so much about the emotional ties, don’t bother about obtaining a new citizenship. If you care about the practical benefits, then become a citizen and don’t think about the emotional.” It is not that easy. Many migrants have genuine feelings of belonging to both their previous and their new home countries.14
LOVING TWO COUNTRIES AT THE SAME TIME
That brings up a transnational perspective. There are more and more people who love two countries at the same time and maintain their personal bonds through frequent mobility. Increased mobility across national borders may cause some to question national belonging and could bring up many other related questions, such as: What does it mean to migrate? Where do migrants belong? Is it possible to belong to more than one country at the same time? What is the content and implication of dual or multiple national bonds? How individual migrants balance practical and emotional ideas about belonging influences the way they construct their identities as well as their attitudes toward naturalization and citizenship.

DUAL NATIONALITY
Many Latin American countries currently accept that their citizens may hold dual nationality. In addition to Mexico in 1998, other Latin American countries such as Colombia in 1991, the Dominican Republic in 1994 Ecuador and Costa Rica in 1995, and Brazil in 1996 reformed their constitutions to allow their citizens to hold dual nationality. Even if, by law, those Latin American citizens could hold dual nationality, the process of integration to the United States would gradually change their individual perspectives. An interviewee said, for example, to Brettell: "In one’s heart, where you work and live determines what you are. Especially once you adapt to life here. I think I would feel like a foreigner in El Salvador now." The most complicated situations arise in relation to raising American-born children. Negotiating the children’s identities and contributing to the integration of the second generation becomes an issue even more crucial than defining the immigrant’s own identity.

UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS
Then there is the situation of immigrants who are placed in the category of "undocumented." Being "unauthorized" marks a difference that requires some measure of public intervention, management, and discipline. Those immigrants may be portrayed either as delinquents or victims that require saving, but always as outsiders. They learn to maneuver in the job market, avoiding and circumventing actions and words that hurt them. The "undocumented" live their lives — uphold their desire of belonging and citizenship — in a complex situation marked by deep contradictions. They negotiate power relationships in their day-to-day movements through work, their community, and the larger community. The mobilization of undocumented Latino youth (the so-called "dreamers") in their struggle to affirm their rights in U.S. society is a pertinent example of distinguishing citizenship from belonging.

Speaking for the First Americans

Nipo Strongheart and the Campaign for American Indian Citizenship

by Andrew H. Fisher

The following essay is a record of Andrew H. Fisher’s August 14, 2013, talk that explored the topic of national belonging through the story of Nipo Strongheart, a showman of mixed Yakama and white ancestry. Fisher is engaged in ongoing research about Strongheart.

ON THE EVENING of January 6, 1920, Nipo Strongheart hurriedly donned his tribal regalia in the chilly back room of a Baptist church in Hyde Park, Massachusetts. He had no props for this performance of "From Peace Pipe to War Trail," his standard lecture on American Indian history and lore, which usually began with him "seated, Indian fashion, in front of a typical Indian tepee." Nevertheless, he proceeded to captivate the audience for nearly two hours with a "dramatic portrayal of the spirit and ways of his people." Afterwards, he answered "a thousand & one questions" from the packed house. Most of the comments were friendly, if sometimes ill-informed, but one woman "of supposed intellect because she came to a lecture" challenged his sympathetic portrayal of Native Americans. She said:

I know better, the Indians are bad people, they are savages, I read a great deal, I ought to know. I asked her whether she ever lived near the Indians. She said No! I would not degrade myself. She said, the Indians are low, they eat dead animals. I asked her whether she eats them alive. Oh boy, there was some laugh. She had to leave the room. Many hand shakes and made many friends.

Strongheart’s schedule did not allow much time for friendship, though, and by midnight he had boarded the train back to Boston.
Three nights later, he was again riding the rails, heading for Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to check in at the head office of the Coit-Neilson Lyceum Bureau. Strongheart rarely wore his regalia while traveling, yet his long, dark hair often drew stares from other passengers. On this trip, he attracted the attention of a little red-headed girl, whom he spent hours entertaining with Indian legends and modeling clay. Before going to bed, she told him, “‘Now Mr. Indian, please don’t get off the train before I wake up in the morning.’ I promised that I would not.” True to his word, he talked with her the next day until he had to change trains for Ludlow, Pennsylvania. “All the children of the town were at the station on my arrival,” he recorded in his diary, and another crowd of 400 children turned out for his January 16 appearance in Blairsville. “Happy kiddies to see an Indian in feathers,” he wrote that evening. “One little tot kissed me, she said ‘I love the Indians,’ isn’t that worth my many trials?” Life on the road could be hard, but it would pay off in the end if audiences formed a better opinion of Native peoples and supported their struggles for justice — especially for the right of citizenship.

Citizenship remains a hot topic today, as it has been throughout most of U.S. history. The current debate is generally framed in terms of immigration, however, and many Americans aren’t aware that the so-called “First Americans” were the last major group in the United States to be granted political citizenship in the land of their birth — in 1924, more than fifty years after all African Americans gained citizenship and four years after the enfranchisement of women. Native Americans have an ambivalent relationship to U.S. citizenship. On the one hand, most tribes resisted their forcible incorporation into the United States between 1783 and 1890. First on the battlefield and then by other means, they fought to maintain their territorial integrity and political autonomy against overwhelming odds. Today, members of federally recognized tribes consider themselves citizens of sovereign nations. On the other hand, by the early twentieth century, many Indians had come to insist that they should have some say in the government that arbitrarily imposed its authority on them through federal laws, judicial decisions, and bureaucratic regulations. They got their wish after World War I, but it took thirty more years and another world war for certain states to remove their barriers to Indian voting. In some places even now, Indians are still treated as second-class citizens by a hostile white majority.

Their fraught relationship to U.S. citizenship is further complicated by the dominant society’s historical insistence that inclusion within the American nation-state required complete assimilation; in other words, Native culture and identity were incompatible with “Americanism.” Just as immigrants were expected to cast off all of their cultural baggage and embrace a unitary American identity — whatever that is, exactly — American Indians
would have to give up everything that marked them as culturally different from the Euro-American majority. The federal government used far more coercive means with Indians than it did with immigrants, however, and with much less promise of economic mobility and social equality in return. Starting in the 1870s, the popular solution to the so-called “Indian Problem” shifted from separation on reservations toward the forcible assimilation of Native peoples. The Office of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C., established dozens of off- and on-reservation boarding schools to “kill the Indian and save the man,” in the words of Richard Henry Pratt, by stamping out Native languages, religions, and cultural practices in the younger generations. Congress followed up with the policy of allotment, expressly designed to break up reservations, teach Indians the value of private property, and free them from tribal thralldom. Allotment opened a path to citizenship for those who adopted the “habits of civilized life,” but it did so at the expense of the tribal land base — between 1887 and 1934, Indian nations lost more than 90 million acres (two-thirds of their remaining land) to sale and seizure. The man who would become Nipo Strongheart was born in May 1891, just as pressure to allot the Yakama Reservation intensified and only five months after the carnage at Wounded Knee, where the U.S. Seventh Cavalry massacred several hundred Lakota Ghost Dancers. That tragic event has often been called the end of the Indian Wars, though it was hardly a battle, and it has often been used to evoke the idea of the “Vanishing Race.” By the 1890s, most Euro-Americans had become convinced that Indians were doomed to disappear because they could not survive in the modern world or compete with the superior Anglo-Saxon race. Assimilation was held out as an alternative to extinction, but in truth they amounted to the same thing. Native Americans could not become citizens as long as they remained “savages,” but once they became “civilized” they could no longer be Indians. This was the pervasive message that Strongheart struggled against throughout the 1920s, a period of intense debate over the place of non-whites, new immigrants, and women in the modern United States.

Like other “show Indians” of his time, Strongheart recognized performance as a political act. Representing his race on stage and screen — or even just in public spaces — constituted an assertion of continuity and dignity at a time when most Euro-Americans still thought of Indians in terms of savagery, primitivism, and disappearance. By producing alternative imagery and serving as a spokesman for Native Americans, Strongheart hoped to transcend the tropes of Noble Savagery and Vanishing Indians that dominated public discourse in the 1920s. He could never fully escape them, however, and he often found it necessary to “play Indian” in order to attract audiences and sell his message. Traveling the country during the early 1920s as a professional lecturer and a field representative for the Society of American Indians (SAI), he reported on reservation conditions, gathered petitions in favor of Indian citizenship, and pressed politicians to support that goal. In turn, he used his experiences on the road to sharpen his critique of the “Indian Bureau System” and inspire his audiences to demand reform. Although the Indian Office tried to censor him several times, he generally received enthusiastic praise from the viewing public, and SAI Secretary Thomas Bishop proudly described him as “one of our best specimens of character in our race.” Fighting on two fronts — the cultural and the political — he joined other “Red Progressives” seeking to broaden the possibilities open to Native peoples and to claim a place for them within modernity as both Americans and Indians.

Strongheart first recognized the power of performance, and the relations of power embedded in it, while traveling with Wild West shows in his youth. He did not initially appear as an Indian, however, or go by the name Nipo Strongheart. Born in 1891 to a white father and a Yakama mother, he was simply George Mitchell, Jr., a “mixed-blood” who spent much of his childhood far from the Yakama reservation in south-central Washington State. The lifelong process of embracing and embellishing his Native heritage began in 1902, when he and his father signed on as trick riders with Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show. By his own account, the troupe’s Lakota performers dubbed him Nipo (short for “Nee-Ha-Pouw”) after he fainted and fell from a horse, then appeared to “come back” from the dead. He claimed that the name means “messenger of light,” but a more accurate gloss is “he lives” or the imperative “live!” Within a few years, he added the surname Strongheart, the English translation of his Yakama name, Chtu-Tum-Nah. The knack for appropriation and invention so characteristic of William “Buffalo Bill” Cody likewise became a hallmark of Strongheart’s career. Yet, looking back on the experience, he criticized Buffalo Bill’s tireless self-promotion and misleading depiction of Indians as “wild people.” In Strongheart’s opinion, “the Ambitions of Cody were always to show the world what he . . . was capable of doing, not so much to educate the public as to the true and authentic life of the plains, but merely to present the Ever-present BUFFALO BILL.”

Strongheart left the Wild West Show in 1909 to strike out on his own as an actor and advocate for Native Americans. After a stint in the U.S. Army, during which he reportedly saw action along the Mexican border, he began working with theater producer David Belasco in New York City. By 1917, he had appeared in “The Heart of We-to-Na” and other Indianist plays that “interpreted the romance and poetry of the Red Man with skill and fidelity.” American entry into World War I brought additional opportunities to perform as a paid lecturer on behalf of bond drives and military recruiting.
He also entertained the troops on occasion, appearing as “Chief Strongheart” to inspire them with stories of his own military service, while also trying to dispel pernicious racial stereotypes. “In speaking of the early times,” noted the *Covit-Alber Review*, “the Chief said the Indians were pictured as a savage race of people, but he explained that their savagery came largely from the desire to defend their own people and lands against the whites. It is the same desire to protect the home that is in evidence today . . . in the United States and the allied countries.” Like other Red Progressives, Strongheart believed that Indians’ patriotism and sacrifice during the war had earned them the rights of citizenship that many still lacked. He was, as his handbills advertised, “an American.”

Strongheart styled his performances “lecture-entertainment,” and that description effectively captures the continual negotiation that occurred between audience expectations and his political agenda. Offering both “Legends and Facts,” he necessarily indulged the dominant society’s hunger for paint and feathers, romantic primitives, and melodramatic odes to the Vanishing Indian. One of his earliest handbills depicted him in a beaded vest and plains headdress, arms crossed, staring off into the distance as if seeking buffalo or a vision. Inside the brochure, readers learned that he was both “Chief of the Yakimas” and “the direct descendant of Chief Standing Rock, who aided Chief Sitting Bull in defeating General Custer.” It remains unclear whether Strongheart authored such fabrications on his own or accepted them at the suggestion of his employers. Either way, he consciously posed as something more than he was because it served his purposes. If Strongheart knew that his Yakama ancestors had been even farther from the Little Big Horn than Cody was on that fateful day, he also knew that audiences wanted to hear of famous battles and famous Indians. He would not disappoint them.

Strongheart’s motives for exaggerating his own accomplishments were neither simple nor pure. Certainly, he craved fortune and fame, as well as the validation of his Native identity. He gave spectators a connection to authentic Indianness — or so it seemed — and in turn they affirmed his claim to being authentically Indian. At the same time, Strongheart clearly enjoyed putting one over on people who did not know any better. As he recalled of the buffalo hunt sequence in the Wild West show, “this was a joke; a real laugh; on the audience; and they fell for it on all fours!” Above all, though, he desired white sympathy and support for his cause. “He asks for more help for the red man, more recognition and opportunity,” reported *The Lyceum Magazine*. “After he speaks he asks the people to sign his petition for equal rights to send up to Washington, and gets about all of them.”

Strongheart excelled as a spokesman for Indian citizenship. His diary entries for 1920 are peppered with references to the enthusiastic responses he received from audiences around the country. In Glen Campbell, Pennsylvania, he encountered a “Big-full house, turned out great. Many many shakes nearly shook my arm off.” So many people thronged the sanctuary after his performance in Dorset, Ohio, that the church’s old flooring suddenly sank beneath the weight, scaring everyone stiff. Strongheart especially enjoyed meeting people of influence, like those who attended his talk in Portland, Maine: “Great affair, great organization, all judges, attorneys, editors, authors, merchants, etc. . . . Great applause, shakes of all kinds. Met all the prominent folks. It is a great life.” Prominent folks not only made him feel important, they could also make things happen, as he hoped they would. In one of many ringing endorsements he received, the secretary of a local lyceum committee expressed the effect Strongheart wished to achieve:
Our audience feels that he has a wonderful message and that his people, the American Indian, have not had the opportunity that they should have, and that the right of citizenship and the right to attend our public schools should be given them, for we feel that in many ways they are far more deserving than many other races which are on par with the American Citizen. Therefore, we trust that your Bureau will do all in your power to help spread Chief Strongheart's message and use your influence to better the conditions of our Brothers, the American Indian.

Strongheart's commitment to those goals had led him to join the SAI in 1916. Generally described as the first formal pan-Indian organization in the United States, the society brought together highly educated and acculturated Native people committed to seeking their own answers to the question of "race betterment." By 1921, he had begun serving as an ad hoc field inspector, combining his lecture tours with trips to Indian reservations and enclaves across the country. Part of his mandate was to enlist white allies and raise money through meetings with "big men" wherever he found them. He carried a large, leather-bound autograph book during his travels, and the signatures in it attest to his boldness in approaching everyone from small-town mayors and police chiefs to congressmen, cabinet officials, and presidents. During Strongheart's travels, however, SAI President Thomas Sloan and Secretary Bishop also asked him to recruit members and gather intelligence from Native communities. In turn, they kept Strongheart apprised of developments in Washington, D.C., and used him to convey information to tribal communities concerning the society's efforts on their behalf.

Strongheart's time in the field opened his eyes to the severity of the problems confronting Indian Country. During his trips through the interior Northwest, he paid visits to the Yakama Reservation and began reconnecting with his tribal relations, who informed him of their growing conflict with the states and white competitors over treaty fishing rights. He also struck up a friendship with Lucullus V. McWhorter, an amateur historian who lived in the Yakima Valley and published several books on the illegal appropriation of Indian water there. Traveling through the Great Basin, Strongheart was shocked by the poverty and neglect he witnessed in the Paiute colonies of the region. "Deplorable conditions here," he telegraphed the SAI in February 1922, during a visit to Burns, Oregon. "Piautes [sic] at dying point no medical attention . . . child died no medicine will department wire doctor or Piautes perish write details enclosing pictures." He also investigated the alleged theft of Paiute allotments by local whites and urged the society to pursue the matter. Captain Luy, the headman at Burns, trusted him enough to ask that he write letters to the Indian Office on their behalf.

Nipo Strongheart wrestled with the dilemma of whether to wear Indian regalia or Euro-American clothing for his lectures. Paradoxically, while he wanted audiences to see Native Americans as civilized, he recognized that he got more attention — and more signatures on petitions — when he played the part of the "Noble Red Man" instead of appearing in "citizen's dress," as in this 1920 publicity photo.
Similar concerns prompted Strongheart’s involvement with the largely unrecognized and landless tribes of northern California, particularly the Colusa and Pitt River peoples. After learning of their unratified treaties, he helped organize intertribal delegations to Washington to press their land claims. Although he was an outsider, local headmen quickly came to rely on him for information and assistance. Other tribal members counted on him too, asking for advice and aid with matters large and small. Tom Kelly of Pitt River, for example, hoped that Strongheart might help him retrieve two horses that the Forest Service had confiscated for grazing without a permit. Such personal connections lent his reports a sense of intimacy that partially offset the fact that he rarely spent much time anywhere. As President Sloan said of his description of affairs at Pitt River, “I want you to know that your explanation is very good and it is so clear, for it comes from the very bottom of a good heart. It is written just as you were talking of it, and that is what counts.”

Strongheart also used his field experiences to infuse his lectures with an air of authenticity and urgency. He began incorporating local material and naming specific officials, thereby incurring the wrath of the Indian Office and his employers. During the 1921 Chautauqua season, he gave speeches in the reservation border towns of Madras, Oregon, and Toppenish, Washington, that impugned the behavior and character of the agency superintendents and certain local citizens. When word got back to them, they complained to the Ellison-White Lyceum and Chautauqua Association, insisting that it either remove him from the circuit or restrain his remarks. Lyceum manager M.E. Paget ordered Strongheart to stick to the safer topics of Indian lore and life ways, but he refused on the grounds that everything he said was true. Moreover, he declared, “to take a backward step now, in my fight for my people, would be the act of a coward and a traitor.” Ultimately, Ellison-White allowed him to stay on the platform if he agreed to stop naming names and making inflammatory generalizations about the Indian Office. Before the affair died down, though, several agents and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs had gone so far as to call him a fake Indian and a paid propagandist for the SAI. It would not be the last time he tangled with the Office of Indian Affairs (now the Bureau of Indian Affairs). In other words, citizenship implied cultural assimilation and the end of tribes as “domestic dependent nations” with a special relationship to the federal government. Like other Red Progressives, Strongheart may have shared this view at the time, but his vision of the Indian future changed as he renewed and strengthened his ties to the Yakama Nation. He came to understand the significance of tribal sovereignty, and he spoke out in defense of Indian treaty rights as well as civil rights. By 1925, he had gone to Hollywood to participate in the shaping of public opinion through the powerful new medium of film. Most of the fare churned out during that period (and since) fit squarely into the mold of the Vanishing Indian. As one of the first Indian technical advisers in the industry, Strongheart challenged that idea with films such as 

Brave Heart, a story based on the contemporary fishing rights struggle of his own Yakama people. Although it contained many stereotypical elements (including a doomed interracial love affair), it ended on a very different note from Richard Dix’s The Vanishing American, produced the same year. The protagonist, Brave Heart, goes to college and helps his people win their case in court, thereby ensuring the continuation of their treaty rights and their fishing traditions. It is a message of persistence, not disappearance, as well as an implicit confirmation of the dual citizenship of American Indians.

Strongheart remained an entertainer-activist for the rest of his life. By the early 1930s, as radio and film supplanted Chautauqua and circuit lectures as the nation’s primary entertainment media, he settled down to
Dressed in traditional regalia, Nipo Strongheart traveled around the country in the early 1920s as a performer and official representative of the Society of American Indians. Recognizing performance as a political act, he hoped to give audiences a better opinion of Native peoples at a time when many whites still saw them as savages.

He did achieve his lifelong quest to rejoin the Yakama Nation, however, when members of the Tomaskin family adopted him in thanks for taking them under his wing in Los Angeles. The Yakama Tribal Council also honored his request to be buried on the reservation, further evidence that for Strongheart — as for many Native Americans today — tribal citizenship mattered just as much as American citizenship.18

pursue a career in Hollywood. For the next thirty years, he labored to create more accurate and sympathetic images of Native Americans, occasionally appearing on screen in minor roles but more commonly working behind the scenes on Westerns and Indian films. At the same time, he continued the struggle for Native rights through association with various pan-Indian organizations, including the National Congress of American Indians that formed during World War II.23

The postwar years brought a renewed emphasis on assimilation, embodied in the twin policies of termination and relocation. As a cofounder of the Los Angeles Indian Center, Strongheart helped tribal transplants make the difficult transition to urban life, but he opposed the unilateral abrogation of treaties and severance of the federal trust relationship through termination bills. Unfortunately, he did not live to witness the formal repudiation of the termination policy and the dramatic protests of the Red Power movement that unfolded just a few years after his death in 1966.24 He did achieve his lifelong quest to rejoin the Yakama Nation, however, when members of the Tomaskin family adopted him in thanks for taking them under his wing in Los Angeles. The Yakama Tribal Council also honored his request to be buried on the reservation, further evidence that for Strongheart — as for many Native Americans today — tribal citizenship mattered just as much as American citizenship.18

From Citizens to Enemy Aliens

Oregon Women, Marriage, and the Surveillance State during the First World War

by Kimberly Jensen

The following essay is a record of Kimberly Jensen’s July 10, 2013, talk that provides historical perspective for contemporary citizenship rights and responsibilities, especially during wartime. This talk reflects ongoing research by Jensen.

FIVE ARCHIVAL BOXES, part of the Oregon Historical Society Research Library collections, contain Department of Justice registration files of “alien enemies” residing in Oregon during the First World War from 1917–1918. They include the records of 3,729 people from across the state — 2,245 men and 1,484 women.1 By presidential proclamation of November 16, 1917, Woodrow Wilson ordered all male citizens of Germany fourteen years and older residing in the United States to register with local officials. On April 19, 1918, Wilson broadened the requirement to all women fourteen years and older. They would have to register within the period June 17–26, 1918. The restrictions and registration provisions were in effect until December 25, 1918.2

These files raise many questions about citizenship and wartime. Who was required to register and why? What did they have to report? What did it mean to be an enemy alien? One of the files contains information about twenty-seven-year-old mother of two Viola Wilhening. The file indicates that she was born in Polk County, Oregon, on February 10, 1891. If she was born in the United States, wasn’t she a U.S. citizen? Why did she have to register as an enemy alien? Because she was the wife of Louis Wilhening, a German citizen.3

Federal legislation in effect from 1907 to 1922 required women who were U.S. citizens who married foreign men to forfeit their U.S. citizenship and
take on the nationality of their husbands. When Oregon Historical Society Research Librarian Scott Daniels introduced me to the collection of World War I Enemy Alien Registrants from Oregon, I wondered if among the female registrants there would be some native-born women who had lost their U.S. citizenship by marrying German men and were therefore categorized as "enemy aliens" by the wartime state. In the end, I had a database of 394 women in this category. This was over a quarter of the total number of Oregon women who registered. Almost half (183 of the 394, or 46 percent) lived in Portland; all other regions of the state were represented. The oldest was eighty-one and the youngest seventeen; most were in their thirties and forties.

I invite us to consider the case of Viola Wilhening and the other 393 Oregon women who were born in the United States but who became "enemy aliens" during World War I as a result of their marriages to German men. Registered and kept under surveillance by state and local officials, many of the women resisted state actions against them and definitions of themselves as enemies and aliens. Their cases challenge the idea of democracy at home at a time when the Wilson administration and many Americans believed that the United States was participating in a war to make the world safe for democracy abroad.

Their stories also illustrate the complex, multi-faceted elements of the ways that citizenship has been gendered and the vulnerability of women's citizenship as a result of that process. And their experiences underscore the
development of the surveillance state during the First World War and raise questions about the relationship between civic rights and national security in wartime and beyond. They also emphasize that while some women had achieved the right to vote in Oregon in 1912, others saw their citizenship challenged by marriage, patriarchal ideas, and questions of nationality.

In 1907, many native-born Americans and U.S. policymakers were anxious about increased numbers of immigrants to the United States. Congress passed the Expatriation Act of 1907, declaring: “any American woman who marries a foreigner shall take the nationality of her husband.” They could not then apply for naturalization on their own. As historian Candace Bredbenner notes, the 1907 act “represented a stunning setback in women’s progression toward full citizenship rights” by denying women “recognition as autonomous citizens.” Here, citizenship law, according to historian Martha Gardner, returned to the idea of the “nation of families with male citizens as their political expression.” Ethel Mackenzie, a California suffragist married to a British subject, challenged the law when she was deprived of her right to vote when California women achieved that right in 1911. Her case went to the Supreme Court, and in Mackenzie v. Hare (1915), the court upheld the law.

In Oregon before the First World War, references to the 1907 Expatriation Act were linked with voting rights and office holding, two key aspects of female citizenship. After women achieved the vote in November 1912, newspapers around the state featured instructions about voting and who could vote, including this from the Oregonian on April 9, 1913, indicating that when it came to voting the “American wife of [a] Foreigner [was] Controlled by [her] Husband.” After suffrage, women were eligible for elected office in the state. But in January 1916, Carrie Wright lost her recently won seat on the Eastside City Council (in Coos County) because her opponents used the recent Supreme Court decision to argue that she was not a citizen and could not hold office.

In February 1915, the Oregon Legislature passed Senate Joint Memorial 15, asking members of the U.S. Congress to remedy the Expatriation Act of 1907, particularly for women of equal suffrage states, as a measure “harmonizing the operation of our laws with the civic progressiveness of twentieth-century civilization.” But the law remained in place as the United States entered the First World War and questions of voting gave way to questions of loyalty.

The United States was a nation of immigrants when Congress declared war against Germany and the Central Powers nations in April 1917. Woodrow Wilson had urged neutrality since the beginning of the conflict in 1914 until the declaration of war, and so the administration used forceful propaganda to promote support of the war. This included dehumanizing the German enemy, as this poster shows (see facing page), and suspicion and violence against German Americans followed. The Wilson administration promoted and enforced a definition of citizenship that emphasized unquestioning loyalty. Wilson’s administration grew with the addition of the Committee on Public Information that imposed censorship. Congress passed a series of Alien and Espionage Acts that took away civil liberties by criminalizing speech and writing critical of the government and war effort. And the Justice Department increased its surveillance on civilians. As historian Christopher Capozzola notes, the Wilson administration constructed “an apparatus of surveillance” and rewarded citizen scrutiny of others in a program of “100 percent Americanism.” Some of their primary targets were those considered “enemy aliens.”

The 1910 census reveals that men and women born in Germany were the largest group of foreign-born residents in Oregon, some 18,000 people. That same year there were over 22,000 additional residents whose parents, both mother and father, were born in Germany in a total state population of 672,765.

Beginning in the fall of 1917 and continuing throughout the war, 260,000 German enemy alien men were registered nationwide, 2,245 in Oregon. In June 1918 and thereafter, 220,000 women were registered nationwide, 1,484 in Oregon. This included German immigrants who had taken out their first naturalization papers and who had many of the privileges of citizenship, including (until 1914) voting. Enemy alien men numbering 6,300 and a few women were imprisoned in internment camps in the United States at Fort Douglas, Utah, and Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. Ninety men from Oregon were interned. (All combatant nations interned enemy aliens.)

The Wilson administration used vivid images of a beastly German enemy to promote support for the war; suspicion and violence against German Americans followed.
Many Oregonians responded to the pressure to demonize Germans during the conflict, and we have evidence of this when Woodrow Wilson extended the registration requirement to “enemy alien women” in June 1918. The Oregonian featured the headline “Claws of Teuton Women Clipped” and “Restrictions Complete in Case of Feminine Huns” when reporting it. The St. Johns Review referenced Rudyard Kipling to warn that the “female of that species is often more dangerous than the male,” and so, chivalry should pause for registration of female enemy aliens.

The collection of World War I alien registration forms at OHS is apparently rare — so far the National Archives lists only Arizona and Kansas counties as other collections, and other historians have not considered the question of women and native-born women among them in detail. Such a study allows us to consider many aspects of female citizenship. One of those is the growth of the surveillance state and how that scrutiny challenged female citizenship in wartime.

How was registration organized and what happened? In cities with 5,000 or more residents, women had to go to police headquarters to register; in smaller communities registration took place at the post office. Women who did not register locally during the designated days of June 17–26, 1918, would have to travel to Portland at their own expense and be subject to arrest. Police and post office personnel processed the applications, and by the middle of July, issued identity cards that women would have to keep with them at all times or be subject to arrest. Permits were required for a change of residence and for any work in restricted zones, such as ports.

The forms themselves illustrate one level of surveillance. Let’s look at examples of each of the four pages of the registration forms. Viola Wilhening’s first page contains a great deal of information about her husband, marital status, children, residence, and birthplace. The second page required information about parents and siblings, whether a relative was fighting for or against the United States, employment history and employers, and the woman’s naturalization status. Here is Gladys Scheer’s second page (see facing page). Scheer lived in Echo in Umatilla County and listed “keeping house” as her occupation; she was married to Claus Frederick Scheer. She reported that she had two brothers-in-law fighting against the United States but did not know the names of another two. Reporting relatives fighting against the United States could mean increased suspicion and scrutiny; failure to report correct information could bring arrest.

The third page asked registrants to report on their husbands’ naturalization status, whether the women had taken an oath of allegiance to another country, been arrested or detained, languages spoken, and whether they had a permit to enter a forbidden zone. Ida Bendush was thirty-three and living in
The third page of the “Registration Affidavit of Alien Female” form gave the registrant’s description and photograph and asked registrants to state their husbands’ naturalization status. Ida Bendush’s husband, Fred, had not applied for naturalization status and had been investigated by U.S. Marshals.

Portland when she registered (see facing page). Her husband Fred Bendush, she noted on her form, had not applied for naturalization and “has been investigated by U.S. Marshals.” The bottom of this page also likely formed part of the identity booklet that registrants had to keep with them at all times and produce for officials when asked. Page four was the fingerprint page, likely also part of the identity booklet. Page four of Grace Brokelman’s file recorded the thirty-six-year-old Roseburg housewife’s burned fingers on her left hand, a poignant reminder of an injury, but also, of course, reached into her life to record these markings of her identity and make them available.

The four pages of the registration form made a great deal of information available to officials. Newspaper coverage of registration deepened the scrutiny. The Ashland Tidings invited “anyone knowing of any person coming under the provisions of this act” to inform Chief of Police Hatcher or Postmaster Kaiser. Some Oregon newspapers printed the names and addresses of women who registered, as the Salem Capital Journal did on June 18.

The file of eighteen-year-old Hattie Burbank Dahrens illustrates the extent of community and family scrutiny and the cooperation of local officials in monitoring a young woman’s behavior. Hattie Burbank lived in Sherwood,
Oregon, the eleventh child in a family of thirteen whose parents had both been born in Oregon. On July 12, 1918, several weeks after the female enemy alien registration period had closed, she married Adolph Dahrens, a German citizen who worked as a logger. The couple moved to his home in Sandy, Oregon. Adolph had taken out his first papers for naturalization in 1916, registered for the draft in June 1917, and registered as a German enemy alien in Sandy on February 7, 1918, so information about his status was on file.

The postmasters, in charge of registration in these two small towns, were the conduits for informants and information about Hattie Burbank Dahrens. Less than two weeks after the marriage, on July 24, Sherwood postmaster M.M. Fitch wrote to the Portland authorities informing them of Hattie Burbank’s marriage to a “German Alien” so that “you may take such action as you deem necessary.” U.S. Marshals contacted C.D. Purcell, the postmaster of Sandy, Oregon, where the new couple was now living, asking him to investigate and, if the situation were true, to compel her to register. Purcell took action, and told Marshal George Alexander: “this case was reported to the [mail] Carrier on route No. 4 [in Sherwood, Oregon] by the ladies [sic] own people who had strongly objected to the marriage.” And, Purcell added, “I am also given to understand the young lady had stated that she would not register as an Alien Enemy.” Under pressure of arrest, Dahrens registered on July 31, 1918.

Hattie Burbank Dahrens’s case illustrates that angry families, community members, and local officials cooperated in the growth of the surveillance state, but also that many women resisted their categorization as enemy aliens by virtue of marriage. I’d like to focus on other evidence of acts of resistance to this state-imposed definition of women’s citizenship, identity, and loyalty. We can never know how many women resisted by choosing not to register and then were able to evade detection, but official and community vigilance was very high. Men who were German citizens had already been compelled to register that February, so the women’s husbands were being observed by local officials. Twenty women in the files registered after the deadline, and the correspondence in their files suggest that many opposed registration.

Some newspapers, like the Oregon Journal, took a positive tone in reporting the registration process during the June 17–26, 1918, window. The Oregon Journal presented Portland Police Captain Leo Harms and Market Inspector and clubwoman Sarah Evans as cheery civic helpers to the women registrants. The Portland Evening Telegram used gendered conventions to evoke sympathy. One woman came to the registration desk at police headquarters and said, “Well, here is an enemy alien” and then cried so much that she had to take the registration blank home to complete. “Her story is similar to many . . . Born and raised in America, some ten years ago she married a traveling salesman of Teutonic birth” and now, though “she has never been out of her native land, she is classified as an enemy alien.”

Other newspaper coverage documents that some women made direct protests in person when they came to register. One Portland woman asked why she was forced to register when she had been born in the United States. “If I had any pro-German tendencies,” she said, “to have to register and have my thumb prints taken, will not less[en] any such tendency. I declare it is an outrage and uncalled for.” A Eugene woman “did not like the idea” of registration as a native-born person, and complied only because she was compelled to do so. Portland Police Captain Harms requested an additional twenty-six dollars for the larger-than-imagined price tag of Portland’s female registration, and his letter requesting the funds also noted that some women
challenged the process. His request for more money “was on account of the unexpected large number of registrants and extra work in registering these Alien Females,” he wrote. “There were nearly as many females registered as males during the recent registration, and much more complicated.”

Given the stakes and the scrutiny, much of the resistance by women was less obvious. Some defiance may be reflected in the choices women made about when to register. Most local newspapers reported slow registration in the early days in large and small communities. “Roseburg either has few alien women, or else they are very slow about registering,” the editors of the Roseburg Evening News reported on June 19. Portland’s Captain Leo Harms worried on June 19 that the small number of women who had registered would lead his office to be “swamped on the last few days.” Mapping when the 394 women registered supports these claims for delayed registration.

Others chose to subvert or redefine the registration form itself. The Department of Justice constructed the form without accounting for U.S.-born women who had lost their citizenship upon marriage to German men. Line 8 asked registrants to complete the phase “I arrived in the United States (date)” and asked for other information about ports and the specific ship on which they took passage. Other questions asked about naturalization and other matters that did not apply to U.S.-born women. Almost half (182 of 394) of the women chose to make statements rather than leave these areas blank. They wrote “Born Here” or “Born in the United States” in the space for the arrival date. Thirty-two-year-old Marie Tueck worked as a “starter of elevators” at Meier and Frank in Portland, and she wrote “Born in U.S.” Maggie Kiss wrote that she arrived in the United States “on August 3, 1886” (her birthday), and several others chose this statement of their nationality and arrival.

Olive Siegenfuhr, at eighty-one the oldest U.S.-born Oregon registrant, described her occupation as the “owner of a farm near Jefferson, Oregon,” and noted that she was “native born” by the space asking for the date of her arrival in the United States. Registrants had to provide four copies of their picture to be used in the files and in their identification booklets. It may be that the women used a picture they had on hand or that the expense of a photograph precluded a choice. But some of the images suggest women’s resistance to the state’s definition of them as enemy aliens. Twenty-three-year-old Meta Koehring of Salem chose a picture of herself in her nurses’ uniform at her job at the Oregon State Hospital, a position that she had held since 1917, perhaps to emphasize her role as a contributing worker in the state. Her husband Herman Koehring also worked there. Emma Krumbein taught school in Larson, Oregon, during the 1914–1915 school year and in Fields, Oregon, from 1915 to 1917. Twenty-five
at the time of her registration, she was then working as a housekeeper at the Pacific Livestock Company of Andrews, in rural southeastern Oregon. She selected a picture of herself astride her horse in the countryside, possibly to emphasize her freedom in the face of restrictions.37

Grace Crocker Reimers had to redefine the state's classification of her as an enemy alien in her divorce proceedings. Paul Reimers left Portland on August 3, 1914, after Germany declared war on Russia and France, to join the German military. He left his wife Grace with an infant son to support. She filed for divorce in May 1918, after learning of the registration requirement for women, and complied with regulations and filed her registration on June 25, 1918. But she and her lawyers were successful in having her status placed on hold while waiting for her divorce decree. She identified herself in divorce and registration proceedings as an American woman abandoned by a husband loyal to Germany. This was particularly important because Grace Reimers worked as a clerk with the Oregon and Washington Railway and Navigation Company located in the waterfront zone prohibited to enemy aliens without a permit.38

Newspaper accounts suggested some women resisted the label of enemy alien by defining themselves as vigilant and loyal women who supported the United States in spite of the federal legislation that labeled them enemies. Many adopted and complied with the label and language of “100 percent Americanism” and narrowed the definition of female citizenship as hyper-loyalty at all costs. Many of them emphasized wartime service of male relatives for the United States. By focusing on a narrow definition of female citizenship, with the purpose of protecting themselves from the label of enemy alien, they narrowed the possibilities of other definitions of citizenship and resistance for women.39

Women's rights activists worked to pass the Cable Act in 1922, starting the process for independent nationality for U.S. women to retain their citizenship. But the Cable Act required husbands to be eligible for citizenship, thus leaving out men who were first-generation Asian immigrants. Their wives continued to lose their U.S. citizenship until legislation passed during the Second World War and its aftermath.

What can the experiences of some 400 Oregon women who, for six months from June to December 1918, were categorized and surveilled as enemy aliens because of their marriages to German citizen men, tell us about the history of citizenship?

First, that the story of women's citizenship rights is not a progressive line to the achievement of full civic power but one of victories and losses and differences based on race, ethnicity, nationality, and gender identity. Just as many Oregon women achieved the vote in 1912, women who married men who were not U.S. citizens lost their own citizenship and the right to vote with it.

The First World War also presented two conflicting visions of the rights and obligations of citizens: the responsibility to challenge government policies that one believes to be in conflict with constitutional ideals and social justice on the one hand and unquestioning loyalty to government actions on the other. Suffragists who protested during the conflict were jailed; Dr. Marie...
Equi of Portland was sent to San Quentin for criticizing the war effort and, as historians Michael Helquist and Kathleen Kennedy observe, received harsher treatment because of her lesbian identity. At least four Portland women sued the City of Portland for false imprisonment because they were interned at the Cedars Detention Hospital because they had venereal disease. The women “enemy aliens” of this study also protested government policies limiting female citizenship. Citizenship in theory and practice hung in the balance. 40

Oregon may have had an unusually large number of U.S.-born “enemy alien” women by marriage. They sought to define their roles as citizens and resisted state definitions and the use of state-sanctioned surveillance and even violence against them. Female citizenship related in deep ways to those most personal and intimate elements of identity: the right to determine one’s own nationality and allegiance, the right and obligation to critically analyze and challenge government polices carried out in the name of citizens, and the right to personal safety and control of one’s person. Women’s resistance to state policies that refused to acknowledge their autonomous decision making, loyalties, and citizenship and to a nation that was developing the “apparatus of surveillance” to challenge personal safety and control in the First World War is a vital part of the history of citizenship. As we ponder the contemporary challenges of the growth of the surveillance state and citizenship in an era of wars on terror and wars on women in this Summer of Citizenship series in 2013, their history and their resistance provide a critical historical context.

NOTES

The Oregon Historical Society 2013
“Summer of Citizenship” Series

by Eliza E. Canty-Jones


Citizenship and Belonging in Uncertain Times
by Marcella Mendoza


OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
“SUMMER OF CITIZENSHIP” SERIES

Through three major exhibits and a series of public talks, the Oregon Historical Society’s “Summer of Citizenship” offered Oregonians and visitors an opportunity to explore the history of citizenship and provided crucial new understandings of a concept that is central to all our lives.

FROM CITIZENS TO ENEMY ALIENS: OREGON WOMEN, MARRIAGE, AND THE SURVEILLANCE STATE DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR
Dr. Kimberly Jensen | Wednesday, July 10, 7 PM

ARE AMERICAN INDIANS FEDERAL AND STATE CITIZENS TODAY?
Prof. Robert J. Miller | Sunday, July 14, 2 PM

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT
Dr. Preston Pulliams | Tuesday, July 23, 7 PM

DEMOCRACY AND THE POLITICS OF THE BODY: FROM ANTI-VACCINATION TO ANTI-FLUORIDATION IN OREGON HISTORY
Dr. Robert D. Johnston | Wednesday, August 7, 12 PM

SPEAKING FOR THE FIRST AMERICANS: NIPO STRONGHEART AND THE CAMPAIGN FOR AMERICAN INDIAN CITIZENSHIP
Dr. Andrew H. Fisher | Wednesday, August 14, 12 PM

VOTING: INCLUSION, EXCLUSION, CONFUSION. WHERE DOES OREGON STAND?
Gov. Barbara Roberts | Sunday, August 18, 2 PM

BUILDING POLITICAL POWER: STORIES FROM THE EARLY DAYS OF GAY RIGHTS
Pat Young | Wednesday, August 21, 12 PM

MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE: RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY ON BEHALF OF URBAN COMMUNITIES
Nichole Maher | Tuesday, September 3, 7 PM

CITIZENSHIP AND BELONGING IN UNCERTAIN TIMES
Dr. Marcella Mendoza | Sunday, September 15, 2 PM
12. Ibid., 89.
13. Ibid., 90–91.

Speaking for the First Americans: Nipo Strongheart and the Campaign for American Indian Citizenship
by Andrew H. Fisher
The author would like to thank the staff of the Yakama Nation Library and Museum for assisting his research in the Strongheart Collection.

2. Strongheart Diary, January 6, 1920, Strongheart Collection.
4. Because of allotment or military service in World War I, many Native Americans were already citizens by 1920. Although Congress passed the Citizenship Act of 1922, unilaterally declaring all non-citizen Indians born within the territorial limits of the United States to be U.S. citizens, the effects of the act were "nebulous." The right to vote was not protected by federal statutes, for example. See Francis Paul Prucha, The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984, abridged edition), 275. John R. Wunder, "Retained by The People": A History of America Indians and the Bill of Rights (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 50–51.
7. Philip J. Deloria, Playing Indian (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). As Deloria uses it, the phrase "playing Indian" describes the Euro-American practice of appropriating Native dress and acting out Native roles, but here it is meant to suggest the strategic use of Indian imagery and identity by Native performers in order to engage white audiences.
8. Thomas G. Bishop to Margaret Hazen, December 12, 1922, folder 18–48, Strongheart Collection. Bishop told Strongheart to call the Office of Indian Affairs "the Indian Bureau System," rather than the "Indian Bureau" or "the government." "For that is what it is. There are a few good men and women working in the Indian Service, but the ones in control are the ones of the present inaugurated Indian Bureau System." Bishop to Strongheart, September 4, 1921, folder 20–63, Strongheart Collection.
9. Lucy Maddox, Citizen Indians: Native American Intellectuals, Race, and Reform (New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), 3–5. Lori Lynn Munz has studied the same period in Strongheart’s career and reached similar conclusions in her Ph.D. dissertation, "Representing Indians: The Melodrama of Native Citizenship in U.S. Popular Culture of the 1920s" (University of Iowa, 2006). As a literary scholar, however, she focuses her argument on the production of the "melodramatic mode" and the "melodramatic fallacy," which yields affective response from perceptions of Indigenous victims as virtuous and offers only a limited invitation to a praxis capable of challenging the mode's dehumanizing effects (v). This paper is my first step toward a full-length biography of Strongheart based on his extensive collection at the Yakama Nation Library and Museum, including unprocessed materials that Munz did not have access to at the time of her study.
10. There is considerable uncertainty surrounding the translation of “Nee-ha-Pouw,” or Nípo. Ní is to breathe in Lakota, and po is a command spoken by a man to more than one person. Nipo could thus be the imperative ‘live!, ’ or a contraction of nípo (dawn), which comes closer to the phonetic spelling Nee-Ha-Pouw. Still more intriguing is the possibility that the Sioux performers believed he was dead or thought it was funny to say so. According to Stephen Riggs’s Dakota-English Dictionary (Minneapo- lis: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1992), “ni-po” means dead. “This is probably Ojibwe, but frequently used by the Dakotas when speaking with white people who do not understand their language” (Riggs, 341).

It has also been suggested that the phoneme Nee-ha-Pouw constitutes a Lakota jake name given in reference to his fall from the horse: ni (breath) plus ipoh (contracted from ipogan, meaning to blow out, or blow away); the literal translation would be ‘breath knocked out of him.’ Strongheart’s translation of his Yakama name is more accurate, as Timná means ‘heart’ in the Yakama dialect of Sahaptin. My thanks to Mike Cowdrey, Susana Geliga, Todd Kerstetter, and the other members of the H-Annidian listserve who shared their opinions on this question.
13. Ibid.
17. Strongheart Diary, January 16, March 1, March 8, Strongheart Collection.
18. E.W. Van Horn to the Coit-Alber Lyceum Bureau, January 11, 1922, folder 22–6, Strongheart Collection.
20. Tom Kelly to Nipo Strongheart, March 20, 1922, folder 17–94, Strongheart Collection; Thomas Sloan to Nipo Strongheart, September 13, 1921, folder 20–46, Strongheart Collection.
21. M.E. Paget to Nipo Strongheart, June 28, 1921, folder 18–3, Strongheart Collection; Nipo Strongheart to J.R. Ellison, June 18, 1921, folder 18–8, Strongheart Collection; M.E. Paget to Nipo Strongheart, June 30, 1921, folder 18–9, Strongheart Collection; Thomas Bishop to Nipo Strongheart, March 27, 1922, folder 18–73, Strongheart Collection.

3. Viola Wilkening File, box 5, WWI Alien Registration Forms.

4. I do not know if this is representative of other states. Arizona and Kansas are also listed in other collections of registration files, but I have not examined them. See “Enemy Alien Registration Affidavits, 1917–1921” (Kansans) and “Alien Registration Affidavits, February 6, 1918–June 28, 1918” (Arizona). Some are digitized at the National Archives http://www.archives.gov/research/arc/topics/enemies/enemy. The press took note at the time. See “Women Register at Station; All Are Loyal to U.S.,” Portland News, June 18, 1918, 7; “400 Women Aliens are Registered,” Oregonian, June 21, 1918, 20. Half of the women registrants in Roseburg at the end of the first week were born in the United States. “Three Alien Women Registered to Date,” Roseburg Evening News, June 21, 1918, 1.


7. Bredbenner, Nationality of Her Own, 65–70.


9. “Mrs. Wright is Denied Office,” Coos Bay Times, January 26, 1916, 1. My thanks to Zachary Jones for sharing this case with me.

10. 1917 OR Laws 975 (February 5, 1917).


12. In the November 1914 election, Oregon voters removed the provision that had allowed residents who had taken out their first papers for naturalization and who met the other requirements for voting to cast a ballot. 1915 OR Laws 11 (December 3, 1914).


20. Ida Bendush File, box 4, WWI Alien Registration Forms.


22. “Registering Woman [sic] of Alien Nationality,” Salem Capital Journal, June 18, 1918, 7, and “German Alien Women to Register To Day;” See also “Three Alien Women Registered to Date.”


27. “German Women Register at Office of Police,” Eugene Morning Register, June 18, 1918, 5.


30. “Three Alien Women Registered to Date.”

31. “Cedars Inmate Aks Release,” Oregonian, November 24, 1918, 14; “Cedars Case is Fought,” Oregonian, April 13, 1918, 9; “Cedars Inmate Aks Release,” Oregonian, November 24, 1918, 14; “Detention Home, Mary Main Petition,” box 1, Folder 29, Baker Mayor Subject Files, AZ000-003, PARC.

32. “Detention Home, Mary Main Petition,” box 1, Folder 29, Baker Mayor Subject Files, AZ000-003, PARC.