

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR JEANNE BOYDSTON

Jeanne Boydston, Robinson-Edwards professor of American history, died on November 1, 2008, six weeks after she was diagnosed with lung cancer. A leading historian of women and gender in the early American republic, Jeanne began her studies as a scholar of English and American literature. She received a BA and master's degree in English from the University of Tennessee, where she wrote a master's thesis on Edith Wharton. Deeply engaged in the civil rights and feminist movements, she worked at the Pennsylvania Department of Education in the mid-1970s. There she dedicated herself to cultivating the educational equality promised to girls by Title IX and wrote a *Self-Study Guide to Sexism in Schools* (1973). Returning to academic studies at Yale University in 1977, she earned a PhD in American studies in 1984. She taught at Rutgers University-Camden for several years and then joined the University of Wisconsin's Department of History and the Women's Studies Program in 1988.

Jeanne's publications transformed the study of women's and labor history. Her 1990 book, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic*, selected as a Choice Outstanding Academic Book of 1991-1992, brilliantly argued that housework underpinned the growth of capitalism in antebellum America, but the discourse of separate spheres simultaneously naturalized women's work as invisible and non-productive. With Mary Kelley and Anne Margolis, she wrote *The Limits of Sisterhood: The Beecher Sisters on Women's Rights and Woman's Sphere* (1988). This book cogently examined how the three Beecher sisters shaped different visions of women's power and demonstrated how they used domestic ideology to call for social reform. Seminal articles on labor and women's reform movements only added to Jeanne's reputation in the field for her lucid and uncompromising insight into the impact of gender on the dynamics of race and class in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America.

As her career progressed, she became increasingly interested in international and theoretical approaches to history. Her last article, "Gender as a Question of Historical Analysis," appeared weeks after her death in the November 2008 issue of *Gender and History*. This piece challenges historians to reconsider the uses of gender as a universal category for understanding the workings of power.

For all of her renown as a scholar, Jeanne was a gifted and beloved teacher who remained deeply committed to bringing history in all its complexity to a wide audience and especially to students. To this end, she co-edited *Root of Bitterness: Documents in the Social History of American Women* (1996) and co-authored *Making a Nation* (2001), a widely-used textbook in U.S. history. A dynamic lecturer, she enthralled generations of students with her courses on the "Age of Jefferson and Jackson" and on early American women's history. As she wove together the diverse strands of American history, she engaged students in discussion, even in large lecture courses. In seminars, likewise, Jeanne crafted her own style. She never offered torrents of her own words and observations. Rather, she stepped back and led the students to their own insights, guiding them with her probing questions, wry sense of humor, and the sheer pull of her thoughtful attention. She paid her students the ultimate respect of expecting excellence from them. Known as a rigorous and sensitive advisor of graduate students, Jeanne mentored numerous PhD students and played a crucial role in making the University of Wisconsin-Madison the nation's leading program in American women's history. In 2002 she received the Chancellor's Distinguished Teaching Award of the University of Wisconsin.

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Jeanne will also be remembered as a kind and perceptive colleague. Always supportive, often playful (taking special delight in the vagaries of the English language), she spoke and acted with integrity, inspiring colleagues and students alike with her understated honesty. As an administrator, Jeanne stood out as an efficient and effective leader, especially as director of graduate studies and as long-time director of the Program in Gender and Women's History.

As much as Jeanne loved her work and cherished intellectual engagement, she always embraced and valued life beyond the university. With her acute eye for color and form, Jeanne became a talented artist. Her early pen and ink drawings gave way to more abstract works in oil, pastel, or watercolor. She loved New Mexico, and its landscapes informed the designs of her paintings. She became an appreciative hiker, especially in the American Southwest and in Peru; she and her partner Joy Newmann climbed the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu in 2007. With Joy she made their home on Lake Monona into a place of hospitality and beauty, where they enjoyed gardening, playing with their grandchildren, or sharing fine cooked food with friends on their deck overlooking the lake.

Jeanne was born on December 15, 1944, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the only daughter of Donnell and Juanita (Laymance) Boydston. Her parents and her brother James predeceased her. She is survived by Joy Newmann, her partner of nearly twenty years, her brother Robert, Joy's children, their four grandchildren, a nephew and two nieces and their families.

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

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