

Sabbatical Proposal

Patty Colman, History Professor

2017

Proposal Date: November 1, 2017
Proposed Leave: Spring, 2019
Previous Sabbaticals: 1
Seniority of Service: August, 2005

Introduction

In Spring of 2012 I was fortunate to be granted a sabbatical to write and publish an article focusing on the 19th century African American community in Los Angeles (see “John Ballard and the African American Community in Los Angeles, 1850-1905,” *Southern California Quarterly*, vol. 94, no. 2, 2012). This was the highlight of my professional career. Now, I hope to have a similar opportunity to further my skills as a historian, create a VCCCD partnership with the National Park Service, and serve our students by commemorating the centennial of the 19th Amendment and women’s suffrage.

Background

The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is the largest urban national park in the United States and encompasses 150,000 acres stretching from Hollywood to Point Mugu. The mission of the park is to preserve, protect, and manage the cultural and historical resources in the recreation area. Within the peaks and valleys of the mountains, Chumash sacred sites, Spanish ranchos, pioneer homesteads, and even 20th century movie sets stand as testimony to the past. Thousands of Moorpark College students live, work, or play within or near its boundaries, yet many are not aware of this rich cultural tradition that surrounds them.



As a graduate student at UCLA, I completed a cultural resources internship for the park and since then have never fully left the mountains. My former sabbatical project focused on a Kentucky slave who came to Los Angeles in the 1850s and eventually homesteaded in the mountains near Agoura. Due to my research, the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors petitioned

the USGS to officially rename a peak just off of Kanan Road in his honor: Ballard Mountain. Previously, for over one hundred years, the name of the mountain had included the pejorative word for African Americans.



The National Park Service (NPS) was grateful for this contribution to the cultural history of the Santa Monica Mountains, especially because they do not have a historian on staff and any cultural resource work must be contracted out or done on a volunteer basis. From time to time, their staff members contact me for advice or counsel about certain historical projects, but as a full time faculty member I am unable to devote much - if any- of my time.

In 2016 I met with Gary Brown, the Cultural Resources Manager of the Santa Monica Mountains, to discuss the park's cultural resources program and the need for a women's history study within the park (see attached letter). Much of the public interpretation in the park focuses on wealthy male landowners or even celebrities with ties to the mountains (Will Rogers State Park or Peter Straus Ranch, for example). With the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment fast approaching, we now have an ideal opportunity to uncover and celebrate the impact women have made in our community. Such a study would greatly benefit the NPS, the public, our college and students.

Proposal

During the Spring 2019 semester, I will:

1. **Collaborate with the National Park Service.** I will work closely with park management and staff to identify their research and interpretation needs. This will include collaboration with other parks as well as NPS headquarters in Washington DC to ensure the information is relevant and consistent with Department of Interior standards. I will also devote this time to learning about the NPS internship program and how our students can get involved.
2. **Research women in the Santa Monica Mountains.** My focus will be on women suffragists, property owners, or activists within the Santa Monica Mountains. I will conduct research in the NPS archive as well as local libraries such as the Urban Archives at CSUN, the Calabasas Historical Society, Stagecoach Museum, and Museum of Ventura County. I will also utilize government land records and the National Archives. I have already identified one woman who deserves further study: Viola Cliett. In 1914 she filed a homestead entry for 120 acres near Calabasas. However, her claim was disputed because she was a wife and mother, and was forced to spend the next five years defending her claim in court. In 1919, she won her case and the government granted her homestead. But Viola's case is unique, and may even national significance. Its stories like this that need to be uncovered, researched and made available to the public.
3. **Write a report and/or article for publication.** I will deliver a report to the NPS at the conclusion of my sabbatical that will be used by park service staff members for interpretation purposes. Thousands of children visit the park on field trips every year and

park rangers will be able to integrate my research into their presentations. Additionally, park signs, brochures, and website will be updated to include my research on women's history. Depending on the scope and focus, this research may also be developed into an article for publication. A study such as this has never been published, and local journals (*the Southern California Quarterly*, *Journal of Ventura County*) have already expressed interest in an article. Finally, my research materials and documents produced during the sabbatical will be donated to the NPS archives for future research purposes.



- 4. Organize women's suffrage commemoration events for Moorpark College.** I would like to organize events on campus to commemorate women's suffrage. While California granted women the right to vote in 1911, the constitutional amendment was not passed by Congress until 1919, with final ratification in 1920. My goal is to have a series of events planned in advance for which the community, faculty, staff and students celebrate this momentous occasion in our nation's history. Being able to plan well in advance will allow me to work with other faculty members, Associated Students and student clubs to create something truly special for our campus. Finally, planning in advance will give me ample time for promotion and publicity.

Benefit to the Students

Every semester, I teach three survey courses in United States history. This means that every year, I teach approximately 300 students about our nation's development. In the CORs for both courses, women, suffrage, and western settlement are key components of the course curriculum. Additionally, every year I teach at least three sections of History M137: *History of American Women*. In all these courses, not only are *white* women's experiences covered, but the experiences of *all* women should be represented. Through this project, I will gain valuable knowledge about local Native, Spanish, Mexican, and immigrant women that I can integrate into my classes. Most importantly, sharing my research can make what is sometimes perceived as a tedious discipline come alive for students by taking history out of the textbook and putting it right into their own backyard. As we now all know, there is a direct relationship between student success and curriculum that is relevant to the student's own life and community. There is also a correlation between student success and hands-on learning. This sabbatical project will allow me to develop assignments for students to visit historic sites in the Santa Monica Mountains; literally walking in the footsteps of female pioneers. It will also educate and hopefully inspire students to see the relevance of national movements in their own personal lives.

Benefit to the College and District

As part of this sabbatical, I would like to formalize a relationship between the NPS and Moorpark College. There are numerous opportunities for student internships and service learning projects beyond the cultural resources such as history, anthropology, or archaeology. Students majoring in biology, geology, environmental science, marketing, and even education could find opportunities within the park. Such collaboration fulfills one aspect of the Moorpark College mission statement to "collaborate with industry and educational partners." Our college

vision statement also values an innovative learning environment by promoting positive citizenship through “purposeful and proactive involvement in a local and global society.” Finally, Moorpark College has an excellent reputation as a transfer institution, and four year universities increasingly expect that our students will have exposure to research methods and “real world” experience. Getting students to explore and work in their local national park serves all of these goals and strengthens the VCCCD standing in California.

Benefit to the Faculty Member

Anything that benefits the college and students benefits me as a faculty member. A sabbatical experience such as this will help me to be a better teacher, mentor and colleague because I will be able to bring new research, assignments and learning opportunities to Moorpark College. These new opportunities will improve student success and equity. Additionally, after years of being in the classroom, it is incredibly valuable and vital for historians to practice their craft. Conducting original research and writing for publication hones my skills as a historian and helps me guide students in their own projects. It will also be greatly beneficial for me to network with other historians, archivists and agencies during this project, furthering my historical knowledge and helping me stay current in the field.

Implementation, Dissemination and Time-Line

At the conclusion of the sabbatical, I will complete a written report for the NPS, which could also be developed into an article for publication in an academic journal. I will also plan activities to commemorate the 19th amendment at Moorpark College, which will be implemented in 2019-2020. My research can be shared with the campus during Multicultural Day and I will promote NPS internship opportunities throughout Professional Development Week and events sponsored by the Career Transfer Center, such as “Major Awareness Week” and Job Fair.

Collaborate with the National Park Service: January – February 2019

Research women in the Santa Monica Mountains: February – March 2019

Write a report and/or article for publication: March – April 2019

Organize women's suffrage commemoration events for Moorpark College: April – May 2019
(implementation in 2019-2020 to coincide with the centennial)

