

Pine Cone Profiles – March 2022

Ruth Hosey Karbach

It would take some doing to relate history with social work and homelessness— unless you're as inspired as Ruth Hosey Karbach, our Pine Cone Profile for March. A graduate of University of Texas-Arlington, Ruth spent a career with people in need: as a juvenile probation officer working in Corpus Christi, as an intake social worker stationed in Fort Worth, and as a surveyor for the U.S. Public Health Service, assigned all over the United States. But whenever she could, Ruth took on the past: heading an oral history project for Texas Tech, designing, and installing exhibits at a historic house museum, and serving as librarian and collections curator for the Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame.

Time eventually provided her the opportunity “to retire from working for others and to focus on my passionate interest in Fort Worth and Texas women’s history,” she recalls, and the skills and information she had developed came with her. “I tend to biographical approach,” she states, “because of my long experience in writing social histories. These reports often were court documents and had to be accurate just as historical research has to be well-documented.” That such expertise paid off is evident in her contributions to two significant books about Texas women, *Grace and Gumption: Stories of Fort Worth Women* and *Texas Women: Their Histories, Their Lives*. Here in her own words is the East Texas Historical Association Pine Cone Profile for March, Ruth Kosey Harbach.

Where do you live?

My husband, Armin. I. Karbach Jr., and I moved to Fort Worth in 1977 and bought a home in the historic Ryan Place neighborhood. I still live there.

How long have you been a member of East Texas Historical Association, what caused you to join, and what has kept you a member?

I Joined in 2015 because I had written about women with East Texas roots in my two chapters in *Grace and Gumption: Stories of Fort Worth Women* and in my contribution on Ellen Lawson Dabbs, M. D. to *Texas Women: Their Histories, Their Lives*. But most of all, I joined because Debbie Liles recommended this as the best regional association. The emphasis on women’s history has kept me in the ETHA.

Of the three Texas regional historical associations whose conferences I have attended, the East Texas Historical Association has the highest level of scholarship and the most active and the most numerous scholars of women's history.

How do you usually pursue history: reading books/articles? Writing columns? attending conferences? watching documentaries? filming documentaries? doing research? exploring graveyards? teaching classes? developing exhibits? organizing programs? pursuing genealogies? administering courses? writing books? what else?

Usually, I pursue history through original sources in archives, private collectors, or online. Books and authorities on a particular period help me contextualize my local and state findings. Currently my goal is to produce a history of the Fort Worth Medical School, 1894-1918, as an integrated story of its women and men, from graduate physicians to educators. My research topics completed to date are encapsulated in power points: "The Lady is a Doctor" and "The Rise and Fall of the Fort Worth School of Medicine."

Is there any period of history that has specifically interested you? What was it and why?

My own family background provided my focus on the period of 1880-1920 because my storyteller grandfather was born in 1872, and my herbalist/midwife grandmother, the mother of thirteen children, was born in 1880. This transformative period fascinates me because of the changing role of women, its social reform movements, and its professionalization of the social work and medical fields.

Who is your favorite historical person and what is your favorite historical period?

Since my favorite historical personality is the one that I am working on at the time, I did not pick one. Also, I could be happy to be set down in an everyday event in any of the eras I write about just to better interpret and understand the times.