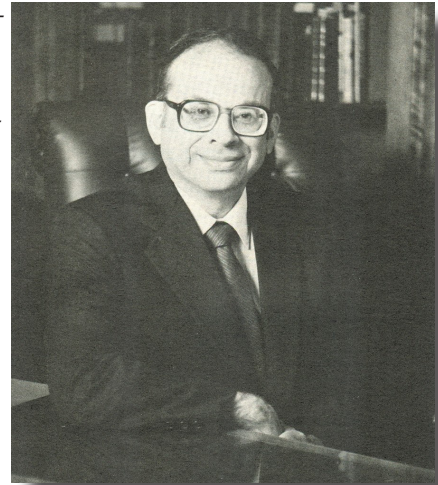


Gene Gressley (1931-)

The twenty-fourth president of the Western History Association (1984-1985), Gene Gressley, had a remarkable career as an historian and archivist. The son of a Congregationalist minister, Gressley earned a bachelor's degree from Manchester College in 1952, an M.A. degree from Indiana University in 1956, and a doctorate at the University of Oregon in 1964 where he studied under Earl Pomeroy. He received the Everett Eugene Edwards Award from the Agricultural History Society in 1958 and a National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship in 1966. He has also served on the editorial boards of the *Western History Quarterly*, *Great Plains Quarterly*, and *Pacific Historical Review*.



Gressley began his career as assistant state historian at the Colorado State Historical Society before joining the faculty at the University of Wyoming in 1956. He also served as the director of American Studies from 1969 until the early 1980s and as assistant to the president at the University of Wyoming from 1973 to 1988. Although he loved teaching, his work with the American Heritage Center was the highlight of his career. When he first arrived, the center only had 284 collections. By 1988, the American Heritage Center had grown to include a staff of 24 employees and over 13,000 collections, including 90,000 cubic feet of manuscripts.

Gressley also made significant contributions to the field of Western history through his numerous publications. Greatly influenced by his doctoral advisor, Earl Pomeroy, Gressley focused his research on connecting Western history to other national issues. While he authored a number of works, *Bankers and Cattlemen* (1966) is the best example of his attempt to reorient the field. It is an economic history of the cattle ranching industry that connects the activities of eastern financiers with events at the local level. As president of the Western History Association, he sought to encourage new scholars to continue this process.

Gene Gressley and Joyce Elinor Burrous were married in 1952 and had two children together. After a long battle with cancer, Joyce Gressley passed away in 2000. He was remarried to Mae Wygant in 2002. Today, they live in Southern Oregon.

Sources:

Robert Bond, "Bare Legs and Pinafores: The American Heritage Center," *Wilson Library Bulletin* 62 (January 1988) in the Wilson Web Database; "Gene M. Gressley, Contemporary Authors Online in Gale Database; and Gene M. Gressley, discussion with the author, December 2011.

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