

RUBY ORAM, PhD
social historian & public historian
American women, labor, and urban reform
www.rubyoram.com

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENT

Associate Professor of Practice (September 2026—present)
History Department, Texas State University, San Marcos, TX

Assistant Professor of Practice (Fall 2020—August 2026)
History Department, Texas State University, San Marcos, TX

EDUCATION

PhD, History (US and Public History), Loyola University Chicago (May 2020)
Diss: “Useful for Life: Women, Girls, and Vocational School Reform in Chicago, 1880-1930”
Committee: Timothy Gilfoyle (chair), Elizabeth Fraterrigo, Elliott Gorn, Kate Rousmaniere
Honors: Distinction

BA, American Studies, DePaul University (May 2012)
Honors: Summa Cum Laude

PUBLICATIONS

Book – Ruby Oram, *Home Work: Gender, Child Labor, and Education for Girls in Urban America, 1870-1930* (University of Chicago Press, 2025). [Hyperlink](#).

Review Essay – Oram, “The New Revisionists: Recent Histories of Education, Inequality, and Urban Schooling.” *Journal of Urban History* (January 2023): 1-7. [Hyperlink](#).

Chapter – Oram, “A School Built Around the Girl: Finding Girlhood to Diversify Chicago’s Built Environment.” *A Girl Can Do: Recognizing and Representing Girlhood*, ed. Tiffany R. Isselhardt (Vernon Press, 2022), 159-174. [Hyperlink](#).

Article – Oram, “Superior Working Women: The Contested Meaning of Vocational Education for Girls.” *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* (July 2021): 392-410. [Hyperlink](#).

Report – Michael Mims and Ruby Oram, “Chicago Vocational School, Chicago, IL.” Property SG100007996, National Register of Historic Places, NPS Form 10-900. March 2022. [Hyperlink](#).

Report – Ruby Oram, “The Lucy Flower Technical High School for Girls, Chicago, IL.” Property SG100000960, National Register of Historic Places, NPS Form 10-900. June 2017.

MANUSCRIPT IN PROGRESS

(tentatively) *Virtue on Patrol: Women, Temperance, and the American Carceral State, 1873-1933*

GRANTS AND AWARDS

- Research Enhancement Program (REP) Grant, Texas State University, \$12,000 (2026)
- Undergraduate Research, Learning, and Community (URLC) Engagement Grant, College of Liberal Arts, Texas State University, \$5,000 (2025)
- Distinction in Service Award, College of Liberal Arts, Texas State University (2025)
- Research Enhancement Program (REP) Grant, Texas State University, \$8,000 (2024)
- Presidential Distinction Award in Teaching, College of Liberal Arts, Texas State University, \$2,000 (2023)
- Golden Apple Teaching Award, College of Liberal Arts, Texas State University (2023)
- Scholars Residency, Newberry Library, Chicago, IL (2019-2020)

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

Organization of American Historians, Philadelphia, PA, April 2026

- Paper: "Carceral Education, Gender, and Progressive-Era Reform."

History of Education Society Conference, Providence, RI, November 2025

- Book Panel on *Home Work: Gender, Child Labor, and Education for Girls*.

History of Education Society Conference, Providence, RI, November 2025

- Paper: "Educating the Criminal Drunkard: How the Woman's Christian Temperance Union Reformed Gilded Age Prisons."

Organization of American Historians, Chicago, IL, April 2025

- Roundtable: "Chicago in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era: A Retrospective."

History of Education Society Conference, Chicago, IL, November 2024

- Paper: "Prevent Girls from Going Astray: Vocational Guidance Counseling as Vice Prevention in Progressive-Era Chicago."

History of Education Society Conference, Atlanta, GA, November 2023

- Panel Organizer: "Regulating Sexuality and Health in Progressive-Era Education."
- Paper: "Fit for Motherhood: Regulating Girls' Health and Labor in Progressive-Era Public Schools."

Urban History Association Conference, Pittsburgh, PA, October 2023

- Panel Organizer: "Girlhood and Urban Space."
- Paper: "Girlhood and Child Labor Reform in Chicago."

Texas Real Places Conference, Austin, TX, February 2023

- Panel Organizer: "Undergraduate Engagement and The Hayden Springs Freedom Colony."
- Presented with an undergraduate student, Matthew Medina, and local partner, Terri Myers.

Berkshire Conference of Women Historians, Santa Clara, CA, June 2022

- Panel Organizer: "More Than Maternalism: Rethinking Women's Activism in the Progressive Era."
- Paper: "New Homemakers: Educating Chicago Girls for Modern Motherhood, 1890-1915."

History of Education Society Conference, Baltimore, MD, November 2022

- Paper: "Higher Vocations: Gender, Labor, and the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917."

Chicago History Museum, Urban History Seminar, Chicago, IL, February 2020

- Invited talk: "A Girl's Preparation for Life: How Women Reformed Vocational Education in Chicago."

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

American Historical Association
Berkshire Conference of Women's Historians
History of Education Society
National Council on Public History
National Women's Studies Association
Organization of American Historians
Society for Historians of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era
Urban History Association

SELECTED PUBLIC HISTORY PROJECTS

Bethany Cemetery Association Project, Austin, TX (August 2025 – Present)

A genealogical research project on Bethany Cemetery, Austin's first independent Black cemetery, resulted in the installation of QR code graveside historical markers for visitors.

- Community Partner: Bethany Cemetery Association; Story + Reason.
- Grant Funding: URLC Engagement Program, College of Liberal Arts, TXST (\$5,000).

San Bernard National Historic District Project, Austin, TX (December 2024 – 2025)

Researched historic Black families, churches, and community groups on San Bernard towards the designation of a new National Historic District.

- Community Partners: Bob Ward, Chairman, Travis County Historical Commission; Emily Payne, President, HHM Historic Preservation Consultants; Dr. Tara Dudley, Assistant Professor of Architecture, UT Austin.
- Grant Funding: \$15,000 Certified Local Government Grant from the National Park Service.

Travis County Freedom Colonies Project, Austin, TX (August – December 2024)

A genealogical and property history research project on Black landownership in Travis County to document the sites of independent Freedom Colonies after the Civil War.

- Community Partner: Bob Ward, Chairman, Travis County Historical Commission.

Historic Black Businesses of East 6th Street Project, Austin, TX (August – December 2023)

A research project on historic Black businesses of East 6th Street in downtown Austin before the 1928 Master Plan enforced racial segregation through zoning reform.

- Community Partner: Bob Ward, Chairman, Travis County Historical Commission.

Fredericksburg Black Cemetery Project (August – December 2022)

Family history project to support the preservation of the segregated municipal cemetery in Fredericksburg, TX in collaboration with descendants.

- Community Partner: Dr. Paul Phillips III, descendant of the Phillips family buried in Der Stadt Friedhof.

Hayden Springs Freedom Colony Project (January – September 2022)

A genealogical and property history research project on the history of Hayden Springs, a newly discovered Freedom Colony near Manor, TX.

- Community Partners: Bob Ward, Chairman, Travis County Historical Commission; Terri Myers, President, Preservation Central.

- Grant Funding: A \$15,000 Certified Local Government Grant from NPS.
- [Hayden Springs Report at Travis County Archives](#)

MEDIA COVERAGE OF PUBLIC HISTORY PROJECTS

- “Black Cemetery Section Gains Historical Marker,” *Fredericksburg Standard*, May 31, 2023. [Hyperlink](#).
- “Is Chicago Vocational School Headed for the National Register of Historic Places?” *Chicago Sun Times*, July 7, 2022. [Hyperlink](#).
- John-Carlos Estrada, “Texas State Students Uncover History Behind Austin’s First Gay-Friendly Public Space,” *CBS Austin*, August 12, 2021. [Hyperlink](#).

TEACHING AT TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Undergraduate Courses

HIST 1320: US History 1865 to Present
HIST 3366: Introduction to Public History
HIST: Material Culture in America

Graduate Courses

HIST 5372: Museums and Material Culture
HIST 5374: Public History Internship
HIST 5376: Local and Community History

ADVISING

MA Thesis Committees

Chair, “The Vasquez Cemetery: A Landmark of Persisting Ranchero Tradition.” Emma Gomez. History, Texas State University. (In Progress).

Member, Master's Thesis, “The Austin Chicano Huelga.” Matthew Medina, History, Texas State University. (In Progress).

Member, Master's Thesis, “Remembering Emma Tenayuca’s Political Legacy Beyond the 1938 Pecan Sheller’s Strike.” Alejandra Navarrete, History, Texas State University. (December 2025).

Chair, Honor’s Thesis. “The Practice of Historic Preservation: The San Bernard Historic District.” Honor’s College, Texas State University. Katherine Hughes, History, Honor’s College, Texas State University. (April 2025).

Member, Master's Thesis, “Central Texas Farmers Adjusting to COVID-19: The Intersection of Oral History and Crisis.” Emma Long, History, Texas State University. (December 2024).

Member, Master’s Thesis. “As Long as Life Endures: Oakwood Cemetery and Reconstruction Austin.” Estevan Baldarrama, History, Texas State University (August 2024).

Chair, Master’s Thesis. “The Accessible Museum: American Exhibit Design and Federal Disability Legislation, 1968-Present.” Colleen Cawthon, History, Texas State University.

Chair, Master’s Thesis. “Commemorating Spindletop: Memory and Community Identity in Beaumont, TX.” Railey Tassin, History, Texas State University. (November 2022).

Chair, Honor’s Thesis. “The Growing Importance of the Interactive Exhibition in History Museums.” Honor’s College, Texas State University. Melissa Liesch, History, Honor’s College, Texas State University. (May 2021).

Member, Master’s Thesis. “The Lost Gonza Band and the Creation of the Live Music Capital of the World, 1960s-1980s.” Avery Armstrong, History, Texas State University. (November 2022).

Member, Master’s Thesis. “Sixth Street: Renewal and Preservation.” Nicole Sutton, History, Texas State University. (November 2022).

Member, Master’s Thesis. “Might as Well Try to Direct the Wind: A Study of Women, Labor, and the Millinery Industry in Dallas, 1900-1940.” Chelsea Morris, History, Texas State

University. (July 2022).
Member, Master's Thesis. "Given Peanuts and Told to Make a Circus: The Living History Programs at Philmont Scout Ranch, 1973-2019." Amber Hullum, History, Texas State University. (April 2022).

MA Exam Committees

Chair, Comprehensive Exam. Riley Apel, History, Texas State University (In Progress).
Chair, Comprehensive Exam. Therese Espiritu, History, Texas State University (August 2025).
Chair, Comprehensive Exam. Andrew Ward, History, Texas State University (In Progress).
Chair, Comprehensive Exam. Jediah Clark, History, Texas State University (May 2025).
Member, Comprehensive Exam. Crystal Dominguez, Texas State University (May 2025).
Member, Comprehensive Exam. Madelyn Patlan, History, Texas State University (Dec 2024).
Chair, Comprehensive Exam. Jared van Auken, History, Texas State University (Fall 2023).
Chair, Comprehensive Exam. Alyssa Aguilera, History, Texas State University (Fall 2023).
Chair, Comprehensive Exam. Blakley McCullough, History, Texas State University (May 2023).
Chair, Comprehensive Exam. Bridget Dunbar, History, Texas State University (May 2023).
Chair, Comprehensive Exam. Cortney Smith, History, Texas State University. (May 2023).
Member, Comprehensive Exam. Hannah Martin, History, Texas State University (May 2023).
Member, Comprehensive Exam. Sarah Habeeb, History, Texas State University. (May 2022).
Member, Comprehensive Exam. Mallory Kazsa, History, Texas State University. (May 2022).
Member, Comprehensive Exam. Jaclyn Zapata, History, Texas State University. (Dec 2022).

Historical Marker Projects

Supervisor, Texas State Historical Marker Application, "The Manhattan Club," Amber Hullum and Railey Tassin, 2021. Accepted.
Supervisor, Texas State Historical Marker Application, "Lydia Street Fire Station," Patrick Bassett, Nicole Sutton, 2021. Accepted.
Supervisor, Texas State Historical Marker Application, "Delashwah Drug Store," Jared Van Auken, 2023. Submitted.

SERVICE TO THE DEPARTMENT

Chair, Public History Committee (September 2026 – Present)

Chair of the public history graduate faculty. I oversee program requirements, course rotations, and pedagogical agendas for the public history graduate concentration.

Member, Public History Committee (Fall 2020 – August 2026)

I co-coordinate and serve as one of three graduate faculty advisors for the Public History Graduate Concentration. My duties include curricular planning, graduate mentoring, and community outreach. Notable committee service also includes:

- Search Committee, Tenure-Track Public History and Documentary Film (May-Dec 2025)
- Search Committee, Tenure-Track Museum Studies and History (Sep 2024–April 2025)
- Co-organizer, Public History Day: Celebrating 25 Years at Texas State (April 2023)
- Member, Ad Hoc Committee on Promotion for Professors of Practice (2020–2021)
- Member, Ad Hoc Committee on Evaluation of Public History Scholarship (2020–2021)

Coordinator, Public History Internship Program (January 2022 – Present)

I coordinate, advise, and set requirements for all graduate student internships in the Public History Concentration. I've advised 37 graduate student interns in our program and strengthened partnerships with the Texas Historical Commission, LBJ Museum, Preservation Texas, National Museum of the Pacific War, and the Travis County Historical Commission (CHC).

PUBLIC HISTORY SERVICE

- Site Coordinator, Preservation Austin Historic Homes Tour. Appointed. 2024-2025
- Voting Member, Merit Awards Jury, Preservation Austin. Appointed. Fall 2023
- Textbook Reviewer, *Writing Public Histories: Intersections in Theory and Practice* (London: Bloomsbury Press). Appointed. July 2022.
- Reviewer / Consultant, *Women's and Gender History Interpretive Guide*, Office of Interpretation and Education, National Park Service (NPS). Appointed. June 2021.
- Chapter Reviewer, *A Girl Can Do: Recognizing and Representing Girlhood* (Anthology, Vernon Press. December 2020 – February 2021.
- Board Member, Pioneer Farms Living History Museum, Austin, TX. Appointed. March 2021 – November 2022.

