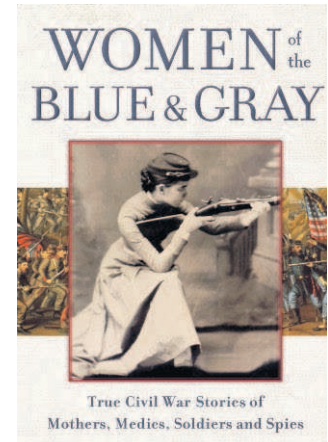


# WOMEN of the WEST



COURTESY MARIANNE MONSON  
Marianne Monson's upcoming book, "Women of the Blue & Gray: True Civil War Stories of Mothers, Medics, Soldiers and Spies," is scheduled to be published in fall 2018.

Marianne Monson, author of 'Frontier Grit,' shares stories of overlooked pioneers for Women's History Month

COLIN MURPHEY PHOTO  
Marianne Monson's book "Frontier Grit" on display at Lucy's Books in Astoria

By HEATHER DOUGLAS  
FOR COAST WEEKEND

Author Marianne Monson has redefined the word "pioneer" in her recent book "Frontier Grit: The Unlikely True Stories of Daring Pioneer Women," a collection of 12 mini-biographies about lesser-known women whose stories have been overlooked in the traditional male-centric narrative of the American West.

Kicking off Women's History month, Monson will present a talk on Donaldina Cameron, one of the stories featured in "Frontier Grit," at the Wit & Wisdom Thursday Lecture Series at Fort George Brewery 7 p.m. March 1 in the Lovell Showroom.

Cameron was a New Zealand woman who rescued Chinese women near the turn of the 20th century in Chinatown, San Francisco, when sex trafficking was rampant.

"I felt a very deep connection with her; she is absolutely one of my heroes," Monson said. "I want my own daughter to grow up with those stories."

Monson will also be speaking about pioneer-era women at an Astoria Library talk 3 to 4 p.m. Saturday, March 3, and will finish with a book signing at Lucy's Books 5 to 8 p.m. March 10 during Astoria's Second Saturday Art Walk.

Monson remembers her own experience learning about women's history growing up. "You would hear about three amazing women — maybe Sacajawea, Betsy Ross and Elizabeth Katie Stanton.

"It just gives you the impression — or



Marianne Monson at Lucy's Books in Astoria

COLIN MURPHEY PHOTO

at least it gave me the impression — that there were three cool women, and everyone else stayed home," she said, laughing.

Women's contributions have historically been overlooked, undervalued and intentionally and unintentionally suppressed, she said. "It's important that we put them back into the narrative."

## Adventures into the unknown

When Monson's editor at Shadow Mountain Publishing first proposed the idea of writing a nonfiction book about pioneer women, Monson felt a little daunted by the research but fascinated by the topic.

"My grandmother raised me on pioneer stories," she said. "She was a huge family

## WHERE TO SEE MARIANNE MONSON

- Wit & Wisdom Thursday Lecture Series, Fort George Brewery Lovell Showroom (Duane and 14th streets), 7 p.m. March 1,
- Talk at Astoria Library (450 10th St.), 3 to 4 p.m. Saturday, March 3
- "Frontier Grit" book signing, Lucy's Books (348 12th St.), 5 to 8 p.m. March 10, during Astoria's Second Saturday Art Walk

history buff and just a strong woman herself. I gravitated towards the stories of strong pioneer women in our family."

One of the reasons Shadow Mountain felt compelled to tell these stories is that "western history is predominately told from a male perspective," said Heidi Taylor Gordon, publishing manager at Shadow Mountain, a Salt Lake City-based company.

Monson's first task was choosing the women to write about. She combed through old books and biographies looking for women no one had heard of but who had done amazing things nonetheless.

"I do love women like Sacajawea, but I was specifically looking for women without name recognition," she said.

Monson also looked for women who had gone on a physical journey as well as a "tendency to push against boundaries,