

A Lecture by Historian Douglas D. Alder

by Washington County Historical Society at Pioneer Courthouse Courtroom, 7 pm, January 9, 2020

The Astounding Achievements of Juanita Brooks



Juanita Leavitt Pulsipher in 1928 with her son Leonard Ernest Jr.

Juanita, the second child of Dudley Henry Leavitt and Mary Hafen Leavitt, was born on January 15, 1898 in Bunkerville, Nevada. She married Ernest Pulsipher on October 10, 1919, just over a year before he died of cancer. The young widow enrolled in Dixie Normal College in St. George before earning a degree from Brigham Young University. She began teaching English and debate at Dixie Junior College in 1925, becoming Dean of Women. Juanita was able to take a sabbatical in 1928-1929. She used that opportunity to obtain a master's degree from New York City's prestigious Columbia University. In 1933, hard times compelled the LDS church to discontinue its financial support of Dixie Junior College. The citizen's of St. George appealed to the State of Utah to take over funding. A deal was reached and State Board of Education funding would commence in 1935. The contributions of local citizens were required to bridge the two year shortfall. Thirty-five year old Juanita resigned her position and married Washington County sheriff Will Brooks, whose wife had died the previous year. Their family consisted of Juanita's son, Will's four sons, and a daughter and three sons born to the couple over the next five years. Juanita served as stake relief society president from 1933 to 1939. Her first article was published by *Harper's Magazine* in 1934. She went on to publish sixteen books, serve on the board of the Utah Historical Society for 24 years and continue teaching English at Dixie College.

Doug Alder served as president of Dixie College from 1986 to 1993. *He wrote A History of Washington County: From Isolation to Desination* (1996) with Juanita's son Karl Brooks. Doug's *A Century of Dixie State College of Utah* was published in 2010. Alder wrote *All That Was Promised: The Saint George Temple and the Unfolding of the Restoration* in 2013 with Richard Schmutz and Blaine Yorgason.

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