

THE CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON VERMONT

RESEARCH_IN_PROGRESS_SEMINAR_#228

“Antebellum Women’s History through the Journal of Phebe Orvis Eastman”

By **Susan Ouellette**

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Wednesday, April 7, 2010, at 7:30 p.m.

Memorial Lounge, Waterman Building

University of Vermont

This project is a social history of early 19th-century (American) rural women’s lives as revealed through the journal of **Phebe Orvis Eastman**, whose ten-year chronicle will be incorporated as part of the text. Orvis’ journal, begun in 1820, contains the daily details of her work, experiences and, more importantly, her personal observations. A keen observer, Orvis chronicled the mundane as well as the unusual happenings of her family, neighborhood, and beyond. The Orvis journal is unique for its time; the entries are rich with the details of her internal intellectual and emotional life as well as her work. A Quaker, she recorded the details of her faith and the upheavals of religiosity that occurred around her in the tumult of the Second Great Awakening. A young bride on the New York frontier, Orvis witnessed the birth of Manifest Destiny in the founding of new communities on the New York frontier; she also shared the homesickness of emigrants for the people and places left behind. In short, the details of her life as they are presented in the journal give an unusual opportunity to revisit a world that we can only see “through a glass darkly.”

Susan Ouellette, chair of the Department of History at St. Michael’s College, received a Ph.D. from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Her teaching encompasses early America and includes courses on Women in American Society, Native Peoples of North America, and History of the American Family. An enthusiasm for local history has involved her in uncovering fragments from the lives of several area women, including Phebe Orvis Eastman, her current research focus and the subject of several recent publications.



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