

Woman Suffrage Movement in Oregon

By

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In 1912 Oregon voters were asked to vote on the issue of woman suffrage for the sixth time. Woman suffrage had never been of crucial importance to Oregonians and it had been defeated five times since 1884. For nearly twenty years suffragists argued fruitlessly to Oregon men that women should vote because it was their right as Americans. These failed campaigns had also been plagued by tensions and disagreements between national suffrage leaders, like Susan Anthony and Anna Howard Shaw, and local suffrage leader Abigail Scott Duniway over organization of the suffrage movement in Oregon. The suffrage campaign for the 1912 election took on a completely new public image. The National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) took over the campaign and sought to make Oregonians excited about woman suffrage in a very public way by hosting parades, rallies, and public speeches, and by distributing suffrage information. Woman suffrage leagues were created all over the state and suffragists began to argue increasingly that votes for women would lead to an improved moral condition for the state. This paper will argue that it was these modifications to the approach of woman suffrage in Oregon that finally led to success in 1912. This will be demonstrated through the analysis of woman suffrage ads, articles, and editorials printed in two Oregon newspapers, the *Wallowa Sun* and the *Corvallis Daily Gazette-Times*, as well as the examination of the works of historians.

The woman suffrage movement had its roots in the abolitionist movement in the mid-nineteenth century. Categories of citizenship were being questioned in the pre-Civil War United States. Whether African Americans would be considered citizens and exactly what rights should be extended to them was debated.

Women abolitionists hoped that women would also be included in the numbers to be given citizenship and the vote.<sup>1</sup>

Suffrage at this time was a matter to be decided by each state. In 1869 two suffrage organizations, the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) and the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), were founded and for twenty years were divided over what tactics should be used by the suffragists. The AWSA focused on enfranchising women on a state-by-state basis. They hoped to elicit as little opposition as possible and they did not campaign for any further women's rights. The NWSA, under the leadership of Susan Anthony, on the other hand fought for a national Constitutional amendment. Anthony believed that suffrage was an important priority for women, but that other women's issues were also important.<sup>2</sup> In February, 1890 the two organizations held their first joint convention and became the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA).<sup>3</sup>

By this time Oregon suffragists had already been campaigning for the franchise for two decades, and had already suffered one unsuccessful attempt in 1884. In 1871 Oregonian Abigail Scott Duniway published the first edition of the newspaper the *New Northwest*.<sup>4</sup> In the same year NWSA President Susan Anthony visited Oregon for the first time. Anthony visited the northwest again, but Duniway established herself as the face and the heart of Oregon's fight for woman suffrage. At this time Portland was the leading city in the northwest as an important trading and

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<sup>1</sup> Flexner, Eleanor. *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1975), 145.

<sup>2</sup> Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 156.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

<sup>4</sup> Moynihan, Ruth Barnes. *Rebel for Rights: Abigail Scott Duniway* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 89.

shipping center, and was competitive with cities of its size throughout the country. It also boasted one saloon for every sixty citizens and opium use and prostitution were widespread. Duniway sought through her paper to eliminate the rampant vice of the region.<sup>5</sup>

From speaking with Portlanders Anthony concluded that woman suffrage was not a crucial concern in Oregon. She determined from her travels within the state that Oregonians were concerned with underpopulation and their primitive economy. She noted that they gave their attention to agriculture, industry, railroads and investments, and that they discussed the potential of Oregon's vast natural resources.<sup>6</sup> In 1871 when Anthony and Duniway began their first campaign in Oregon neither the Republican nor Democratic Party had a strong dominance in the state and agitation for woman suffrage and temperance was on the rise.<sup>7</sup> Anthony recognized that she had a good opportunity to extend the franchise to Oregon women.

In 1874 the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was established and initially opposed woman suffrage as being against true womanhood. They soon joined forces with the suffrage movement, but tensions between the WCTU in the northwest and Duniway never ceased.<sup>8</sup> The strong relationship between woman suffrage and prohibition proved to be detrimental in the eastern suffrage campaigns.<sup>9</sup> Duniway wanted to evoke as little opposition to woman suffrage as possible, and in the absence of Anthony and NWSA she instituted a "still hunt" campaign. She

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<sup>5</sup> Moynihan, *Rebel for Rights*, 89-90.

<sup>6</sup> Edwards, G. Thomas. *Sowing Good Seeds: The Northwest Suffrage Campaigns of Susan B. Anthony*. (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1990): 21.

<sup>7</sup> Edwards, *Sowing Good Seeds*, 24, 27.

<sup>8</sup> Moynihan, *Rebel for Rights*, 132.

<sup>9</sup> McDonagh, Eileen L., & Price, H. Douglas, "Woman Suffrage in the progressive Era: Patterns of Opposition and Support in Referenda Voting, 1910-1918," *The American Political Science Review* 79, no. 2 (1985): 418.

maintained that this was the only way to win the vote and she lobbied politicians privately and did not incite public opposition through “hurrah” tactics such as parades and rallies.<sup>10</sup> Despite her efforts, Duniway’s combative attitude did not win her any popularity and woman suffrage was defeated again in Oregon in 1900.

The prohibitionists’ concern that enfranchisement was not a feminine undertaking characterized the major thrust of anti-suffragism in Oregon. Duniway attempted to keep woman suffrage from being a Christian reform in order to increase her support. She was accused of being hostile to the church. Her religious and personal independence threatened religious and gender parameters.<sup>11</sup> Prohibitionist groups posed the most aggressive opposition to woman suffrage in Oregon. Corrupt election practices were occurring which increased Duniway’s loyalty to the “still hunt” so as not to stir up fear of prohibition through women’s votes.<sup>12</sup>

In 1905 NAWSA held its annual convention in Portland and national suffrage leaders remained in Oregon to aid Duniway with the 1906 campaign. Anthony, and fellow NAWSA leader Anna Howard Shaw, were excited because Oregon had recently enacted referendum voting which included collecting signatures of voters to get issues on the ballot.<sup>13</sup> Tensions appeared here when NAWSA leaders pushed for a “hurrah” campaign over Duniway’s preferred method of the “still hunt.”<sup>14</sup> After the defeat of woman suffrage in 1906 Duniway denounced both NAWSA and the WCTU. In 1910 Duniway stuck with her “still hunt” and Oregon once again failed to

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<sup>10</sup>Moynihan, *Rebel for Rights*, 177.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>13</sup> Edwards, *Sowing Good Seeds*, 211.

<sup>14</sup> Mead, Rebecca J., *How the Vote Was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States, 1868-1914*. (New York: New York University Press, 2006): 103.

enfranchise its women.<sup>15</sup> In 1912 Duniway was ill and NAWSA returned to seal the deal in Oregon.

Aileen Kraditor's monograph, *Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920*, addresses the argument of expediency in the Progressive era which was so successful in the 1912 Oregon campaign. Because of their exclusion from politics, women had traditionally contributed to social reform through charitable activities. Social reforms were made politically during the Progressive era and many women who had previously had little interest in the vote saw the importance that suffrage held. Interest in suffrage from middle-class women increased as did the number of women's clubs as women discovered that they required enfranchisement in order to realize their goals of social reform. In 1912 the Progressive Party was the first major political party to endorse woman suffrage.<sup>16</sup> Kraditor explains that there was a shift in the expediency argument during this era. Suffragists no longer tried to convince women that suffrage was good for them individually, but they stressed that women could help to end liquor trafficking, pass pure food laws, and abolish child labor.<sup>17</sup> This alteration in tactics brought women into the suffrage movement who were, if indifferent about suffrage, socially conscious and increased the number of men to whom woman suffrage appealed.<sup>18</sup>

In 1975, ten years after Kraditor's work, Eleanor Flexner wrote the book *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States*. She is not surprised that suffragists gained support from women and men alike in the west early

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<sup>15</sup> Mead, *How the Vote Was Won*, 107.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

on. Western women had experienced the hardships of birth, death, hunger, and exhaustion during the 2000 mile journey from their homes. These women were elevated in importance because they were an invaluable source of assistance to their families while they got established.<sup>19</sup> One of these pioneer women was Abigail Scott Duniway. She arrived with her family in Oregon at the age of seventeen and dedicated her life to bringing suffrage to the women of the Pacific northwest.<sup>20</sup> The scarcity of women also increased their value in society. The Oregon Land Donation Act of 1850 gave any single woman who wished to settle in the west 320 acres of her own land. Married couples received 640 acres under this act, but the wife was entitled to retain her portion of the acreage as her personal property.<sup>21</sup> Privileges such as these were not extended to women who remained in the east.

Beverly Beeton's article, "How the West Was Won for Woman Suffrage," combines these discussions of expediency and regionalism.<sup>22</sup> Beeton does not directly address Oregon, but argues that western states were the first to enfranchise women because it was an affective way to fulfill political goals.<sup>23</sup> Support for woman suffrage was sometimes seen as a way to advertise a region and attract the attention and interest of settlers or investors.<sup>24</sup> Oregon, like Washington and California, suffered from strong, organized opposition from liquor interests which made the fight for woman suffrage last longer than in other western states.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 160.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>22</sup> Beeton, Beverly, "How the West Was Won for Woman Suffrage," in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Troutdale, Oregon: NewSage Press, 1995).

<sup>23</sup> Beeton, "How the West Was Won," 100.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

G. Thomas Edwards provides an examination of the failures of early suffrage campaigns in the Pacific northwest in his book *Sowing Good Seeds: The Northwest Suffrage Campaigns of Susan B. Anthony*.<sup>26</sup> Edwards discussed the important role of Susan Anthony in the woman suffrage campaigns in Oregon and Washington in 1871, 1896, and 1905. In Anthony's lectures in Portland and other urban centers of Oregon in 1871 she appealed to her audience for support in a variety of ways. She argued that woman needed the vote in order to protect themselves and their property. While anti-suffragists argued that women possessed protection from men, Anthony pointed out that widows and single women lacked this kind of protection.<sup>27</sup> She confronted the theory that women would be corrupted by the political sphere by reassuring Oregonians that women would become even more moral with the vote and that they could use this power to improve the conditions of society.<sup>28</sup> Anthony argued that a Constitutional amendment was not even necessary because the Fifteenth Amendment had given all American citizens the right to vote.<sup>29</sup>

Anthony returned to the northwest to campaign again in 1896. In 1883 the Northern Pacific Railroad had extended across the country and provided train services into the northwest. Anthony noted the large population growth which had occurred during her absence from the region. The railroad had brought welcomed immigrant populations from the east, but racial tensions existed between white citizens and Chinese and Indian citizens in the northwest.<sup>30</sup> In 1896 the northwest was recovering

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<sup>26</sup> Edwards, G. Thomas. *Sowing Good Seeds: The Northwest Suffrage Campaigns of Susan B. Anthony*. Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1990.

<sup>27</sup> Edwards, *Sowing Good Seeds*, 41, 49.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.



from an economic depression and political emotions were high especially over issues of the gold standard which created a split in the Republican Party which was the majority party in Oregon.<sup>31</sup> Oregon and Washington had both enacted referendum voting systems which required petitioning and appealing directly to voters and not to legislatures. In 1896 woman suffrage efforts were hurt by the Woman Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) which was better organized in the region at the time.<sup>32</sup> Fear of prohibition was directly linked with fear of woman suffrage.

In 1905 Anthony returned to Portland for the last time and she brought with her the National Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and the national woman suffrage convention. During this campaign Oregon suffragist Abigail Scott Duniway began parting ways with national suffrage leaders and tactics. While NAWSA held public rallies, parades, and demonstrations in support of woman suffrage Duniway was in favor of what she called the “still hunt” approach. Her technique was very low key and focused on not arousing opposition. NAWSA leaders wanted Duniway to conform and they privately criticized her approach.<sup>33</sup> Despite the large national support present during the 1905 campaign women were unable to win the vote in Oregon once again. The dissention between Duniway and national suffrage leaders lasted until 1912 when Oregon women were finally enfranchised.

Sara Hunter Graham expanded on Kraditor’s ideas.<sup>34</sup> As the political climate shifted so did the tactics taken by the suffragists. As opposition increased suffragists

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>34</sup> Graham, Sara Hunter. *Woman Suffrage and the New Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

became more organized and their arguments became more political.<sup>35</sup> She talks about the new democracy not being one in which women were enfranchised, but one in which groups had the tools to fight their social and political exclusion. She credits the suffragists for making this reality possible.<sup>36</sup> Suffragists joined forces with charitable organizations, temperance supporters, labor unions, and other progressive groups to create an interconnected web of reform minded members.<sup>37</sup> Suffragists had success with the expediency argument against anti-suffragists. They argued that if women were enfranchised then they could mend social vice through the vote.

Rebecca J. Mead analyzed the western woman suffrage campaigns on tactics that were successful. She also built from Kraditor's ideas of expediency, but argues that the idea of justice was still an important tactic for suffragists, but that it was also important for the movement to present many justifications for suffrage. Arguments for justice and expediency weren't mutually exclusive, but were used in conjunction with each other.<sup>38</sup> The suffragist interest in both equality and social reform connected the interests of women from varying social and cultural backgrounds. Overlapping interests joined together temperance leagues, labor unions, woman suffrage organizations, and even agricultural interests.<sup>39</sup>

The only in depth historical study of the woman suffrage movement in Oregon was done by Kimberly Jensen who focused on the efforts of suffragists in Portland in the 1912 campaign.<sup>40</sup> Well known suffragist Abigail Scott Duniway was at the

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<sup>35</sup> Graham, *the New Democracy*, 33.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>38</sup> Mead, *How the Vote Was Won*, 5.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

<sup>40</sup> Jensen, Kimberly, "Neither Head Nor Tail to the Campaign': Esther Pohl Lovejoy and the Oregon Woman Suffrage Victory of 1912," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 108:3 (Fall 2007): 350-383.

forefront of Oregon's attempts at suffrage. Duniway preferred to campaign in her "still hunt" method. This was a quiet, understated form of campaigning to political groups and legislators, without holding parades or lectures. Many blamed this tactic for the losses in a state which used the initiative and referendum. She was also blamed for not accepting and alienating national suffragist support in Oregon. During the 1912 campaign Duniway was ill and confined to a sick bed. With Duniway largely out of the picture, Oregon suffragist Esther Pohl Lovejoy appealed to National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) President Anna Howard Shaw to come to Portland and assist in the campaign. Shaw agreed and Oregon once again had national support for woman suffrage. The return of NAWSA to Oregon inspired a new wave of suffrage leagues to be created. Groups were created by men, working-class women, African American women, and Chinese American women. Lovejoy also created the Everybody's League which required only a one time membership fee of \$.25 so it was accessible to working-class members. Suffragists in Oregon worked closely with all of their suffrage leagues and welcomed support from all willing to offer it up.<sup>41</sup>

By 1912 Oregon was surrounded by states which had won suffrage. Idaho (1896), Washington (1910), and California (1911). Across the Pacific even China was beginning a fight for woman suffrage. Oregon was determined not to be left behind. The 1912 suffrage campaign in Oregon utilized all the latest and greatest methods of campaigning and advertising. Suffragists ran print ads in newspapers and showed short propaganda films during nickelodeons, passed out fliers, banner, and

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 356, 362-368.

buttons, held parades, and placed literature in mailboxes and community centers. Suffragist groups also made floats and participated in local parades including the Portland Rose Parade which had massive community appeal and attendance. All of their hard work paid off in the end and Oregon women were enfranchised in 1912.<sup>42</sup>

In order to demonstrate how the rejuvenated tactics of the 1912 suffrage campaign in Oregon finally brought victory to the state this paper will examine first-hand accounts of the campaign drawn from two Oregon newspapers. These articles will show that while the electorate was sometimes hostile, and often indifferent about suffrage, suffrage leagues were created and were meeting regularly, suffrage events and speakers were sponsored, and people were at least discussing and being informed about the issue. The *Wallowa Sun* was a weekly newspaper which serviced the rural communities of Oregon's Wallowa County in the northeast region of the state. During the suffrage campaign of 1912 there was no suffrage activity which took place in Wallowa County. When suffrage news was reported on it was generally not done in a favorable light.<sup>43</sup> Despite little support from the local newspapers 802 Wallowa County voters cast their ballots in favor of suffrage and were narrowly defeated by 847 votes against suffrage.<sup>44</sup> At the time of the 1912 election, Wallowa County was a dry community and hope of greater social reform may have driven support for woman suffrage. The *Corvallis Daily Gazette-Times* was a daily newspaper that was printed in Corvallis in the heart of the Willamette Valley. Corvallis was more urbanized than Wallowa County, and its political and social atmosphere was shaped by the presence of the Oregon Agricultural College (OAC) which sponsored suffrage speakers and

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 371-372.

<sup>43</sup> *Wallowa Sun*, May-November 1912.

<sup>44</sup> *Sun*, "Vote in Wallowa County Canvassed," November 15, 1912, p. 1.

boasted faculty and student organizations which considered the topic of woman suffrage in Oregon.<sup>45</sup> The *Gazette* made numerous reports of suffrage activities taking place in Corvallis and the surrounding area, but voters also narrowly defeated suffrage in Corvallis with a vote of 1161 votes for, and 1180 votes against woman suffrage.<sup>46</sup>

The earliest published article on the topic of woman suffrage found during this research came from the *Corvallis Daily Gazette-Times* on July 30, 1912. The editorial entitled “Woman’s Suffrage???” expressed the views and opinions of the *Gazette* to its readers. The opinions expressed in the article coincide with the general views of the state. According to the author, the *Gazette-Times*

believes that the matter is of little significance either way, and is willing for the question to be settled by others who from greater or less knowledge feel more keenly about it. The women who care to vote may well have the opportunity to do so. They are governed by the same laws and the same lawmakers as the men, and are as much entitled to help make the laws and help select the officials who administer the laws. By all moral law the women who care to vote are as much entitled to the ballot as are the men – but that men, who will settle this question for Oregon next November, shall, at the request of the few, the very few, who desire the ballot, thrust upon all the others, the great majority of the women, an obligation and duty they do not care to assume, and force them into a field they do not care to occupy. ...By nature, woman is unfitted by office holding, except in a limited way... Except those few who are more masculine than feminine in their attributes... Woman’s suffrage in Oregon may tell a different story; perhaps it’s worth trying.<sup>47</sup>

This author also cites the opinion of Colorado suffragists who claim that after sixteen years of full woman suffrage in that state, no good had been accomplished.<sup>48</sup> In general the immediate necessity of woman suffrage could not be seen by Oregon voters, but they were not opposed to giving it a try.

On August 5, the *Gazette* reported on a speech made by Mrs. Colby, a representative of the College Women’s Suffrage League of Oregon. Mrs. Colby

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<sup>45</sup> *Corvallis Daily Gazette-Times*, July-November 1912.

<sup>46</sup> *Gazette-Times*, “Woman’s Suffrage Fails in Benton---Lane Wins by 99---Official Figures,” November 12, 1912, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> *Gazette-Times*, “Woman’s Suffrage???” July 30, 1912, p. 2.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

made a very strong appeal for expediency, claiming that “the women of Colorado are responsible for 18 of the newest laws for the protection of children; that after twenty-one years of woman suffrage in Wyoming, that state has less than one-third of the divorce cases per capita attributed to other states...”<sup>49</sup> She argued that issues of child labor, liquor, and sanitation were concerns for all citizens, not only men. She briefly reminded her audience, “That woman today is as well educated as man; that the schools now graduate more girls than boys and are given the same instruction in political economy, the science of government.” She returned to issues of moral reform and concluded her remarks by asking, “...that women be given the ballot to assist good men in doing the good things necessary to be done.”<sup>50</sup>

Across the next month the woman suffrage discussion in the *Gazette* is dominated by seven editorials penned by Mrs. Winnie Springer of Philomath. She speaks strongly in favor of woman suffrage in Oregon in each of her articles entitled “Amendment Number I: Woman’s Suffrage,” but her approach to the topic changes in each installment. She presents support for woman suffrage as justice for women as citizens, and also stresses the important role women could play in social reform if they were given the ballot. Her statements also attempt to discredit, if not mock, anti-suffrage ideas. In her first piece, on August 6, Mrs. Springer states her argument very clearly. “Those who believe in justice regardless of sex should stand by their convictions and rally to the support of this most important of reforms. Enfranchisement of women means a more intelligent womanhood. Only from a free

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<sup>49</sup> *Gazette-Times*, “Pleaded Woman’s Suffrage,” August 5, 1912, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

and intelligent motherhood may we expect a better race.”<sup>51</sup> In this article she takes on the anti-suffrage argument that “...the women of the state have enjoyed exemption from this burdensome duty, and no adequate reason has been assigned for depriving them of this immunity.” Mrs. Springer challenged this idea by stating that,

Every individual, regardless of sex, should have the right to the power of self-representation, and that is ‘adequate reason’ why those who want to ballot should have it. The right to vote forces no one to do so. Let the ‘anti’ live out her life to the end of her day just as she has been doing I she so chooses... Oregon should be a free state as well as her sisters, Washington, California and Idaho.<sup>52</sup>

Springer’s argument of justice had not experienced wide spread support in Oregon during earlier campaigns for suffrage, but it attacked the anti-suffrage argument well, which may explain why she chose to use it in this case. She makes the first reference to the fact that by 1912 Oregon was bordered completely by states practicing full woman suffrage. This article demonstrates that the pressure from that situation was affecting Oregonians’ opinion, or willingness to adopt, woman suffrage. In this article Mrs. Springer also informs *Gazette* readers of the creation of the Benton County Suffrage League.<sup>53</sup>

The follow-up to this article came on August 9. Mrs. Springer notified readers that business men in the town of Falls City had organized a Woman’s Suffrage Amendment League. She then attempts to destroy the stereotype that suffragists are man haters. She asserts that,

No one loving humanity can hate or despise anyone. It is the anti-suffragette who hates and despises... She doesn’t want to work for the franchise or assist women who do want it because associated with her in this work may be working women and plain, common women who lay no claim to wealth, luxury and ease. The anti hates both men and women.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Gazette-Times*, “Amendment Number I: Woman’s Suffrage,” August 6, 1912, p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Gazette-Times*, “Amendment Number I: Woman’s Suffrage,” August 9, 1912, p. 4.

In defending the moral value of suffragists she perpetuated the stereotype of the anti-suffragist as a wealthy woman who was above participating in the suffrage movement with the common woman. Women who opposed suffrage were often type cast as rich socialites who steadfastly held onto tradition. Truth be told, anti-suffragists were as varied socially as pro-suffragists. Single, working-class, and minority women weren't as public in their anti-suffrage sentiment as wealthier women, which was true to much pro-suffrage campaigning also. Anti-suffragists did not typically believe that a woman should be confined to the home all the time, but they felt that women were already overburdened with the tasks of the family and their current public duties in church groups, temperance leagues, and so on.<sup>55</sup>

In Mrs. Springer's next installment of "Amendment No. I" reports on the creation of a Woman's Suffrage Amendment League in Newport on the Oregon coast. She offers *Gazette* readers an endorsement for woman suffrage from Captain and Mrs. Stuart who had recently moved to Newport from Washington. Mrs. Springer pities Mrs. Stuart's position because, "In Washington she was a sovereign. In Oregon she becomes a subject."<sup>56</sup> Mrs. Springer uses the positive experience of the Stuarts with woman suffrage in Washington to strengthen her argument for woman suffrage in her own state of Oregon. She claims that,

From honorable people comes only the most sincere endorsement of the franchise for women. Oregon should no longer be the stamping ground for those routed out of their own states because their dishonorable business becomes unpopular there because of woman's vote. Oregon should give the franchise to its women just as the surrounding states have done.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Thurner, Manuela, "Better Citizens Without the Ballot": American Anti-suffrage Women and their Rationale During the Progressive Era," in *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, (Troutdale OR: NewSage Press 1995).

<sup>56</sup> *Gazette-Times*, "Amendment No. I: Woman's Suffrage," August 15, 1912, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*



Mrs. Springer's next article is published in the follow day's newspaper and it attacks the anti-suffrage notion that women should be represented by the votes of their husbands. She does not present an argument to support equal representation for women through the vote, but she tries to illustrate to the male voter how his one vote is corrupted when it must represent two people. She states that,

So long as man holds the conception that his ballot is something that may be used in representing another, just so long will corruption prevail in politics... The freedom of the ballot of the American man demands that woman be given a ballot of her own to represent herself, that his own may be made free.<sup>58</sup>

Mrs. Springer here speaks of justice, but justice for men as well as women.

On August 21, Mrs. Springer turns the focus of her argument back onto moral reform. This article contains a list of reasons why, according the Mrs. Springer, women in Oregon should be given the ballot. She asserts that laws for the protection of children and working women could be passed more easily with the votes of women and that woman voters could keep "notoriously bad candidates" from being elected. She cited Professor Edward H. Grigg who said that, "The ballot is an educator, and women will become more practical and more wise in using it."<sup>59</sup> This article is concluded with a simple argument stated in a bold way. Mrs. Springer tells *Gazette* readers that women should vote

Because experience has proved it to be good. Women are voting, literally by hundreds of thousands, in Norway, Finland, England, Scotland, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, Utah, Idaho, Washington and California. In all these places put together the opponents have not yet found a dozen respectable men who assert over their own names and addresses that the results have been bad, while scores of prominent men and women testify that it has done good. An ounce of fact is worth a ton of theory.<sup>60</sup>

This argument seems a little dramatic but Mrs. Springer clearly felt that she was reaching people by presenting the moral value of woman suffrage and successes

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<sup>58</sup> *Gazette-Times*, "Amendment No. I: Woman's Suffrage," August 16, 1912, p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> *Gazette-Times*, "Amendment No. I: Woman's Suffrage," August 21, 1912, p. 4.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

of woman suffrage in other states because she uses both of these tactics often throughout her publications.

Later that week Mrs. Springer printed a brief reporting of the woman suffrage activities which occurred at the Lincoln County Fair. The Ballots for Women Leagues of Toledo and Newport had suffrage booths supplying fair-goers with free information. She addressed audiences about enfranchising Oregon women as did President Ackerman of the Oregon State Normal School and Mr. Ergott of Portland.<sup>61</sup>

Mrs. Springer's final article was published on September 2. In her final plea to *Gazette* readers Mrs. Springer again attempts to discredit anti-suffrage arguments and promote the image of suffragists as intelligent, concerned citizens to whom all sensible male citizens should listen. She states that,

No sensible man can blame a woman who is interested in good government for wanting the proper weapon to help good government along... They have learned that the suffragette class of women are earnest, intelligent, educated women who are capable of broad sympathy and intelligent interest in the government under which they and their families live, and who are intelligent and intelligent enough to reach out and handle the ballot as intelligently and wisely as they preside at their own firesides and where as intelligent mothers they are prepared to bring forth and rear a better race of human beings... It is the indifferent "anti" who has no interest outside of her own selfish ambitions and a desire to live at ease, giving nothing back to society, that sensible men are fast learning to disrespect...<sup>62</sup>

There was a void in the discussion of woman suffrage in Corvallis for the month of September, but on October 2, NAWSA President Anna Howard Shaw addressed a Corvallis audience at the invitation of OAC. In the October 1 article announcing her visit, the *Gazette* refers to Dr. Shaw as the, "queen of American suffragists," and states that, "Probably no woman in America has done more to gain the franchise for her sisters than Rev. Anna Shaw, minister, physician, eloquent

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<sup>61</sup> *Gazette-Times*, "Amendment No. I: Woman's Suffrage," August 23, 1912, p. 2.

<sup>62</sup> *Gazette-Times*, "Amendment No. I: Woman's Suffrage," September 2, 1912, p. 1.

speaker, and above all things, gentle-woman crowned with many years of noble service to her kind.”<sup>63</sup>

On October 3 an article titled “Dr. Shaw Aroused Audience” reported on the enthusiasm with which Shaw addressed the citizens of Corvallis. Using her thirty years of experience as an advocate for woman suffrage Dr. Shaw appealed to her audience in a variety of ways to ensure that she impacted each citizen in attendance. She asked that men, “put themselves in our places for a moment if they can, and see themselves governed by Chinese, negroes, Dutch, French, Italians, every race and color without an opportunity to say what the laws which govern us are to be...”<sup>64</sup> This argument from Dr. Shaw presents a taste of the racism that often accompanied both sides of the woman suffrage debate. She addressed the anti-suffragist, claiming that they suffered from

old unreasoning fear of the unknown, and a false conception of man and of what the government is. The government lies neither in the gilded dome at Salem nor in the men who sit beneath it any more than the kingdom of God lies there alone; like the kingdom of God, it lies within ourselves.<sup>65</sup>

Dr. Shaw spoke to the audience of justice for Oregon women and she spoke out against anti-suffrage sentiment, but her last appeal to the audience seemed to be almost an attempt to shame them if she could not reach them any other way. She reminded Corvallis that, “Oregon enjoys the unenviable and unfavorable distinction of being the only one of these northwest states where the women do not have the franchise.” She then informed them that

The women of all the world are to meet soon in Budapest for a day of rejoicing over the victories of the units in these United States that are now approaching a vote on suffrage. Oregon is not

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<sup>63</sup> *Gazette-Times*, “Dr. Anna Shaw, Big Chief of Suffragists, at O.A.C. Convocation Tomorrow,” October 1, 1912, p. 1.

<sup>64</sup> *Gazette-Times*, “Dr. Shaw Aroused Audience,” October 3, 1912, p. 1.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

yet caught up with China in that respect. Think how much more widespread the 'booming' Oregon would be if her victory could be celebrated at the Budapest by the women of the world!<sup>66</sup>

Dr. Shaw points out that Oregonians had failed to keep up with the social reforms of not only its own country, but had also failed to keep up with China whose people were seen in the U.S. as being inferior to Americans, especially on the west coast. Opium and prostitution were rampant in Portland and Chinese citizens were commonly held responsible for this vice in the city, as well as in other places with high Chinese populations.<sup>67</sup>

After Dr. Shaw's visit, the wave of woman suffrage activity in Corvallis slowed. During October the subject of woman suffrage was addressed through paid advertisements and on the agenda of local club meetings. The first suffrage ad printed in the *Gazette* was entitled "Women Say They Don't Want Vote."<sup>68</sup> The ad was paid for by the Oregon State Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women which published similar ads across the state. This ad maintained that the majority of Oregon women did not want the vote. According to the association, "To put upon these women a responsibility from which they have hitherto been exempted and which they do not wish to assume is not Womens Rights... It is not democratic, nor just, nor fair to draft this large body of women into this campaign against their wills."<sup>69</sup> They reminded readers that Oregonians had voted against woman suffrage six times previously and urged the citizens of Corvallis to follow their example again in 1912.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Moynihan, *Rebel for Rights*, 89.

<sup>68</sup> *Gazette-Times*, "Women Say They Don't Want Vote," October 11, 1912, p.1.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

On October 28, the Portland Equal Suffrage League paid for an advertisement which leaned heavily on the morality of women for support of enfranchising them.

The ad read:

Do you desire to go on record as maintaining that your wife or mother is not sufficiently intelligent to know whether the people of your community wish pure or foul food and water, clean or filthy streets, good or bad schools, honest or dishonest laws, temperance or intemperance, peace or war, corrupt or incorruptible legislators. If your wife or mother can judge for themselves in these matters let them have the chance.<sup>70</sup>

This statement makes a connection between votes for women and temperance. This argument was not always valuable to suffragists because it could potentially add the enemies of prohibition to the numbers opposed to enfranchising women.

The women of the faculty of OAC organized the Folk Club. Their first meeting of November was dedicated to the subject of suffrage for women. To lead their discussion they used a paper written on results of enfranchisement of Colorado women.<sup>71</sup>

On November 1, Ethel E. Griffith of the College Equal Suffrage League of Portland made a public speech in Corvallis. Her visit was highly anticipated and was announced on at least three occasions in the *Gazette*.<sup>72</sup>

The majority of articles and ads addressing woman suffrage in the *Gazette* were placed on the first or second pages of the paper which shows that the subject was given some importance by the newspaper. Even though the woman suffrage movement was fairly organized in Corvallis and there wasn't a lack of support being demonstrated by the community and the newspaper, residents of the community still did not feel strongly enough in favor of it to support the measure on the ballot. This

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<sup>70</sup> *Gazette-Times*, "Is Your Wife or Mother Incompetent?" October 28, 1912, p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> *Gazette-Times*, "Folk Club in Politics," October 18, 1912, p.1.

<sup>72</sup> *Gazette-Times*, "Woman Suffrage on Friday Night," October 30, 1912, p. 1.

seems to demonstrate the indifference of Oregonians on the subject of suffrage. In Wallowa County the opposite scenario occurred. There doesn't appear to have been any organized suffrage activity at all, but a large number of voters still supported the issue. This community indicates the desire for social reforms in Oregon, which it was widely speculated could be accomplished through votes for women. No local suffrage activity was reported by the *Wallowa Sun*, so the main discussion of the subject occurred through paid advertisements. Five such ads were paid for during the campaign.

The first of these ads was printed on October 18. This ad was submitted by an unidentified source in favor of woman suffrage and took the two-fold approach of discussing the reasons for and the results of woman suffrage. The ad states that, "Women must obey the laws and pay taxes just as men do... Mothers who want to make their children's surroundings better and women of leisure who attempt to serve the public welfare should be able to support their advice by their votes."<sup>73</sup> Wyoming is cited as a case where enfranchisement of women had had a positive impact on the state.

In Wyoming, where women were first enfranchised and where ninety percent of the women vote regularly, there is a larger percentage of married women than in any other state except Idaho – also a suffrage state – while divorce in Wyoming is only one-eighth as great as in similar states where women do not vote. Equal suffrage builds up rather than disrupts the home.<sup>74</sup>

The next advertisement contains a list of questions which point out the injustice done to women by not allowing them to vote. These questions and answers paint a picture of women as good mothers and teachers and as, "educated, temperate,

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<sup>73</sup> *Sun*, "Reasons for Woman Suffrage," October 18, 1912, p. 4.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

moral, and law-abiding...”<sup>75</sup> The majority of the ad, however, is dedicated to a list of reasons why women wanted to vote. The list included

Because they are tax-payers, and it is a principle of our government that taxation and representation ought to go together... Because every citizen should help select those who make the laws which he or she must obey... Because every citizen in a free republic is entitled to representation, and no person having but one vote can represent himself and another, even with the latter’s consent... Because a vote means power, and women need this power to protect the interests of themselves, their children, their homes and society.<sup>76</sup>

The first anti-suffrage ad was printed by the *Sun* on October 25. The ad, paid for by the Oregon State Association Opposed to the Extension of the Suffrage to Women, was the same one that the group endorsed in the *Gazette* in Corvallis.<sup>77</sup> The use of paid advertisements was affective for both suffragists and anti-suffragists because it was an efficient way of reaching a broad audience. Newspapers were the main source of information to a community so ads would have been widely read, and as is apparent in this case, ads allow one argument to be considered by audiences in multiple locations.

On November 1, the same anti-suffrage league had a second ad published. The ad attacks the notion that woman suffrage has improved the moral quality of states practicing equal suffrage. They rely on Colorado politician Elizabeth Cass Goddard to explain the failure of woman suffrage in her state. According to her

We have no cleaner politics, no purer politicians, no less graft, no better laws for women and children than Massachusetts has, and in spite of the often repeated assertions of the Suffragists, not ONE of the laws we have is the result of the votes of women... I have found the professional Suffragist of politician hard, aggressive, loud in voice and manner and ready to antagonize anyone to carry her point... The better class of women do not want to vote.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> *Sun*, “A Few Leading Questions,” October 18, 1912, p. 8.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Sun*, “Woman’s Rights,” October 25, 1912, p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> *Sun*, “Conditions in Colorado Today, After 19 Years of Women Voting,” November 1, 1912, p. 4.

Mrs. Springer stereotyped anti-suffragists in her Corvallis articles as selfish and unintelligent, and in the same way this ad stereotyped suffragists as low class, loud, and aggressive.

The last ad which appeared in the *Sun* before the election was in favor of woman suffrage. The ad was titled, “What Kind of Men Want Women to Vote, and Why.”<sup>79</sup> It claimed that, “Statesmen, philosophers and scientists have endorsed woman suffrage.”<sup>80</sup> Included in the list of notable men were Abraham Lincoln, Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Lloyd Garrison, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>81</sup> For a male voter being asked to vote on this issue it would have been compelling to follow the example of these, and other, great men in supporting woman suffrage. This ad made suffrage a universal issue, not just a women’s rights issue.

Paid advertisements were invaluable to the suffrage discussion in communities like Wallowa County where local suffrage activity was not taking place or was not being reported by newspapers. The advertisement gave suffragists, and anti-suffragists, the opportunity to keep the subject in people’s consideration in the absence of an organized suffrage movement. This was an important way to keep woman suffrage information current and relevant even if more traditionally “hurrah” tactics such as parades were not being held.<sup>82</sup>

These two Oregon communities in 1912 demonstrate the varying level of support and activity taking place during the suffrage campaign. Corvallis benefited

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<sup>79</sup> *Sun*, “What Kind of men Want Women to Vote, and Why,” November 1, 1912, p. 6.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Finnegan, Margaret, *Selling Suffrage*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999): 170.



from its nearness to Portland because it was not difficult for campaign leaders to speak directly to the people of that community. Also the college provided the means for bringing speakers to the town and providing a location for them to be heard. Despite the favorable suffrage opportunities in Corvallis, suffragists failed to gain enough support to win the vote there. In Wallowa County, however, the issues of moral reform seemed to be enough to gain considerable support despite little or no suffrage activity. In this community woman suffrage did not appear to be seen as a reform in itself, but as a means to gain other social reforms through the votes of women.

The early attempts to bring suffrage to Oregon women were characterized by struggle. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Oregonians were more concerned with boosting their young economy and building their population than institution social reforms like woman suffrage. At the turn of the century the temperance movement found new rejuvenation and provided suffragists with an unlikely ally. Unfortunately the relationship between the two movements hurt support of suffrage in Oregon because anti-prohibitionist factions feared that votes for women would lead to just that. In 1912 all the pieces finally came together to help suffragists finally be successful in Oregon.

In 1912 the Progressive Party became the first major party to endorse woman suffrage and the desire for moral reform was sweeping the state. Washington, California, Idaho, and many other western states had already extended the franchise to women by 1912. On top of that, suffragists in Oregon took the 1912 campaign to the next step. They ran a very public campaign that was aimed at exciting

Oregonians at the possibilities that woman suffrage held. Although this opened suffrage up to public criticism and opposition, it also gained support for woman suffrage that helped pass the reform. Not until suffragists made themselves vulnerable to criticism were they fully successful in Oregon.

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