



# McMinnville 100 Years Ago

Reflections On A Changing Way Of Life



## *Women's Roles*

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For the McMinnville 100 year project, our group has focused our research on women's roles in Yamhill County since 1912. As a group, we have chosen to focus our project on the impact women of the time made on society. In addition to examining what it was like to be a pioneer woman and how those roles were reflected in the media, we have looked at key figures such as Abigail Scott Duniway, Yamhill County resident and one of the most influential women of the suffrage campaign. Duniway's life story exemplifies the struggle that pioneer women in Yamhill County endured, from their lack of civil rights to demanding daily schedules. She spent her life making strides for women and was instrumental in passing laws that gave women the right to vote.



# Women's Daily Life

“The ladies are requested to wear sheets and pillow slips, one was selected to take the part of a witch. The Ladies were asked to practice their most terrifying gost (sic) stories in their most horrible way as part of the evenings entertainment.” - Current Events Club, (October 24, 1912)

- Women participated in various clubs and associations, many related to the church they attended. Women were not allowed to gather in churches for political reasons.
- Teaching was a common profession for women. Mrs. Mary Robinson Gilkey of Dayton recorded that she, and many others, had to stop school-teaching once they married.

- Women's basketball was the only female sport at McMinnville High School in 1913.
- Women wore modest clothing with high necklines, long hemlines and delicate material.



McMinnville High School  
1913 basketball team. Photo  
courtesy of Yamhill County  
Historical Society



Loyal Women's Club. Photo courtesy of  
Yamhill County Historical Society



Teachers of Columbus School,  
McMinnville 1910. Photo courtesy of  
Yamhill County Historical Society

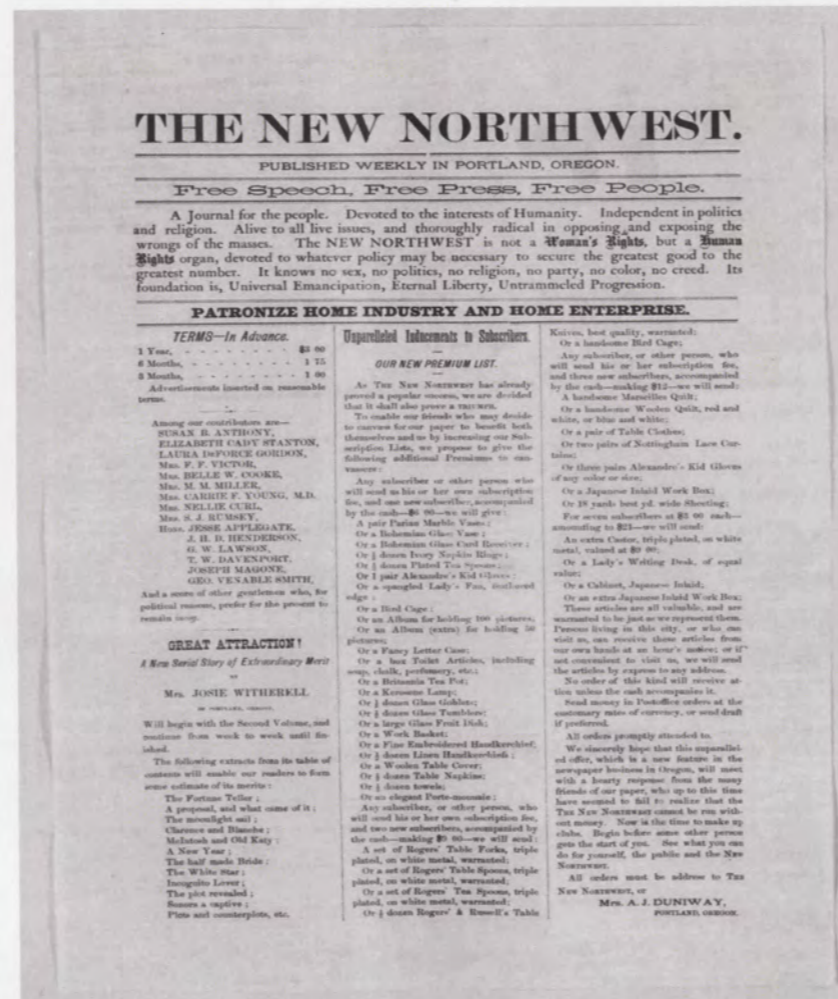


# Abigail Scott Duniway

- Born in Peoria, Illinois 1834. Traveled to Oregon on Oregon Trail with family.
- Mother described the birth of three girls as “a grievance almost too burdensome to be borne.”
- Abigail understood first-hand the struggles of pioneer women. Lost the Duniway family farm when her husband co-signed for a loan, against her will.
- Supported family of six children and opened a millinery.



Abigail Scott Duniway. Photo courtesy of Yamhill County Historical Society



“The New Northwest,” Duniway’s suffrage newspaper. Photo courtesy of University of Oregon libraries

- 1870, traveled to San Francisco and attended women’s suffrage meetings.
- Began “The New Northwest,” a publication in which women were allowed to speak out.
- Her career as a writer, speaker and advocate for women’s rights began.



# Abigail The Suffragette

- Abigail fought for women's rights with well known suffragette Susan B. Anthony.
- Women of Oregon draft a proposed petition on equal rights for the lawmakers in Salem to consider. Abigail asked for the privilege to speak to the legislature about the petition.
- Abigail devoted her life to women's rights and gaining the right to vote.
- Oregon became the 8<sup>th</sup> state to give women the right to vote in 1912.



Duniway votes for the first time. Photo courtesy of Yamhill County Historical Society



Duniway registers to vote for the first time with county clerk, John Coffey. Photo courtesy of Oregon Historical Society



1912 suffrage campaign poster. Photo courtesy of Oregon Historical Society



# Women's Clubs and Activities

- McClain (1973) mentioned many clubs including:
- The Elvira Assembly
- The Sacagawea Club
- The Women's Christian Temperance Union
- Equal Suffrage Association
- United Artisans
- Boys and Girls Aid Society of Yamhill County
- Friendship Rebekah Lodge
- Women of Woodcraft
- Women's Relief Corps (for San Francisco)
- The Shakespeare Study Club
- Current Events Club
- The Civic Improvement Club
- The Self Improvement Club



Martha L. Barton, Self Improvement Club member and a librarian of McMinnville Library. Photo courtesy of Yamhill County



# Women's Club Movement

## Community Changes:

- Coffee Committee to keep the fireman caffeinated during frequent fires of 1914
- The relief corps formed in response to an earthquake in San Francisco
- Campaign against tuberculosis and the fly
- Creation of the McMinnville library
- Junior League and partnership in the schools

## Self Improvement Changes:

- The Shakespeare Club fined 50 cents if members didn't write one paper a year
- Paid men to go to meetings and then report back to the groups
- Before the library, women would share the books that they had
- They analyzed plays, poetry and current events

The women in these clubs made things happen, they changed the community. And, not only did they change themselves, but through the Junior League, they no doubt helped to shape the mindset of other upcoming young women. Essentially, they became the change that they wanted to see, the changes their community needed.



Self Improvement Club Booklets.  
Booklets courtesy of the Yamhill County  
Historical Society



# Women Reflected in the Media



Jay H. Davis and Mabel Collard wedding photo. Courtesy of Yamhill County Historical Society

- Mrs. Mahala Cozine's obituary goes into detail about her husband's life and her life as Mr. and Mrs. Cozine.
- In most photos where men and women are pictured together, men are shown in dominant power positions.
- The first junior high school faculty in McMinnville is pictured with a male administrator above female teachers.
- In an ad selling the Mississippi Washer, there is a photo of a small girl doing the washing. The caption states "The Washing is Finished and the Little Maid has Done it All herself."



First McMinnville Junior High School faculty. Photo Courtesy of Yamhill County Historical Society



Parishioners outside Methodist Church in Lafayette. Photo courtesy of Yamhill County Historical Society



# Conclusion

A hundred years ago, women struggled. They were denied their suffrage five times before it passed in 1912. They lived their lives without property rights or a voice in their households. As Mrs. Oldham, who voted in the first Oregon election, said, “A lot of women felt they had no say-so, the only way to express themselves was to organize and work on the powers-that-be.” All that work paid off. In other words, the women in 1912 were aware of their community’s needs, fought to change their world for the better and, after much hard work, they succeeded.



Abigail Scott Duniway at a suffragette meeting.  
Photo Courtesy of University of Oregon Libraries

*A Special Thanks To:*

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