

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Sara Anne Acres Gelser for the degree of Master of the Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies in History, History, and Women Studies presented on December 7, 1998. Title: Beyond the Ballot: The Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Politics of Oregon Women, 1880-1900.

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Abstract Approved:

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Bess Beatty

Between 1880 and 1900, the Oregon Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) significantly impacted the lives of Oregon women. Not simply an organization of middle class white women, the Oregon WCTU enlisted Native American and African American women, and persistently advocated for improved conditions for working women. The WCTU aspired to be more than a simple temperance union, taking on a broad social agenda which had as its goal the social emancipation of women. It successfully secured positive changes for women in the areas of sexuality, labor, personal safety, education, and prison life in addition to successfully advocating several temperance issues on the state and national level. The union also served to solidify the bond between women, mobilizing them into a social class.

Despite their commitment to improving the lives of women, not all WCTU members were supportive of the suffrage movement. Open conflict between the WCTU and the state suffrage association, led by Abigail Scott Duniway, highlights the complexity of women's politics in Oregon at the end of the nineteenth century. Divisions between women on the issues of suffrage and temperance reveal early disagreements as to

the best route to increased freedom for women. Such division led to a delay in achieving equal suffrage in the state of Oregon.

Despite their disenfranchisement, women's work in the public arena shaped the development of communities and the state of Oregon. Through petition circulation, public speaking, industrial schools, labor union organization, and political lobbying, Oregon women influenced the decisions made by voting men. The activities of Oregon women at the end of the nineteenth century suggest that women wielded political power long before they gained the right to vote.

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Beyond the Ballot:  
The Women's Christian Temperance Union and the  
Politics of Oregon Women, 1880-1900

by

Sara Anne Acres Gelser

A THESIS

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Sara Anne Acres Gelser, Author

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This thesis is dedicated to my grandmothers:

*Mary E. Frazier, Florence Ellen Acres, Mary Helen Florea, and Grada E. Gelser*

who have quietly given so much to so many.

# **Beyond the Ballot: The Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Politics of Oregon Women, 1880-1900.**

## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction: Women's History and the Problem of Difference**

As I began this project, I asked myself if it was possible, or even desirable, to write a feminist history. On the one hand, writing a history that centers around the experience of women is by some definitions a feminist endeavor. On the other hand, writing any history with the kind of political motivation that a feminist stance would imply is dangerous, as any historian who writes with political motivation is in danger of being influenced by those motivations when interpreting the events of the past. Fortunately, in recent years new work is being done which provides an example of solid historical research that illuminates the female historical experience, without distorting the lives of these women for political expediency. As a result, scholars are slowly chipping away at institutional models of history that exclude women, and also at the foundations of an ahistorical academic feminism that relies heavily on an oversimplified view of sisterhood.

Widespread interest in the historical experience of women is rooted in the early days of the second wave of American feminism in the 1960's and 1970's. The early pioneers of this field first took a compensatory approach to the female experience. Scholars sought to discover the stories of "great women" in history and to integrate them into a previously established historical narrative. Historian Glenda Riley argued that most historians saw this as a "finite" task, which they could focus on briefly before returning to

their “real careers.” By the mid-1970’s, however, historians realized that women’s history held promise as a rich and legitimate subfield of American history. They began to wonder if in fact women had a different historical experience from men, and thus created a genre which Riley termed “the women-in” phase.<sup>1</sup> Historians focused on the role of ordinary women in major historical events, such as the Revolutionary War or the westward expansion, to define women’s roles in history. Such investigations led to a scrutinization of women’s domestic work, such as childbearing, housekeeping, sewing, cooking, and teaching. This “pots and pans” approach was significant because it raised consciousness of some unique experiences of women. However, it was also limited in that it excluded working women, women in education, and women’s political activities. This approach also meant that women were still defined primarily as members of the family unit, rather than as individual actors on the stage of American history.

By the late 1970’s the women’s liberation movement began to strongly influence the historiography of American women. The movement was particularly influential to western women’s history as feminism inspired two new and contradictory views of the women of this region. The first new view could be termed the “oppression argument.” Informed by the new assumption that women were an historically oppressed group, many accounts of women in the West in the late seventies and early eighties were dismal in their assessment of the quality of life for women. Riley explained that the oppression view:

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<sup>1</sup> Glenda Riley. “Continuity and Change: Interpreting Women in Western History,” *Journal of the West* (July 1993): 7-11.

maintained that insensitive men, intent on wealth and adventure, dragged protesting women out onto the Westward trail against their wills. Once on the trail, women worked themselves to near death, languished emotionally, and counted trail-side graves as an indictment of men. As settlers, women cried for home and family, begged their menfolk to take them back East, and often met early deaths.<sup>2</sup>

While this view was helpful in legitimating the argument that women were an historically oppressed group, it prevented the assignment of personal agency to these women.

Dragged around by their husbands and given no voice to protest their treatment, the oppression argument offered no examples of female resistance to oppression. Instead, western women emerged as weak and passive participants in the westward expansion. This sharp focus on uncovering oppression strictly limited the questions historians asked, making it impossible to write a complete history of these women.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast, other feminist scholars built up an historical framework for sisterhood by focusing on women's fights for abolition and suffrage. For historians of western women, suffrage was of primary importance. Such scholarship put a great deal of power in the hands of women, showing that nineteenth-century women were astute to the conditions around them. This "proto-feminist argument" revealed a clever group of women who parlayed their position of dominance in the domestic sphere into a role in

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>3</sup> For one example see John Faragher and Christine Stansell. "Women and Their Families on the Overland Trail to California and Oregon, 1842-1867," *Feminist Studies* 2 (1975): 150-66. Julie Roy Jeffrey refuted both the idea that women were always resistant to moving west and the idea that women exploited the lack of social structure in the west to create widened opportunities for themselves. Julie Roy Jeffrey. *Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1880* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979).

public life.<sup>4</sup> Feminist scholars argued that through their agitation for the vote and their work in various female voluntary societies, nineteenth-century women laid the groundwork for modern feminism by building networks of sisterhood. According to this view, women in the west actively shaped the communities in which they lived. They were not passive, but instead were creatively resisting and challenging societal standards that kept them out of public life. While this argument gave agency to some women, the primary emphasis upon the suffrage movement prevented historians from exploring the experiences of women who were not involved in explicitly political activities, or in activities unrelated to the suffrage movement.

This was one of the problems addressed by historians Joan Jensen and Darlis Miller in their 1980 article titled "Gentle Tamers' Revisited: New Approaches to the History of Women in the American West."<sup>5</sup> The article marked a turning point for western historians for two reasons. First, it legitimated the subfield of western women's history to more general historians. Second, it determined the lines of scholarly inquiry

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<sup>4</sup> This assigned dominance of the domestic sphere by women is also commonly referred to as the "cult of domesticity" or the "cult of true womanhood." These terms were suggested early in the historiography of American women, first by Barbara Welter in 1966 and later by Nancy Cott in 1977. Barbara Welter. "The Cult of True Womanhood,"

American Quarterly 18 (1966): 151-74; Nancy Cott. *The Bonds of Womanhood* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

<sup>5</sup> Joan Jensen and Darlis A. Miller. "The Gentle Tamers Revisited: New Approaches to the History of Women in the American West," *Pacific Historical Review* 49 (1990): 173-213.

for the newly legitimated field. Historian Susan Armitage recognized the article as “the guidebook” for many who entered “the new territory of western women’s history.”<sup>6</sup>

Jensen and Miller challenged scholars to step beyond the myths surrounding the American West, including those that suggested that all women in the West could be neatly categorized together as “frontier women.” They argued that while women were mostly ignored by western historians, the few attempts to include women in the historical record were flawed. “There has been a strong tendency to replace solid research on women’s roles with lofty rhetoric distorting western women beyond recognition,” they wrote. The rhetoric and mythology surrounding these women paid no attention to the diversity of women who lived in the geographical area commonly referred to as the American West. Instead, the history of the region was limited to that of middle class white women.

Jensen and Miller argued that historians should move beyond these limitations by challenging the stereotypes that had been cast regarding western women. They promoted the writing of “a newer, ethnically broader and more varied image of women in the West. . . [A view that] rests on a multicultural approach which calls for the evaluation of the experiences of all ethnic groups of women within a historical framework incorporating women’s history into western history.” By refocusing the history of western women, Miller and Jensen believed that new questions would immediately emerge for scholars to

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<sup>6</sup> Susan H. Armitage. “Revisiting ‘The Gentle Tamers Revisited’: The Problems and Possibilities of Western Women’s History- An Introduction,” *Pacific Historical Review* 61 (1992): 459-462.

investigate, and that the answers to those questions would “necessitate the rewriting of western history.”<sup>7</sup>

Miller and Jensen provided a road map for women’s historians to begin this journey towards a more accurate and inclusive history of western women. For example, they urged scholars to more closely investigate the demographics of western settlements, arguing that careful study of population statistics on both the rural and urban frontier, would reveal that long held assumptions about the absence of women in these communities were wrong. They went beyond arguing that women lived alongside men in frontier settlements by suggesting that there were even communities where women outnumbered men. Miller and Jensen also argued that historians needed to investigate women’s political activism beyond the fight for suffrage. By focusing only on the suffrage movement, they argued, the work of many women, particularly women of color, was ignored. Finally, the authors called for historians to include the experience of women of color in all avenues of historical inquiry, such that the racial diversity of the American west might be revealed through the lens of women’s history.

“The Gentle Tamers Revisited” did in fact transform western women’s history. Most notably, historians responded to Jensen and Miller’s call to investigate the lives of women of color. One of the first monographs to come out of this new approach to western women’s history was Glenda Riley’s *Women and Indians on the Frontier*. In her introduction, Riley explained that “in discussing what images and stereotypes whites held toward Indian peoples, it has generally been assumed that these attitudes were adopted

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<sup>7</sup> Miller and Jensen.

and applied in an identical manner by both white men and women.”<sup>8</sup> However, Riley argued that women and men held distinctly different views regarding native peoples.

Although she acknowledged that women were not exempt from racial stereotyping, Riley posited that white women were friendlier in their relations with Native American women than were white men. They were willing to offer food to Native American people, to form friendships with Native American women, and did not threaten violence against Native Americans as often as men did. She also argued that contrary to the sensational, serialized captivity novels published in the nineteenth century, many white women were not eager to return to white settlements after they had been captured by Native Americans.

Riley argued that women’s changing view of Indians impacted the way that they viewed themselves. When they started out on the overland trail, many were expecting to find dangerous and uncivilized Indians. However, as they began to see these people on a regular basis, many women found them to be attractive, friendly, and non-threatening. Riley acknowledged this was not true for all women, as tensions in some areas, particularly Texas, did lead to frequent violent conflict. However, in areas where violence was not the norm, women were perplexed by the lack of evil Indians. As they began to question the “essential” nature of Native Americans, Riley argued that they began to question some of the “essential truths” about themselves. As they proved their physical and emotional strength on their westward journeys, many began to question their

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<sup>8</sup> Glenda Riley. *Women and Indians on the Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), xii.

supposed physical and mental weakness. They also began to question the idea of female moral superiority. According to Riley, these seeds of doubt were the beginnings of women's rebellion against gender roles in the west.

While Riley's arguments were based on the idea of difference between men and women, historian Sarah Deutsch explored the way that men and women shaped each others lives, leading to an admirable synthesis of women's experiences into broader historical contexts. In *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* Deutsch utilized a multi-disciplinary approach to argue for the "central significance of women in the processes of conquest, economic and cultural subordination, and social change."<sup>9</sup> She argued that Chicana women lost significant degrees of power as Hispanic people underwent the economic transformation brought on by Anglo capital expansion into the American Southwest. Because their contributions to family and community were central and visible to Hispanic culture, village society provided women with power, dignity and material security. She described a democratic family life, with women sharing in decision making with their husbands and a land system that provided for property ownership rights for women.<sup>10</sup>

However, as Anglos expanded into the village areas, many of the traditional Hispanic businesses were driven into extinction. Without the capital to compete with

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<sup>9</sup> Patricia Limerick. Book Reviews. *American Historical Review* 94 (April 1989): 530.

<sup>10</sup> Sarah Deutsch. *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

railroads and highly bred livestock, Chicano men were forced into wage labor for Anglos. Because families could no longer survive based upon their own farm work, many men turned to migrant labor. While such a labor system demanded men leave their villages for significant time periods, it enabled Hispanics to preserve their village system. It also provided women with a particular source of power, as they were left to manage farms and village communities in the absence of their husbands. However, as Chicano men became more oppressed by Anglos, they adopted Anglo attitudes towards gender, disintegrating their former respect for Chicana women. Furthermore, as women were forced into the Anglo economy, many lost property rights. Still others were forced into wage labor, but their paychecks were issued to their husbands. Thus, in an Anglicized community, Chicanas lost much of the power they previously enjoyed.

Deutsch's work, widely regarded as a landmark publication, challenged not just the invisibility of women of color, but it also persuasively argued that their work (paid and unpaid) significantly shaped social developments in the American Southwest. Also, by arguing that women lost power as they assimilated into Anglo life, it challenged the idea that white women were responsible for bringing education and life improvement to their sisters of color on the frontier. Finally, it persuasively argued that Chicano people actively resisted the expansion of Anglo markets into their communities. In short, Deutsch's work served to challenge many of the widely held stereotypes about Hispanic people in American history.

While Deutsch briefly explored the dynamics between Chicana women and the Anglo women who were sent to their communities as missionaries, Peggy Pascoe took an in depth look at the relationships between women of differing cultures. In *Relations of*

*Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939*,

Pascoe analyzed the complicated relationships between the “rescuers” and the “rescued” in female Protestant mission homes.

Looking at four specific home mission projects (one for Chinese prostitutes, one for unwed mothers, one for Mormon women, and one for the advancement of Native American women), Pascoe made several significant arguments. First of all, she persuasively argued that Protestant women were not motivated by ideas of racial superiority rooted in biological essentialism. Rather, they worked on the assumption that all women- regardless of skin color- aspired to Victorian morals. This is not to say that mission women were free from racism. Rather, they actively sought to challenge racial biological determinism. They did not believe that skin color determined a woman’s ability to aspire to and achieve Victorian moral standards.<sup>11</sup>

Pascoe argued that home mission projects were inspired by Protestant women’s frustration with the patriarchal system in which they lived. “These home mission projects displayed Protestant women’s outrage at male-dominated social orders and their belief that women knew a better way,” wrote Pascoe.<sup>12</sup> Protestant women believed that men were at the root of underprivileged women’s difficulties. For example, Chinese prostitutes were victims of a male dominated social system that never afforded women personal authority or recognition, forcing them into the slavery of prostitution. Furthermore, like fallen Anglo women, they were seduced into their downfall by men

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<sup>11</sup> Peggy Pascoe. *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 115.

who were never punished for their own sexual misdeeds. This sexual double standard incensed the home mission women who felt the playing field should be leveled. To do this, they sought to provide educational opportunities to women in order to further their chances for moral success. Pascoe argued that home mission projects were embarked upon in order to secure the emancipation of women. Their goals for this emancipation were threefold: to expand women's sphere by promoting higher education for women and supporting women professionals; to fortify female purity by eliminating the double sexual standard; and to enlarge the influence and power of women in the Protestant churches.<sup>13</sup>

Pascoe's assignment of political aspirations to Protestant women does not negate the agency of the women they were "rescuing." Rather, Pascoe challenged the popular idea that those who went into rescue homes were passive participants in their assimilation into the dominant American female culture.<sup>14</sup> While women who entered the rescue homes did adopt the rhetoric and behaviors promoted by the Protestant women, they did not necessarily buy into the idea of female moral authority. Instead, these women cleverly did what they needed in order to obtain the education, shelter, or other services they desired from the rescue homes. Pascoe argued that the common tendency to assume that these women were victims of a social control movement by Protestant women results

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>14</sup> The dominant American female culture was that of Protestant white women. It is important to remember that there never was a single American female culture. Rather,

in their appearance as “shadowy figures who have little individual agency and few choices about their lives.”<sup>15</sup>

Finally, Pascoe challenged scholars who argue that true history is to be written and discussed on its own merits without attention to contemporary movements. Pascoe explained: “I understand history as a kind of conversation between the past and the present in which we travel through time to examine the cultural assumptions- and the possibilities- of our own society as well as societies that came before us.”<sup>16</sup> Arguing that home mission projects failed because women relied too heavily on the idea of female moral authority, she warned modern feminists against placing a specific set of values on their movement. Pascoe posited that just as Protestant women assumed that all women aspired to Victorian female values, some modern feminists suggest a new set of “universal female values.”<sup>17</sup> While this provides a framework for discussion between more conservative and liberal women (on the subject of pornography, for example), it

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the culture of an individual woman’s community was defined by factors such as race, class, region, sexual orientation and marital status.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., xxi.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.,xxiii.

<sup>17</sup> The idea of a universal set of female values is promoted by proponents of cultural feminism. Cultural feminism suggests that “the enemy of women is not merely a social system or economic institution or set of backward beliefs but masculinity itself and in some cases male biology.” As a result, cultural feminists seek an environment “free of masculinist values and all their offshoots such as pornography.” These feminists hold that women are essentially the same, and that women have characteristic responses to environmental pressures and moral dilemmas. Linda Alcoff. “Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism,” in *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*, ed. Linda Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1997): 332. Prominent cultural feminists include Adrienne Rich, Mary Daly, and Carol Gilligan. See Adrienne Rich. *On Lies, Secrets and*

“encourages the reinforcement of gendered identities, it short-circuits communication between cultural feminists and women who challenge the gender role definitions of contemporary society.”<sup>18</sup> In short, the idea of a universal set of female values requires the assumption that all women are essentially the same by virtue of their biological sex, an argument that Pascoe firmly rejected.

Peggy Pascoe is not the only historian to suggest that the writing of women’s history has implications for contemporary women. In her article “Else Surely We Shall All Hang Separately: The Politics of Western Women’s History,” Virginia Scharff argued that writing the history of western women is a political act.<sup>19</sup> She asserted that history is not a set of absolute facts or a body of absolute truth waiting to be uncovered by historians. Instead, history is “an infinite set of past happenings, none of which are *necessarily* (italics Scharff’s) more important than others.” Drawing on historian Joan Wallace Scott, she explained that history is a “political exercise that both reflects and creates relations of power.”<sup>20</sup>

While Scharff and Pascoe were correct in their arguments that the writing of history has political implications, it is problematic when history is written for blatantly political purposes. This clouds the judgment of the historian, making it difficult to make a fair assessment of all available evidence. One example of this can be found in John

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*Silence* (New York: Norton, 1979); Mary Daly. *Gyn/Ecology* (Boston: Beacon, 1978); and Carol Gilligan. *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>19</sup> Virginia Scharff. “Else Surely We Shall All Hang Separately,” *Pacific Historical Review* 61 (1992).

Mack Faragher's 1985 *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie*. In his introduction, Faragher argued that one use of history is to "elucidate the structures of power and dominance by which men have been able to exercise, protect, and perpetuate their control of the social order."<sup>21</sup> As a result, Faragher's interpretation of the lives of women in Sugar Creek were always tied to his perception of the dominance exercised by the men of the community. To be sure, Faragher recognized the significance of the women to the development of the community, and he recognized their mostly unpaid contributions to community life. However, he rarely moved beyond the women's relationships with the men in their lives or his own assumption that the women were universally oppressed. Drawing extensively upon the writings of traveler and social commentator Frances Trollope, Faragher suggested that frontier women in the mid-nineteenth century held little joy or satisfaction in their lives. Trollope argued that early marriage and multiple pregnancies aged women prematurely, and kept them from reaching their highest potential. She pitied their isolation and felt that the life of a frontier farm wife was "one of hardship, privation, and labor."<sup>22</sup> To Trollope, and to Faragher, it was clear that these women were nothing more than "slaves of the soil."<sup>23</sup>

Because Faragher never moved his analysis of women beyond their roles as wives and mothers, he did not have the opportunity to explore points of power, joy or friendship

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 539

<sup>21</sup> John Mack Faragher. *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 110.

for these women. Faragher never described the community of women in Sugar Creek, instead furthering the idea that communities are defined by men and politics. Faragher argued: "Despite the importance of women's roles in their families. . . Sugar Creek was, finally, a community of men, led by fathers, to whom women as a group were 'subject.'"<sup>24</sup> While women certainly were excluded from public life and the male community, it seems likely that they established their own friendship and support networks. The author made passing reference to women's involvement in their church congregations, and their strong kinship ties. They also served as midwives, healers, and participated in spinning frolics and sewing bees. Just as men dominated the public sphere, women reigned over the private sphere, creating their own female communities. While this did not grant women power in the world of electoral politics, it certainly added to the complexity of their lives.

Like many historians who argue that women are an historically oppressed group, Faragher's problem was not that he presented erroneous information about women. Instead, the picture that he painted was incomplete. In his own introduction he argued: "[Simply] writing women into the historical narrative does not suffice."<sup>25</sup> While this is true, it is also not good enough to simply write about women's miseries and sufferings. While it is important to acknowledge injustices towards women, it is just as important to also recognize that women were more than just passive victims of the nineteenth-century.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>24</sup> Faragher, 155.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., xiii.

Faragher's argument that women were not members of the community also highlights the continued "othering" of women by historians. Even though Faragher is recognized as an historian sensitive to the importance of women's history, he still fell into the trap of assuming that the male community was the primary social structure in Sugar Creek.<sup>26</sup>

Despite significant progress towards the recognition of the significance of gender, for many scholars it seems that the male experience still represents the larger, common human experience.<sup>27</sup> While a history text or introductory survey course might highlight scores of men and one or two women, it is considered general history rather than men's history. However, if the same book or course were presented with the proportions of men and women reversed, it would no longer be considered a general history course. It would be women's history.

The field of women's history is problematic. While it provides a forum for the focused study of women, it also reemphasizes the "othering" of women, and takes the pressure off of scholars to produce a history that is truly synthesized. It prevents students

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<sup>26</sup> The concept of "othering" was first suggested by French existential feminist, Simone de Beauvoir. She posited that the male experience was considered the primary human experience, even by women. She argued: "Proletarians say 'We'; Negroes also. Regarding themselves as subjects, they transform the bourgeois, the whites, into 'others.' But women do not say 'we,' except at some congress of feminists or similar formal demonstration; men say 'women,' and women use the same word in referring to themselves. They do not authentically assume a subjective attitude." Simone de Beauvoir.

"Introduction" to *The Second Sex* in *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*, ed. Linda Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1997): 15.

<sup>27</sup> There has been significant progress in recent years towards a recognition of the significance of gender in the study of history. In particular, attention is being focused on the social construction of masculinity.

of history from learning the whole story unless they choose to sample “other” histories, such as women’s history, African American history, gay/lesbian/bisexual history, or Chicano history. Feminists’ acceptance of women’s history courses and books is a passive response to the continued invisibility of women in historical studies. de Beauvoir would see this as feminists’ complicity in their own oppression. She wrote: “They have gained only what men have been willing to grant; they have taken nothing, they have only received.”<sup>28</sup> The existence of women’s history and Women’s Studies departments placates women, discouraging them from demanding the inclusion of women’s experiences in all curriculum.

Studying women as “the Other” does more than just reaffirm their secondary existence. It also forces historians and feminists to search for overarching similarities between women that simply do not exist. While it is useful to develop frameworks for understanding the general social pressures that guide women’s life choices, it is wrong to assume that every woman will have the same response to these pressures. Just as one would not expect to find a core group of values or experiences which apply to all men, it is fruitless to search for the essential female experience. This, of course, is not to say that there is no such thing as a larger “sisterhood” of women. Rather, if we study history honestly it would be difficult-- if not impossible-- to identify the values that would define a universal sisterhood uniting women across all time and space. Historian Virginia Scharff argued that any generalization about the female experience is flawed because “to

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<sup>28</sup> de Bouvoir, 15.

speak of women as a group is to forget that notions of womanhood vary from time to time, place to place, and group to group.”<sup>29</sup>

The most obvious obstacles to finding a universal sisterhood are the very real differences that women have by virtue of sexual orientation, class, ethnicity, religion and race.<sup>30</sup> While scholarship in the 1960’s and 1970’s was heavily biased towards the experience of middle-class white heterosexual women, over the past twenty years women’s history has become more intentionally multi-cultural. However, due to the continued emphasis upon identifying early leaders of the woman suffrage movement, little attention has been paid to the myriad of political activities in which nineteenth-century women participated.<sup>31</sup> The sharp focus upon early women’s suffrage leaders blurs the vast distinctions between communities of women by neglecting those political women who actively campaigned against the vote and those who paid little attention to the suffrage movement because they were engaged in other activist pursuits.

This lack of attention to difference is in part caused by an effort to elucidate a clear feminist heritage in order to legitimate modern feminism. As a result, the vast political differences among nineteenth-century women have been largely ignored except for the exercise of defining them as feminists or anti-feminists. Although few

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<sup>29</sup> Virginia Scharff. “Else Surely We Shall All Hang Separately,” *Pacific Historical Review* 61 (1992).

<sup>30</sup> When speaking of “sisterhood” and difference, this thesis examines only women in the United States. This is not to ignore the value of women living in all regions of the globe. Rather, the scope of this thesis prevents a global approach.

<sup>31</sup> It is worth noting that the early woman suffrage movement is commonly noted in academic feminism as the “first wave” of feminism.

nineteenth-century women would recognize themselves as proponents or opponents of the feminist movement, scholars often try to assign these labels in an effort to locate the roots of the movement. Often, the distinction is based upon women's attitudes towards the suffrage movement, with little analysis of why women took differing positions on the voting issue. Womanist historian Elsa Barkley Brown has argued that there is a resistance to highlighting such difference among women because "this recognition is often accompanied with the sad (or angry) lament that too much attention to difference disrupts the relatively successful struggle to produce and defend women's history and women's politics, necessary corollaries of a women's movement."<sup>32</sup> After all, can women's history be legitimate if we acknowledge there is no single female experience?

This may partially explain why there is little examination of the experience of nineteenth-century women who were staunchly anti-suffragist. For many feminist scholars, the litmus test for the feminist sentiments of women in the nineteenth century is suffrage stance. Further, it seems that feminist historians have little interest in women who were not supportive of "feminist causes," especially suffrage. While no one has ever argued that every nineteenth-century woman was an active suffragette, the organized activities of women opposed to women's voting rights (called the "anti's") are rarely discussed. Nor are these women held up as examples of self-directed and self-reliant

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<sup>32</sup> Elsa Barkley Brown, "'What Has Happened Here?' The Politics of Difference in Women's History and Feminist Politics," in *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*, ed. Linda Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1997), 272. Womanism is a theory of feminism espoused especially by African-American women and which takes into consideration the significance of race and class to women's lives. Prominent womanists

activists. In *Splintered Sisterhood*, historian Susan E. Marshall argued that it is time for a reassessment of the experience of the “anti’s.” She argued that these women should be reconceptualized as “political actors rather than retiring housewives, granting them their rightful historical place as counterparts to suffragists.”<sup>33</sup> These were not just a few women, cowering to the demands of their husbands. In fact, several hundred thousand women belonged to national anti-suffrage organizations, such as the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage and the Southern Woman’s League for the Rejection of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment. Marshall dismissed the idea that female anti-suffragists were merely fronts for the economic interests of their wealthy husbands. Rather, she argued that these women acted out of a desire to protect their own wealth, privilege and social status. Many wealthy white women experienced an increase in social status towards the end of the nineteenth century. Given authority over the private sphere, these women gained community prominence by volunteering time and money to charities, missions, and organizations. Women’s suffrage would not only blur the distinctions between separate spheres for women and men, but it would “legitimate women’s employment and further the expansion of the social welfare state, supplanting the authority of the society volunteer with a cadre of female professionals bearing college credentials, relevant work experience and liberal political agendas.”<sup>34</sup> In short, women’s suffrage and the power it would give to American women threatened to displace wealthy

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include Alice Walker and bell hooks. See bell hooks. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston: South End Press, 1984).

<sup>33</sup> Susan E. Marshall. *Splintered Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Campaign Against Woman Suffrage* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997).

women. With membership in the “anti” movement largely based in the East, Marshall posited that the work of the anti’s “helps explain why 480 legislative campaigns in the first forty years of suffrage agitation yielded only four full suffrage victories, all in the sparsely populated western states.”<sup>35</sup> Such broad based involvement by women to defeat what most consider to be a basic right does not help establish the idea of a sisterhood uniting all women. Rather, it highlights the complexity of life circumstances, and the volatility of factions among women in the areas of race and class. In this case, anti’s recognized themselves first as a class of wealthy and privileged individuals, with their identification as members of a class of women coming second.

The “anti’s” were not the only large group of nineteenth-century women who were politically active despite opposition or indifference to the suffrage movement. Indeed, there were thousands of American women who exerted political power and influence without relying upon or advocating for the vote. Women were active petition organizers throughout the abolition movement, and home mission women worked to change the moral climate of the world around them. Others fought for educational and labor reform, sought an end to restrictive clothing for women, and others for increased availability of birth control. In fact, the largest group of organized, activist women in the nineteenth century was not a group dedicated to pursuing suffrage. Rather, they were the women of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). No other women’s organization could claim as many members as the WCTU on the local, state, national or

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 4.

even international level. Despite this, the history of the WCTU is not well known even though it could be argued that their work did more to improve the situation of nineteenth-century women than their suffragist counterparts.

This thesis will look at the significance of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in the state of Oregon in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The WCTU of Newberg, Oregon, provides an enlightening case study of the politics of temperance work, as the women of this union were initially unwilling to vocally support the suffrage movement. The women of Newberg are particularly significant because they were very politically active despite their initial public opposition to female voting rights. Part of this was due to the formation of their community, which was based upon Quaker ideals that historically have held women in high regard. Newberg women were active in influencing policy, economic development, educational institutions, and legislation on the state and national level. Their efforts in these arenas were not just in the form of petitions and letter writing, but they also frequently engaged in public speaking, preaching in churches, and on some occasions even testified before government bodies.

Abigail Scott Duniway is widely recognized as the most important leader in the history of Oregon women. While her work was important, it pales in comparison to the accomplishments of the women of the Oregon WCTU. No single woman can be credited with the success of this group; instead a group of anonymous women worked together to create a state that was more habitable for all women. They were willing to recognize and respect differences between women in the areas of race, class, religion and political ideology. Their dedicated focus on changing the world for the benefit of women, and their commitment to keeping all of their activities woman-run and woman-centered,

should be of great interest to any feminist scholar seeking to flesh out the origins of a feminist heritage. An investigation of the work of WCTU women will help scholars to realize that using suffrage stance to evaluate nineteenth-century women's feminism is inadequate. While there were certainly anti-suffragists who were anti-feminist, there were many women opposed to suffrage who were fighting passionately for the social emancipation of women.

Finally, the work of these women suggests that despite their lack of enfranchisement, women in Oregon were extremely political. The very differences that divided them provided for a very rich and complex political climate. The consequences of these women's political actions were, in the end, relevant not just to women but to all Oregonians. Women's political work shaped the development of communities and the state of Oregon. As a result, it is wrong to assume that the history of Oregon women must be separate from that of Oregon men. Any history which claims to tell the story of Oregon must include the politics of women.

## Chapter II

### The Birth of the National Women's Christian Temperance Union

A quiet group of Midwestern women began the Women's Christian Temperance Union in 1873. On December 22 of that year, Dr. Diocletian Lewis gave a speech in Hillsboro, Ohio, titled "The Duty of Christian Women in the Cause of Temperance." In his address, Lewis recounted his father's days of drunkenness and his mother's despair as their home life crumbled. In her desperation, she pleaded with the owner of the saloon her husband frequented to stop selling liquor, and was surprised by the barkeeper's positive response. Once the bar closed, her husband gave up drinking and their lives improved drastically. Lewis ended his speech wondering aloud what would happen if the women of Ohio were to try the same tactic.<sup>36</sup> For Ohio women, there would be plenty of work to do, as there was already one saloon for every 200 people.<sup>37</sup>

Though Lewis had delivered the same speech countless times in the past, the women of Hillsboro were captivated by the challenge, and decided to meet it head on. Fifty women volunteered to participate in marches against the saloons and met the following morning in the Presbyterian Church, electing Eliza Jane Thompson as their president. Following the vote, the Presbyterian minister presiding over the meeting called Thompson forward to address the assembled women but she was so terrified by the thought of speaking in public that she could not move. After a few moments of silence in the room, her brother realized that the women were not likely to speak in the presence of

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<sup>36</sup> Ruth Bordin, *Women and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 6.

men, so he led the men out of the room. Only when the women had the room to themselves did they feel free to begin their work. Historian Ruth Bordin explained:

As the last man left, Thompson's strength returned and she walked to the front, read from the Bible, and called on Mrs. Joseph McDowell to lead in prayer. McDowell had never prayed in public before. She was so shy that even when she prayed with her own children she whispered, but "she prayed that morning as if a live coal from the altar had touched her lips, and there was no dry eye in the house." Thompson then asked the women to sing the old hymn "Give to the Winds Thy Fears." They formed a line, and two by two marched singing out of the church and down the cold and sunless street, a few snowflakes falling on their cloaks and shawls. "Every heart was throbbing and every woman's countenance betrayed her solemn realization of the fact that she was going about her Father's business."<sup>38</sup>

The women moved through the town, asking all druggists, grocers, physicians, innkeepers and saloon owners to sign a pledge promising to immediately end all alcohol sales. If they did not sign, the women began praying and singing inside the establishments. Onlookers were so shocked by the sight of these women moving in prayer and song from establishment to establishment, that they looked on with awed silence and offered little resistance. After a few weeks of their untiring efforts, most of the town's liquor establishments closed. Of the thirteen in business at the beginning of the marches, only four survived.

Similar efforts were initiated in other Midwestern towns. On Christmas Eve, at Washington Court House, Ohio, Lewis gave the same lecture he gave to the Hillsboro women. His audience was so taken with his challenge that they forgot the Christmas holiday all together to begin organizing their own crusade. The women followed a

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 16-18.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 18.

routine similar to that of their sisters in Hillsboro, moving from establishment to establishment with prayers and songs. Their male supporters prayed in the church and rung the church bells at the end of each hour. After three days of hard work, with barely even a break for meals, the women succeeded in closing down their first saloon. As the dealer began pouring stock in the gutters

axes were placed in the hands of the women who had suffered most, [presumably the wives of drunkards], and swinging through the air, they came down with ringing blows, bursting the heads of the casks, and flooding the gutters of the street. One good woman, putting her soul into every blow, struck but once for a barrel, splashing Holland gin and old Bourbon high into the air amid the shouts of the people. Four barrels and one cask were forced open, the proprietors giving a hearty consent.<sup>39</sup>

Within eight days, the women of Washington Court House realized victory. On January 2, the women announced to the town that their efforts had closed eleven saloons, and had convinced all the druggists to stop selling liquor except for prescriptions. Every dealer in town surrendered to the women's demands, and Washington Court House became a temperance town.<sup>40</sup> News of the crusades spread across the nation and within three months women had shut down the liquor industry in 250 localities, including towns in Michigan, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Before the rash of marches ended, women staged them in over 912 communities in 31 states and territories.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 22.

In August of 1874, the formal Women's Christian Temperance Union was formed at Lake Chautauqua, New York, at a meeting attended by about fifty women.<sup>42</sup> Using national church networks, leaders of this meeting sent messages to local women's temperance societies throughout the country, calling for them to organize regional gatherings and elect officers for a national organizing convention. The national convention was set for Cleveland, Ohio, in November of that same year. The organizational committee was carefully appointed at the Chautauqua meeting, requiring that no two members came from the same state and that all regions of the nation be represented. When the conference was held, there were 135 women representing sixteen states. One of the participants commented that a generation earlier such a gathering could never have come to pass because "woman was often no more than a slave to man."<sup>43</sup>

Several important decisions were made at the conference. They decided to call themselves the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and to ensure that this was a national movement, they stipulated the appointment of a vice-president from each state of the country. While men were at the convention as guests, they were not allowed to join, to vote, nor to preside over business sessions. The women decided that unions throughout the country should follow the same policy, allowing men to join only as honorary members. This was one of the most significant decisions made at the convention. Bordin argued:

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<sup>42</sup> Bordin, 25; John E. Caswell. "The Prohibition Movement in Oregon," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 39 (1938): 235-261; 255.

<sup>43</sup> Bordin, 36.

To exclude men from membership and substantive participation in the Union was a decision that markedly increased the WCTU's potential for capturing top place as an outlet for the woman's movement in the nineteenth century. Because the WCTU from the beginning banned males from voting membership, men never became competitors in the WCTU for leadership roles. On state, local, and national levels, women did the work, set the policies, and monopolized the offices. No other existing organization provided women with a similar forum over which they exercised complete control.<sup>44</sup>

While women were active in other groups, they never realized such power as the WCTU afforded them. For example, even though 3,500 of the 4,000 members of the National Conference on Charities were women, only twenty percent held office at the national level, and forty percent at the state level. Even the National Association of Woman Suffrage Associations had male officers and members. No other organization in the country in the nineteenth century was more woman-centered or woman-controlled than the WCTU.<sup>45</sup>

At the Cleveland convention, the WCTU elected as its first president, Annie Wittenmyer, founder of the Methodist home Missionary Society and editor the *Christian Woman*. The WCTU also adopted a platform for their work, agreeing to advocate for total abstinence and requiring each member to sign a pledge that she would never consume alcohol under any circumstances. To promote widespread abstinence, they agreed to promote temperance education in religious and public schools, as well as through the churches. They also agreed to continue their prayer services, mass meetings and speaking engagements, and to promote themselves by seeking publicity and distributing literature.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

Local unions were encouraged to gain space for regular WCTU columns in their home newspapers, and to urge local editors to cover their events as news items.<sup>46</sup>

That women responded so eagerly to the idea of a national organization for temperance is explained by the particularly devastating effects of alcohol abuse on their lives. Because women in the 1870's had extremely limited property rights, could not sue or be sued in their own names, could not execute business or financial transactions for themselves or others, and often no longer owned even their own labor, the wife of a drunkard had few options. He could easily spend all of the family earnings on alcohol, leaving the family hungry and destitute. Furthermore, men who were frequently drunk abused their wives and children who had no legal recourse in the face of domestic violence. "Given a woman's limited legal rights, the drunkard as head of the household was seen as a true oppressor of his wife and family. The drunken husband epitomized the evils of a society in which women were second-class citizens, in ways that no sober (however tyrannical) husband and father could," argued Bordin<sup>47</sup> The WCTU gave women the platform they needed to bring attention to this widespread problem, and to help women rise out of domestic abuse and poverty. For many women in the WCTU, it was clear that alcohol was the true root of all violence, oppression and evil. If it could be eradicated, homes and cities would be peaceful and no family would have to go hungry.

The message of the WCTU spread quickly across the country, with local unions springing up all over the United States. The large network of unions kept in contact with

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 7.

each other through national conventions and their newspaper, *The Union Signal*, which commenced publication in 1875. Such communications led to a national community of women, which had well-known speakers, leaders and causes. Successes from local unions were published in the *Signal*, allowing women to rejoice in the success of WCTU sisters they never met. When popular leaders died, women across the nation mourned them as if they had known them their entire lives.

Perhaps more importantly, such communication enabled women to be taken seriously by politicians despite their lack of enfranchisement. During their first year, the organization collected over 40,000 signatures on a petition to the United States Congress to investigate the liquor trade and its evils. When collated, the petition was too heavy to be carried by hand and had to be transported by carriage. Though the bill eventually died in the Senate, the Senators did review the bill, inviting the women to testify before them.<sup>48</sup> This was invaluable experience for these leaders who never had such opportunities before the collective power of the WCTU.

Despite their visible political activity on the national level, the work of the WCTU has not been the subject of as much historical inquiry as one might expect. Bordin suggested that women's historians have almost completely ignored the WCTU and its leader, Frances Willard, "because the WCTU in the mid-twentieth century became a cheap joke, the epitome of bluestocking bigotry" and because the political motivations of feminist scholars made WCTU women unattractive subjects.<sup>49</sup> Bordin explained:

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

The feminists of the 1960s and 1970s have been personally concerned with egalitarianism and sexual freedom. Living in a libertarian age, they quite naturally discovered an interest in the suffrage and social purity movements, which represented antecedents for their own concern with social and political equality and control of their own bodies, rather than temperance, which seemed part of the anti-libertarian tradition. But it was in the temperance movement that large numbers of women were politicized, and it was through temperance that they experienced wider spheres of public activity in the nineteenth century.<sup>50</sup>

Ignoring the significance of the WCTU leaves those interested in the lives of nineteenth century women with an incomplete picture of the complex world of women's politics. Although women were not voting in most areas of the United States in the late nineteenth century, they were influencing public policy and general elections. WCTU women also, often inadvertently, either bolstered or hindered the cause of suffragists. In some regions, cooperation between the temperance and suffrage leaders gave the appearance of a united front of women who claimed their votes could make the world a safer place for everyone. However, in other regions, the relationship between these two movements of women were marked by public conflict.

The relationship between the temperance movement and the suffrage movement was particularly volatile in the state of Oregon. In her autobiography, *Pathbreaking*, suffrage leader Abigail Scott Duniway argued that women who advocated for prohibition slowed her battle to gain the vote for Oregon women. Although Duniway supported temperance as a moral virtue that individuals should strive for, she saw prohibition as an encroachment upon personal liberty and thus publicly ridiculed those who proposed laws to make liquor consumption illegal. Staunch temperance workers were mortified by her

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

anti-prohibitionist agenda and often fiery rhetoric, and refused to associate themselves with her. Duniway claimed she was turned away from many speaking engagements due to rumors spread by WCTU and other temperance women that she was a drunkard.<sup>51</sup> She believed temperance workers were to blame for the delay in suffrage for Oregon women, not just because of their desire for prohibition but also because they belittled Duniway and her movement publicly. (Voting rights for women made it to the state ballot six times over three decades before it finally passed in 1912.) She was particularly angered when Susan B. Anthony publicly endorsed the prohibition movement, and felt that the national suffrage association's relationship with prohibition workers would only slow the progress of women's rights. This was because she was certain that men would fear that by enfranchising women, they would lose their rights to manufacture, sell and consume liquor.

Duniway's belief that the WCTU was to blame for the delay in winning the vote was not endorsed by other suffragists. Instead, leaders like Susan B. Anthony believed Duniway was to blame for selling out allegiance to women by pandering to men. Duniway openly stated that it was more important to convert men to the suffrage cause than women, because men had the vote. Anthony argued that this strategy failed because it did not unite women. Without large numbers of women speaking publicly about their

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<sup>51</sup> Abigail Scott Duniway. *Pathbreaking*. (Portland: James, Kearns and Abbot, 1914), 62; Ruth Barnes Moynihan. "Of Women's Rights and Freedom: Abigail Scott

Duniway," in *Women in Pacific Northwest History: An Anthology*, ed. Karen J. Blair. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 9-24.

desire to vote, Anthony believed that male voters were bolstered in their claims that women did not really want suffrage.

In Oregon, many WCTU women distanced themselves from suffrage in order to keep themselves away from the conflict surrounding the outspoken Duniway. Given the fact that there were more women involved with the WCTU than any suffrage organization, failing to enlist the support of the organization was a great loss for Duniway. To be clear, many members of the Oregon WCTU supported suffrage. However, the majority were not inclined to speak publicly for the movement and instead focused on a broad social agenda which advocated the social emancipation of women.

### **Chapter III**

#### **“Not Just a Mere Temperance Society:” The Early Years of the Oregon WCTU**

Women did not gain the right to vote in Oregon elections until the passage of the state suffrage amendment in 1912. Prior to this time, however, women actively exploited various avenues for political activity. Usually, these activities centered around “women’s issues” such as education and temperance which allowed women to exercise their political voices while still feeling they were firmly rooted in the domestic sphere. Some women, however, challenged the notion of the separate sphere ideology by advocating property and voting rights for all women.<sup>52</sup> Between the movement for increased women’s rights, and the movement for women’s participation in social housekeeping, Oregon women formed a political force which influenced state and local elections, the development of individual communities and the state.

The primary organizations for women’s political action in Oregon between 1880 and 1900 were the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and the Oregon State Women Suffrage Association. Many of the prominent women in Oregon politics were involved, at least to some extent, in both the suffrage and temperance movements. However, unlike in other states, there was never a successful formal alliance of the two groups, due primarily to the divisive influence of suffrage leader Abigail Scott Duniway.

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<sup>52</sup> The “separate sphere ideology” refers to the scholarly theory that nineteenth century men and women each dominated over a particular sphere. Men controlled the public sphere, encompassing politics, economics, and commerce. Women presided over the private sphere, which included the home, family values, church, and education. In

Duniway was born in Illinois on October 22, 1834, and immigrated to Oregon in 1852. In early adulthood, Duniway was not an advocate for women's rights, rather, she lived the life of a typical pioneer housewife and school teacher. However, following the loss of the family farm due to foreclosure on a loan and the permanent injury of her husband, Duniway grew increasingly concerned about her lack of control over her own financial assets. Her concerns about the deficiency of women's property rights were exacerbated by her experience running a millinery store in Albany after her husband's injury. Through her interactions with her female customers, Duniway became acutely aware of the unique problems women faced due to their disenfranchisement and lack of economic power. Day after day, she watched women desperately looking for work in an effort to make ends meet while their husbands squandered family assets on gambling, drinking, and other luxuries. In her autobiography, Duniway recounted stories of women who died from exhaustion, those who were left penniless and abandoned with several children to care for, and those who were physically abused by their husbands. Through experiences in her millenary, Duniway became convinced that if women had the right to vote along with rights to their children and wages they could bring themselves out of "pioneer drudgery." She was also convinced that drunken men were a danger to families, and that curtailing drunken behavior was important to the advancement of women. As a result, she simultaneously engaged in temperance and suffrage work.<sup>53</sup>

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order to attain "true womanhood," women were expected to abide by the values of her sphere, which included domesticity, piety, and purity.

<sup>53</sup> Abigail Scott Duniway. *Path Breaking: An Autobiographical History of the Equal Suffrage Movement in the Pacific Coast States* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971);

Duniway's most important contribution to the temperance movement was her authorship of the Oregon State Temperance Alliance's constitution.<sup>54</sup> This alliance, founded in 1871, was an organization of men and women which preceded the creation of the WCTU. Like early temperance societies throughout the United States, the OSTA was a male dominated organization despite the fact that temperance was widely regarded as a women's issue. Not only was the leadership of the OSTA entirely male, women were not permitted to speak or vote on resolutions. Instead, women were encouraged to attend meetings silently while promoting temperance in their own homes by teaching their children the principles of abstinence, and prevailing upon their husbands to make sound decisions regarding liquor.

Duniway and some of her female allies challenged this sexual division of temperance work in 1872 when Duniway consented to her own nomination as chair of a committee. When the nomination was submitted by a woman, Duniway was angered and humiliated by the open laughter and ridicule of the men attending the meeting. Even more infuriating to Duniway was the fact that the president of the alliance completely ignored the nomination, refusing to respond to it at all. Encouraged by the women surrounding her, Duniway stood up and vocally challenged the authority of the president: "Are men the only lawful members of this Alliance? And if so, is it not better for the women delegates to go home?" she asked angrily. Duniway's words were immediately

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Ruth Barnes Moynihan. *Rebel for Rights: Abigail Scott Duniway* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

<sup>54</sup> Helen Krebs Smith. *The Presumptuous Dreamers: A Sociological History of the Life and Times of Abigail Scott Duniway, Volume Two, 1872-1876* (Lake Oswego: Smith, Smith and Smith, 1983), 2.

met with hostility and she was silenced by the chair of the meeting. Shamed, all of the women sat silently until one of them sent an anonymous note to the president, pointing out that because women constituted the majority of the membership of the Alliance it was ludicrous to prohibit them from speaking.<sup>55</sup>

Exasperated by the persistence of the women, the president conceded that perhaps a woman's voice should be heard and he invited Duniway, the recognized leader of women in the room, to share her thoughts with the larger crowd. Betraying her disgust with the men around her, Duniway began her speech on a derisive note. "I hope gentlemen will pardon the criticism, but you talk too much and too many of you try to talk at once. My head is aching from the roar and din of your noisy orators," she complained. She went on to argue that men would never succeed in their temperance goals without the support of women, and that women's support would never matter unless they were given the vote. "Give women the legal and financial power to combat intemperance in their homes and they will soon prove that they do not like drunken husbands any better than men like drunken wives. Make women free!"<sup>56</sup> she demanded.

Because the topic of woman suffrage was generally too radical for temperance meetings, Duniway was immediately silenced. She was not permitted nomination to leadership in the alliance, nor had she persuaded the men to reconsider their attitudes towards women's active participation in the business of the Alliance. Soon after this meeting, Duniway left the temperance movement permanently. A bitter woman who ably

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<sup>55</sup> Smith, 2-5; Duniway 62-4; Moynihan, 114.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

carried grudges for years, she would always equate the temperance movement with the repression of liberty, and she saw women who engaged in temperance work as liabilities to the woman suffrage movement.

Just as Duniway was denied full participation in the Oregon State Temperance Alliance, all Oregon women were essentially shut out of real temperance work until the founding of the Oregon Women's Christian Temperance Union. Like other states around the nation, the women of Oregon were inspired by the accomplishments of the activists in Ohio who worked to shut down local liquor establishments through marches of song and prayer. The first stirrings of WCTU spirit in Oregon began in the Portland area, where women staged their own crusade marches in the spring of 1874. The first groups were organized in March and were made up of women representing all of the area churches. The city was divided into territories, with each territory assigned to a particular committee of women. Committee members canvassed their territories, going door to door in residential and business districts to obtain signed pledges of abstinence from citizens and to solicit funds to help cover the costs of their efforts. On March 19, the *Oregonian* reported that "in conformity to these arrangements, ladies were circulating freely about with pencil in hand and the pledge, asking for signatures. Their efforts, we learn, were crowned with a very encouraging measure of success, and many persons signed the pledge of total abstinence. Today and tomorrow these labors are to be

renewed, until the whole city has been gone over and thoroughly canvassed.”<sup>57</sup> Within four days, the women gained 200 signed pledges from Portlanders.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *Oregonian*, March 19, 1874, p. 3.

<sup>58</sup> John E. Caswell. “The Prohibition Movement in Oregon,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 39 (1938) 235-261; 255.

On the same day, the paper carried an open letter to manufacturers and liquor dealers urging them to stop their trade so –

That our husbands, brothers, and especially our sons, be no longer exposed to this terrible temptation, and that we may no longer see them led into these paths which go down to sin, and bring both soul and body to destruction. We appeal to the better instincts of your hearts; in the name of desolated homes, blasted hopes, ruined lives and widowed hearts; for the honor of our community; for our prosperity; for our happiness; for our good name as a town; in the name of God, who will judge you as well as ourselves; for the sake of your souls, which are to be saved or lost. . .<sup>59</sup>

The following week Portland women began their demonstrations at the city saloons. Historian Ruth Bordin has argued that early WCTU crusaders met little overt resistance because “their highly charged nonviolent protests demoralized and immobilized the liquor dealers.” The women of Portland, however, seemed to be an exception. Saloon-keepers humored the women, suggesting they hold their prayer meetings in side rooms, or in the doorways of their establishments. Like their sisters in Ohio, the women argued their point through prayer and song. Their audience, however, was not moved and made fun of the spectacle of women carrying on in such fashion. The *Oregonian* reported that “at the conclusion of each hymn and prayer, clapping of hands and stamping of feet followed, while on the outside some boisterous individuals would jeer and laugh, one in particular being loud in his disapproval of the course of the women.”<sup>60</sup> The novelty was so amusing to saloon patrons, that the women actually drew

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> *Oregonian*, March 25, 1874, p. 3.

larger than expected crowds to the saloons, causing the barkeepers to invite them to come back whenever they chose.<sup>61</sup>

The women of Portland continued their crusade, but with no real success. Three days into their demonstrations, just two men had given up their drinks in the bars, only to resume their liquor consumption after the women left. As time wore on, patrons and businessmen became impatient with what was once amusing, and the demonstrations became rowdy. On April 1, the crowds “became rough” resulting in “a row at Moffett’s saloon.” Tired of the disturbance, the police requested that the women give up their efforts.<sup>62</sup>

The women stubbornly persisted, however, and on April 7 the police began arresting crusaders. The women argued their civil rights were being violated as they had a constitutional guarantee to freedom of speech and worship. At first, their arguments were persuasive enough to lead to their release, but by April 17, after spending several hours at Moffett’s Saloon, twenty-one women were arrested. Six of them faced trial for disorderly conduct and were subsequently found guilty. When the judge sentenced them to a few hours of jail, the formal marches came to an end.<sup>63</sup>

When the marches stopped, however, the women of Portland continued to meet in small female temperance societies, just as other women around the country did. Efforts to create an official Women’s Christian Temperance Union did not begin until

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<sup>61</sup> Caswell, 254.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

Elizabeth White of Portland was appointed Vice President for Oregon by the national union in 1880. The first local WCTU was founded by White's mother, the Reverend Rebecca Clawson, on March 22, 1881 and its sister union was established three weeks later in Albany. These early days were difficult for the unions, as they had few resources to attract members or to start up sister unions. In October of 1881, Mrs. H.K. Hines of Portland, who took over for White as state Vice President, determined to build the membership rolls in the state and undertook over one thousand miles of travel in order to reach all of the women of Oregon. She also sent letters to women and pastors throughout the state, encouraging them to build and support local unions. Though she did get some positive responses, she was mostly discouraged by religious leaders who argued that women did not need this organization. Ministers believed that women were already overburdened with the tasks that their churches set before them, and to add a WCTU would just be too much. Despite these initial setbacks, in 1883 Hines convinced Frances E. Willard, the national president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, along with her private secretary, Anna Gordon, to come to Oregon for a WCTU convention.

Willard and Gordon's visit drew ninety women from all over Oregon, including several from Newberg, to Portland in June of 1883. Meeting at the First Methodist Episcopal Church, the gathering spot for the Portland crusaders of 1874, the women officially organized the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of the State of Oregon. The state was divided into six districts, and it was determined that the president of each district would also serve as a vice president for the state. Newberg was part of the third district, along with the other towns of Yamhill county, and the towns in Benton, Polk and Tillamook Counties. Mary Edwards of Newberg was elected president of this district.

The convention revolved around speakers (all of whom were women), devotions, and prayer times. There was also a presentation by the “committee on declaration of principles and plan of work” which included five women who wanted to see the state union take a stand on suffrage. Their report to the convention suggested that women could never succeed in promoting temperance unless they had the right to vote. The women argued:

Until long retarded justice shall have placed within women’s hands the power to register her protest, through the ballot, against that monstrous perversion of the righteous law called license, she must use every influence which her versatile brain can suggest under the leading of the Spirit of All Truth, to alleviate the condition of those who are bound in Satan’s chains, etc. While we are careful to keep the silent forces ever moving onward toward the final consummation which we have in view, we must be ever active and vigilant, zealously watchful of our wily foe, and constantly seek out ‘new devices’ whereby to circumvent and cripple his energies, *until the set time arrives when the power shall be placed in our hands, when we shall*, at least in part, be instrumental in accomplishing his destruction.

Although most of the women were enthusiastic about including such strong suffrage language in their organizational papers, Frances Willard argued against it. She explained that while she was pleased to see that the women of Oregon were “taking such advanced ground,” she could not “willingly submit to the subject of woman’s suffrage being brought before this convention.” Willard believed that suffrage was likely the only way a “woman can hope effectually to protect her home,” but argued that work for suffrage should be a hobby, and not part of the agenda of the WCTU.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Lucia H. Faxon Additon. *Twenty Eventful Years of the Oregon Women’s Christian Temperance Union, 1880-1900* (Portland: Gotshall Printing, 1904), 4.

Several other items of business were discussed at this first convention. The women decided to send a representative to the national WCTU convention to be held in Detroit in October. Reverend Rebecca Clawson was appointed as the state's delegate.<sup>65</sup> The women also drafted a "plan of work," stating the goal of the Oregon WCTU to be "to educate the children and the mothers, to bring influence to bear upon pulpit and press, and to bring into activity latent forces, powers and influence of Christian women."<sup>66</sup> In order to accomplish these goals, the convention outlined sixteen departments of work which were also adopted by local unions.<sup>67</sup> Finally, the WCTU adopted its first official resolution which was to "refuse to deal with those who deal in intoxicating drink." By the time the second annual Oregon WCTU convention was held in Albany in 1884, twenty-two more unions had formed. One of the new unions was the Newberg WCTU which was founded on February 10, 1884 with Amanda Woodward as its first president.

The rapid growth of the WCTU in Oregon was a result of effective communication among women, despite the distances that separated them. Most unions had a department for press work, but many local newspapers were not interested in

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 2-6. Clawson died in Indianapolis, Indiana as she was traveling to the convention.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>67</sup> By 1892, departments of work in the Oregon WCTU included: Evangelistic, Scientific Temperance, Sabbath Observance (previously Sabbath Desecration), Music, Work Among Foreigners, Fairs and Public Gatherings, Heredity and Health, Narcotics, Temperance Literature, Temperance and Labor, Union Signal, Flower Mission, White Cross, Social Purity, Kindergarten, Peace, Prison and Jail Work, Purity in Literature and Art, Pastor Work, Legislation and Petitions, Mercy Department, Press Work, Medal Contests and Young Woman's Work. *Minutes. Annual Meeting of Newberg WCTU, March 31, 1892; page 11.*

publishing lengthy articles about the WCTU, forcing women to depend upon personal communications. Taking advantage of church and kinship networks, women wrote to pastors and church leaders requesting suggestions of individual women that might be willing to head up unions. They also depended upon salaried state workers (all women) who traveled all over Oregon speaking to church groups, ladies circles and pastors, and continuing the tradition of paying personal visits to saloon keepers and liquor manufacturers.

Women who devoted themselves to state level organizing had to be completely dedicated to their work. It was time consuming, exhausting, and sometimes dangerous. The log of one state worker, published in the *Northwest White Ribboner*, the regional WCTU newspaper, reported that in the course of one year, a single organizer helped create seven local WCTU's, five Young Women's Christian Temperance Unions, two Loyal Temperance Leagues, two anti-cigarette leagues, and two new county organizations. In addition, she conducted five institutes, ten day sessions and five evening sessions, organized six conferences for young women and conducted four department meetings. She was also called upon to do significant public speaking work, as she addressed 1500 public school children, gave 70 public lectures, delivered 21 sermons, and conducted ten public Bible readings. She wrote 175 letters and post cards, made 25 visits to jails, and lobbied 11 printing offices to donate services to the WCTU. Among her personal accomplishments that year she enlisted 103 new WCTU members, 383 Loyal Temperance League members, 600 pledges for total abstinence, and 140 signed declarations of anti-tobacco sentiment. To accomplish these things, and all of the "personal work [which] cannot be tabulated", this individual woman traveled 754 miles.

Historian Lucy Addington commented in “Twenty Eventful Years in the Oregon WCTU” that “when we realize that this is only one field worker’s report, and that there were five, beside the faithful, constant work of the state president, we may perhaps form some just estimate of the amount of earnest effort put forth” in working for the goals of the WCTU.<sup>68</sup>

The stated goals of the WCTU were quite simple. Essentially, the WCTU sought to put an end to liquor consumption by all people. They sought total prohibition, and sought pledges of complete abstinence from all whom they encountered. To this end, they pushed for educational reforms which would teach young people the dangers of drinking. Specifically, they sought compulsory scientific temperance education in all public schools which would mandate that all students learn the scientific basis for the dangers of alcohol, particularly the harmful effects that alcohol had upon the body. To complement this, WCTU workers sought to educate church leaders so that Christians all over Oregon were educated from the pulpit and in their Sunday School classes that alcohol was a tool of the devil. Those who drank alcohol in any quantity were endangering their souls. The WCTU women felt that alcohol use always led to some form of social evil-- spousal abuse, poverty, loose sexual morals, thievery, and even murder.

To be certain, the WCTU was very focused upon the spiritual health of the women and men in their communities. It earnestly believed its work was God’s work, and that each of its women had been called to fight Satan through their fight against the

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<sup>68</sup> Additon, 76-7.

liquor trade. For many, this was the justification they needed for defying gender roles which precluded women from speaking in public and preaching in churches. Because their mission came from God, and because their efforts were for the purpose of protecting the home, many women felt their work was still rooted firmly within the domestic sphere. Social housekeeping, even when it involved public speaking and lobbying, was thus an acceptable task for all kinds of women, not just those who were more inclined towards a movement to liberate women.

The women's fervent belief that their work was God's work is evident in their minutes, speeches, poems and songs. For example, a passage from the lengthy poem, "The White Ribbon Army" by Mary L. Kenworthy, reflects women's growing sense of power and authority.

But He, who hears the raven's cry  
And to all weakness giveth strength  
Shall make her righteous cause His own  
And advocate it at the throne,  
And truth, and right shall win at length

O, mothers that with trembling feet  
And throbbing heart and dewy eyes  
Have meekly borne the public gaze  
The taunts, the jeers, the coarse amaze,  
Sure, God will bless your sacrifice.<sup>69</sup>

The confidence, dedication and passion of the Oregon WCTU women did pay off in small political victories during their first few years of work. In 1885 the Women's Christian Temperance Union convinced the Oregon Agricultural Society to prohibit liquor sale and consumption on the state fair grounds. An even greater victory secured

that year was the adoption of the compulsory scientific temperance law for the state of Oregon which was won through effective petition circulation, multiple lectures given in communities throughout the state by WCTU women, and women's letters to newspapers throughout Oregon.<sup>70</sup> Some of the women in leadership positions also made personal visits to legislators. In the years that followed, Oregon women turned their attention to passing similar legislation on the national level. In 1887, the WCTU actively cooperated with other temperance organizations in their advocacy for a state prohibition amendment campaign. Though the amendment did not pass, the women's work paid off by "cementing the links of the temperance chain, unifying the forces for united action, as the marked results of the battle for 'Home versus the saloon.'"<sup>71</sup>

Despite the passage of the compulsory scientific temperance law and the prohibition of alcohol from the grounds of the state fair, WCTU women never achieved their ultimate, stated goal. Oregon never became a totally dry state. By these standards, the WCTU was an absolute failure. However, the real contributions of the WCTU were not in the area of temperance. The women of the union always believed that they were working for something more, one WCTU woman arguing that "we must not allow ourselves to degenerate into mere temperance societies. We are more, or we have fallen

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<sup>69</sup> Additon, xiii. Mary L. Kenworth, *The White Ribbon Army*

<sup>70</sup> Compulsory scientific temperance laws required that students in public school be taught the scientific basis for the dangers of alcohol, particularly the harmful effects that alcohol brought to bear on the human body.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 15.

far below our birthright.”<sup>72</sup> Indeed, the greatest accomplishments of Oregon WCTU women came from their broad and aggressive social agenda, which had as its primary goal the betterment of all women.

Most WCTU women recognized themselves as participants in what was broadly known as “the Woman Movement”, a movement among women to “initiate measures of charitable benevolence, temperance, and social welfare and to instigate struggles for civic rights, social freedoms, higher education, remunerative occupations and the ballot.”<sup>73</sup> Historian Nancy Cott has argued that the use of the singular word “woman” highlights the belief that there was a unity among all women, and that all women together shared a single, fundamental cause. Of course, if women of this era had been polled, it would quickly become clear that individual women had different causes and priorities. However, most white club women, including those in the WCTU, did share a common belief in the idea of a female moral authority which, if unleashed upon America, could improve the quality of life for all citizens. While suffrage workers believed that the root of nineteenth century women’s oppression was political exclusion, WCTU women believed that women were oppressed by men, especially those abusing alcohol. In order to combat this, they believed that women needed to be educated, empowered, and protected. As a result, the WCTU addressed such issues as labor reform, school programs, prison conditions, prostitution, pornography, and birth control.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>73</sup> Nancy Cott. *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 3.

The women of the Oregon WCTU were unable to tap into previously existing institutions to help them in their quest to improve the social situation of women. Because Northwest cities were new and rapidly growing, there were few social service agencies available to provide a safety net for those in need. The Oregon WCTU recognized that this was particularly dangerous for women who could quickly fall into poverty as the result of marital dissolution or untimely pregnancy. In 1888, the East Portland WCTU began trying to fill the social welfare gap with the creation of the Baby Home, which cared for 132 children in its first year. Around the same time, another Portland area union organized a women's exchange network. Through this network, women had the opportunity to earn money for their own support by selling homemade goods to other women. The same union also opened an industrial home for women and girls, which included a kindergarten, child care, and a sewing school. Together, these projects became known as the Refuge Home for Women.<sup>74</sup>

The Refuge Home for Women was a place where WCTU women worked to overturn the sexual double standard. Rejecting the idea that women who found themselves unmarried and pregnant should be stigmatized for life, the Refuge Home offered women a place to live and learn while they regained, or even realized for the first time, their footing in the world. The organizers of the home believed that if women had access to good education and child care, they could support themselves and go on to lead what WCTU women considered to be proper lives. Of course, women who entered the homes surely had a variety of motives, as did the women in other refuge homes described

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<sup>74</sup> Additon, 70-72.

by Peggy Pascoe in *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West*.<sup>75</sup> Nonetheless, the Refuge Home provided an important resource for poor, single mothers in the Portland area in the 1880's.

The WCTU women did not believe they should be solely responsible for the care and rehabilitation of these women; rather they argued it was the responsibility of the state to provide such social welfare services. As a result, activists lobbied the state legislature for several years to take over financial responsibility for the Refuge Home. In 1889, the women scored their first victory with the commitment of \$5000 in state funding for the home. Historian Sandra Harsaager argued this was a typical pattern of "cultural politics" in the Pacific Northwest. WCTU women "creat[ed] an institution to meet a community need, and pressur[ed] government to fund it and eventually assume its management as a legitimate state activity."<sup>76</sup>

While Oregon WCTU workers sought to meet the needs of pregnant women, they also looked to address the cause of untimely pregnancies. Many believed women found themselves pregnant due to poverty, abuse, or alcoholism. To curtail abuse, WCTU women lobbied for the introduction of a bill to the state legislature which would raise the age of sexual consent from 14 to 18 in order to protect young girls from coerced sexual activity initiated by usually older and more powerful men. Although promoters of the bill

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<sup>75</sup> Peggy Pascoe. *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>76</sup> Sandra Harsaager. *Organized Womanhood: Cultural Politics in the Pacific Northwest, 1840-1920* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 81. In 1899, the home caught the attention of New York philanthropist Charles Crittenton, who took over financial responsibility for the institution and renamed it the Florence Crittenton Home.

“obtained the promise of support from many members of the legislature,” it was “snowed under through the opposition of the chairman of the committee to which it was referred in 1889.”<sup>77</sup> The following year, the WCTU redoubled its efforts by opening a reform school for “incorrigible boys” near Salem. They believed that through education, these boys could be diverted from the paths of alcoholism and sexual promiscuity. The end result would be fewer abused wives and unwed mothers.<sup>78</sup>

The WCTU also sought to ensure the safety of women prisoners through their work to hire female jail wardens. Their first success came in 1893, with the appointment of Flora W. McKinney as jail warden in the city of Portland. Because McKinney was a WCTU woman, she served two purposes. First of all, her work with women helped protect them from sexual assault, advances or abuse from male wardens. Secondly, she used her position to share her message about abstinence and wholesome lifestyles. Perhaps because of her work on this front, she was soon removed from the position “through political chicanery,” but it was not a total defeat for the WCTU. A new female warden was soon hired in McKinney’s place.<sup>79</sup>

In keeping with their concern about women’s personal security, the Oregon WCTU also instituted a safe house for women in Portland and a Traveler’s Aid society. The Traveler’s Aid Society began in 1896, with the appointment of “motherly women” to positions at the railway stations. Their job was to “stand ready to care for unprotected

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<sup>77</sup> Additon, 23.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 38.

girls coming to the city, little comprehending the dangers which, unaided, they often found hard to escape.”<sup>80</sup> Like the rescue home, the WCTU funded the salary for the matron only for the first two years. Beginning in 1898, the railroad company added the matron to their regular payroll and relieved the WCTU of any financial responsibility.

An even more ambitious endeavor was the creation of the “Noon Rest” establishment for women in the center of Portland. When it first opened, it was intended to provide a safe, quiet place for women to rest during their breaks from factory work. However, as time passed it became known as a place for any woman needing a safe place to stay, a person to talk to, financial assistance, or job referrals. Its founders intended for it to be a gathering place for women, where they could share ideas and support. One booster wrote: “This institution stands for a great sisterhood, based on the divine edict, ‘All ye are brethren,’ and the motto ‘Love thy neighbor.’”<sup>81</sup>

Indeed, all were welcome at the institution. It served Portlanders, women visiting the city from other parts of the state, and travelers from other parts of the country. The report written on the fifth anniversary of the Noon Rest said: “No entrance fee is required. The door stands wide open for every girl and every woman who needs rest, quiet, aid or advice. We have never turned any one away without trying to render assistance. This place is designed for something more than a noon resting place. It is open all day, with inner circles of work, extending in various directions.”<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 50.

While many women visited the institution in search of respite and safety from the outside world, it was actually founded out of the WCTU's concern for working women. In fact, one booster argued that the Noon Rest was the "intended for headquarters for industrial womanhood."<sup>83</sup> Plagued by financial difficulties and unable to attract the support of legislators or philanthropists, the noon rest was forced to close its doors in 1892 after five years of service. However, the spirit of the WCTU commitment to working women lived on through the creation at that same site of the Working Women's Club which was headed up by the union's labor department. Founders claimed the club "was the outcome of earnest study of the woman's wage question, and organized after the plan of the national society, of which Grace Dodge of New York was honored leader."<sup>84</sup> Such focused effort on behalf of working women is significant because it points to the depth of the organization's commitment to enabling women to claim independence. While the WCTU is stereotypically seen as an organization promoting domesticity as the only avenue for women's productivity, in Oregon there was a strong commitment to working women. The women of this organization recognized that if women were truly going to be saved from abusive and alcoholic men, poverty, and prostitution they needed to be given a means for self-support. As a result, the WCTU sought to lift up working women and support them in their quest for financial independence.

This support of working women took several forms. To begin with, the women believed that if women were to be successful in the workplace, they needed to be

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 72.

educated. As a result, they lobbied for equal access to higher education for women and in many cases even provided financial support to women seeking professional degrees. The WCTU also promoted reading rooms and libraries throughout Oregon which not only made reading materials available to women free of charge, but also provided a wholesome alternative to the bars for men who sought evening entertainment.<sup>85</sup>

Recognizing that financial status was not the only barrier to higher education, the WCTU also organized evening industrial classes all over the state to teach women job skills. Many local unions offered job referral services, and the union was always very supportive of labor unions.

Their enthusiastic backing of women's labor unions was evident in their organizing efforts on the regional as well as state level. In 1891, the Oregon WCTU cooperated with the California union to convene the first Pacific Coast Conference in Portland, attracting White Ribboners from all over Washington, California, and Oregon. One of the two resolutions from this conference was to encourage "all women to study the economic side of the labor question." If women were going to work, the WCTU wanted to ensure that they were well compensated.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> The women of Oregon became the first club women on the west coast to erect a building for their own purposes and with their own money. In 1884, the Corvallis WCTU commissioned the construction of a two story building which was to serve as a reading room and resting place. They repaid the debt for the building in full by 1890. Other towns followed in the footsteps of the Corvallis WCTU. New Era built a reading room in 1889, and Albany in 1897. Reading rooms were also opened in Portland in Salem in 1884, but the unions did not own the buildings that housed them. Additon, 45-6.

<sup>86</sup> Additon, 29.

The organization did not stop short of holding itself accountable for ensuring fair wages for women. While many women's clubs were staffed by volunteers, the WCTU had several paid positions. Not only did this enable individual women to fully dedicate themselves to the work of the unions, but it helped establish legitimacy for professional women. Many who would have otherwise been uncomfortable with the idea of a female professional workforce found their attitudes changed by the competency of the many women who worked for the WCTU for pay.

While not all local unions advocated expanded political freedoms for women, on the state level, the WCTU made many efforts towards increasing women's civic autonomy. The first step towards this, of course, was the failed effort to include suffrage language in the founding documents of the Oregon WCTU.<sup>87</sup> While the women persistently lobbied legislators and the general public to pass laws which would protect women and limit alcohol consumption, they were frustrated by their lack of power at the ballot box. Often, when their agenda was defeated in the state legislature, they blamed "dirty politics" and their exclusion from the voting process. To remedy this, some of the women of the WCTU advocated for partial or complete enfranchisement for women. In 1891, the Pacific Coast Conference resolved that voter qualifications should be changed, declaring the need for "an educational test as a qualification for the voter instead of the accident of sex."<sup>88</sup> Such an argument was crafted to appeal to those who worried that women's minds might be too feeble for the responsibility of voting. The WCTU also

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 29.

encouraged women to vote at school meetings, which would allow them to have a voice in the policies of schools and “the enforcement of the law relating to instruction regarding the effects of alcohol and narcotics to the human system, and who shall require teachers to be free from the use of the same.”<sup>89</sup> By 1897, despite Willard’s early arguments against incorporating suffrage work with temperance work, the Oregon WCTU cooperated with the Suffrage association’s advocacy for a suffrage amendment in Oregon. Though the amendment failed, the WCTU reported in its annual minutes that the campaign raised public sentiments in favor of increased political rights for women.<sup>90</sup>

Although the state WCTU cooperated with the suffrage movement in 1897, it remained an independent organization with a broader mission. In addition to supporting broader avenues of political opportunities for women, the WCTU continued to reach out to a larger audience of women than the suffrage movement in Oregon. While suffragettes appealed mainly to middle- and upper-class white women, the WCTU also served and attracted working class women and women of color. The participation of working class women was demonstrated by the organization’s support of the noon rest hour, employment agencies, labor unions, and vocational training. The participation of women of color was just as striking, with large numbers of African American and Native American women officers and members.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 15.

The first local WCTU formed on a reservation in Oregon was the Umatilla WCTU, founded in 1891.<sup>91</sup> A local union was formed at the Warm Springs Reservation in the fall of 1894, and by 1897 it was recognized as the largest local union in the state with 102 members. By the turn of the century, the membership rolls swelled to 150 women.<sup>92</sup> The women of the Warm Springs reservation believed that the introduction of alcohol into the lives of their husbands was destroying their way of life. In a letter to the state union in 1895, the Warm Springs women wrote: "They tell us that we are a dying race, but whisky will kill us faster than anything else. It is killing all of the tribes. I am glad that our people are taking the stand against whisky; we do not want our young people to become drunkards."<sup>93</sup>

Despite the enthusiasm for the temperance cause on the part of white and Native women alike, there was a degree of separation between the Native American local unions and the larger state organization. Minutes of state conventions suggest that Native women did not attend the large gatherings, and in 1896 a temperance convention was held on the Umatilla reservation "for Indians by Indians and with none present but Indians."<sup>94</sup> Despite the lack of physical unity during meetings, however, both white and Native women expressed feelings of friendship, solidarity, and a bond of shared victimization by alcohol. In the 1895 letter to the state convention, the women of the

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<sup>91</sup> Haarsager, 82. The Umatilla reservation, located in northeastern Oregon, combined the Wallawalla, Cayuse, Nez Perce and Umatilla tribes.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 42, 52.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

Warm Springs reservation articulated their theory that the destructive forces of alcohol could bridge the racial and cultural divide between women. "There is a great difference between a white woman and an Indian woman, unless they are both drunk, and then they are both on the same level," they wrote.<sup>95</sup> They went on to say that "this society is working for the good of our people; nearly all of the trouble that comes to us now is because of whisky. . . . We are glad that our white temperance friends are thinking of us, and we would like to have some words to us from the big meeting."<sup>96</sup> With their letter, as a symbol of their friendship, the women of Warm Springs sent "a most unique banner" made of tanned skin and edged with fur. The banner was embroidered with several Native American symbols.

In the center [was] a white star- the Indian symbol of Light; at the bottom [was] an Indian pipe of peace, but around the pipe of peace is a serpent, indicating intoxicating drink. Above the pipe of peace is a tomahawk, the Indian symbol of war; but around the handle of this tomahawk is tied a beautiful bow of white ribbon to show that the only war they are now engaged in is a battle against King Alcohol. At the top of the banner [was] beautifully embroidered a spray of the white narcissus, in honor of their chieftain (our state president), Narcissa White Kinney.<sup>97</sup>

The WCTU also attracted women from Oregon's African American communities. Perhaps simply due to geography, African American unions were not as segregated from white temperance unions. African American women attended state conferences, and in

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 43. It is important to note that the praise the white women of the WCTU heaped upon Native American temperance workers was laced with condescension. For example, they indicate that state WCTU president, Narcissa White Kinney, was "their chieftain."

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

1899, Lucy Thurman, the national leader of African American temperance women, was invited to be the keynote speaker for the state convention. Members expressed regret that Thurman was unable to reach the city due to travel delays, noting that it was “not till the close of the afternoon session did the board give up her coming, and faced the fact that the leading feature of their program, the drawing card, had failed.”<sup>98</sup> However, at the same convention M.E. Fullilove was introduced as president of Oregon’s “colored union,” and was praised as “a very sincere Christian woman, an evangelist of much power.”<sup>99</sup>

The participation of African American women in the state convention, however, should not suggest that Oregon’s white WCTU women were free of racial discrimination. While they praised Thurman’s work on the national level and rejoiced in her “successful tour through Oregon,” they obviously accepted the idea of social segregation. State WCTU minutes do not suggest that there were any integrated unions, and Thurman’s own work was directed only towards women and children of color.<sup>100</sup> Although white and black women came together for business meetings at the state convention, Lucy Additon’s history of the first twenty years of Oregon’s WCTU suggests that all social functions were segregated. She noted that Thurman “was entertained by her own people”

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 43-44.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>100</sup> Besides encouraging the work of the Lucy Thurman Union of Portland, Thurman helped organize a Loyal Temperance League for African American children during her tour of the Pacific Northwest.

while in Portland. Though Additon mentioned two other receptions given in Thurman's honor by white women, there is no mention of any African American women besides Thurman at these events.<sup>101</sup>

Native American, white, and African American women may not have united as friends in their struggle for prohibition, but they were united by a common cause and a common structure. The Lucy Thurman Union, the Umatilla WCTU, and the Warm Springs WCTU were organized in the same manner as local unions all over the state and nation. The WCTU was unique for the power it left in the hands of its local unions. Though the WCTU was successfully organized on a state and national level, in the end it was the work of the smaller, local unions that brought the movement its greatest successes. Women came together periodically to share ideas, information and support with women from other counties, states, and even nations, but their real work was determined by the leadership of their local unions. To better understand the inner workings of the WCTU at its most powerful level, it is important to carefully assess the growth and development of individual unions. In Oregon, a good case study is the WCTU of Newberg, which exerted independence from the state union on the issue of suffrage, yet promoted more leaders to the national level than any other union in the state.

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 68.

**Chapter IV**  
**“Blest Be the Tie that Binds:”**  
**The Women of Newberg and their WCTU**

*A Brief History of Newberg*

On February 10, 1884, under the leadership of Amanda Woodward, the women of Newberg, Oregon, organized their local chapter of the WCTU. Though the Newberg WCTU was the 24<sup>th</sup> union to be founded in the state, many of its women had a long history of involvement with the temperance and WCTU movements in Oregon. With a strong Quaker influence dominating the social politics of the town, Newberg women were more likely to be predisposed to temperance sentiment than women in other localities. The town and its women were also influenced by particularly strong ties to the Reverend Rebecca Clawson, one of the original leaders of the Portland temperance crusades and the president of Oregon's first local WCTU, founded in 1881. A decade earlier, in 1874, Clawson aided William Hobson, the founder of Newberg, in his efforts to establish a Quaker settlement in the Pacific Northwest.

Hobson came to Oregon in hopes of starting a Friends settlement in the West after feeling a call from God to visit the Pacific Coast. Prior to his travels westward, Hobson founded the leading meeting in the state of Iowa at Bangor, and then established a settlement at Honey Creek.<sup>102</sup> While it may seem that Hobson had commercial or political interests in creating new settlements, his motivation was primarily spiritual. A devout Friend, he possessed a strong missionary spirit which inspired him to begin new

settlements. Hobson was concerned about the development of religious life in the American West, particularly the lack of a Friends' Settlement there. He believed that a Friends' settlement in Oregon was important because it would stretch the bounds of Quakerdom all the way to the farthest frontiers of the United States. After a powerful experience in a meeting for worship, Hobson felt confirmed in his call to travel to Oregon. He first traveled to the region in 1871, but returned to Iowa without any success. However, he remained convinced that he was called to establish a settlement on the west coast.<sup>103</sup> Hobson was frustrated by the reception he received back in Iowa where his friends, neighbors and most significantly his wife bitterly protested any return to the Oregon Country. They argued the missionary was too old and too frail to undertake such an effort. Apparently unmoved by the arguments of even his wife, Hobson returned to Oregon again in 1874.

During his second journey to the Pacific Northwest in 1874, Hobson was greeted by Rebecca Clawson and a company of eleven Friends. Clawson, who was engaged in prison outreach in the Salem area at the time, invited Hobson to join the group as her guest. By spring, Clawson relocated the group to the Dayton area where she and Hobson began to hold regular meetings for worship. Although a steady stream of Friends from the region began coming to Dayton for worship activities, Hobson was not convinced that Dayton was the appropriate site for his new settlement. Because there were already other religious services being held in the area, Hobson was concerned about intruding upon the

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<sup>102</sup> Ione Juanita Beale Harkness, "Certain Community Settlements of Oregon." (Unpublished Masters Thesis, 1925), 26.

beliefs and traditions of others. Hobson, like other Quaker missionaries, was not prone to “intrude and proselyte [sic], but rather chose to seek unoccupied fields for [his] religious work.”<sup>104</sup>

Hobson began exploring the region by foot, traveling as far north as Vancouver in search of what he hoped would become the center of Quakerdom on the Pacific coast. Early the following winter, Hobson visited a cousin in the Chehalem Valley, and was impressed by stories of good health, hardy produce, and pleasant weather. He found that the residents of the farm “had never had fever or ague, that good peaches had been produced, that corn bore thirty bushels to the acre, that vegetables and small grains did well, that there were plenty of acorns for the hogs and a good stand of fir.”<sup>105</sup> Hobson was also intrigued by the lack of church services in the immediate area, and realized that should he establish a Quaker settlement there it would be the only point between Dayton and Portland to offer worship services of any kind.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 29. Unlike missionaries from other Protestant denominations, Friends engaging in missionary work did not try to win “converts.” Rather, missionaries believed that God’s work was best accomplished through outward acts of God’s will which would attract the attention of those around them. For example, Quaker missionaries to Native American Indian reservations in the late nineteenth century would do manual labor for the reservations, but would not insist on preaching. Quaker missionaries, unlike other Protestant missionaries such as Narcissa and Marcus Whitman, did their work without the stipulation or expectation that their beliefs, rituals and behaviors would be adopted. Instead, Friends hoped that those around them would be inspired by their honesty and way of life. In keeping with this custom, members who joined the church from other faith traditions were never called converts. Rather, they were (and still are) called “convinced Friends.”

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 29

In March of 1876 Hobson decided that this area, known as Newberg by its postmark, was the promised land for which he had been looking. He began holding church services and Sunday School there, inviting all neighbors in the area. He also began sending letters home to friends and family in Iowa and Indiana, encouraging groups of Friends to begin the journey west so that settlement could begin. The response to his letters was strong, drawing a number of new colonists to the area that first year.

Still unpersuaded, however, was Mrs. Hobson who was unwilling to uproot from her home community. Hobson was displeased at her strong-willed resistance to his requests for her to come, and argued that it was her God-given and wifely duty to join him and help build the settlement. In his journal he wrote:

I remember the Lord said "It is not good that man should be alone. I will make him a helpmeet for him." I am every day desirous the Lord may make of my wife a help suitable to my present need. Has not enough come to pass already to enable her to believe that I am in the work of the Lord in trying to make settlement here, and like Israel of old say "It is enough." This is no crazy freak of the brain of William Hobson. But the Lord has laid upon William Hobson the arduous work of selecting a suitable location and the commencing of a settlement of Friends in Oregon. The selection is made. A settlement is already begun to form. . . Some are on their way to this place and many others have their thoughts this way. I hope my wife will soon see it her duty to enter in as my helper in this thing, because it is the Lord; And he will surely prosper the work if his servants prove faithful under all trials.<sup>106</sup>

The strain upon the marital relationship was also made apparent in an epistle Hobson wrote a few days later to be circulated publicly among meetings for worship in Indiana and Iowa alone. The letter, intended to persuade those back home that their

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

Christly duty was to immigrate to Oregon, was openly hostile towards Mrs. Hobson. He wrote:

I must choose a locality for a Friends settlement and help some to get it started even if, for the main part, my home remained in Iowa, my wife seeing or feeling little or nothing in this work has seemingly come nigh causing me to fail going on, but I rejoice this morning that I have not suffered even this to hinder me from apprehended duty.<sup>107</sup>

Whether moved by sense of duty, love of her husband, or by public humiliation, Mrs. Hobson soon capitulated in her battle to remain in Iowa. In September of 1876, Hobson returned to Iowa to settle his affairs and bring his family to their new home in Newberg. In the years to follow, many families followed, greatly increasing the population of the area.

By 1878, over 70 Friends were regularly coming together for worship. The following year, there were enough Friends meeting each week in Newberg to request permission from Honey Creek Quarterly Meeting to hold a Monthly Meeting at Newberg.<sup>108</sup> The Chehalem Monthly Meeting was formed on June 1, 1878, and answered

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> In the Society of Friends, there are several levels of organization for congregations or meetings. The lowest level is the weekly meeting. Weekly meetings are primarily for worship, and in the traditional Friends style are held in silence. There is not a pastor or minister in whose care these meetings rest. Rather, the meetings are characterized by long periods of silence out of which Friends speak according to the call they feel from the Spirit. Once a month, each weekly meeting holds a Monthly Meeting for Business. At such meetings finances, marital decisions, congregational problems and other programming issues are discussed. Again, these meetings are not under the care of a minister or pastor. Rather, Monthly Meetings appoint a clerk who facilitates discussions and records the minutes. Every three months, several meetings come together for Quarterly Meetings for Business. Finally, once a year an even larger number of meetings convene for a Yearly Meeting. At the Yearly Meeting, large scale business items are

to the Honey Creek Quarterly meeting and the Iowa Yearly Meeting and it became the first official meeting of Friends west of the Rocky Mountains.<sup>109</sup> Many Quaker settlers from around the state came out for this first monthly meeting, and were honored with the presence of Rebecca Clawson who traveled to Newberg to participate in the celebration.

In the five years that followed, immigration to the Newberg area was intense, drawing nearly 200 Friends to the area from Indiana and Iowa. David J. Wood and William P. Ruddick surveyed five acres of land which they had purchased for \$125 and then platted it as a town on February 14, 1881, giving it the name of Newberg. In accordance with Quaker sentiment towards alcohol, spirits were banned from the town from the very beginning. Pioneer Jesse Edwards recalled in 1912: "In the first dedication of the town a strong temperance clause was inserted in each deed, which with vigilance and effort in other ways, built up a moral sentiment, so that Newberg has never had a saloon."<sup>110</sup>

Like temperance, education was a high priority for the Friends. The same year the town was platted, the first school building was built in a timber stump field. Although

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discussed and plans for missionary work made. The Yearly Meeting has ultimate care over all meetings in its region.

<sup>109</sup> Harkness, 29. Although this was the first official Friends congregation in the West, it was certainly not the first regular gathering of Friends. The first First Day school classes in the Friends' tradition was held in Ashland in the early 1850's. In 1859, London Yearly Meeting commissioned Sarah and Robert Lindsay to minister to Quaker settlers in Oregon. They traveled around the region, and held the first true Friends meeting for worship in Salem. In their eight months in the Pacific Northwest, they also held meetings for worship in Eugene which drew public officials from the area.

<sup>110</sup> Jess Edwards. "The Platting of Newberg," *Newberg Enterprise*, 1912. Located in Ref: Oregon-Newberg file at Newberg Public Library. Newberg, Oregon.

there had not been an official school building, classes were held beginning in the late 1870's in the home of Maggie Woods and her husband David. Maggie Woods served as the teacher of thirteen children in her home until a new school building was erected and Horace Cox took over teaching duties.<sup>111</sup> By the early 1880's, the small Friends community began discussing the need for an institution of higher education. Before Newberg was even incorporated as a town, Pacific Academy was opened. Efforts to establish the institution began in May of 1883 under the care of the monthly meeting. A committee to raise capital for the endeavor, including two women, Evangeline Martin and Amanda Woodward, was immediately formed.<sup>112</sup> Within three months of commencing fundraising efforts, the committee had raised \$1865, representing considerable ingenuity and effort on the part of this community, as the population of the area was still no more than 200. Ground was broken on a site donated by Jesse Edwards in the south central part of town in 1884. It opened the following year, enrolling as its first student, the young future-President of the United States, Herbert Hoover.

Newberg, incorporated as a town in 1889 and sustained by the efforts of fruit farmers, was able to support a drug store, a weekly newspaper, a mill and several other small businesses. The town also supported several Protestant denominations, including Evangelical, Presbyterian and Union congregations. The Quaker influence in the surrounding area was so strong that by 1893 there were seven monthly meetings in

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<sup>111</sup> Newberg Teachers Workshop, "History of Newberg." Unpublished teachers project. Oregon State College, 1954. Located in "Newberg" file of the Newberg Public Library, 5; Harkness, 34.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 34.

Oregon and Washington with 1363 members. Despite the small size of the town, Newberg remained the center of the Quaker world in the Pacific Northwest and boasted one of the largest monthly meetings. In 1891, the Oregon Quakers forwarded a request to be released from the care of Iowa Monthly Meeting in order to create the Oregon Yearly Meeting. The request was granted, and the Oregon Yearly Meeting of Friends was established in June of 1893 with the first yearly meeting held in the large and newly built Newberg Friends Church.

By the late 1880's and early 1890's, Newberg was an established community in the state of Oregon, and a leader among Friends in the Pacific Northwest. While the stories of the men who lived and worked there have been told in countless local histories, the stories of the fascinating community of women who lived and worked in this town have been neglected. Wielding incredible power despite their disenfranchisement, these women played a significant role in the development and daily life of their community, particularly through their involvement with the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

### *The Women of Newberg*

The 1870 census for the Newberg area of Yamhill County lists 61 adult women (age sixteen and above) and 72 adult men living in forty-nine separate households. Of these women, 42 were married and 19 were single or widowed. While most of these single and widowed women lived with parents or boarded with other families, there were two households headed by women: Polly Winters, a forty-year-old mother of four children and Mary Hess, the fifty-two-year-old mother of five.

What is significant about these numbers is their contradiction of commonly held assumptions about the population of the far Western states. As Darlis Miller and Joan Jensen argued in their 1980 article "The Gentled Tamers Revisited," most historians have worked on the assumption that men far outnumbered women in the American West. Furthermore, the idea of unmarried women living in frontier areas is dismissed, based upon the assumption that single men would leap at the opportunity to marry the first available single woman.<sup>113</sup>

Even some pioneer women recalled such gender patterns in their memoirs. For example, in 1896, Irene Calbreath, a pioneer of the Newberg area, wrote:

Worse than [pioneer women's] privations, worse than the inconvenient manner of living, worse than their terrible loneliness and isolation, were the marriage customs; children, almost infants, married to men old enough to be their grandfathers. It was a barbarism equaled only by the savages by whom they were surrounded. . . . [Little] girls, ten, twelve, and fourteen enticed from their arms, to take upon their tender shoulders the duties and responsibilities of wifehood and motherhood! Poor little child-women, alone in the pioneer's cabin, their frail forms toiling through the drudgery of a woman's labor, filling the place of wife and mother when they ought to have been in pinafores playing with their dolls. Sixteen was old for a girl to marry, and at twenty she was quite an old maid.<sup>114</sup>

The 1870 census of Newberg does not bear out her memory, though these were certainly the "pioneer" days of the young town. The youngest married women in the Newberg area in 1870 were Nancy Parrot and Rachel Hess, both 19 years old. Their husbands were just five years older. Furthermore, while several of the single women in

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<sup>113</sup>Joan Jensen and Darlis A. Miller. "The Gentle Tamers Revisited: New Approaches to the History of Women in the American West," *Pacific Historical Review* 49 (1990): 173-213; Dee Brown. *The Gentle Tamers: Women of the Old Wild West* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1958.)

the area were widows, there were fourteen young unmarried women between the ages of 16 and 32 years old. The oldest never-married woman in the area was thirty-two year old Martha Brown. The number of single women is striking considering that the area was also home to 25 young, single men. Such numbers suggest that couples were not quick to marry in the area, and that social pressures did not force females to marry as young girls. Even among the older couples who had lived in the area longer, the age span between spouses was not as large as Calbreath suggested. There are only two instances which indicate the type of child marriages Calbreath refers to. In the first instance, there was an eighteen year age gap between Sarah Deskins, 28, and her husband Daniel Deskins, 46. With three children, aged eleven to thirteen, it seems that the pair was married when Sarah was a girl of fourteen. Sarah and Alvin Hash, at ages 33 and 50, had seventeen years separating them and shared seven children ranging in age from two to fifteen years of age. This suggests that Sarah was a teenager, maybe 17 or 18, when she exchanged wedding vows with Alvin. However, because her first five children were born in Illinois and Iowa, it seems unlikely this marriage began in the Newberg area. Most couples had no more than ten years between them, though there were a few other instances of large age gaps. However, in these cases it seems the marriages happened in adulthood for the women. For example, Martha and Henry Parrit (25 and 43 respectively) had an 18 year age difference. However they just had two children, two-year-old Samuel and five-month-old John, suggesting that theirs was a recent marriage. Nancy and Joseph Wiley (45 and 60), had fifteen years between them and six children. Their oldest child, Charles,

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<sup>114</sup> Irene Calbreath, "Pioneer Days," *Newberg Graphic*, 19 July 1896, 2.

was 24, suggesting that Nancy was married around the age of twenty. The largest age gap in the area existed between Irish immigrant Ann Martin, 40, and her husband James, 62. With no children credited to them, a late marriage seems likely. There were several women in the area who were older than their husbands. Permela Tuckness was three years older than her husband William. Maria Quinn had seven years on husband James, and Lucy Hayes was likewise seven years older than her spouse, George.

These marriage trends followed the same course through the next decade. The 1880 census reported 107 adult women and 143 adult men in the Newberg area. Once again, there were striking numbers of single young women and men. With 76 married couples, there were 31 single women and 67 single men. Of these, there were 22 women between the ages of 16 and 30 who had never married. The oldest never married women in town were the Heater sisters; Lizzie was 32 years old and Susan was 27. There were several other single women in their twenties, including 20-year-old Mattie Abernathy, 23-year-old Ellen Deskins, and 23-year-old Samantha Winters.

One change from 1870 was the number of single young women living away from home. By 1880, there were three young women boarders in the Newberg area including 29 year old Rachel Hess, 20 year old Anna Dowling, and 20 year old Emma Bruschter. Other single women boarders included 60 year old Mary Jones, 72 year old Elizabeth Smith and 55 year old Nancy Ellison. There was also an increase in women who served as head of their own households. While there had been only two such woman in 1870, by 1880 there were seven female heads of household. These were mostly widows with children, including Sarah Deskins who was left with her four daughters after Daniel's death. The oldest female head of household was 55 year old Mary Doty. The youngest

was 23 year old Alice Haworth who was left to provide for her two young daughters (two and one) after her husband's death. Ironically, one of the other female heads of household was her mother-in-law Silvires Haworth, 46, who cared for her six children (including twin daughters) after the death of her husband.<sup>115</sup>

The census data from 1870 and 1880 suggests that marriage was not always the primary focus of young adults, rather it is noted that many of the young single men and women were students or helping on their family farms. It does not seem that single women were quickly married off in response to a shortage of women in the area. In fact, the evidence strongly contradicts such an idea. While men certainly outnumbered women in Newberg as late as 1880, on the whole the difference was not dramatic. On the other hand, because there were twice as many single men as there were single women, it seems that if a woman wished to be married there would be plenty of suitors from whom to choose. The fact that so many women were not married suggests women actively chose to pursue other goals and responsibilities before settling down with a husband and family. Furthermore, the widespread incidence of women remaining single into their twenties indicates community support for the choices these women were making.

This support might be partially explained by the Quaker influence in the area. By 1880, the Newberg area was already dominated by Quaker immigrants and their value

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<sup>115</sup> Suzanne Lebsock argued that some nineteenth-century women consciously chose not to remarry after they were widowed in an effort to maintain control of their assets. This was a way of choosing to be a single woman without facing the ramifications of rejecting social norms. Because the woman had already married, she no longer faced the same

pressure to find a husband and have children. Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1984).

system. As one of the first denominations to allow women to preach (beginning in the 1640's), Friends regarded women in a different light than many other Protestant groups. Guided by the principle that all individuals carry "that of God" or "the light of God" within them, Friends believed that all people needed the opportunity to speak what was on their hearts and in their minds. To do this responsibly, education was considered a necessity and thus highly valued. As demonstrated by the early foundation of Pacific Friends Academy, the Newberg Quakers were no different. The school enrolled both boys and girls, and employed men and women as teachers. This provided more opportunities in the town for single women to support themselves, and provided goals and opportunities for girls and young women to pursue prior to marriage.

The acceptance of women preaching the Gospel led to another empowering circumstance for the women of Newberg. Women frequently preached, spoke, and addressed mixed crowds long before this was common practice for women in other religious groups. The *Newberg Graphic*, which began publication in the late-1880's, reported on notable speeches and sermons in the area and frequently the noted speakers were women. What is significant is not so much that these speeches were noted, but rather the non-chalance with which they were reported. There is no suggestion that these events were novelties. Rather, they were just ordinary events in the course of daily life in Newberg, Oregon. For example, under "Academy Notes" on February 2, 1889, the *Graphic* reported: "Mrs. Votaw, attending with her husband, conducted chapel exercises."<sup>116</sup> Later that month, on February 23, it was reported in the same section that

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<sup>116</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, "Academy Notes," Feb 2 1889.

“Mary Edwards spoke to a large audience” on a Sunday at the Academy.<sup>117</sup> On April 23, the *Graphic* reported that Mary Edwards and Amanda Woodward visited the college, with Edwards conducting morning worship exercises and Woodward making “some appropriate remarks.”<sup>118</sup> While it was often the same women who spoke in public (usually Amanda Woodward, Mary Edwards and later Mrs. F.A. Morris), the local paper frequently noted many women’s participation in local events.

Occasionally the newspaper chronicled the work of women coming to Newberg from other areas. Most significantly, in 1889, the *Graphic* reported extensively on the revival meetings run by Miss Eva Parker. The first mention of this female revivalist came on March 30, 1889 when the “Local News of the Week” column reported that ‘Miss Eva Parker began a series of meetings at the Evangelical church last night. She will preach tonight and tomorrow night. Miss Parker is well known as an evangelist and all should hear her preach.’<sup>119</sup> Parker traveled to Newberg from the Midwest. Born in Ohio, she was the daughter of a doctor (her father) and a minister (her mother). She was educated at Earlham College, a Friends institution in Richmond, Indiana, before

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<sup>117</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, “Academy Notes,” February 23, 1889.

<sup>118</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, “Academy Notes,” April 13, 1889.

<sup>119</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, “Local News of the Week,” March 30, 1889.

beginning her work as a missionary and evangelist.<sup>120</sup> She was a recorded minister with the Society of Friends, and had led and organized her own church in Kansas.<sup>121</sup>

Parker was well received in Newberg, and garnered considerable attention from the *Graphic* for the entire duration of her work there. The April 6 issue noted Parker's work in two separate items. Under "Local News of the Week," the paper reported that Parker had won fifty conversions in her work on the site of the Evangelical Church. Under "Academy Notes," the *Graphic* reported that Parker's work at the school resulted in several conversions of students. Parker's days were full, as the paper reported she was running revival meetings for the town along with evening prayer meetings and morning worship services for students of the Academy.<sup>122</sup> The *Graphic*'s support of Parker's work was revealed by such editorializing as: "To decide to live a Christian life is the most honorable decision a person can make, and we are glad to see so many of the young men and women coming out fearlessly for the right. Newberg needed an awakening on this subject, and may the good work go on."<sup>123</sup> On April 13, 1889, the *Graphic* reported that because of Parker's leadership "a great religious interest has been awakened and much good done." In a town of just over 600 people, the *Graphic* reported that Parker had influenced ninety-six people to convert, and others to renew their faith. In its appraisal of Parker's skills as a speaker, the *Graphic* wrote: "Miss Parker, though not an eloquent

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<sup>120</sup> Dr. Thomas D. Hamm, Archivist of Earlham College, interview with the author, August, 1997 by telephone.

<sup>121</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, "In Memorium," June 29, 1889.

<sup>122</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, "Academy Notes," April 6, 1889.

speaker has a peculiarly forcible and practical way of presenting the gospel, which seems to have a wonderful influence over her hearers.”<sup>124</sup>

Parker’s efforts, it seems, were not without cost. On May 25, the *Graphic* posted notice that the “well-known evangelist’s” had fallen ill due to overexertion. Within a month, residents of Newberg were devastated by Parker’s death. The *Graphic* ran a lengthy obituary, noting her death as “one of the saddest events that has come under our notice for some time.” The *Graphic* described her as a woman with “a magnitism [sic] about her that few possess and could sway an audience as she willed, from mirth to tears. . . . She was a woman of exceptionally strong mind and a force of character that demanded respect wherever she moved.” Though appreciated for her work, the paper blamed her untiring efforts for her death, writing: “she laid the foundation of her death by overwork not realizing her condition until it was too late. She virtually laid down her life for the salvation of others.” Parker was buried in Newberg, and was given a heroine’s funeral with a reported 500 people joining the procession to the cemetery. The *Graphic* concluded: “Although she was not bound to this people by any natural ties. . . . she was bound to them by a higher and holy bond than that of blood; the bond of Christian fellowship. And the people of Newberg feel that they have lost in her a friend; there is a vacancy that will not soon be filled.”<sup>125</sup>

<sup>123</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, “Academy Notes,” April 6, 1889.

<sup>124</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, “Local News of the Week,” April 13, 1889.

<sup>125</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, “In Memorium,” June 29, 1889. Though the residents of Newberg eagerly stepped up to give Parker an elaborate funeral, they requested financial assistance from Friends throughout the nation. In a letter published in the July 25, 1889 issue of

Women's public speaking was not limited just to religious activities. Rather, Newberg women spoke at large community gatherings and served as ambassadors of the town to official functions around the state of Oregon and the nation. For example, when Newberg applied to the state for incorporation as a town in 1889, they sent a woman to represent the town's case. Sarah Deskins, a widowed mother of four daughters, appeared before the House Committee on Corporations to argue for passage of the bill which would incorporate Newberg.<sup>126</sup> Several years earlier, Mary Edwards was instrumental in the fundraising efforts to open Pacific Academy. She traveled to Philadelphia in 1884 to raise funds from Friends in the East. Years later, Amanda Woodward and Evangeline Martin traveled across the country to raise funds for a new building on the campus, which was named Wood-Mar Hall in their honor. According to Mercedes J. Paul, in notes from the Champoege Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, such activities were typical of Quaker women in the area. Paul argued that "the Quaker women through their

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*Christian Worker*, the Newberg Quarterly Meeting detailed the costs incurred by the town for her care and support. "No expense was spared and everything possible was done to prolong her very useful life, all without avail. . . Total expenses (for her care were) \$242.45. We think it right to ask others to assist in paying this amount." The editor, J.H. Douglas commented "I trust those who have been blessed through her instrumentality may take pleasure in seeing that the little expense attending her sickness and death is soon paid.

I would encourage all who knew her to assist in this truly proper thing." Letters. *Christian Worker*, 1889 (July 25): 471.

<sup>126</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, "Local News of the Week," February 2, 1890.

determination and leadership were the force that established schools [in the area], introduced reforms, and maintained them.”<sup>127</sup>

Women and girls in the Newberg area also participated in debates and discussions regarding current events. For example, at a meeting of young women in August of 1889, participants discussed immigration. The *Graphic* reported that “Miss Cook was the only champion for the Chinaman but she held her own against all opposition.”<sup>128</sup> The young women of Newberg, unafraid of discussing current events, were also not put off by doing manual labor. During the late 1880’s, the *Graphic* was replete with lamentations about the disrepair of city sidewalks. In fact, the sidewalk issue was one of the driving forces towards incorporation of the town. It was believed if there was a town council, efforts could finally be made to make the sidewalks safe. The girls at the academy, however, grew impatient with the process and took matters into their own hands. On February 23, 1889 the *Graphic* reported: “One day this week some of the girls procured hammers and nails and then proceeded to nail down the sidewalk that leads from the Academy to the stores. That’s right girls, practice habits of industry and you will be sure to succeed in life. You deserve praise and credit for this good deed you have done for it may be that you have saved the life of some person who might have fell and done great injury to the sidewalk.”<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Mercedes J. Paul. “Notes from Champoege Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution,” February 1958. Located in “Newberg” file, Newberg Public Library, Newberg Oregon.

<sup>128</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, “Local News of the Week,” August 8, 1889.

<sup>129</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, “Academy Notes,” February 23, 1889.

Though the community accepted such ventures out of the woman's sphere by the women and girls of Newberg, women were still expected to be hospitable and create a wholesome, friendly environment for children and families. When they fell short of meeting these expectations, they were chastised. For example, an editorial in March of 1889 was openly critical of the townswomen. It read:

The people of Newberg need to wake up to the fact that there are strangers in their midst. Persons who have left Eastern homes and friends, and have come here to live. Naturally, they at times get lonesome and long to see the familiar faces of those left behind. It is the duty of those who live here and are acquainted to make the strangers feel welcome and at home, to make them forget as far as possible that they are strangers. There are families in Newberg who have been here two and even three months and scarcely one of the Newberg ladies have called on them. This is not showing them even the formal courtesy which they are entitled to expect from any true lady, to say nothing of the open-hearted hospitality which should be general in a country town like Newberg. . . We hope these few lines will cause all to be more careful and considerate of not only the feelings, but the rights of strangers. Let us all have a cheerful smile and a kind word for each other and see that strangers are made to feel at home, a good old-fashioned hospitable "at home."<sup>130</sup>

It is significant to note such examples of criticism towards the women of the town. Though the women of Newberg enjoyed many non-traditional opportunities in the community, such as public speaking, ministry and fund-raising, they were still expected to conform to all of the other ideals of true womanhood. These standards are clearly illustrated by the attitudes of William Hobson regarding his wife's reluctance to move to Oregon. Hobson never publicly questioned the abilities of his friend Rebecca Clawson. In fact, he directly benefited from her spiritual and practical leadership and her hospitality.

However, when it came to his wife he was unwilling to recognize her legitimate concerns about moving to Oregon. While, theoretically, Mrs. Hobson could have felt a call from God to remain in Iowa, Mr. Hobson would not consider it. While he believed it proper for a woman to preach, he still believed a wife's rightful duty was to serve as helpmeet to her husband. She was to protect house and home while he made the worldly decisions for the family. The editors of the *Graphic* carried this philosophy into the realm of social housekeeping, arguing that a woman's hospitality was not a spontaneous act of kindness. Rather, it was a responsibility she must perform. Visitors and newcomers were entitled to her services and help, and if she failed to provide these services she was not a "true lady." Providing comfort, rest, and hospitality to their husbands and neighbors was always regarded as the primary responsibility of women in Newberg.

While some of their public activities may have seemed radical to their contemporaries, the women of Newberg essentially complied with the values of their community. Though not everyone in Newberg was Quaker, the influence of this group made women's public speaking a normal, acceptable activity for women of the town. Likely, if the women chose to speak about more controversial subjects, such as woman suffrage, they would have been targets of ridicule. Instead, women focused their talks and sermons on religion, education, and even more frequently, the subject of temperance.

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<sup>130</sup>*Newberg Graphic*, "Editorial," March 2, 1889.

Again, as a result of the Quaker influence, Newberg was always known as a temperance town. The initial platting of the town included a strong, anti-liquor statement, and the first act of the town council upon the incorporation of the town of Newberg was to establish a temperance law. In 1928, Amanda Woodward recalled the strength of the temperance forces in Newberg when speaking at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Newberg Friends Monthly Meeting. She said:

There were saloons in most, if not all, of the nearby towns, and not a single newspaper in the county, excepting the *Newberg Graphic*, raised its voice against them. The editor of the *Graphic* stood alone, as far as editors were concerned, but he decided to stand by his principles if he had to close up shop. He didn't have to, but the saloons did.<sup>131</sup>

The only effort to open a saloon in Newberg came in the summer of 1889, and was immediately defeated. The *Graphic* ran repeated articles and editorials protesting the saloon, and by August reported on a man charged with being intoxicated on the streets after leaving the saloon. The *Graphic* declared: "What about the man who sold the liquor. He should pay the fine yet he goes unpunished and in defiance of public sentiment keeps open his HELL HOLE and deals out that which is certain destruction to man, both soul and body. . . if this town is to prosper, the saloon must GO!"<sup>132</sup> Soon after this, the town council passed stricter anti-alcohol regulations, forcing the saloon to close its doors for good.

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<sup>131</sup> Ed Kidd. "Newberg Unique From Its Beginning," in *Newberg Graphic: 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Progress Edition* (Newberg: Diamond and Cady, 1939), 36. Amanda Woodward was married to the editor of the *Newberg Daily Graphic*.

While most residents of the town supported the temperance cause, none were more ardent in their work than the women of the town, especially through the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Socials, debates, reading circles, mothers meetings, sewing bees and other events were sponsored by this group. While this provided the nucleus for a women's community in Newberg, it was also significant to the town as a whole. For several years, the WCTU column was the most prominent regular feature in the *Newberg Graphic*. Furthermore, the local notices in the newspaper frequently reported on the activities of WCTU women. The newspaper's support of the organization lent a visibility to the women of Newberg which was not seen to the same degree in other areas of the state and nation. Unlike many of their sisters across the nation, these women were far from invisible.

While community support for women's activities was linked to their compliance to town values, it is wrong to assume this was an innocuous ladies club. These women engaged in real work, and despite their repeated denials, were extremely political. Though the organization had the support of the men of Newberg, the WCTU was completely run and organized by women. The minutes of their meetings suggest a gradual assertion of their independence from men in public life, and their activities on the local, state and national level suggest that they were competent, sophisticated leaders.

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

*The Organizational Structure of the Newberg WCTU*

Like other local unions around the state and nation, the Women's Christian Temperance Union of Newberg, Oregon, functioned on several different levels. At its most basic level, the Newberg WCTU was a voluntary association providing social and service opportunities for women in the area. Like other women's voluntary associations, the WCTU facilitated women's social contributions to the community, including charity work, fundraising, and the organization of community celebrations. What made local WCTU's unique from other women's clubs, however, was their larger vision. Women in Newberg, like WCTU women elsewhere, were always conscious of their connection to other temperance crusaders around the state and across the nation. While the union certainly met many of the social needs of women in the community, it also served as a vehicle for women to exercise their voices in the public sphere and to build themselves into a larger, national movement of women. As a result, minutes of Newberg WCTU meetings reflect a variety of local, state, regional and national topics. Rather than simply including the activities of the women of Newberg, minutes frequently include messages from women in other parts of the state and country, updates on state and national legislation, and excerpts from the national WCTU newspaper, the *Union Signal*. The constitution of the Newberg WCTU reflected the intent of the women to create an organization that went far beyond operating as a local women's social and voluntary club. In its constitution, the stated mission of the Newberg WCTU was "to educate public

sentiment up to the standard of total abstinence, train the young, save the inebriate and secure the legal prohibition and complete banishment of the liquor traffic.”<sup>133</sup>

Any woman was allowed to join the Newberg WCTU, provided she committed to paying \$1 into the union treasury each year and she signed and upheld a pledge of total abstinence.<sup>134</sup> Men were allowed to join the union as honorary, non-voting members who paid into the treasury and signed the abstinence pledge. Attracting honorary members was a strategic benefit for the women. Not only did it enrich the organization’s coffers, but honorary members were expected to uphold and advocate temperance ideals as voters, businessmen, and consumers. Despite the work men did for the union, women gave up none of their power to these honorary members, because men were prohibited from serving as officers in the organization and presiding over conventions. At every turn, participation by honorary male members was defined and determined at the discretion of the women.

Unlike the men, some women participated in a special ritual upon joining their local union. On the day they joined, the women would stand in front of the meeting while the secretary read the local WCTU constitution and the names of the new members. One by one, the new members then filed past the secretary to publicly sign the pledge and pay their dues. After a brief message of welcome, the president would recite a message

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<sup>133</sup> Minutes book of the Newberg WCTU. Unpublished. College Archives, George Fox University, Newberg, Oregon; 1.

<sup>134</sup> There are no records of what, if any, provisions were made for women who did not have the financial resources to pay into the treasury. The pledge itself read, “I hereby solemnly promise- God helping me- to abstain from all distilled, fermented and malt

of congratulation to the new members, explaining: "You are now a member of the largest organization of women in the world, and its 'do everything policy' provides a niche for every lover of humanity to work for God and Home and Native Land."<sup>135</sup> Then, the members would each stand in front of the president who would pin the white ribbon badge on each woman while reciting the white ribbon pledge:

To the Ribbon White be loyal,  
Bind it to your heart,  
For in our peaceful warfare  
It must ever have a part  
In the battle we are waging  
For our God and right,  
Be an oriflame of love  
This bow of Ribbon White.<sup>136</sup>

Once inducted into the sisterhood of the WCTU, women were expected to join- and often chair- committees. The Newberg WCTU listed seventeen committees in its constitution, each chaired by a different woman. The committees reflected the spectrum of WCTU activities.<sup>137</sup> For example, the Flower Mission and Parlor Work committees demonstrated the commitment to domestic work in the town of Newberg. The women on these committees saw to it that flowers were delivered to those who were ill or stricken by tragedy and also organized social events. The departments of Labor, Peace,

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liquors, including wine, beer, and cider and to employ all proper means to discourage the use and traffic in the same." WCTU Minutes, 1.

<sup>135</sup> Lucia H. Faxon Additon. *Twenty Eventful Years of the Oregon Women's Christian Temperance Union, 1880-1900* (Portland: Gotshall Printing, 1904), 79.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

Legislation and Petitions, Work Among the Foreigners, and Prison and Jail Work reflected the commitment of Newberg women to issues and political processes that existed outside the boundaries of their own hometown. The committees on Kindergarten, Heredity and Health, Young Women, and Literature served to further the WCTU commitment to education, while the committees on Press Work and the Union Signal grew out of the women's commitment to communicate their ideas with other women, and with those in the wider community.

The head of each committee was expected to provide regular reports to the whole union. At quarterly meetings, the committee chair was required to provide a written report of her committee's activities, and if she did not submit her report in a timely fashion, she was subject to a fine of fifty cents.<sup>138</sup> Two committees were formed which were not required to submit regular reports. The Silent Committee was an intermittent group, made up of "three of the active members of the Union" to "attend to matters not properly coming before the union at large."<sup>139</sup> Honorary (male) members of the Newberg WCTU were members of the Picket Line Committee whose duty it was to "aid the Union in outside matters."<sup>140</sup> There were no recognized leaders for these committees.

<sup>137</sup> WCTU Minutes, 13. It is interesting to note that chairing a committee was no small commitment. Several times between 1889 and 1894, women's resignations from such positions were rejected.

<sup>138</sup> Though the minutes of the Newberg WCTU record many threats of levying fines against tardy committee chairs, there is no record of any such fine actually being collected.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

The local union recognized several other leaders, including a president, a recording secretary, a corresponding secretary, and a treasurer. There were also several vice presidents, one from each of the denominations represented in the Newberg WCTU. The president was expected to preside at all meetings, to call special meetings and to sign all bills approved by the organization. Vice-presidents were to recruit women from their churches to join the union, and to submit quarterly reports which detailed their efforts to increase union membership. In the absence of the president, one of the vice-presidents was expected to preside over the meeting. The Corresponding Secretary was expected to manage the written communication between the Newberg Union and other local unions, the state union, and the national union. She submitted a quarterly report to the local union about her work, and also sent an annual report about the activities of the Newberg WCTU to the state corresponding secretary. The Recording Secretary was responsible for taking minutes at each local meeting and notifying members of upcoming meetings and events. She was also expected to receive all dues, fines, voluntary offerings and bills and to then hand deliver them to the treasurer. The treasurer paid all bills, made certain that annual contributions to the state and national unions were made in a timely fashion, and kept "a strict book account" of the union's financial activities.<sup>141</sup>

The women of the Newberg WCTU met twice a month, on the second and fourth Thursdays. One of these meetings was typically for business, while the other was considered a literature meeting. At the latter, the women took turns offering a short homily about Biblical values which usually focused on women's issues such as

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 2-4.

mothering, premarital sexual relations, and faith. In addition to the regular meetings of the WCTU proper, the union sponsored monthly meetings of the Y's (Young Women's Christian Temperance Union), socials, and Mother's Meetings. Mother's Meetings typically followed the format of the literature meetings, with a topic relating to parenting serving as the focus of discussion. The location of the meetings varied over the years with women meeting in churches, the YMCA, and women's homes. Wherever they met, the women remained focused on their work and were diligent in their efforts to further the cause of the WCTU.

### *The Work of the Newberg WCTU*

The work Newberg WCTU women did on the local level was both social and political in nature. The *Newberg Graphic* frequently reported on women's sewing bees, mother's meetings, and Young Women's Christian Temperance Union sociables. Most of these events served dual purposes: to create social opportunities in the community, and to further the work of the union. For example, the bi-weekly sociables usually included opportunities for women to practice their debating skills and to sing religious music. The *Graphic* reported that at one sociable held in March of 1889, twenty five young people were present with the literary portion of the program consisting of "songs, music, declamations and a discussion of the question 'Would industrial training tend to elevate labor?'"<sup>142</sup> Other social events, including special lunches and sewing bees, served as fundraisers for the union. At an 1889

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<sup>142</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, "Local News of the Week," March 16, 1889.

sewing bee, each woman who brought sewing was expected to pay \$1 into the WCTU treasury.<sup>143</sup> In 1892 the union served cake, ice cream, confectionery, and lemonade in the Friends Meetinghouse for the community Fourth of July celebration, making \$27.05 from the event.<sup>144</sup>

Most work, however, focused directly on the issues of temperance and social improvement. In 1889, the union worked to pass a temperance ordinance in Newberg, to protect Sabbath observance, to support the efforts of evangelist Eva Parker and to prevent a local pharmacist from selling liquor. For the most part, the women were successful in their local efforts. On June 29, 1889, the women resolved to uphold the tradition of temperance in Newberg. Less than two months after the women's resolution was published in *The Graphic*, the new town council unanimously passed Ordinance 13, titled "An Ordinance to Prevent the Sale or Gift of Spirituous or Malt Liquors in the Town of Newberg." Violation of the temperance law in Newberg under this ordinance would lead to possible fine and imprisonment for the offender.<sup>145</sup>

The male establishment of Newberg did not simply back up the WCTU women through city temperance ordinances; they also defended the women from verbal attacks by their detractors. In June of 1889, the *Graphic* ran an editorial decrying an item in the *Oregonian* which ridiculed the Newberg WCTU. The *Oregonian* reported that about forty women marched upon a pharmacy after being informed by "some

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<sup>143</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, "WCTU Column," May 25, 1889.

<sup>144</sup> WCTU Minutes, 26.

<sup>145</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, August 10, 1889.

mischievous person” that the druggist had secretly opened a saloon in the back of his store. The women sang, prayed, preached and demanded that the man take down his bar. At this point, the pharmacist pointed to his prescription case asking if that was the bar about which they were chanting. After some convincing, according to the correspondent, the women realized they were mistaken and “marched back a little faster than they came, vowing not to be fooled again.”<sup>146</sup>

The editors of the *Graphic* railed against this account, arguing: “The idea of claiming and publishing to the world that the women of Newberg have so little sense as to take a prescription case for a bar! It is perfectly outrageous.” They continued:

Brother, you are badly fooled if you think that your threats, insults, and false ‘write up’ will keep the women of this town from doing what they conceive to be right. . . . If our Main Street druggist is not guilty, why does he and his accomplices squirm so under fire? “It’s the hit duck that flutters. . .” Did they get their information from the one who stands by the good and the pure and who is always seen in the front ranks of reform? One who strives for the unbuilding of society and the betterment of mankind? No! But from one with a curse on his lips and an insult to meet the entreats of our brothers and sisters. Away with such information!

Marched back faster than they came, did they? But not until after they had given the gentleman(?) fair warning and had brought to his remembrance resolutions adopted at the mass meeting last winter which was to the effect that “no gentleman, after knowing the sentiment of this people, will sell intoxicating drinks in Newberg. Never to be fooled again. Where did you get your information? What a gross perversion of the facts; what a delusion the brother is laboring under if he thinks they have given up the work because they have been outrageously insulted. They are not made out of that kind of stuff as our druggist (?).<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Reprinted in *Newberg Graphic*, “Editorial,” June 22, 1889. Originally published in *The Oregonian* on June 1889.

<sup>147</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, “Editorial,” June 22, 1889.

It was not unusual for WCTU women to target individuals, like the druggist, who they believed to be disrupting the moral character of the town. In 1889, they formed a committee to “look after any disreputable characters” that lived in the town, with the goal of sending them to the Refuge home in Portland. In March of that year, they also urged the town not to allow excursion trains to stop in Newberg on Sundays. In their minutes, they explained that they disapproved of Sunday travel “not only as a Temperance union but as a Christian community, because of the evils that ever follow in the train of Sabbath desecration and pleasure . . .”<sup>148</sup> The women believed that should the Sunday leisure train stop in Newberg, it would “destroy the influence of our scripture teaching, and meetings for worship and make way for the inroads of vice and sin.”<sup>149</sup> The women petitioned the town council again in 1892, requesting that they pass an ordinance forbidding the use of “women’s face and form to be put up in public places and for advertising purposes.”<sup>150</sup> Unlike their requests for a temperance ordinance, the requests for train and advertising restrictions were rejected.

Although women remained active in local community life, the women of the Newberg WCTU directed most of their energies towards issues on the state and national levels. In 1889, the Newberg WCTU was particularly concerned with the success of the Portland Rescue Home. The February minutes reflected the union’s pleasure at being asked to participate in the organization of the home.

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<sup>148</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, “WCTU Column,” March 30, 1889.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> WCTU Minutes, 11 February 1892, 7.

It is a matter of congratulation for our Unions that they are invited to lend a helping hand to the Refuge Home for unfortunate and fallen women in Portland. . . Without such a home there is barely a straw to catch at when a young woman, sick at heart with a life of vice, would fain raise herself out of its mire. The social verdict of the world around her is that (for her punishment) in the mire she must stay, while her partners in sin and shame go 'scot free.' God grant that many may find the open door of this sheltering home a very gateway to heaven.<sup>151</sup>

The Newberg union cheerfully sent regular financial donations, and worked with other state activists to convince the legislature to grant money to the home. They "heartily rejoiced" with women around the state when the state appropriated \$2500 to the cause in the spring of 1889.<sup>152</sup>

Besides financial support and legislative activism, Newberg women's interest in the Refuge Home inspired frequent discussion about social purity and women's sexuality. While the women certainly did not condone the premarital sexual activities of women the home was meant to serve, they believed it to be grossly unfair that women bore the societal burden of shame while their partners did not. Unlike many of their contemporaries (men and women), WCTU activists believed that all women could be redeemed, and that no woman should live a life in poverty because of sexual indiscretion. They looked to Biblical sources to affirm their insistence that all women could attain lives of purity, regardless of their pasts. In February of 1889, the Newberg union published an excerpt from the *Union Signal* outlining their frustrations with the sexual double standard, and their fervent belief that women must be uplifted.

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<sup>151</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, "WCTU Column," February 23, 1889.

[When] a woman once loses that jewel so precious to her, nothing can save her. A man can reform, but poor woman is debarred from society and cast out forever. God help such 'society' as that! Jesus himself said unto a fallen woman, "Go and sin no more." If he could do that, why can we not try to save them without being contaminated? Of all the hands that are to gather flowers which will decorate His throne, none will be purer than hers who is cast down and out here, but will be loved and blessed over there.<sup>153</sup>

Mrs. F.A. Morris, press secretary for the Newberg WCTU, expressed the frustration she and other women in her community felt about the unfair expectations placed upon women in a column she submitted to the *Graphic* in March of 1889. She argued that the work she and her sisters engaged in was essential to saving women from lives of poverty and desperation, and that the efforts of the WCTU would help others realize that all could be redeemed. She explained:

[WCTU rescue workers] prove the falsity of the general notion that fallen women cannot be saved. There seems to be no trouble about saving fallen men; and women are not intrinsically different in moral fiber. Give the fallen women a chance like that accorded to fallen men, and a similar result might be predicted.<sup>154</sup>

The women of the Newberg WCTU, like their white ribbon sisters elsewhere, believed that a good education was essential to "giving women a chance" at leading an upstanding life. In addition to an industrial school at the Refuge Home, the women advocated for improved educational opportunities for all Oregonians. Because they believed that a solid educational foundation was integral to the creation of a financially and morally secure society, the women worked for the passage of a compulsory

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, "WCTU Column," February 2, 1889.

education bill in the Oregon legislature. This law would require that all students attend public school in their local communities, which the women believed would help to alleviate the blight of illiteracy throughout the state. An 1889 Newberg WCTU column reported that there were over seven thousand illiterate people in Oregon, and went on to argue that the compulsory education law was one of the most important pieces of the Oregon WCTU agenda. Newberg women were encouraged to visit legislators, circulate petitions, speak to neighbors and friends, and send letters to their congressmen.

Because women could not vote, their use of petitions and letter writing were important political tools. Newberg women directed their letters and petitions not just at city and state officials, but also towards officials in other regions of the country. For example, in 1892, the women spent a considerable amount of time discussing the increase of saloons in the state of Alaska, and in February it signed and circulated a “petition against the saloon in Alaska.”<sup>155</sup> The women also participated in the effort to circulate the Polyglot Petition to women all over the world, carrying an anti-liquor statement. When it was complete, over one million women from fifty different nations signed the petition and it was presented to an international panel of leaders.<sup>156</sup>

Newberg women were particularly interested in international women and temperance issues. In 1889, WCTU women attempted to organize a foreign mission

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<sup>154</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, “WCTU Column,” May 25, 1889.

<sup>155</sup> WCTU Minutes, 25 February 1892; 9.

movement to better facilitate cross-cultural contact between women. One WCTU column explained that “it was generally conceded” by the women that “something more must be done at Newberg for the support of Foreign Missions, and perhaps for the education and encouragement of those who feel a call to this service.” They recognized that such an endeavor moved beyond the primary purpose of the WCTU, but also believed that the union set the precedent for initiating such a movement in Newberg. The column asked: “Why cannot we learn for all time, the value of the idea that ‘in union there is strength’ and apply it upon this subject as upon others, and at once unite and organize a Women’s Foreign Missionary Society?”<sup>157</sup> While the Women’s Foreign Missionary Society did not produce missionaries from Newberg in the late nineteenth-century, the women continued to monitor the situation for women world-wide, and eagerly followed the chronicles of other international woman missionaries.

Newberg relied upon newspapers, letters and conferences to keep track of the activities of their sisters through the state, nation and world. The union encouraged all members to personally subscribe to the *Union Signal*, and on some occasions used the local treasury to pay for the subscriptions of women who could not afford it. Newberg women were great supporters of the *Union Signal*, deciding on several occasions to send unsolicited gift subscriptions to ministers, congress people, and other newspaper editors. The corresponding secretary of the Newberg union, like her counterparts

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<sup>156</sup> Ruth Bordin. *Frances Willard: A Biography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

elsewhere, facilitated direct communication between her own union and others in her state and region throughout the calendar year. However, communication was most effectively facilitated through the many conferences and conventions held by the WCTU. Newberg women were always very active participants in conferences at all levels. Each county, district and state conference from 1889 to 1895 had at least one representative from the Newberg WCTU and in 1892, the women were able to send Mary Cox to the national convention.

Participation in these conventions was expensive and inconvenient. Women who attended made significant financial sacrifices, and needed to find a way to get away from their home and childrearing responsibilities for the duration of their travel. The union heartily supported its members in their efforts to participate, frequently using the union treasury to subsidize the cost of travel. In 1892, the Newberg Union paid for two train tickets to the convention in Pendleton and sent five delegates. In addition to the train fare, the women dedicated \$10 to purchasing an outfit for Helen Hanford to wear at the convention.<sup>158</sup> Sometimes, the union simply loaned money to women needing financial assistance to complete their travels and the loans were not always expected to be repaid. When the union loaned \$15 to Mary Cox for her travel expenses to the national convention, they later forgave \$10 of the debt “in

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<sup>157</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, “WCTU Column,” February 23, 1889.

<sup>158</sup> It is unclear why the women decided they should purchase this outfit, however it seems likely that they wanted her to be properly dressed for her speaking engagement. This could be an example of the way women without great financial means were supported in their efforts to participate in what has been considered a middle-class social movement.

consideration of the appreciation of her work and especially her recent lecture.”<sup>159</sup>

Supporting women’s participation in these conferences was a wise investment for the union because women returned from their travels with increased energy and new contacts. The frequent conventions also helped to build the momentum of the movement because it united women from many localities, allowing them to share ideas and develop true friendships.

Temperance workers also communicated by traveling around the state and nation visiting other unions and attending lectures. Though many of these lectures were focused on temperance, others were related to topics of general concern for women. For example, in 1889 Newberg women were encouraged to travel to Portland to hear Miss Janeiso Miller speak on “Healthful and Artistic Dress.” In a newspaper announcement, the WCTU reported that it “hoped that all of our ladies who can will hear what she has to say on this important topic. We herald her coming and the prospect of the reform that is hoped will be rushed in as one of the greatest blessings of the age.”<sup>160</sup>

The Newberg WCTU also frequently engaged outside speakers to lecture and preach in their community. In the earlier years of the Newberg WCTU, the speakers were often men who supported the temperance cause. However, as women gained more confidence in their speaking skills and more women were empowered to go into communities for speaking engagements, the Newberg union shifted its priorities to

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<sup>159</sup> WCTU Minutes, 4 January 1893; 49.

<sup>160</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, “WCTU Column,” March 30, 1889

bringing in primarily women. One example of women's growing independence from men in the temperance field can be seen through the Newberg union's relationship with Major George Hilton.

In 1889, Mrs. F.A. Morris attended a meeting of the Portland WCTU at which Hilton was speaking. Morris reported that Hilton "touched on the different lines of work, encouraging every one to work in whatever line of effort her talents lead her." She was particularly moved by his argument that women needed to go about their efforts with "ungloved hands" and that what the world needed was "women who are not afraid to go into the slums and work with and for the poor fallen creatures there." Morris reported that Hilton's talks to unions around the region consistently resulted in increased membership and large financial donations. Noting that Hilton claimed "he has never left a union in a worse condition than he found it," Morris urged the Newberg women to hire him to come speak in their community.<sup>161</sup>

The women of the union agreed, and for the next several weeks their WCTU columns chronicled Hilton's travels and promoted his upcoming visit to Newberg. In February, the column reported that a recent visit to Tacoma by Hilton resulted in one hundred new members and five hundred dollars in collections, subscriptions and new membership fees. Morris argued that "Hilton can enlist public sentiment in [support of the WCTU] as few of our own members have ever done. The value of having our work placed before the public as he presents it cannot be over estimated."<sup>162</sup> In a later

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<sup>161</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, "WCTU Column," February 19, 1889.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, February 9, 1889.

column, Morris described Hilton as a “conscience arouser,” whose speeches contained “no dry statistics, no syllogistic logication, no ludicrous anecdote.” Instead, Hilton “[reached into the Bible to] select the burning truths of revelation and hurl them with a giant’s power right into the masses of truth and smothered convictions that lie dormant in the minds of Christians and unbelievers alike, and there blazes forth such light of moral responsibility that sleeping consciences spring to their feet, and skulking cowardice sneaks away in shame.”<sup>163</sup>

The women recognized that a small town like Newberg was not likely to see the dramatic financial results of a larger community like Tacoma, but they determined to bring out as many people as possible for the speaker. The women lobbied all of the local churches to promote the event and urged each church to prepare for Hilton’s arrival by holding congregational temperance meetings. They even went so far as to encourage ministers to shorten their church services, as individuals who spent long Sunday mornings in church might not be as willing to attend a lengthy temperance meeting at night. They bolstered their request for shorter worship times by noting that Major Hilton canceled his engagements in Albany and Corvallis because ministers did not respond to his request.<sup>164</sup>

Of course, Hilton did not just require adjustments to local worship schedules. He expected financial support for his work, and for a small union like Newberg this was quite expensive. In fact, Morris conceded that there were some in Newberg who

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., February 16, 1889.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

argued that there had been “too many lectures of recent date, taking all the money out of our town and country and ruining our trade.” However, Morris argued that “no city or town in the state can afford not to have him,” and those who argued against making the financial commitment to Hilton were dismissed as “poor, selfish, short sighted creatures.”<sup>165</sup>

Much to the disappointment of Newberg WCTU members, their arguments on behalf of Hilton were in vain. Though they believed they had secured a date for his arrival, he sent word to the union that he was not coming because he was already engaged elsewhere. Hilton wrote that he “should have liked to labor in Newberg” and would plan to return in a few months if the women could immediately commit to “sufficient time.” He recommended that his services should be retained for at least four to six days. The women agreed to take the issue under advisement, though such a lengthy stay in Newberg would be very taxing on the small treasury there. In the end, they were not successful in bringing Hilton to Newberg.

By 1892, the union was not only engaging more women from the outside to visit their union, but they were sending many of their own members to speak in communities around the state. Thus, when Hilton wrote a letter to the union that year, he was immediately rejected. Despite their belief just three years earlier that Hilton was one of the most significant individuals a community could retain to speak, they no longer felt “financially able to have him come.”<sup>166</sup> While finances were certainly an

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> WCTU Minutes, (14 April 1892) 16.

obstacle in 1889, the women were willing to make Hilton a priority and spent several newspaper columns trying to convince their neighbors and friends that they should contribute to the efforts to bring him to Newberg. However, in 1892, Major Hilton received only two sentences of notice in the union minutes. Furthermore, despite the argument that finances were tight, the union was committing substantial amounts of money to other activities, including \$10 for an outfit for Mary Cox and other financial reimbursements for female speakers.<sup>167</sup>

Newberg women frequently addressed crowds in Newberg and many ventured elsewhere in Oregon, distinguishing themselves as state level leaders. Amanda Woodward was credited with organizing the first county and district organizations in Oregon, and she frequently addressed the membership of the state union at the annual conventions. Several other Newberg women participated regularly in leadership tasks for the Oregon WCTU, including young women who often spoke at gatherings of temperance workers. Two Newberg women became national leaders, giving Newberg women a unique opportunity to have their voice heard by women all across the United States.

The women's speaking engagements, convention participation, and communication through temperance newspapers created a profound sense of sisterhood that defied geographical boundaries. The bonds were further reinforced by bulletins and devotional exercises which were periodically printed in the *Union Signal* for women across the nation to participate in. Most often, these exercises were used to

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

mark observance of dates of special importance to the WCTU, particularly dates of the national conventions and Crusade Day, which was a celebration of the beginning of the WCTU movement. Newberg women cheerfully participated in such national events, following the programs "as nearly as practical" and relishing the opportunity to feel united with American women everywhere.<sup>168</sup>

The unity between local unions across the nation was also made evident by the support unions gave to women who moved to new towns. Whenever a woman moved, her local union mailed a "letter of removal" to the local union in her new town. The Newberg WCTU recorded several of these letters, and wrote of enthusiastically receiving new members to the area. Under these circumstances, the WCTU facilitated the integration of newcomers into the community, by building upon the shared sense of sisterhood among temperance workers. Such women did not find themselves strangers in a new place. Rather, they were welcomed warmly by women with similar interests who were eagerly anticipating their arrival.

Women also exchanged favors for each other across state lines. For example, in 1893 Newberg women devoted time during several of their May meetings to raise money and offer prayers in support of the efforts of the WCTU in Chicago to promote temperance and do "rescue work" at the World's Fair.<sup>169</sup> In 1896, women's aid to each other moved beyond temperance work, with women across the nation offering their services to others who could not attend the national meetings which were held in large

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., (29 October 1892) 40.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., (26 April 1893) 64- 66.

cities. For example, in 1896, Mrs. S.E. Osborne utilized the network of WCTU women to earn money as a shopper for them. Local unions were sent a letter which recommended Osborne's services to those WCTU women "who are unable to come to Chicago to do their shopping and yet would like the benefits of city trade." The letter went on to explain that "Mrs. Osborne's years of experience as shopper for non-residents has given her such a reputation for reliability and trustworthiness that any one desiring her to serve them in this capacity will be satisfied with the results."<sup>170</sup>

The passionate identification women had with each other can also be clearly seen through memorials the Newberg union held for women upon their deaths. The affection and grief expressed over the death of WCTU women is surprisingly similar whether the women were local members or national leaders. In the 1890's, Newberg women recorded several lengthy memorial services for members who died and always composed a resolution of praise to be published in the local newspaper. For example, on August 8, 1894 the union held a memorial service in honor of Isabella Terrell. In their memorial resolution, they wrote that they "cherished[ed] her memory as a beloved sister" and praised her character "as a neighbor and friend" who was "kind and truly sympathetic." The resolution detailed her work for the union, and was laced with reassurances that in death she had returned to the "blessed Savior." The depth of feeling for Terrell was most evident by the simple line "We loved her."<sup>171</sup> In 1894, the

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<sup>170</sup> Mrs. R.A. Emmons. In an undated letter accompanying a letter from Albany, 1896. Papers are folded into the pages of the Minutes Book of the Newberg WCTU which is housed in the archives of George Fox University.

<sup>171</sup> WCTU Minutes, (13 July 1894), 116.

union was saddened by the death of their sister, Mrs. A.J. Boyd. In April, they held a meeting in her honor which included “heartfelt prayers and appropriate songs.”<sup>172</sup> The women resolved at this meeting to wear badges of mourning “until after her funeral is preached and perhaps a month hence.”<sup>173</sup>

In February of 1895, a similar service was held for national leader Mary Lathrop, with local women reading eulogies offered by women across the nation. Mrs. Harford, who had developed a personal relationship with Lathrop during her travels on behalf of the WCTU offered a “loving tribute to her memory.” The minutes of the service, written by M.E. Allen, highlight the shared duty that united women despite geographical separation. She concluded: “Truly a valiant has fallen and on whom will her mantle fall? Surely we should double our diligence that our beloved cause may not suffer from the calling home of these mighty ones.”<sup>174</sup> In other words, Lathrop’s work was done on the behalf of a sisterhood of women, and upon her death the women believed that each had a responsibility to pick up where she left off. A similar memorial service, which followed a format published in the *Union Signal*, was held in May of 1893 for Miss Cassady, the national flower mission superintendent. WCTU women, though they grieved at deaths, recognized that such events strengthened their commitment to each other and raised their own awareness of the deep connection they felt with other women. Whether they were mourning the loss of a Newberg neighbor

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., (25 April 1894), 105

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., (13 February 1895) 135.

and WCTU member they had known for years, or the loss of a national leader they had never known, the women believed that “the sorrow of our hearts and the very tears that we shed [serve] to cement us as sisters closer and closer together.”<sup>175</sup> That these women felt so tied to each other is demonstrated by the fact that most meetings began by singing the words:

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., (25 April 1894) 104.

Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love  
 The unity of heart and mind is like to that above  
 Before our Father's throne we pour our ardent prayers  
 Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one  
 Our comforts and our cares

We share our mutual woes, our mutual burdens bear  
 And often for each other flows the sympathizing tear  
 From sorrow, toil, pain, and sin we shall be free  
 And perfect love and friendship reign through all eternity<sup>176</sup>

The shared vision and friendship which was cherished by the women of Newberg was just as valued by communities of women all over the nation. Their common pursuit of increased opportunity for women in education, the workplace, and reform movements united them into a national community of women. The initiative taken by countless women in Newberg exemplifies the way that the WCTU placed power and responsibility in the hands of individual women. With so many women feeling that their contributions were essential to the success of the movement, the thousands of members of the national WCTU were never passive participants in innocuous ladies clubs. Rather they were participants in a movement they believed to be ordained by God and which empowered them to exercise their voices in the public arena.

Through their work together in the WCTU, women in Newberg and across the nation came to recognize themselves as a social class of people. They recognized that they were bound not just by their commitment to the temperance issue, but by their common experience as women. While temperance was perhaps the glue that held their

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<sup>176</sup> Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship. *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1978), 370. Minutes of meetings of Newberg, as well as national bulletins, reflect "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" as a WCTU favorite.

particular organization together, Newberg women recognized that their work was part of a larger trend of reform movements lead by and for women. "The movement for women is the heart of the world seeking utterance in behalf of justice, purity, and spiritual insight,"<sup>177</sup> argued one Newberg woman. WCTU women also claimed a universal significance for their work, believing that not only would their efforts broaden woman's sphere, but they would also improve their communities for both men and women. They did not believe that their efforts were any less important than the activities of their brothers and husbands, and they expected respect for the work in which they engaged. The strength of the women's convictions were perhaps best summarized by Mrs. F.A. Morris of Newberg who argued that "the work of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. . . is as important as anything else accomplished in our time."<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, "WCTU Column," February 23, 1889.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Chapter V**

### **The Broken Bond: Suffrage, Temperance and Oregon Women**

The WCTU represented a national community of women with a united vision for temperance and the general uplift of women. Despite the deep connections between these women, and their shared vision for the future, there were significant differences between them on several issues. Most significantly, WCTU women were quite diverse in their attitudes towards politics and woman suffrage. One of the reasons there could be such diversity of opinion was the freedom given to individual unions to do their own work and make their own decisions. While local unions were always conscious of their connection to the national organization, they knew the real power of the movement rested with the local organizations. Thus, so long as women worked towards the general adoption of temperance attitudes in their communities, they had the latitude to adopt policies and opinions that may have been vastly different from their sisters in the next county or another state.

The women of Newberg frequently participated in public leadership roles in their community, both as representatives of the union and as individuals. They preached, represented the town's interests to the Oregon legislature, and gave public lectures and talks quite frequently. Despite their eager pursuit of such public activities, the women of Newberg were not known as active suffragettes, nor did they consider themselves to be political. In fact, some statements found in WCTU minutes and columns suggest that the women of Newberg struggled to remain non-political, and were ambivalent about offering support to the woman suffrage movement.

Their ambivalence perhaps stemmed from their own political empowerment in Newberg. Women were recognized as leaders in their town, and were respected when they spoke and preached. Their voices were heard by the local town council, which often took the women's requests into consideration when passing ordinances. Women were included on major committees in Newberg for some of its most important projects, including incorporation as a town and fundraising for their prized Pacific Academy. Newberg women did not recognize themselves as voiceless citizens of their community, and some did not believe that enfranchisement would give them more power than they already had. Their belief that they had real power is suggested by a column written by Mrs. F.A. Morris in 1889 after traveling to Corvallis for a district convention. She was unimpressed by Professor Rook of Salem who gave one of the evening addresses and supported a woman suffrage amendment in Oregon. In response she wrote: "The speaker is evidently a woman's rights man, if we may judge from the ridiculous construction he placed upon the non-voting law for women, telling the audience that women are classed with negroes, untaxed Indians and idiots, the women coming last on the list."<sup>179</sup> As a community leader respected by both men and women in Newberg, it is perhaps understandable why Morris would find it "ridiculous" to believe that she had less power than a person with mental retardation or a Native American.

In addition to enjoying public privileges in Newberg, the WCTU women there also believed their calling was too pure to be considered politics. They truly believed that God was directing their work, and that in the end their efforts were more important than

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<sup>179</sup> *Newberg Graphic*. "WCTU Column," April 6, 1889.

anything a politician or voting man could ever accomplish. While a politician might work for a state or a nation, the women of the WCTU believed they were on a mission to serve all of humanity in direct response to a mandate from God. As a result, women such as Newberg WCTU president Amanda Woodward believed that women's involvement in politics would be distracting and damaging. She argued that WCTU women were "philanthropists rather than politicians, and when we attempt to establish our work on a political basis right then shall we lose sight of the breadth of our plans and purposes, and so far fail in our work for God, home and humanity."<sup>180</sup> Newberg WCTU minutes frequently reflected the women's belief that God was guiding their efforts. In November of 1893, they noted that they "felt the sacred nearness to our Heavenly Father and could almost hear his kindly approving words [urging] 'Courage my daughters, go on.'"<sup>181</sup>

Woodward, the matriarch of a family known for its liberal social politics, repeatedly warned women of bringing politics into WCTU work.<sup>182</sup> In 1889, she told her sisters about "one local union which had entirely destroyed its influence for good by having taken a definite position relative to the political issues of the times." She then went on to criticize the national union for its public support of the Prohibition Party. Although it seemed logical that WCTU women would support prohibition candidates, Woodward believed it best to remain uninvolved in the political process. Reflecting some anti-suffrage sentiment of the era, Woodward argued that while "some [women]

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<sup>180</sup> *Newberg Graphic*. "WCTU Column," January 26, 1889.

<sup>181</sup> Minutes of the Newberg WCTU (1 October 1893), 80.

<sup>182</sup> Interview, Thomas D. Hamm.

have sufficiently informed themselves on political issues of the day to be able to give an intelligent reason for the position they take, we suspect that it is the few who can claim to be adepts in politics.”<sup>183</sup> She argued that stepping into political debate kept women from more important work, arguing that “there are other things for us to do than handle questions that even if we thoroughly understood, are better not discussed.”<sup>184</sup> Despite these warnings, Woodward urged her membership to actively participate in state reforms. In fact, in the same column in which she denounced the national union’s support of the Prohibition party, she chastised Newberg women for not doing enough lobbying of the Oregon legislature for passage of a compulsory education bill.

Woodward’s inconsistent statements regarding women and politics are certainly curious, and her suggestion that women lacked the intellectual capacity to participate in electoral politics are suspect considering the high level of education of Newberg women. Woodward herself served as an officer to the WCTU on the local and state level, and frequently spoke in public. She and Evangeline Woodward undertook efforts to raise money for a new building at Pacific College, suggesting that she had the self-confidence and wisdom needed to organize and execute a major capital campaign. Thus, it seems unlikely that Woodward opposed women’s participation in the political process because she doubted the ability of women to vote intelligently and make wise decisions. Instead, she recognized community expectations for women and feared a loss of power if Newberg women became overtly political. Newberg women enjoyed the support of their

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<sup>183</sup> *Newberg Graphic*. “WCTU Column,” January 26, 1889.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

husbands and brothers, but had they endorsed more controversial measures, such as women suffrage, that support may have quickly eroded, stripping away much of the power and autonomy Newberg women enjoyed. Thus, Woodward at once denied the politicization of her work while encouraging women to devote their energies towards influencing political processes.

Though the Newberg WCTU women expressed concern about women's political activities, they never actively opposed the suffrage movement. Instead, they conducted their affairs without giving much consideration to the activities of the suffragists and anti-suffragists in their region. Not all unions in Oregon chose to tackle this issue in the same way. Many Oregon WCTU women were staunchly pro-suffragist while there were others who worked hard to discredit the suffrage movement and its Oregon leader, Abigail Scott Duniway. However, most Oregon WCTU women went about their activities without participating in the debate on suffrage. Many women simply found more pressing issues in their lives, and failed to see the personal relevance of the suffrage movement.

It would be easy to look at the suffrage stance of Newberg women and assume that WCTU women were not part of the early movement for women's rights. However, such a conclusion would be in error. While the Newberg women were not suffragettes, they are representative of a large movement of women that worked to improve the social and personal lives of their sisters in more practical ways. These women are not frequently credited by feminist historians for their important work, and this is perhaps because their strong support of the woman movement has been clouded by a focus on their religious zeal and social purity.

The women of Newberg had no doubt that they wanted more power in the world in which they lived, and they clearly recognized the need to offer more opportunities to women. In 1893, Mrs. Harford of Newberg argued that the WCTU was “an agent to bring woman out of the narrowness of her sphere.”<sup>185</sup> Later that year, the Yamhill County President, Mrs. A.J. Whitman told the Newberg WCTU that “this world will never have a greater agency for. . . rescuing woman and raising her to her proper place than the WCTU.”<sup>186</sup> Like White Ribboners across the nation, the women of Newberg were committed to ending the sexual double standard, improving women’s access to higher education, and ensuring fair pay for women’s work. Newberg women also frequently recognized the professional achievements of their sisters, cheerfully raising funds to pay those who devoted their time to lecturing on temperance and doing union organization. This was certainly a departure from the traditional woman’s sphere, which held that such activities should be performed on a voluntary basis if at all.

In spite of their many efforts to improve the situation of women in Oregon, Abigail Scott Duniway blamed WCTU women for impeding the course of the woman movement in Oregon. Just as Amanda Woodward believed that women’s public commitment to the woman suffrage movement would jeopardize their success in other areas of reform, Duniway believed that women’s high-profile support of a prohibition amendment guaranteed that men would never give women the vote. However, unlike WCTU women who chose not to advocate for suffrage, Duniway was not content to keep

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<sup>185</sup> WCTU Minutes (18 January 1893), 50.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, (26 July 1893), 73.

her frustrations with the temperance movement to herself. Instead, she used her platform as a well-known speaker and newspaper editor to discredit WCTU women and their cause. In fact, temperance women became Duniway's nemesis.

Much of Duniway's autobiography, *Path Breaking*, focused on her irritation with the WCTU. In fact, in its original edition, the full title of her monograph was *Path Breaking: An Autobiographical History of the Equal Suffrage Movement in Pacific Coast States with Sidelights on Prohibition in Politics, a Stumbling Block on the Path of Freedom for the Mothers of the Race in Disenfranchised States and in Congress; Force is not Freedom and Prohibition is Not Liberty*. The introduction to her autobiography further revealed the struggle between the two movements of women. She explained that "it was not my expectation, or design, when beginning my work, in 1871, for securing equal rights between the mothers and fathers of the race, to encounter a conflict between the two contending elements of force and freedom, known as prohibition of the liquor traffic and prohibition of women's right to vote."<sup>187</sup>

Duniway believed this conflict stemmed solely from the temperance movement. She argued that temperance workers busied themselves by spreading rumors that detracted from Duniway's character. This was true in some cases. For example, in 1879 Duniway learned prohibitionists were alleging that Duniway was "in the habit of meeting

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<sup>187</sup> Abigail Scott Duniway. *Path Breaking: An Autobiographical History of the Equal Suffrage Movement in Pacific Coast States, with Sidelights on Prohibition in Politics. A Stumbling Block in the Path of Freedom for the Mothers of the Race in Disenfranchised States and in Congress. Force is not Freedom and Prohibition is not Liberty* (Portland, James, Kearns and Abbot, 1914), Introduction.

men in [her] rooms at the hotels, and drinking intoxicants.”<sup>188</sup> She vociferously denied these and other allegations which followed her through the years. On several occasions she found that churches and meeting facilities were not open for her to use because so many believed that she was a drinker. Duniway was on particularly negative terms with the WCTU of Washington territory, who in 1886 managed to publish several vicious rumors about Duniway’s drinking habits in the *Union Signal*. Duniway’s editorial staff denounced all of the rumors as patently untrue, though they claimed they never read the allegations in the first place. “We don’t see the goody-goody sheet,” proclaimed an editorial in the November 25 edition of *The New Northwest*. The editorial went on to chastise the enfranchised WCTU women of Washington for their ungratefulness to Duniway for her efforts to help see a suffrage amendment passed in their territory. “Out of denseness of their ignorance and bigotry. . . they have deliberately borne false witness against the one woman but for whose years of labor they would now be disfranchised,” read the editorial.<sup>189</sup>

That Duniway expected praise and gratitude for her suffrage advocacy, along with her insistence that she alone was the leader of the movement for women in the Pacific Northwest, was extremely damaging to her cause. While the women who detracted from Duniway’s work by publicly questioning her character certainly damaged the suffrage movement, they were not the sole cause of its extremely slow journey to success. Many

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<sup>188</sup> Duniway, 95.

<sup>189</sup> *The New Northwest*. 25 November 1886. It is significant to note that an Oregon WCTU woman is credited with “[taking] to task” the *Union Signal* for its “misrepresentations” of Duniway’s character.

historians have failed to recognize Duniway's complicity in the conflict between the two movements. For example, Ruth Barnes Moynihan argued that "[Duniway] was entirely correct about prohibition; it did cause the delay of woman suffrage by mobilizing opposition."<sup>190</sup> This argument is flawed because the WCTU did not actively mobilize women to denounce passage of a suffrage amendment. Duniway, however, failed to tap the WCTU movement for suffrage support. From the very beginning, Duniway ridiculed women who participated in the temperance movement, publicly assessing them as political lightweights opposed to true liberty. Though she argued that women's support of prohibition would discourage men from passing a suffrage amendment, she was the most vocal proponent of the idea that women's votes would result in compulsory temperance laws. Perhaps if she had not drawn such attention to the matter, it would not have raised the level of concern it did.

Further, the suffrage amendment did not fail to pass simply because of men's resistance to prohibition legislation. Rather, many men did not believe the women in their lives had much interest in the vote. Duniway did not do an effective job of mobilizing women to demand the vote because she believed that her energies were best spent convincing male voters that women needed to vote. Thus, the membership of the suffrage movement did not swell the way the membership of the WCTU did.

The WCTU flourished because it focused on the needs and ideas of women and recognized the power and influence held by women. The suffrage movement, on the other hand, revolved around the celebrity and leadership of Duniway, making little effort

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<sup>190</sup> Ruth Barnes Moynihan. *Rebel for Rights: Abigail Scott Duniway* (New Haven: Yale

to engage a broad base of women in suffrage work. Because Duniway directed so much attention to herself, and demanded recognition as the primary leader for suffrage in the region, it was difficult for many people to separate the issue of suffrage from Duniway. Because she used her newspaper to publicly ridicule those who dared disagree with her, she made many enemies in the state. Others who were not directly impacted by her criticisms were simply turned off by her condescending rhetoric. Had Duniway been able to accept a diversity of opinions among women, particularly on the issue of temperance, she may have been more successful in recruiting more women to the ranks of active suffrage advocates earlier in her political career. Rather than publicizing the liability of women's broad support of temperance to male voters in Oregon, Duniway could have been encouraging WCTU women that they should support the movement for voting rights because it would give them a greater voice in public affairs regarding alcohol. Instead, Duniway chose to belittle those who disagreed with her, alienating a large organization of women that could have been strong allies.

Duniway dismissed the support WCTU women could have offered to the suffrage movement. However, her characterization of woman prohibitionists in the Pacific Northwest did not give an accurate picture of the suffrage sentiment of many of the temperance women there. It is important to remember that in Oregon, the founding documents of the WCTU included strong suffrage language which was removed only at the request of national WCTU leader, Frances Willard. Despite this, many Oregon WCTU women continued to privately promote the issue of women's voting rights, though many did this independently of Duniway.

That many women of the Oregon WCTU looked forward to the day they seized the vote was evident in Lucy Additon's history of the early years of the Union. She argued that women had accomplished much in the nineteenth century, but that their power and influence would be greatly increased when they were enfranchised. She wrote: "[When] the arrogance man has shown in denying woman the freedom and equality before the law [has disappeared] the intelligence of woman will assert itself." As voters, Additon argued that women would bring about "the dethronement of vice" and "the cleansing of the 'turbid pool of politics.'"<sup>191</sup> Once women achieved equality with men before the law, justice could be achieved. "If women in the last two decades have wrought so mightily for humanity's uplift, apart from men, what may we expect to see accomplished when men and women become a unified force working as one and inseparable for the common joy, the common good?" she asked. Even the ambivalent women of Newberg hinted of their realization that the vote was essential to securing the passage of suffrage legislation as early as 1890, when their local WCTU column announced that "for morality and religion the woman's vote is all important."<sup>192</sup> By 1896, Mrs. Martin of Newberg urged all the women of the town to leave behind their denials of political action and "to come out and be what they are politically."<sup>193</sup>

Duniway failed to recognize the WCTU's passionate support of increased rights for women. She did not recognize that there were prohibitionists who would have been

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<sup>191</sup> Lucia H. Faxon Additon. *Twenty Eventful Years of the Oregon Women's Christian Temperance Union, 1880-1900* (Portland: Gotshall Printing, 1904), 101.

<sup>192</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, "WCTU Column," February 1, 1890.

valuable allies in the fight for suffrage, nor did she understand that those who were not actively working for women's voting rights were in fact working to improve the situation of women in Oregon. Had she been able to look past her own opposition to prohibition, accepting that individuals often disagree on matters of politics, she may have succeeded in uniting the women of Oregon on behalf of suffrage. However, because she was unwilling to work with such women, she suffered the loss of the largest and most effectively organized group of women in the state. Surely this slowed the journey to women's voting rights in Oregon.

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<sup>193</sup> *Newberg Graphic*, "WCTU Column," August 7, 1896.

## **Chapter VI**

### **Conclusion: Politics Beyond the Ballot Box**

WCTU women's work has long been overshadowed by the experiences of suffragists who are credited with carrying the first wave of feminism, and of uniting women to demand social and political equality in the United States. While the suffrage movement is certainly a significant piece of women's history, it has for too long been considered the backbone of the nineteenth-century woman movement without enough attention given to the broad based supportive structure that organizations, such as the WCTU, offered to the movement. As a result, any group of women not recognized as active supporters of voting rights for women have been too often dismissed as either insignificant or unenlightened. However, in many cases, women not advocating for suffrage were committed to activities and agendas which they believed more efficiently improved women's lives.

Unfortunately, by neglecting the stories of women who were not suffragists we fail to recognize the complexity and diversity of women's involvement in political and social life in the United States. The women of the Oregon WCTU made important strides towards improving the lives of women all over the state, despite the fact that their primary goal was not equality at the ballot box. Furthermore, the WCTU united thousands of women who were then able to recognize themselves as a social class. The significance of this achievement cannot be underestimated. As feminist theorist Rosemary Tong explained, "as soon as a group of people is fully conscious of itself as a class, that group becomes extremely difficult to prevent from achieving its fundamental

goals.”<sup>194</sup> For the women of the WCTU, these fundamental goals included far more than the establishment of universal temperance laws. The unstated agenda of the WCTU also aspired to broaden women’s opportunities in the public sphere, to equip women for self-sufficiency, to enhance the rights of working women, and to end the sexual double standard.

Central to the WCTU’s success in organizing women as a class was its commitment to addressing issues which were relevant to large numbers of women. Many nineteenth-century women, regardless of class or race, could easily identify with fears of a daughter becoming pregnant, of losing family assets to a husband’s drinking habit, or being beaten by a drunken man. Identification with these issues was also facilitated by the ability to cloak them in the rhetoric of morality, allowing women who may have been intimidated by the more radical notions of woman suffrage to participate in the broader woman movement. In many cases, such work served as a bridge between a non-committal (and in some cases negative) attitude toward woman suffrage and the desire for equality at the ballot box. Such a bridge was essential to building a united front of women who sought greater freedoms for themselves.

Abigail Scott Duniway failed to recognize the importance of reaching out to women in ways that made sense to them and didn’t challenge their conception of womanhood. Even though many WCTU women shared much of Duniway’s vision for women’s expanded social rights, Duniway failed to produce an agenda which was

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<sup>194</sup> Rosemary Tong. *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction* (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1989), 43.

accessible to a broad spectrum of women. Her focus on the philosophy of egalitarianism between the sexes and her lofty and often angry rhetoric did not grab the attention and passion of the average Oregon woman. As historian Suzanne M. Marilley argued in *Woman Suffrage and the Origins of Liberal Feminism in the United States, 1820-1920*, the academic philosophy of “egalitarianism proved irrelevant to many Americans.”<sup>195</sup> Though Duniway was generally more acerbic than her contemporary suffrage allies (such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony), she was not alone in her inability to fully engage women in the battle for the vote. They too, according to Marilley, relied too heavily on academic arguments for a suffrage amendment and failed to speak about issues that touched women’s lives every day. As a result, Marilley made the novel argument that national WCTU president Frances Willard was the most significant organizer of women in the nineteenth century rather than more well known national suffrage leaders. Marilley argued that her success was so great because “[s]he attracted and kept thousands of women in the WCTU, was one of the few elite white reformers who also tried to mobilize black women, and transformed the WCTU from a pretemperance organization into a major source of political power in the cause of votes for women.”<sup>196</sup> Willard achieved this through her development of “a feminism of fear,” driven by women’s determination to alter men’s behaviors such that women would be economically and physically safe in their homes and communities.

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<sup>195</sup> Suzanne M. Marilley. *Woman Suffrage and the Origins of Liberal Feminism in the United States 1820-1920*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 100.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

In Oregon, this “feminism of fear” did more than simply unite women. The WCTU instituted significant changes to the social structure of the state. The organization created opportunities for women to become educated and provide for themselves financially, to leave abusive situations, and to be fairly compensated for the work they performed. They contributed to the institution of compulsory school attendance laws in Oregon, and planted the seeds for social welfare agencies in the state through the Refuge Home and Noon Rest Center. In accomplishing all of these things, the WCTU also built the confidence of countless women, training them to work as professional organizers and public speakers. The organization provided an entry into the public sphere for women who valued their claim to moral authority, and allowed women to enter the world of politics without fear of leaving their feminine identities behind. As historian Lucia Additon argued, the WCTU succeeded in “developing the women of Oregon into truer, grander women, no less womanly, only stronger in all that makes for the rightness of life.”<sup>197</sup>

While not all WCTU women were suffragists, and some were even anti-suffragists, it is wrong to assume that this was an anti-feminist organization. The perceived feminist stance of nineteenth-century women has profound implications for those who study history and those that seek to understand feminism. Because the suffrage movement has been identified as the basis for modern feminism, anyone who didn’t support that movement has either become invisible or deemed “anti-woman.” Seen as the “losers” in a great battle for political freedom, women opposed to suffrage

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<sup>197</sup> Lucia H. Faxon Additon. *Twenty Eventful Years of the Oregon Women’s Christian*

seem to have nothing to offer us today. Those women who neither supported nor opposed suffrage are largely overlooked, often regarded as late-comers to the movement.

WCTU women who neither publicly endorsed nor denounced woman suffrage were not simply late-comers to the movement. Rather, they believed that women's emancipation would be more easily accomplished through their hands-on assistance programs. In many ways, WCTU and suffrage arguments are early examples of divergent feminist theory. While both groups advocated increased rights and opportunities for women, they differed in their interpretation of the root cause of women's oppression and the best way to end that oppression.

In the end, the impact the women of the WCTU had upon the lives of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women in Oregon was much more significant than that of Abigail Scott Duniway. While the suffrage amendment was a great victory for women and enabled them to add their voices to electoral politics, it did not have the same direct and profound impact upon individual women's lives that WCTU programs did. For example, a single mother may have appreciated the ability to vote, but likely would have appreciated even more the opportunity to rebuild her life through the industrial school and refuge home. Woman suffrage changed the status quo in the abstract world of politics. The WCTU changed women's day to day experiences and their perceptions of themselves.

By failing to bring to light the experiences of women who were not suffragists, particularly WCTU women, we lose the opportunity to paint a more complete picture of women's experiences in nineteenth-century America. The work of the WCTU in Oregon

reveals that women were politically active despite their disenfranchisement, and that their efforts changed their society for men as well as women. Through industrial schools, union organization, lobbying the state legislature, the building of reform schools, and cooperation with prisons and railroads to enhance women's safety, the WCTU influenced the decisions made by voting men. Even more significantly, the history of the WCTU reveals that women recognized their power long before they achieved the vote. While many embraced their role as ruler of the domestic sphere, many WCTU women clearly believed their voices also needed to be heard and heeded far beyond the walls of their homes. Though many later came to recognize the need for suffrage, these women did not believe that the world of electoral politics was the only way to change the world. Their accomplishments are proof that women's effectiveness and political action does not begin or end at the ballot box.

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