

OREGON STATE ARCHIVES

On Her **OWN** *Wings*

Oregon Women and the Struggle for Suffrage

It can be hard to imagine only 100 years ago women weren't allowed to vote in the United States. The fight for this right took many years of dedication and sacrifice from different people who make up the mixed fabric of our country. This deck of cards introduces 25 historical figures who were vital in the struggle. These profiles are part of the Oregon State Archives' 2020-21 exhibit *On Her Own Wings: Oregon Women and the Struggle for Suffrage*. The exhibit tells the story of the struggle for suffrage in Oregon and across the United States. It explores the circumstances in which people and organizations operated and the strategies they used. This exhibit also looks at the social movements that shaped activists' views and arguments for and against suffrage.

View our online exhibit @

<https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/exhibits/Pages/default.aspx>



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

ABIGAIL SCOTT DUNIWAY

Duniway worked as an educator, editor, and activist for over 50 years. A colleague of Susan B. Anthony and other luminaries, Duniway was active on a national level, but won greatest success in her native Pacific Northwest. She was instrumental in organizing the winning vote for universal woman suffrage in Idaho, then Washington, and finally in her home state of Oregon. When the state did pass suffrage legislation in 1912, a 79-year-old Duniway personally wrote the Oregon Women Suffrage Proclamation in her own hand.



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

ADELINA OTERO-WARREN

Otero-Warren, a member of Santa Fe's social elite, was active in politics as well as the woman suffrage movement. Otero-Warren headed the New Mexico's chapter of the Congressional Union for Women's Suffrage. To reach the widest audience, Otero-Warren insisted that suffrage literature in the Southwest be published in both English and Spanish. Her language inclusivity extended to her tenure as the superintendent of Santa Fe County schools and inspector of Indian schools where she denounced the federal government's practice of banning Spanish and Indigenous languages in boarding schools.



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

ALICE PAUL

Paul worked with the National American Woman Suffrage Association and then went on to found the National Woman's Party. She was highly educated with a master's degree in sociology, a PhD in economics, and a law degree. Repeatedly arrested and brutalized by authorities, Paul and her counterparts continued their quiet protest for over a year until Congress sent the 19th Amendment to the states for ratification in 1919. Additionally, Paul agitated to end legal discrimination against women by writing what would become the Equal Rights Amendment, establishing a UN Commission on the Status of Women, and pushing to have language prohibiting discrimination based on sex in the Civil Rights Act.

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Public domain image, Courtesy Barbara J. Redwine.

BEATRICE MORROW CANNADY

Cannady is considered one of Oregon's most prominent civil rights activists. She edited *The Advocate*, the state's largest African American newspaper. Cannady was also a founding member of the Portland chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1913. She was a fierce advocate for equality: regularly protesting against segregation, the Ku Klux Klan's activity in Oregon, and the prison and justice systems. In 1922, she graduated from Northwestern College of Law, becoming the first black woman to graduate from law school in the state of Oregon. She advocated for state civil rights bills, and helped to integrate public schools in Oregon and Washington.

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Courtesy of the Library of Congress

BETTY GRAM

Gram was among the "Silent Sentinels" arrested for picketing in front of the White House in 1917. She was arrested twice, and eventually sentenced to serve 30 days at a workhouse. Once jailed she joined a hunger strike along with other protestors. Doctors forced the protestors against their will, however the strikers succeeded and were freed after two weeks. The torturous methods of feeding these women were publicized, and their suffering had a profound effect on public opinion. Gram showed the nation what women were willing to endure in order to secure their right to vote, and what the law was willing to do in order to suppress them.

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Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT

Catt joined the suffrage movement and gained notoriety for her speaking skills. She became the National American Woman Suffrage Association president and during her tenure created the "Winning Plan" which coordinated the drive for the 19th Amendment with state suffrage campaigns. More conservative than younger members of her organization, Catt was wary of expanding voting rights to foreigners, the illiterate, and women of color. She also opposed militant tactics and supported President Wilson's war effort in World War I, an issue that divided the suffrage movement.

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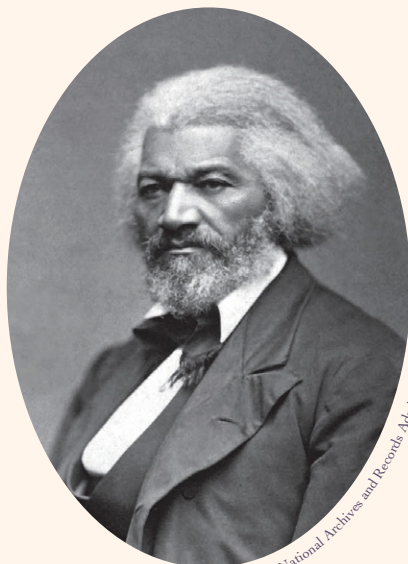


Courtesy of the Library of Congress

REP. JEANNETTE RANKIN

In 1916, Rankin ran for U.S. Congress on a platform of peace and social welfare. Rankin pushed for a congressional committee on suffrage, which proposed a constitutional amendment granting women suffrage. Rankin opened the floor debate and voted "yea" in the House, which passed the measure, but the Senate overturned the bill. Rankin again ran for Congress in 1940 at the age of 60 and won. Her commitment to peace still guided her politics, and in 1941 Rankin was the only member of Congress to vote against declaring war on Japan after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Holding to her beliefs was wildly unpopular with the public, and she would not seek office again, retiring to a life of social activism.

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Courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Douglass freed himself from slavery, becoming a national leader for the causes of suffrage and abolition. Douglass was the only African American present at the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, and one of only 32 men to sign the Declaration of Sentiments. In 1866, Douglass founded the American Equal Rights Association with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony to push for universal suffrage. Their relationship soon soured in debates over the 15th Amendment. They disagreed over the exclusion of sex from the language of the amendment. Douglass celebrated the amendment's passage as an incremental victory, but continued to agitate for women's rights for the rest of his life.

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Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society

HARRIET REDMOND

The daughter of freed slaves, Redmond lived in Portland when Oregon's laws and constitution prevented black Americans from living in the state. Portland society barred Redmond from the women's rights groups frequented by white suffragists. She instead organized meetings on suffrage and served as president of the Colored Women's Equal Suffrage Association. Like many other women of color, Redmond's life and contributions to suffrage were virtually unknown until the 21st century. Historians uncovered her records in 2012 while conducting research during the centennial of Oregon woman suffrage. Celebrated only posthumously, Redmond's grave now bears the inscription "Black American Suffragist."

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Courtesy of National Portrait Gallery

IDA B. WELLS-BARNETT

Wells-Barnett spent her life fighting against the racism and sexism of white America using her journalistic skill to campaign against lynching. She studied accounts of lynching and published her findings in two pamphlets. Wells-Barnett explained that white men got away with murdering African American men by allegedly defending the honor of white women, and the unjust irony that, in contrast, black women had no recourse against sexual assault by white men. As a suffragist, Wells-Barnett shone light on the link between racial and gender discrimination, furthering the cause of black feminism. She saw woman suffrage as a means for black women to become politically involved and elect African Americans to influential offices.

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Courtesy of the Library of Congress

HELLEN KELLER

Keller lost her sight and hearing but learned braille, sign language, and speech, and graduated from Radcliffe College in 1904. Best remembered as an activist for disabled peoples, Keller also spoke out for woman suffrage, birth control, and pacifism. She was a radical socialist and a member of the International Workers of the World. She advocated against U.S. imperialism and railed against the power of wealth in government. In 1920, the same year as the ratification of the 19th Amendment, Keller co-founded the American Civil Liberties Union. Then as now, the American public celebrated Keller's activism for women and disabled people while glossing over her more radical politics.

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From Sunset Magazine (Public Domain)

SEN. KATHRYN CLARKE

Clarke was the first woman to serve in the Oregon state Senate and made national headlines as an example of women's progress in the government as a result of gaining suffrage. Her cousin, who was the Oregon governor, appointed her as a senator, following a subsequent resignation. Although a campaign was run against her to oust her from office, Clarke prevailed and won the election. Following her victory, she supported bills that raised salaries for county employees, and later that same year, began pushing for a federal amendment for women's voting rights.

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Courtesy of Yale University Library

LOUISE BRYANT

Bryant graduated from the University of Oregon in 1909 and quickly made a name for herself as a poet, columnist, and radical feminist. In the effort to gain women's voting rights, she traveled the state, turning her writing skills to speeches and lectures. After moving to New York briefly, Bryant moved to Russia at the end of World War I to write about the Bolshevik Revolution. Her most famous work, *Six Months in Russia*, was read across the United States in part for its sensational reports of powerful female revolutionaries.

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Courtesy of the Library of Congress

LUCY BURNS

Burns was a radical Irish Catholic from Brooklyn whose studies at Oxford exposed her to militant suffragists in Britain. Burns was among the "Silent Sentinels" who picketed in front of the White House. Burns was arrested and confined to the Occoquan Workhouse where she and fellow suffragists staged hunger strikes. She was held in solitary confinement, force-fed, and beaten and left overnight with her hands cuffed above her head. Once freed, Burns engaged in nationwide speaking tours until the 19th Amendment was ratified. After its passage she retired from activism, devoting her life to the Catholic Church and an orphaned niece.

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Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

DR. MARIE EQUI

In her career as a Portland doctor, Equi was a fierce proponent of working-class women and children. A believer in women's reproductive rights, she also provided access to contraceptives and abortions. After witnessing a police crackdown on Portland's working-class women during a strike, Equi protested for better working conditions, aligned herself with the International Workers of the World, and declared herself a socialist and anarchist. The federal government noticed Equi's radicalism and wiretapped her home and office. In her personal life, Equi lived openly in romantic relationships with women. She even adopted a daughter with her partner Harriet Speckart, an heiress of the Olympia Brewing Company.

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Courtesy of Joseph Gaston, *Portland: Its History and Builders* (vol. 2), p. 734.

DR. MARY ANNA COOKE THOMPSON

Thompson began practicing medicine in 1867 and gained notoriety as the Portland's first woman physician. Like many others who came after her, Thompson's activism stemmed from her experience as a doctor. She advocated for women and infants, and pushed for sanitation, rest, and recuperation. Thompson gave speeches and lectures around the state and nation, and when the 19th Amendment was introduced to the U.S. Senate, she was one of 13 women to address the senate. In her speech, she spoke of the moral quality of women, and her sincere belief that voting rights were the cure to political corruption and vice.

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Courtesy of *The Crisis*, Vol. 13, No. 4, February 1917

MARY BURNETT TALBERT

Talbert was an educator, activist, human rights proponent, and one of the best-known African Americans of her time. Talbert lectured across the U.S. and abroad on the oppression of African Americans and became a major influence in bringing black women into international women's organizations. She also founded the Niagara Movement, the predecessor of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). As a suffragist, Talbert advocated for women of all races to work together for the cause. She worked to raise awareness among prominent white feminists on the importance of supporting women who were marginalized and less privileged.

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Courtesy of National Portrait Gallery

REV. ANNA HOWARD SHAW, M.D.

Shaw was both a medical doctor and ordained as the first woman minister of the Methodist Protestant Church. She was also a prominent advocate for the temperance movement, and dedicated to the cause of woman suffrage. In 1904, Shaw became president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). While she fought for the rights of working-class women, Shaw was uninterested in obtaining suffrage for women of color. A committed nativist, Shaw's anti-immigrant politics were laced through her speeches and lectures. Under her direction, NAWSA treated African American suffragists and other minorities with hostility, leaving a mixed legacy.

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Courtesy of the Library of Congress

SARA BARD FIELD

A renowned poet and activist, Field was a committed Christian and socialist. While performing missionary work in India and Burma, she witnessed the suffering caused by colonialism and income inequality. Field's exposure to the working poor led her to adopt radical ideas. After moving to Oregon, Field involved herself with the woman suffrage campaign led by Abigail Scott Duniway. She joined the Oregon College Equal Suffrage League and toured the state giving speeches on voting rights. In 1915, suffrage leader Alice Paul chose Field to take a petition of 500,000 signatures advocating woman suffrage by car to President Wilson at the White House.

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Courtesy of the Library of Congress

SUSAN B. ANTHONY

Anthony, one of America's best-known suffragists, began her career in activism as an abolitionist. Though she was avidly anti-slavery, Anthony did not always support racially universal suffrage, and publicly voiced her belief that white women were more deserving of voting rights than African Americans. Together with Elisabeth Cady Stanton, Anthony formed the National Woman Suffrage Association which pushed for a national amendment granting women the right to vote. Though she worked for over 50 years to attain woman suffrage, Anthony would not live to see the passage of the 19th Amendment. In honor of her struggle, this decisive bill was nicknamed the "Anthony Amendment."

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Courtesy of the Los Angeles Public Library

TYE LEUNG SCHULZE

Leung Schulze, born in San Francisco, grew up in a racially segregated society. In 1910, Leung Schulze took the civil service exam and became the first Chinese American woman to be an employee of the federal government. She worked as a translator for Chinese immigrants at the Angel Island Immigration Station. After women won the right to vote in California, Leung Schulze voted in the 1912 presidential primary. She is believed to be the first Chinese woman to vote in the U.S., and perhaps the first ethnic Chinese woman to vote in the world. She continued working as an advocate for women and Chinese Americans in the San Francisco area for the rest of her life.

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Courtesy of the Library of Congress

WENDELL PHILLIPS

Phillips was an abolitionist and early advocate for women's rights. A member of the free-produce movement, he refused to wear cotton or eat cane sugar since both crops were produced by slaves. In the 1850s, Phillips used his oratory and writing skills to build support for woman suffrage. Unusual for white Americans of the era, he argued that the 14th and 15th amendments granted citizenship to Native Americans. He lobbied against using the military to dislocate indigenous peoples in the western territories, and accused the army of racial extermination. Phillips continued to support Native American land claims even after public opinion turned against him, and vocally advocated for an end to all U.S. Indian removal policies.

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Courtesy of National Portrait Gallery

ZITKALA-ŠA

A member of the Yankton Dakota Sioux, Zitkala-Ša, or Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, was taken from her home as a child to attend a Quaker boarding school. Though she enjoyed learning to read, write, and play European music, Zitkala-Ša mourned for the culture which she was stripped of by her forced assimilation. She was deeply critical of the American Indian boarding school system, publishing articles condemning it, and working to preserve traditional cultures through her role as secretary of the Society of American Indians. She also continuously advocated for citizenship, voting rights, healthcare, and education for all Native Americans.

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Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society

LIZZIE WEEKS

Weeks was an activist in Portland's African American community following Oregon's 1912 proclamation of woman suffrage. She aimed to organize and empower local black women as voters in a system that had previously disavowed their sex and race. She invited visitors to the Portland African American community, and helped build networks with activists outside Oregon. Weeks helped to organize a 1914 meeting for women of color to support the Republican party, which was popular with African Americans until the Great Depression. This led to the formation of the Colored Women's Republican Club. Weeks was elected president, and her chief aim was the registration of African American women to vote.

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Courtesy of the Library of Congress

DR. ESTHER POHL LOVEJOY

The physician and suffragist Lovejoy promoted the idea of woman voters as agents of public health. She believed that woman suffrage was the key to creating safer and healthier communities. This was a subject close to home for Lovejoy, who lost both her son and first husband to disease. Lovejoy and other woman physicians were a powerful voice in local politics and at the time around 8 percent of all physicians in Oregon were women – over double the national average. Lovejoy worked closely with these women and many other organizations, building a strong coalition to promote radical notions of equal suffrage as a remedy for social ills.

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