ANTIQUE LADIES: WOMEN AND NEWSPAPERS ON THE OREGON FRONTIER, 1846-1859

by

LYNNE ERTLE

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Dr. Lauren Kessler, Chair of the Examining Committee

May 16, 1995
Date

Committee in charge: Dr. Lauren Kessler, Chair
Dr. Timothy Gleason
Dr. Leslie Steeves

Accepted by:

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

An Abstract of the Thesis of

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Studies have shown that women's ideas, especially those that challenge the status quo, have historically received little attention from the press. This thesis discusses how women were described in three of Oregon's frontier newspapers from 1846 to 1859, and also explores their contributions to the newspapers as writers, poets, editors, and businesswomen. Information from established American media clipped for the frontier papers described popular, mainstream ideas of womanhood, as well as provided news on the emerging women's rights struggle. Information generated locally on women encompassed a variety of themes, including marriage, education, and temperance. This study shows that even though content about women and women's roles as contributors were constrained by contemporary ideas of propriety and women's place in society, women were valued as readers and contributors to the three Oregon newspapers.

CURRICULUM VITA

NAME OF AUTHOR: Lynne Marie Ertle

DATE OF BIRTH: August 8, 1963

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOL ATTENDED:

University of Oregon

DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Arts in Journalism and Communication, 1995, University of Oregon
Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology, with honors, 1985, University of Oregon Honors College

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

History of Communication

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Teaching Fellow, School of Journalism and Communication, University of Oregon, Eugene, 1990-91

Writer and Copy Editor, 1989-95

AWARDS AND HONORS:

Kappa Tau Alpha, National Journalism Honor Society
Pi Gamma Mu, International Social Science Honor Society
Phi Beta Kappa
Pass with Distinction, Honors College Thesis
University of Oregon Dean's List: Winter 1983, Spring 1983, Fall 1983, Spring 1984

GRANTS:

Travel and Research Grant, School of Journalism and Communication, 1995
Senior Research Fellowship, University of Oregon Honors College, 1985

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INTRODUCTION

With expectation beating high,
Myself I now desire to spy;
And straight I in a glass surveyed
An antique lady, much decayed
—Elizabeth Hamilton, 1758?-1816, no date

Studies of women and communication have branched in many directions in the past few decades. One of the sturdier limbs has been a historical view, setting a foundation from which current trends can be understood. Some historical researchers, noting a lack of women's coverage in newspapers, have attempted to highlight and explain this lack.[1] Others have focused on women's alternative press, where women's voices were welcome,[2] and on non-media communication networks, such as study clubs[3] and sewing societies.[4] Still others have viewed women's communication from a different

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[1]See Lauren Kessler, "The Fight for Woman Suffrage and the Oregon Press," in *Women in Pacific Northwest History*, ed. Karen J. Blair (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988); Glenda Riley, *Frontierswomen: The Iowa Experience* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981), xii.

[2]See Lauren Kessler, *The Dissident Press: Alternative Journalism in American History* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1984); Martha M. Solomon, ed., *A Voice of Their Own: The Woman Suffrage Press, 1840-1910* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991).

[3]See Theodora Penny Martin, *The Sound of Our Own Voices* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987); Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980).

[4]Katherine Harris, "Homesteading in Northeastern Colorado, 1873-1920: Sex Roles and Women's Experience" in *The Women's West,* eds. Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 169.

angle, exploring women's work in journalism.[5] Despite the great advancements in the history of women and communication in recent years, however, several avenues for research remain largely unexplored, including how women were presented in and contributed to mainstream frontier newspapers.

Newspapers have been called mirrors of society: they record our activities and report them back to us. In historical studies, newspapers offer a through the looking glass journey to our past, providing an opportunity to view ourselves as we were years ago. Many assert, however, that mainstream newspapers do not reflect their entire communities, that women, minorities, and other groups that do not belong to society's power structure receive limited coverage. The lack of representation for such groups is even more pronounced in papers of the past. Nevertheless, creative exploring can reveal information about historical women's lives.

This study will investigate how women were written about and spoken to in three Oregon frontier newspapers from 1846 to 1859 and will explore their contributions to these papers. This research will provide insight into how antebellum frontier women used newspapers as readers, writers, editors, consumers, and businesspeople, will enhance the currently limited understanding of the frontier press, and will inform on the utility of frontier papers as historical sources. But first, the larger historical context must be considered, including the extent to which American women were newspaper readers and contributors in the mid-1800s, what the media of the time were saying about women, the characteristics of frontier newspapers and journalists, and the coverage of women in

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[5]For example, Marion Marzolf, *Up From the Footnote: A History of Women Journalists* (New York: Hastings House, 1977); Ishbel Ross, *Ladies of the Press: The Story of Women in Journalism by an Insider* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1936).

frontier newspapers. This chapter will blend this cacophony of ideas into an understandable chorus.

The mid-1800s saw a huge increase in American newspaper readership, which was due in part to the increasing female audience. This shift in readership led to changes in newspaper content. Henry J. Raymond, editor of the *New York Times*, in 1852 observed that newspapers were accommodating their newly acquired women readers by providing more domestic and family-oriented information.[6] Women not only grew as an audience in the mid-1800s but also entered the field of journalism in increasing numbers. Blazing the trail for future female journalists were Margaret Fuller, who began writing literary and social articles for Horace Greeley's New York *Tribune* in 1844, Jane Grey Swisshelm, who founded the abolitionist Pittsburgh *Saturday Visiter* (sic) in 1847, and Sarah Jane Clarke, who under the pen name "Grace Greenwood" wrote on diverse topics in the 1840s.[7] Beginning in the 1850s, women such as "Jenny June" (Jane Cunningham Croly) and "Fanny Fern" (Sara Payson Willis) also helped pave the way with their discussions of fashions, recipes, and social problems.[8]

Information on women to appear in newspapers in this era of more "feminized" content includes news blurbs on working women, women and crime, both as victims and perpetrators, and women's work in temperance. Newspapers also borrowed literature and didactic fare from magazines and other media.[9] The content of these clippings includes a

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[6]Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism: A History: 1690-1960*, 3d ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 304.

[7]Marzolf, 11-16.

[8]Ross, 16, 40.

[9]Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines, 1741-1850* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1957), 502-503; Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines, 1850-1865* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1957), 206.

popular ideal Barbara Welter has identified as The Cult of True Womanhood: a commitment to piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Piety enjoined devotion to the family's religious well-being; purity demanded that True Women maintain their virtue, for death was preferable to the loss of innocence; submissiveness required passive acquiescence to male guidance; and domesticity constrained women to the home or "private sphere," there to reside faithfully as wife and mother.[10] Other researchers have elaborated on these themes, delving into the medical and biological views that supported women's confinement to the domestic sphere,[11] and the fashions designed to help women maintain their purity.[12]

Frances Cogan asserts that another popular ideal for women, called the Ideal of Real Womanhood, existed from 1840 to 1880 in a variety of genres autonomously and at the same time as the Cult of True Womanhood. This ideal was not part of the era's feminist crusade because it accepted the concept of a separate sphere of duty and activity exclusive to women. Physical fitness and health were moral duties in this ideal, and a tendency to invalidism hinted at religious slovenliness. Women were considered to be intellectually as capable as men, and it was a woman's duty to develop her mind and put it to good use, as well as a prerequisite to attracting and recognizing a good marriage mate. Potential marital partners were to be assessed with cold-blooded detachment to avoid tragic marriage to an alcoholic, gambler, or philanderer; romance could come later, after the candidate's character had been thoroughly investigated. Even if women married carefully,

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[10]Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 151-174.

[11]Caroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles Rosenberg, "The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Woman and Her Role in Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of American History* 60 (1973): 332-356.

[12]Lois Banner, *American Beauty* (New York: Knopf, 1983).

they should still cultivate the skills to make themselves employable outside the home in case disaster struck, not an unlikely event in the wildly fluctuating economic climate of the mid-1800s. This ideal was native to the northern United States, rather than the South, where the True Womanhood ideal had a strong foothold and which was more dependent on the British for cultural ideals than the rest of the United States.[13]

These ideals of Welter and Cogan were popular views of woman, acceptable for mainstream print because they did not challenge the concept of separate spheres. Discussions that questioned women's place in society were less likely to receive press coverage. Harvey Molotch, although not discussing the 1800s, does provide a basis for the study of women in the media. He argues that the powerful give shape to the media, ensuring news coverage that is of use to them. More specifically, because primarily men own and control the media, the media are a forum for men to talk to men. The primary news need of those who control the mass media is to perpetuate the social and economic status quo.[14] Lauren Kessler has added that historically the ideas and goals of nonconformists have been denied access to the American media.[15] For example, the lack of coverage of the women's suffrage movement in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Oregon newspapers was hostile to women and their ideas and a deliberate act of censorship.[16] In a similar vein, E. Claire Jerry says that "from the beginning of the woman's rights movement, the press responded negatively or by ignoring the effort." The

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[13]Frances Cogan, *All-American Girl: The Ideal of Real Womanhood in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989).

[14]Harvey Molotch, "The News of Women and the Work of Men," in *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media,* eds. Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan, and James Benet (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 180.

[15]Kessler, *Dissident Press*, 13-15.

[16]Kessler, *Fight for Woman Suffrage*, 52-54.

mainstream press was not open to women who wished to discuss and disseminate their political concerns.[17] This contributed to the growth of women's special interest publications, such as Amelia Bloomers' *Lily* and Paulina Wright Davis's *Una.*[18]

In short, women may have had more coverage in the mainstream American press beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, but that coverage was largely limited to noncontroversial topics. Is the same true for coverage of women in frontier papers? To answer this, one must ask whether newspapers on the frontier were substantially different from those in areas long settled and established. The lack of research makes this question difficult to answer; frontier journalism remains a relatively neglected field.[19] It is known, however, that some functions and the stability of frontier newspapers were different than mainstream papers of other times and places. This study is concerned with frontier papers set up in communities, with continued economic success the desired outcome, not papers established simply to serve a desired purpose for a few months, such as promote a certain politician before an election.

Boosting, or describing the town in the best possible light to attract immigration and development, is one of the characteristics noted by Mott as setting frontier papers apart from their eastern counterparts. Pioneers sought editors and established newspapers to promote their towns, then sent the newspapers, filled with propaganda about the new country, back East to encourage immigration.[20]

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[17]E. Claire Jerry, "The Role of Newspapers in the Nineteenth-Century Woman's Movement," in *A Voice of Their Own: The Woman Suffrage Press, 1840-1910*, ed. Martha M. Solomon (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991), 19.

[18]Kessler, *Dissident Press*, 76.

[19]William E. Huntzicker, "Historians and the American Frontier Press," *American Journalism* 5, no. 1 (1988): 28-29.

[20]Mott, *American Journalism*, 282.

Assuaging the loneliness of the frontier is another function characterizing the frontier press, according to Jerilyn McIntyre. Life on America's frontiers was a life of isolation, especially for those in the vanguard of frontier development. People in these remote settings valued books, magazines, and newspapers for their entertainment value and as a link to their former lives. Feeling of estrangement, both geographical and emotional, spurred the establishment of frontier papers and added to their importance.[21]

Newspapers were also an active agent in frontier social and business development, a function not required in the long-established east. By calling attention to the needs for improvement in local streets, schools, churches, and police and fire departments, for instance, the frontier newspapers helped gather and direct support for change, according to Oliver Knight. These efforts would have acted to replicate the institutions and customs of the East and add a sense of permanence to the town. By printing information from the rest of the nation, frontier papers also served as a psychological link with the lives left behind.[22]

Even though frontier community newspapers may have served a variety of functions, they were not significantly different from their eastern counterparts in one important respect: they relied on subscribers and advertisers for survival. If anything, frontier papers were even more susceptible to audience approval than eastern papers—the small number of residents of most frontier towns and the boom-bust cycles of the West made frontier newspapering decidedly precarious. In Washington Territory, for example, several newspapers were started between 1852 and 1859 but only one made it to the Civil

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[21]Jerilyn McIntyre, "Communications on a Western Frontier—Some Questions About Context," *Journalism History* 3 (1976): 54-55.

[22]Oliver Knight, "The Frontier Newspaper as a Catalyst in Social Change," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (1967): 74-81.

War.[23] Consequently, to please the audience, frontier newspaper content never strayed far from the mainstream. As William Lyon points out, the editor "could not become too eccentric else he took to the trail to find a new print shop."[24] Furthermore, as Marilyn Sibley observes, frontier editors had to handle local items with care. By merely noticing certain events, Texas editors could antagonize advertisers and subscribers or become involved in local vendettas.[25]

These economic pressures resulted in newspaper content decisions by editors that may seem contradictory, such as the extent to which they were political. For instance, on the Rocky Mountain mining frontier, most papers were founded without an announced party allegiance because editors didn't want to antagonize a large segment of the camp's population and thereby lose subscriptions. Some editors, conversely, did declare party allegiance out of economic necessity; they believed the paper would immediately receive the overwhelming financial backing of the party's faithful.[26] Politics and "world-saving," as Barbara Cloud observes in her study of Washington Territory, were subordinate to feeding families. One editor made it clear that although he was a devout Democrat who would do almost anything to help his party "no considerations can or will induce us to

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[23]William A. Katz, "The Western Printer and His Publications, 1850-90," *Journalism Quarterly* 44 (1967): 710.

[24]William H. Lyon, "The Significance of Newspapers on the American Frontier," *Journal of the West* 5 (1980): 9.

[25]Marilyn McAdams Sibley, *Lone Stars and State Gazettes: Texas Newspapers before the Civil War* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1981), 78.

[26]David Fridtjof Halaas, *Boom Town Newspapers: Journalism on the Rocky Mountain Mining Frontier, 1859-1881* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1981), 39-41.

jeopardize the roof that shelters our family, for the sake of keeping up a party newspaper."[27]

Subscribers and advertisers weren't the only sources of income for editors (or printers or printer-editors, as some researchers refer to them). Oftentimes editors were initially set up by local businessmen and professionals to boost the town. In Wisconsin Territory, for example, such boosters lent money to editors to begin the paper, provided some favorable copy, and circulated the paper in the East. Politicians also financed papers to promote themselves and their party.[28] Although editors chose the selections and wrote the material for their papers, owners had ultimate veto power, and if they were not pleased with the content they had the option to fire.

Most frontier editors, subject to pressures from sensitive readers, tight-fisted advertisers, and self-promoting owners, were in fact far from the independent, idealistic journalists legend has painted them. Even so, glimpses of editors as rugged individualists do occur. Many editors denied that they were in any way "bought or sold" and claimed full freedom of editorial expression.[29] Henry Blumenthal, for example, was hired to edit the Grass Valley, California, *Daily Union* in 1864. When asked by a competing editor to switch his paper's support over to the McClellan ticket in exchange for a fee, Blumenthal responded that "there was not money enough in the town or the State to hire him to do an act so mean and contemptible."[30] When Blumenthal's partner agreed to make the switch,

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[27]Barbara Cloud, "Establishing the Frontier Newspaper: A Study of Eight Western Territories," *Journalism Quarterly* 61 (1984): 805-805.

[28]A. L. Lorenz, "'Out of Sorts and Out of Cash': Problems of Publishing in Wisconsin Territory, 1833-1848," *Journalism History* 3 (1976): 34-39, 63.

[29]Halaas, 39-41.

[30]Richard A. Dwyer and Richard E. Lingenfelter, *Lying on the Eastern Slope* (Miami: University Presses of Florida, 1984), 18.

Blumenthal forced him to leave town.[31] Other researchers make it clear that personal ethics dictated the extent to which frontier editors would compromise their beliefs to stay in business.[32]

If the business side of frontier newspapering was similar to that of eastern newspapers, if not more precarious, how would this affect content on women? One might assume that coverage on women would be within the mainstream so as not to displease subscribers and advertisers. Women as audience members were a minority on most frontiers, so the increase in women readers that caused a shift toward more family-oriented fare in eastern newspapers may not have been a factor in the West. Women's contributions may have appeared less frequently in frontier papers as well because on the frontier fewer women were available to make contributions. Also, most editors were men, and owners were men with money, often businessmen and professionals interested in rebuilding the social institutions of the east on the frontier, then maintaining the status quo. These factors, one might suggest, would also work to keep content about women well within norms established and accepted in the East.

On the other hand, Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis—that the frontier liberated the individual from social, class, and psychological constraints—suggests that women who entered the frontier may have been able to escape behavioral norms based on ideals of true and real womanhood. If such is the case, one might expect newspaper coverage to reflect this movement. However, many question whether Turner's thesis was

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[31]Ibid., 19.

[32]William H. Lyon describes editor Joseph Charless, whose beliefs won out over his desire for economic success in *The Pioneer Editor in Missouri: 1808-1860* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1965), 157.

true for women and argue that the eastern ideology of women's place was transported to the frontier.[33]

Unfortunately, the extent to which true and real womanhood ideals were printed in frontier papers has not been explored, but some scholars do discuss coverage of local women in frontier papers, often highlighting the limited attention given to women. Elizabeth Keen, for example, notes that the Wyoming papers "afforded scarcely a glimpse of women's activities." The *Laramie Daily Sentinel* gave plenty of space to men's fishing trips, lodge meetings, and baseball games, but provided almost no news about women because "to make the news columns in those days women had really to exert themselves."[34] Similarly, Elizabeth Jameson asserts that the working-class newspapers in Cripple Creek, Colorado, defined men by their work roles and women by their morality—as either "good" or "bad"—virtually ignoring women's work.[35] For booster purposes on the Rocky Mountain mining frontier, says David Halaas, "the few ladies in the camp were sure to receive their share of notice in the press." The coverage, however, discussed women's beauty and availability for marriage rather than their activities.[36]

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[33]Several researchers discuss this issue, including John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979); Julie Roy Jeffries, *Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West 1840-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979); Paula Petrik, *No Step Backward: Women and Family on the Rocky Mountain Mining Frontier, Helena, Montana 1865-1900* (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1987).

[34]Elizabeth Keen, "The Frontier Press," *University of Wyoming Publications* 20 (1956): 78-79.

[35]Elizabeth Jameson, "Women as Workers, Women as Civilizers: True Womanhood in the American West," in *The Women's West*, eds. Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 147-148.

[36]Halaas, 98-99.

This limited coverage has prompted Glenda Riley to claim that frontier women were not active in the public sphere, rather the long hours of domestic chores frontier women undertook in the private sphere made them almost invisible. Consequently, their activities were not reported in local papers.[37] Riley suggests that women's confinement to the domestic sphere took place in all frontier times and places, constituting a "female frontier."[38] This theory implies that women were "invisible" on all frontiers and therefore were seldom reported in all frontier newspapers.

Susan Armitage, on the other hand, asserts frontier women had enough time to take a more active role in public affairs. Frontier society had a strong pattern of informal female activity in which many community projects were begun, lobbied, and arranged, she argues. However, when the moment of formal organization came, the women stepped back and men were elected as officials and often given public credit for the entire enterprise. Newspapers reported the final, formal stage, overlooking women's efforts.[39] Elizabeth Jameson agrees, arguing that women in the West were not restricted to the domestic sphere but took an active role in establishing communities and building schools, churches, and social groups. Like Armitage, Jameson believes that women received less credit than men for their community service.[40] These assertions imply that women's

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[37]Riley, xii; Glenda Riley, "Images of the Frontierswoman: Iowa as a Case Study," *Western Historical Quarterly* 8 (1977): 190.

[38]Glenda Riley, *The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and the Plains* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988), 2-4.

[39]Susan Armitage, "The Challenge of Women's History," in *Women in Pacific Northwest History: An Anthology*, ed. Karen J. Blair (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 238.

[40]Jameson, 154.

activities weren't "invisible," they simply weren't reported, indicating, perhaps, a male bias in the person who disseminated or collected the news.

Margaret Nan Haines suggests another angle on this approach in her study of women in Jackson County, Oregon, 1875-1885. Her research is not on the frontier era, but the results are pertinent to this study. Haines points out that the Ashland newspaper depicted women in a more positive light than did the Jacksonville paper. Ashland was an agricultural community with a woman-to-man ratio closer to equal than that in the male-dominated mining town of Jacksonville.[41] These results suggest that editors may have printed content that appealed to female readers perhaps because women, if not subscribers themselves, may have been able to influence subscribers. Or, perhaps, editors who were less critical of women chose to live in the agricultural community rather than the mining town. In any event, the ratio of women to men may have been a factor in newspaper coverage of women and their interests on the frontier.

This idea is not new. Some scholars have long urged that newspaper history needs to take into account context, including local demographics, the local economy, the geographical setting, the area's stage of social development, and the period in history.[42] Indeed, part of the reason why Jameson and Halaas were unable to find news on women in the frontier papers they studied may have been because they focused on mining towns.

To review, the extent to which women were discussed in frontier newspapers was influenced by several factors. The increasing role of women in journalism in the mid-1800s, both as readers and journalists, brought women and their ideas more press

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[41]Margaret Nan Haines, *Women in Jackson County, Oregon, 1875-1885: A Group Portrait* (Master's thesis, University of Oregon, 1980), 201-202.

[42]McIntyre, 53; Sidney Kobre, "The Sociological Approach in Research in Newspaper History," *Journalism Quarterly* 22 (1945): 12-22.

coverage, but the basic function of the male owned and controlled media, to perpetuate the status quo, dictated that women be presented in a certain light. Consequently, the restrictive concept of separate spheres, as presented in the popular ideologies of true and real womanhood, received substantial press coverage, while the rise in the women's movement, beginning in 1848 in Seneca Falls, was usually either not covered or covered negatively in the press. Journalism on the frontier, as with many frontier ventures, was precarious. Frontier editors bowed to audience interests because antagonizing readers could lead to unemployment. Frontier owners, the monied merchants, professionals, and politicians, also influenced the editor's choice of content. The economy of the town in which an editor settled, based on mining, timber, or agriculture for example, could determine the woman-to-man ratio of the audience. The existence of more women might sway editors to print items geared more toward women's interests. It also might mean more local coverage of women's activities. However, an editor's personal views of women would also determine how they were discussed.

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a framework for understanding how women were presented in Oregon's frontier press. This thesis will address the following questions: To what extent did Oregon's frontier press of the 1840s and 1850s present information about women and use women journalists, writers, and poets? What was the nature of that information and those contributions? To what extent were women appealed to as consumers? Did women use papers to promote their businesses, and if so, how? And finally, what factors on the Oregon frontier may have influenced newspaper coverage of women, women's contributions to papers, and women's use of papers as consumers and businesspeople?

The *Oregon Spectator* (1846-1855), the *Oregonian* (1850-present), and the *Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times* (1850-1864) were the three longest-running

newspapers in the Portland area during this era and are the focus of this study. This research will include the newspaper issues spanning from the February 5, 1846, printing of the *Oregon Spectator's* first paper to February 14, 1859, when Oregon became a state. The Portland area's frontier of the 1840s and 1850s was chosen to create a comparison with other frontier newspaper studies. However, the definition of when regions cease to be frontiers is a matter of some debate. The end of the frontier era in the Portland area may have occurred either before or after 1859, depending on the method used to determine the end of a frontier. Statehood is a criterion some use, but my use of this date as a terminus in this study is more a matter of convenience than a recognition that this constituted the end of the Portland-area frontier.

Qualitative, and to a lesser extent, quantitative methods were used for this study. This research seeks to explore the variety of ways women appeared as the subject of Oregon's frontier newspapers and as the producers of newspaper material, and is therefore more suited to research through traditional historical methods. However, the frequency of occurrence of certain topics and the overall percentage of information about women in the newspapers can reveal much about women's participation in the frontier press; therefore, quantitative methods were used to enhance certain areas of research.

Qualitative methodology for this study included reading all the newspaper issues for each of the three newspapers from February 5, 1846, to February 14, 1859. All the articles, stories, poetry, notices, and advertisements were read and any information regarding women was carefully noted. Patterns of ideas were also observed and synthesized into the discussion.

Many qualitative researchers acknowledge that quantitative methods may define some information more satisfactorily than can be accomplished by unquantified

impressions.[43] For this reason, content analysis, which is useful in describing trends in communication content,[44] was chosen to provide general content information. The sample size consists of three randomly sampled newspaper issues per year (5.8%) and is comparable to samples used in other studies.[45] One study, for example, found that a sample of 12 issues out of a universe of 312 (3.8%) was adequate for classifying subject matter published in daily newspapers. Likewise, a study that analyzed Sunday newspapers published from 1939 through 1959 used three issues to represent each year in the study (5.8%).[46] This sample proved sufficient for providing a sense of the general news content.

The newspaper units varied from short, two- to three-line blurbs to page-length articles, each defined by a separating device, such as a line or pointing hand. Each text item was counted and measured to 1/8 of an inch. The use of larger units, rather than words or sentences, is considered useful when the goal is to supply information on general content.[47] Both counting and measuring was thought useful because measurements sometimes more accurately reflect the perceived "importance" of an item. For example, a blurb on Daniel Webster might take 15 lines, whereas one on Margaret

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[43]Robert William Fogel and G. R. Elton, *Which Road to the Past?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 81-84.

[44]Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1980), 33.

[45]For the *Spectator* 31 issues were sampled, for the *Oregonian*, 24, and for the *Weekly Times*, 25. The *Spectator* suspended publication for some time, so there are no issues for 1853. For some years more than three issues were sampled, but this was abandoned because it was too time consuming and did not reveal additional information.

[46]Richard W. Budd, Robert K. Thorp, and Lewis Donoher, *Content Analysis of Communications* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 20-21.

[47]Ibid., 34.

Fuller might take only two lines, even though each would count as one item. Measurements, however, can provide only very general information because the editors sometimes switched to a smaller font in the middle of a story if they thought they would run out of room. Headlines were included in the column length measurement; mastheads were measured separately. Notices and advertisements were counted only, not measured, because individual measurements for each item were not considered useful. The total space taken by ads and notices, however, was calculated.

Each item was coded into a general category, such as U.S. politics, science and invention, temperance, or Oregon laws and politics, loosely based on Bush's system of categories for general news content.[48] Bush's list was modified to fit the historical and frontier perspective. Categories on women were further broken down into specific topics, such as women's nature, women's behavior, bloomerism, and other women's rights. Each item was separated by its origin, such as clipped from a newspaper, magazine, or other source; written by the editor; written by a local contributor; or of indeterminate origin. For expediency, however, items of indeterminate origin were lumped with clipped items because most, if not all, were probably clipped (they were presented among the clipped items but contained no identifying information, such as a newspaper name or a reference to a city). Items were also separated by genre: articles, lectures, and essays compose one category, followed by stories, poems, and jokes.

As indicated, this thesis will discuss the extent to which women and their interests were presented in Oregon's frontier papers and explore women's contributions to frontier newspapers as journalists, writers, and poets. Although much of this research will focus on the newspapers' content, an effort will be made to understand the economics behind

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[48]Chilton R. Bush, "A System of Categories for General News Content," *Journalism Quarterly* 37 (1960): 206-210.

women's involvement in the newspapers. The chapters, or themes, of this discussion are as follows:

Chapter Two provides background on Oregon's history and, in particular, the experiences of women on the frontier, frontier editors and their ties to the community, and the make-up of Oregon's frontier newspapers. Clippings from other media were one component of frontier newspapers. Chapter Three discusses the extent to which this clipped information presented the mainstream ideas of true and real womanhood. Clippings on reform-minded women and general news, as well as women's contributions will also be covered. Chapter Four discusses the extent to which clippings informed the frontier audience of developments in the controversial topics of women's rights and dress reform.

Chapter Five shifts the focus to locally generated information on women and women's contributions to the local newspapers. This chapter explores how local women were written about and were an intended audience, and shows how local women used the newspapers to promote their businesses, air their opinions, and print their artistic efforts, helping redefine culture on the frontier. Chapter Six discusses the use of Ladies' Departments to appeal to female readers. This chapter focuses on the only Ladies' Department in this study to be edited by a woman, Margaret Jewett Bailey, and her problems with the frontier's mainstream views of women. The final chapter summarizes and synthesizes the themes of the previous chapters to arrive at an understanding of the women's involvement in Oregon's frontier newspapers.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

> What Oregon wants to make her great, prosperous and happy, is men and women who are willing to cut down the timber, clear the ground, till the soil, apply the needle, fly the shuttle, card, spin, weave, make and mend, and in short to put forth mentally and physically the object of their creation.
> —*Weekly Oregonian,* February 20, 1858

To bring perspective to the material on women in Oregon's frontier newspapers, this background chapter will provide information on frontier life and the frontier audience of the 1840s and 1850s, with emphasis on women and their experiences, explore the ties between the three frontier papers of this study and their communities, address the pressures on frontier editors from owners and readers, and describe the make-up of frontier papers.

Life on the Frontier

In 1840 the first group of settlers to arrive in the Oregon Country found a region already occupied by Native Americans, Britain's Hudson's Bay Company, mountain men, and Protestant and Catholic missionaries.[1] The 1840 party consisted of only fifty-one immigrants, but that number was to increase dramatically in subsequent years, such that by 1860, 53,000 people had completed the overland trip. Pioneers also came by ship,

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[1]Carlos A. Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 53-66, 96; Eugene E. Snyder, *Early Portland: Stump-Town Triumphant* (Portland: Binfords and Mort, 1970), 12-13.

making the six-month voyage from the East Coast around Cape Horn.[2] The influx of so many white settlers was not viewed kindly by the native peoples. The war that began with the killing of the Whitmans and eleven others in November 1847 is the most famous example of white conflict with the region's native population, and it set off thirty years of intermittent clashes.[3]

Many settlers traveled as family groups to Oregon, but even so, white men outnumbered white women on the frontier. In 1850, while the ratio of male to female children was about even, the ratio of men to women older than twenty ranged between 202 and 264 men per 100 women. Ratios differed in rural and urban areas; in 1850 about 58% of the rural inhabitants were men but about 69% of the urbanites were men. The contrast is even more striking among urban dwellers when age is considered: in Portland among those between twenty and twenty-nine years of age, men outnumbered women by about 9 to 1.[4]

Rural settlement clustered around the richer, more accessible areas of the lower Willamette Valley and the Clatsop Plains, and was characterized by clans of people from the Middle West and Upper South.[5] To acquire land a man could either lay claim to a parcel not already spoken for by white settlers or purchase the rights of an earlier claimant. The Donation Land Claim Act of 1850 recognized the generous claims established under the provisional government and allowed each white male citizen eighteen years or older to

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[2]Schwantes, 86.

[3]Ibid., 73-76, 81, 116-119.

[4]William A. Bowen, *The Willamette Valley: Migration and Settlement on the Oregon Frontier* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 53-55.

[5]Ibid., 69, 95.

claim 320 acres if single and 640 acres, through his wife, if married. The act actually gave 320 acres to the wife "to be held by her in her own right" but it is doubtful the intention was to grant married women management authority. To keep the land, a person had to reside on and cultivate it for four years. This act existed five years and granted more than seven thousand claimants over 2.5 million acres.[6]

Living in an urban setting was also an option, and the competition among the towns along the Columbia River provided a steady supply of work. Town promoters hired men to improve their townsites by clearing forests; building warehouses, stores, and residences; and working at trade and milling jobs. Single men from the Northeast or abroad were most attracted to urban living, although farmers needing to supplement their income were also drawn to the towns.[7]

Women's labor was an important contribution to all frontier economies. Women baked, sewed, swept, churned butter, ironed, and laundered, tasks that kept their households running but could provide income as well. Women could sell the products of their labor, such as butter, soap, and clothes, or they could sell the labor itself through teaching, shopkeeping, laundering, sewing, boarding, and so on. In addition to their everyday household tasks, women also helped dig cellars, build cabins, raise fences, plow, and plant, and regularly cared for gardens, cows, and chickens.[8] Child care was an ongoing concern, and many frontier women bore a large number of children, which

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[6]Ibid., 69; Richard H. Chused, "Late Nineteenth Century Married Women's Property Law: Reception of the Early Married Women's Property Acts by Courts and Legislatures," *The American Journal of Legal History* 29 (1985): 16; Schwantes, 103.

[7]Bowen, 58, 95.

[8]Jeffries, 59-61. Jeffries uses sources from many frontiers, including Oregon's, to come to an understanding of women's frontier experiences.

usually meant more work, as well as a greater health risk through childbirth.[9] However, some suggest procreation was highly encouraged on the frontier both to aid population growth and to provide future laborers for the family farm or business.[10] Such might be the case, but along with advertisements in the Oregon papers for an obstetrician and a midwife were ads for patent medicines to be used as abortifacients and one for a doctor who performed abortions.

Women's work increased when their husbands hired themselves out or were ill, but the number of women in the agricultural labor force was probably highest during the California gold rush, when often only men traveled to the mines, leaving their families behind. According to one estimate, by 1849 two-thirds of the Oregon men had left for California, and Oregon probably had a net decline in population during 1848. In the spring and summer of 1848 and 1849 existing crop fields were quickly planted and left to be tended by the women and children, and women and children were left to clerk in the stores and to row their boats into the towns to trade. But California's need for food and lumber soon stimulated Oregon's economy, inducing some to stay, and many to return.[11]

Marriage, an important milestone for nineteenth-century American women, acquired a sense of urgency on the Oregon frontier because of the shortage of women and the deadlines for the Donation Land Act. In 1845, men outnumbered women by almost two to one among people older than eighteen, and the immigrations of the next several years did not appreciably change that ratio. Because prostitutes were not openly accepted and, unlike the early trappers, few male settlers took Native American wives, white

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[9]Ibid., 69.

[10]Riley, *Frontierswomen*, 81-82.

[11]Bowen, 14, 90-91; Schwantes, 92; Snyder, 50-52.

women were in great demand. The Donation Land Act created an even greater need with its rule that to claim the entire grant, 640 acres, the man had to marry by December 1, 1851. Another deadline ensured continued haste in marriage, as half as much land, 160 acres, was granted to all men older than twenty-one settling in the territory by December 1855, with additional acreage again provided to married men.[12] Consequently, women were encouraged to wed at a young age, and neither licenses nor the parents' consent was required.[13] Girls barely into their teens exchanged vows, although apparently very young females often remained at home for a year or two until they were considered old enough to assume the duties of a housewife.[14]

The Donation Act with its grant of 640 acres also frequently ensured that the couple remained isolated, especially in the early years of settlement. Frontier isolation, coupled with the scarcity of women and western Oregon's winter rains, could also compound the loneliness and depression many women felt after having left friends and family behind.[15] Furthermore, some suggest that violence against women was common in the American West and that the isolation of the frontier and frequent moves contributed

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[12]Bowen, 12-13; Robert Carlton Clark, *History of the Willamette Valley Oregon* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1927), 406; Schwantes, 103.

[13]In 1844 the legislative committee made sixteen-year-old males and twelve-year-old females competent to marry with the parents' consent. When a man was twenty-one and a woman eighteen, no consent was required. The person marrying minors without consent could be fined $100, but the marriage was not invalidated. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, vol. 1 (San Francisco: History Company Publishers, 1886), 436-437.

[14]Robert Carlton Clark, 394.

[15]Richard Maxwell Brown, "Rainfall and History: Perspectives on the Pacific Northwest," in *Experiences in a Promised Land*, eds. G. Thomas Edwards and Carlos A. Schwantes (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), 20.

to the problem.[16] Several accounts by Oregon pioneer women illustrate this dark side of frontier living.[17] Not all cases of domestic violence, however, were against women. Claiming that he had threatened to kill her, Charity Lamb, an early Oregon pioneer, murdered her husband with an ax and was sentenced to life in prison.[18]

Creating a social network helped relieve the loneliness of the frontier, although neighborly visits were usually uncommon in the early years because of the traveling distance.[19] Sometimes women gathered to quilt or do other chores, and occasionally these gatherings developed into voluntary female associations.[20] Families also socialized when they pooled their labor for large tasks, such as house or barn building. Religious camp meetings could be entertaining as well as spiritually uplifting, but the preaching was not necessarily the only attraction; horse racing often took place as well. As communities developed, they provided many of their own amusements, such as amateur plays, concerts, minstrel shows, and readings and imitations by "elocutionists." People also

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[16]Melody Graulich, "Violence Against Women: Power Dynamics in Literature of the Western Family," in *The Women's West,* eds. Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 112-113.

[17]Elvina Apperson Fellows's and Margaret Jewett Bailey's experiences are just two examples of this problem. Margaret Jewett Bailey, *The Grains or Passages in the Life of Ruth Rover, with Occasional Pictures of Oregon, Natural and Moral,* ed. Evelyn Leasher and Robert J. Frank, with Foreward by Professor Emeritus Edwin R. Bingham (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1986; reconstructed reprint from two incomplete and damaged copies of the author's original, published in Oregon in 1854), 242-243; Fred Lockley, *Conversations with Pioneer Women,* comp. and ed. Mike Helm (Eugene, Oregon: Rainy Day Press, 1981), 65.

[18]H. S. Nedry, ed., "Willamette Valley in 1859: The Diary of a Tour," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 46 (1945): 252; *Oregonian,* 30 September 1854, 1.

[19]Dan E. Clark, "Pioneer Pastimes," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 57 (1956): 334.

[20]Jeffries, 55-56, 85-87.

joined lyceums and atheneums, literary clubs, debating societies, singing schools and choral clubs, and bands and orchestras. Oregon Territory was also visited by traveling entertainers, many of them women.[21] When socializing was not possible, reading was often the only entertainment, and pioneers passed the time with letters, newspapers, and novels. One Oregon pioneer woman remembered "the two papers read and prized by my parents, *The Oregon Statesman* and *The Oregonian*." *Harper's Magazine*, a farm journal and later the *Sun* and *New York World* were also read in her household.[22]

In contrast to many frontiers, where the arrival of women indicated that the "civilizing" influence of churches would soon be felt, on Oregon's frontier churches were well established before many women had immigrated. Oregon women did bolster religion when they arrived in the new country by holding tea parties and suppers to raise money for church improvements. Oregon pioneer women also helped recreate secular organizations on the frontier, including the Daughters of Rebekah, a companion group to the Odd Fellows.

Education in Oregon, including female instruction, owed much of its early support to religious institutions, but churches were mainly interested in founding private denominational education, to the detriment of public schools. Private citizens helped establish schools as well, including Mrs. N. M. Thornton, who opened a private school for girls in 1847 in Oregon City, and Mrs. Hill, who opened a "school for young ladies."[23] In 1848 Tabitha Brown and the Reverend Harvey Clark founded a school and

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[21]Dan E. Clark, 334-336, 339-342, 348.

[22]Harriet Nesmith McArthur, "Recollections of the Rickreall," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 30 (1929): 377.

[23]*Weekly Oregonian*, 17 February 1855, 3.

orphanage on the Tualatin Plains, which became Tualatin Academy in 1849 and developed into Pacific University in 1853-1854.[24]

Oregon women were involved in the "civilizing" work of temperance reform, which had a strong hold in Oregon. Many of the temperance groups established in the States were recreated on the frontier, including the Washingtonian Society, the Sons of Temperance, and its sister organization, the Daughters of Temperance. Oregon pioneer women attended temperance meetings, giving speeches and presenting the groups with bibles and banners, and worked on petition drives to present names to the Oregon Legislature and Marion County Board of Commissioners.

Newspapers in Oregon

Frontier editors have sometimes been depicted as freewheeling individualists, self-sufficient tumbleweeds unfettered by community ties and poised to migrate on the wings of opportunity. But editors, often backed by publishers and sustained by subscribers, were more like reeds in the wind, bowing and swaying to the preferences of the owners and audience. Although editors chose the selections and wrote the material for their papers, owners had ultimate veto power, and if they were not pleased with the content they could fire their editors. If the readers disliked the content, they could let the editor know through a letter or by cancelling their papers. Most editors, even those who owned their own papers, could not afford to be idealistic or extreme in their content.

The three Portland-area papers of this study were not established by wandering journalists looking for an economically sound place to set up a print shop. Rather, they

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[24]Bancroft, 31-35; Charles Henry Carey, *History of Oregon*, vol. 1 (Chicago-Portland: Pioneer Historical Publishing, 1922), 715-728.

were founded by settled businessmen and politicians interested in achieving their goals (town promotion and advertising) through use of a newspaper and sought editors who would help them achieve these goals. Some of the editors chosen were local businessmen and professionals, bound by the same community ties as the owners; others were more objective imports, without strong allegiances to keep them in one place. Nevertheless, all edited community papers, supported by the towns in which they were published and the surrounding regions. Their continued existence depended on subscriptions, and the editors' printed views never ventured far from the mainstream. The following review explores the history of the three papers of this study to illustrate their ties to their communities, as well as the pressures created by owner and audience.

The Oregon Spectator

Oregon City, originally called "The Falls" because it rested beside a forty-foot drop in the Willamette, was one of the first towns in Oregon to develop. Early in 1842 the town boasted four buildings, sixteen white men, and at least one woman, and by winter's end, the population had almost doubled through immigration. In 1843 the Pioneer Lyceum and Literary Club and a circulating library were established, and by 1847 the town had six hundred inhabitants, two flour mills, two sawmills, two churches, a tavern, a day school, and a female boarding school. By 1850 Oregon City was the region's largest town and the capital of Oregon Territory, its 933 residents accounting for almost one-tenth of the territory's population. The portage necessary at Oregon City because of the falls made it a successful transportation center, and the river's drop at that point provided water power for saw and flour mills, but the Clackamas Rapids, a gravel bar and

shoals about two miles downstream from the town, made it virtually inaccessible to ocean-going vessels and became the main obstacle to its continued growth.[25]

The *Oregon Spectator* was established in 1845 as an official publication of the provisional government, and was to remain free from party politics, but promote "science, temperance, morality, and general intelligence."[26] The founders were a group of Oregon City pioneers called the Oregon Printing Association, essentially the members of the Pioneer Lyceum and Literary Club, and its officers included several of the leading men of the region, including George Abernethy, milling and mercantile businessman and governor of the provisional government; James W. Nesmith, Supreme Judge of the provisional government and future senator; and John H. Couch, businessman, banker, and treasurer of the provisional government. The first *Spectator*, issued February 5, 1846, measured 11 1/2-by-17 inches, had four four-column pages, and was printed twice per month.[27]

The *Spectator* had several editors and owners during its turbulent nine-year run. William G. T'Vault, the first editor, was a member of the legislature of the provisional government in 1846 and was prosecuting attorney and Postmaster General when he became editor. He was a Kentuckian trained in law but probably had some newspaper training in Arkansas before crossing the plains. A stalwart Jeffersonian Democrat, T'Vault was too political to suit Governor Abernethy and other influential men in the publishing association, although faulty orthography and syntax were cited as the reasons

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[25]Schwantes, 92-93; Snyder, 18-26, 30-37.

[26]George H. Himes, "History of the Press of Oregon: 1839-1850," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 3 (1902): 336.

[27]Himes, 337-343; George S. Turnbull, *History of Oregon Newspapers* (Portland: Binfords and Mort, 1939), 25-26, 41.

for his April 1846 dismissal.[28] H. A. G. Lee, a Virginian who trained for the ministry but did not enter that vocation, became the second editor. He edited nine issues in 1846, but was forced to relinquish the position, possibly because he favored British interests in Oregon.[29] George L. Curry, a twenty-three-year-old journalist who later became governor of Oregon, was editor after John Fleming, the printer, edited a few issues. Curry, a Northeasterner, remained editor of the *Spectator* for less than a year and a half. In his last issue in January 1848, Curry announced he had been dismissed because he refused to edit the paper in the interest of one man, meaning Governor Abernethy, and he strongly criticized this censorship. Curry's dissatisfaction soon led to his founding of a protest publication, the *Free Press*.[30]

Why the next few editors left is not known. Aaron Wait, a Massachusetts native who had worked as both a journalist and an attorney, became editor in 1848 after Curry left and held the position for a year. Wait enlarged the paper to twenty-four columns from sixteen and suspended printing in the fall of 1848 because the California gold mines lured away the printers. The Reverend Wilson Blain, a United Presbyterian clergyman from Ohio and member of the territorial legislature, became editor in October of 1849, and Robert Moore, proprietor of Linn City, located across the Willamette from Oregon City, became the owner in April 1850. D. J. Schnebly, who succeeded Blain after about a year, bought the paper in September 1851, becoming both owner and editor. C. L. Goodrich

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[28]Turnbull, 25-26, 41.

[29]Himes, 344; Nellie B. Pipes, "The Oregon Printing Association," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 35 (1934): 173.

[30]The first issue of this two-column, four-page, 7 1/2-by-15-inch paper was produced in Oregon City on April 8, 1848 with the slogan "Here shall the press the people's rights maintain, unawed by influence and unbribed by gain." The *Free Press* was suspended after a scant six months because many of its subscribers had gone to the California gold mines. Turnbull, 42-45, 48.

bought the paper in March 1854 and permanently suspended it in March 1855.[31] Margaret Jewett Bailey, a Massachusetts native who made the trip to Oregon in 1839 as a missionary but left the mission after a few years, edited the *Spectator's* Ladies' Department when Goodrich was editor. Her personal battles with Goodrich over content and space, as well as disapproval of her and her editing by the townsfolk, forced her to leave after only six issues.

The Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times

Before the gold discovery many had unsuccessfully attempted to usurp Oregon City's eminence by platting other townsites, such as Linn City on the west side of the Willamette falls, Multnomah City just north of Linn City, and Portland. With the increased shipping during the gold rush, the more accessible towns such as Milwaukie and Portland became shipping centers and vied for the growing export trade by building roads to the Tualatin Plains.[32]

Lot Whitcomb, an 1847 pioneer from Vermont and Commissary General under the provisional government, was the founder and principal proprietor of Milwaukie and tirelessly promoted it. Upon hearing of the gold discovery, Whitcomb quickly organized crews to build vessels and cut square timbers used in mines, and was the first to establish lumber shipments to San Francisco from the Willamette River. Whitcomb paid a competitive wage, enough to keep people working for him instead of going to California, thereby successfully competing with Portland for shipping. By 1850 Milwaukie had a post office, with Whitcomb as postmaster, four mills, a shipyard, two hotels, a sheet iron

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[31]Himes, 353-354; Turnbull, 45-47.

[32]Bowen, 15-16; Snyder, 27.

and copper plating works, and a public school. Through Whitcomb's efforts, Milwaukie grew from nearly zero early in 1848 to about five hundred by 1850, making it larger than any other town in Oregon Territory except Oregon City.[33]

To enhance his commercial prospects, Lot Whitcomb set out to publish a newspaper. In San Francisco he found two young Vermont men trained as printers, John Orvis Waterman, twenty-four, and William Davis Carter, twenty-two. Whitcomb's paper, the four page, six column, 24-by-34-inch *Western Star*, appeared November 21, 1850, two weeks before Portland's *Oregonian.* The paper was Democratic, unusual because Whitcomb was a Whig, though not rigid in his politics.[34] When word of the arrival of the printers at Milwaukie reached Oregon City, *Spectator* editor Schnebly increased the frequency of the *Spectator* from once every two weeks to once per week. Schnebly, like the earlier owners, was trying to keep the *Spectator* free from partisanship, but with editor Waterman of the *Star* bluntly stating his views, the *Spectator* gradually became more Whig in tone.[35]

By the fall of 1849, as many were returning to Oregon from California as were leaving, bringing gold with them, and Oregon's population growth resumed. Without a group of supporting businessmen like Portland enjoyed, Milwaukie swiftly declined, and Whitcomb was practically bankrupt in 1851. The *Western Star* fell into financial difficulties within a few months of its commencement, and was handed over to the unpaid printer-editors, Waterman and Carter.[36]

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[33]Snyder, 55-59, 63.

[34]A few years later Whitcomb did, in fact, become a Democrat. Ibid., 75.

[35]Ibid., 72-75.

[36]Ibid., 53, 69-75, 114-115, 126.

With the *Western Star* press on their hands, Waterman and Carter decided to start their own newspaper. Convinced that a paper would have a better chance in Portland than Milwaukie, but mindful of the effect such a move would have on Whitcomb, the partners transferred the equipment onto a steamer one night and were in Portland the following morning. They changed the name to the *Oregon Weekly Times* and printed their first issue on June 5, 1851. The *Times*, like the *Spectator*, went through several changes in editors and owners, although any owner-editor conflicts that may have existed have not been published. Carter sold out to Waterman in 1853, then with R. D. Austin bought the paper back in 1854, keeping Waterman as editor for three years. Ethelbert C. Hibben became editor in 1857, quit at the end of 1858, and was succeeded as editor by the owners. The *Times* stopped printing in 1864.[37]

The Oregonian

While Oregon City was quickly growing in the winter of 1842-1843, Portland was nothing more than a clearing on the riverbank halfway between the Hudson's Bay Company posts at Fort Vancouver and Oregon City. In 1844 the spot was claimed, and by late 1846 more than sixty people lived in Portland, and a wharf, twelve to fifteen new houses, a tannery, a blacksmith shop, and wagon routes to Oregon City and the Tualatin Valley had been built. In 1850, Portland had a population of about four hundred. Despite Oregon City's apparent prosperity, Portland's strategic location for shipping, near the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia rivers, quickly established its supremacy as Oregon's center of commerce and population.[38]

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[37]Himes, 362; Turnbull, 52-53.

[38]Schwantes, 92-93; Snyder, 1, 26, 30-37.

W. W. Chapman and Stephen Coffin, two Portland businessmen, traveled to San Francisco in July 1850 to obtain a plant for the paper Portland's business and professional community so desperately wanted. There they met and hired as editor and publisher of the *Oregonian* Thomas Jefferson Dryer, forty-three, a New Yorker who had some newspaper experience when he joined the California gold rush in 1849. Dryer arrived in Portland around the first of November 1850 and waited for his press to arrive. Interestingly, the Keoka, which carried the printing equipment, was part of Lot Whitcomb's "Milwaukie Line" of sailing vessels. The Keoka's belated appearance in Portland, long after other vessels that had entered the Columbia at the same time, may be attributed to Whitcomb's competitive spirit, but whether he deliberately delayed the Keoka will never be known.[39] Captain Hall of the navigation company apparently said he didn't care when he delivered the freight for the "little damn Whig paper in Portland."[40]

The *Oregonian* came out as a four page paper, 14 3/8-by-19 inches, with six columns to the page. In April 1851 it expanded to 15 1/4-by-20 3/4 inches. Dryer, as both publisher and editor until he left in 1861, did not experience the censorship pressures from owners that the early *Spectator* editors did. His was one of the livelier political papers of Oregon, and his acerbic style was probably an asset to subscriptions rather than a hindrance.[41]

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[39]Snyder, 79; Turnbull, 56-57.

[40]Turnbull, 58.

[41]Himes, 364-365, 370; Turnbull, 58-61.

The Anatomy of Frontier Papers

To understand the content of frontier newspapers, especially content concerning women, one needs to know the origin of the information, the main topics of interest for the time period, and how the information was organized. The Portland-area papers contained information from four basic sources: clippings from nonlocal media, items by the editor, local submissions that were not notices or advertisements, and notices and advertisements from private citizens and businesses (see Table 1). A few gray areas of sources also occurred—clippings from local papers and "local" contributors who were actually corresponding from some distance—but the percentage of space for these two items is negligible. Events and ideas that captured press attention locally and worldwide help put topics about women, and the space allotted to them, into perspective. Organization of themes into departments also indicates the importance of these items relative to other entries. The following discussion will explore each of the four main sources, name some of the main topics of the day, and describe the various newspaper departments. A few words on the intended audience are also included.

TABLE 1. Sources of Information in Newspapers

	Oregon Spectator (%)	Oregonian (%)	Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times (%)
Clippings	37.9	23.2	30.9
Editorials	12.4	8.6	9.4
Local Submissions	20.2	14.0	10.1
Notices and Ads	24.9	50.8	42.8
Other*	4.6	3.4	6.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Other includes masthead.

Clippings

Clippings were taken by the local editor from a variety of American and foreign newspapers, magazines, and books, giving frontier papers a very eclectic feel. The heart of news gathering and dissemination in the early years of this country was the exchange system, a government subsidized communication network. Printers exchanged their newspapers through the mails free of charge, a tradition originating in the early 1700s and becoming formalized with the Post Office Act of 1792. According to this law, every newspaper printer could send one paper to every newspaper printer in the United States free of postage. (Not everyone shared with everyone else, though. Maintaining an exchange list was one of the primary duties of publishers.) This system allowed for the speedy dissemination of foreign and national news. Newspaper publishers often set their dates of publication in anticipation of the arrival of exchanges with the latest information, which put publishers at the mercy of the post office's ability to deliver the mail on time.[42] Oregon printers also relied on this system for news of happenings in the U.S. and abroad, and experienced its drawbacks; the Portland-area editors frequently complained of the lateness of the mails.

The appendix lists a portion of the media that appeared in the Portland-area newspapers. While the Oregon papers made not have had direct access to each newspaper and magazine listed, having access to one exchange paper meant having access to the media that paper clipped for its columns. (The only exchanges of the *Spectator* in 1848

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[42]Richard B. Kielbowicz, "Newsgathering by Printers' Exchanges Before the Telegraph," *Journalism History* 9, no. 2 (1982): 42-47.

were one in Honolulu and two in California, and at that time papers and letters arrived from the States only about once a year.[43])

Clippings also had magazines and books as their media of origin, but it is not known whether the editors actually had access to these sources or whether the clipping had been clipped before. For instance, items could be clipped from a magazine and placed into an Eastern newspaper, then the Oregon media could receive the newspaper, clip the item, and state either the magazine or the newspaper as the source. By the time items were printed in the Oregon papers, they could be several times removed from their original source, with their route through the various media impossible to determine.

Editors frequently commented on articles they clipped, sometimes inspiring additional comments by later clippers. Often the origin of the comment, whether by the Portland-area editor or an earlier clipper, was impossible to determine. In addition, editors often copied articles without giving credit to the media from which they were clipped.[44] Items of indeterminate origins that occurred among the clipped items, but mentioned no identifying source or city, were included with clipped items in this study. (Items of indeterminate origin make up about 10%, by space, of the total clippings.)

Clippings came in a variety of forms, including official transcripts, news articles, essays, lectures, speeches, aphorisms,[45] stories, poetry, and jokes (see Table 2). A wide range of topics were covered, including U.S. politics and laws, Presidential messages, slavery and secession, foreign news and diplomacy, especially the Mexican War,

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[43]Himes, 352.

[44]Mott, *American Magazines, 1741-1850*, 502-503.

[45]Aphorisms, or words of wisdom, usually consisted of a line or two of space, and were typically worded like the following: "Pride is a flower that grows in the devil's garden." *Oregon Weekly Times*, 7 July 1855, 1.

TABLE 2. Clipped Item Type in Newspapers

	Oregon Spectator (%)	Oregonian (%)	Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times (%)
Articles, essays, etc.	82.4	71.1	76.1
Stories	5.9	15.4	10.5
Poetry	2.1	4.0	4.0
Jokes	9.6	9.5	9.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

economics, transportation development through railroad and canal building, industry, and agriculture, as well as crimes, calamities, and curiosities. Agricultural items were often placed in a Farmer's Corner or Agriculture Department. Advances in science were frequently presented, including those made in astronomy, telegraphic communication, the caloric engine, and submarine development. World exploration was also discussed, including numerous blurbs pondering the whereabouts of Sir John Franklin, the British Arctic explorer.[46] Clippings also offered recipes and practical advice, on ginger beer, pancakes, how to treat burns, and how to stay afloat, for example. Sometimes recipes turned up in the Agriculture department. Religion was discussed (including stories debunking the famous Rochester spirit rappings), and sometimes religious items were placed in their own department. Temperance, health, and education were also covered. Information on the California gold rush was provided by California and U.S. media, as well as by locals who had tested the waters. Stories and poetry frequently had their own

[46]Searching for the Northwest Passage, Franklin and crew set out in 1845 and never returned. Twenty-one rescue parties were sent out between 1846 and 1854, when word came through "Esquimaux" that the party had starved. Owen Beattie and John Geiger, *Frozen in Time: The Fate of the Franklin Expedition* (London: Bloomsbury, 1987).

departments, labeled Miscellany or Poetry. Jokes were often gathered in a Wit and Humor department.

All American newspapers used a good deal of stories and poetry during this period, often clipped from magazines. Some of the weekly newspapers ostensibly devoted to providing news contained no more news than than the literary weeklies. Literary magazines usually liked their contents to be clipped by the newspapers, as it was considered good advertising, when credit was given.[47] Popular contemporary essayists, critics, poets, advice writers, and storytellers whose writing appeared in the Portland-area papers include Horatio Alger, T. S. Arthur, Catherine Beecher, George Bethune, Lydia Marie Child, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thomas Dunn English, Fanny Fern (Sara Payson Willis), Margaret Fuller, Grace Greenwood (Sara Jane Lippincott), Sarah Josepha Hale, Julia Ward Howe, Washington Irving, George Lippard, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Edgar Allen Poe, John Saxe, Lydia Sigourney, Harriet Beecher Stowe, William Makepeace Thackeray, Alfred Tennyson, John Greenleaf Whittier, and William Wordsworth.

Information on other icons of popular culture were also clipped, including the singer Jenny Lind, "the Swedish Nightingale," who toured the United States from 1850 to 1852; Hiram Powers, whose nude sculpture "The Greek Slave" electrified America in 1847; and the Norwegian violinist Ole Bull, who toured the United States on several occasions.

Clippings kept Oregon readers abreast of domestic and foreign politics, scientific advancements, general news, and popular culture, but at times the clippings from media east of the Rockies could be at odds with Western experience. One article on manners and

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[47]Mott, *American Magazines, 1741-1850*, 502-503; Mott, *American Magazines, 1850-1865*, 206.

dress explained how ladies should hold their skirts when they crossed a puddle. "In the first place," it said, "a lady should never be seen in the streets in rainy or muddy weather,"[48] not very practical advice for the Oregon frontier.

Editorials

The editors wrote on a range of topics, including U.S. politics and foreign affairs, but most of their writings were more locally focused. Local concerns include territorial politics and laws, especially the Donation Land Act, municipal elections and town competition, meetings and celebrations, commerce, development, such as the building of a railroad line to the Northwest, boosting, immigration, Indian problems, including the Whitman massacre and Rogue River and Yakima Indian wars, education, temperance, religion, crime, and accidents and disasters, such as steamship explosions and drownings. Descriptions of Oregon, regional explorations (such as of Mt. St. Helens and the Coast Range), and gold discoveries in California, Washington, and Oregon were frequently discussed, as were more mundane agricultural topics. The weather was a common theme, as it influenced agriculture and the state of the rivers. Shipping was frequently mentioned, especially problems navigating the bar at the mouth of the Columbia and the Clackamas Rapids, a gravel bar and shoals downstream from Oregon City.

Editors spoke to their correspondents in the papers, requested contributions, and directed attention to other entries, such as new ads. They frequently complained about the mails and requested delinquent payments. Arguments with other newspapers on local and national politics were a common feature. The name-calling and invective employed by

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[48]*Oregonian*, 28 February 1852, 4.

Oregon editors to describe local politicians and editors has been dubbed "Oregon Style" journalism by historians.[49]

Local Submissions

Local contributors submitted some stories and poetry (see Table 3), but mostly expressed their opinions on many of the same concerns as the editors, including local laws and politics, land grants, Indian problems, progress and development, shipping and commerce, agriculture, gold, education, temperance, religion, accidents, and crime. Local contributors also wrote descriptions of Oregon and discussed local meetings and celebrations. Local items were sometimes gathered into a Correspondence department.

TABLE 3. Local Item Type in Newspapers

	Oregon Spectator (%)	Oregonian (%)	Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times (%)
Articles, essays, etc.	95.1	99.6	99.4
Stories	0.3	0.0	0.0
Poetry	4.5	0.4	0.6
Jokes	0.1	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Notices and Advertisements

In addition to notices of marriage, birth, death, separation, and divorce, were statements of created and dissolved business partnerships, appeals to settle accounts, alerts on bad notes (notes, or IOUs, were often passed about in lieu of cash), no trespassing warnings, political candidate announcements, and requests for proposals (for bridges and

[49]Turnbull, 81-82.

the like). Notices also told of missing persons, lost, stolen, or found stray animals and personal effects, help wanted needs (for laborers, bookkeepers, and seamstresses, for example), and auctions and meetings to be held (such as for the Masons, Odd Fellows, Oregon Auxiliary Tract Society, and teaching and temperance groups).

Advertising provides an excellent window for viewing the civilizing of the frontier. The earliest advertisements, in the *Spectator* of 1846, mentioned an attorney, a hotel, a store, a hat manufactory, a flour mill, and town lots for sale. By 1859 the Portland-area papers boasted doctors, druggists, merchants, bankers, shippers and express lines (including Wells Fargo), attorneys, notary publics, real estate agents, surveyors, architects, builders, carpenters, masons, painters, blacksmiths, gunsmiths, gold refiners, tanners, daguerreans, advertising agents, insurance agents (including a Lloyds of London representative), an exterminator, bakers and confectioners, barbers, jewelers and watchmakers, milliners, dressmakers, a singing instructor, and dance instructors. Also advertised were mills, a library, schools and Universities, livery stables, restaurants (including an ice cream saloon), hotels, bath houses, boarding houses, saloons and taverns, a hospital, and a gymnasium.

In addition to the basic food, clothing, and agricultural needs, by 1859 Portland-area papers advertised wedding cakes, chocolate, peaches, olive oil, raisins, liqueurs, coffee (some of the early residents used parched wheat and peas for "coffee"[50]), patent medicines (including abortifacients), sarsaparilla, pen holders, ladies' and gentlemen's breast pins, cigars, perfume, books, magazines (including Godey's), piano fortes, guitars, flutes, fiddles, stoves, sewing machines, carpets, French tapestries, fine china, chandeliers, and a host of other luxuries.

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[50]Robert Carlton Clark, 385.

The Audience

Papers can be dissected and their content measured and studied, but it remains difficult to ascertain for whom the content was provided. On the Oregon frontier, where adult white men outnumbered adult white women by a ratio of almost 2 to 1, the intended audience is especially hard to determine. Men on the frontier frequently had to perform their own household chores, and newspaper articles that may have been originally written for women, such as recipes and other household advice, may have been reprinted in Oregon for men. Even the article "How a Lady Should Wash Herself" was printed in an Oregon paper to titillate the male readers, as evinced by the editor's prefatory remarks: "Mrs. Swisshelm . . . has a long article to young ladies upon the necessity of cleanliness. In the article she gives the following directions as to the *modus operandi* which, to the bachelors, who have no idea as the manner in which such things are managed, will be extremely interesting . . . ."[51] Only a few hints in the Portland-area papers indicate that women were the intended audience, such as editorial comments; direct addresses to women in some articles, meeting notices, and advertisements; and the Ladies' Departments. The *Western Star* prospectus, which vowed to print items of interest to women, also shows that the Portland-area editors valued their female readers.

Conclusion

The frontier audience was made up of single urban men from the Northeast and married couples from the Middle West and Upper South, while most of the editors (Dryer, Waterman, Curry, Wait, and Bailey), the gatekeepers of newspaper content, were Northerners. These editors had varied experiences. Some were their own bosses, while

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[51] *Oregonian*, 7 June 1851, 1.

others had to please owners, who also acted as gatekeepers for newspaper content. All were supported by their communities and surrounding regions, not private subsidies, and had to be conscious of reader preferences. The Oregon audience received a broad view of the world through clippings from foreign and domestic media. They were also kept informed on issues that more directly affected their lives and livelihoods through editorials, local contributions, and notices and advertisements.

Not only were women part of the frontier audience, they also took part in many public activities, such as socializing; helping to build the frontier culture, including establishing schools, supporting churches, and promoting temperance; and getting married, usually a private concern but made more public in Oregon because of the Donation Land Act. Such activities provided ample opportunities for newspaper coverage.

CHAPTER III

CLIPPINGS OF WOMEN: IDEALS, REFORM, AND GENERAL NEWS

> . . . the brightest examples of truth, constancy, and devotion, are found among our fair and beautiful sex.
> —*Oregon Weekly Times,* 1853

> None of our excellent girls are fit to be married until they are thoroughly educated in the deep and profound mysteries of the kitchen.
> —*Weekly Oregonian,* 1856

Clippings, taken mostly from American newspapers, magazines, and books, but also borrowed to a small extent from foreign media, make up about 30% of Oregon's frontier newspapers.[1] Clippings allowed isolated, often lonely, frontierspeople to maintain connections with the "civilized" world; while news articles kept locals apprised of domestic and foreign politics, crime, and scientific discoveries, lectures, essays, stories, poetry, and jokes commented on society, promoted good conduct, and entertained. About 20% of the clippings (by space) discussed women,[2] indicating that Oregon editors thought women an appealing topic to frontier readers. The large amount of prescriptive information for women suggests as well that Oregon editors considered women in particular an important local audience.

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[1]The percentage of space taken by clippings, by my calculations, averaged 37% in the *Spectator*, 23% in the *Oregonian*, and 31% in the *Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times.*

[2]Space allotted to material on women amounted to 19%, 21%, and 22% in the *Spectator*, *Oregonian*, and *Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times*, respectively. Such material includes essays, lectures, government laws, news blurbs, stories, poetry, and jokes.

The following presentation includes clippings on popular societal ideals of women, women and reform, and women in the news, as well as discussions of women's contributions and trends in women's coverage. Unfortunately, editors often copied articles without giving credit to the periodicals or newspapers from which they were clipped.[3] Items of indeterminate origins that occurred among the clipped items, but mentioned no identifying source or city, are considered to be clipped and are included in this discussion.

The Idealized Woman

A broad, sometimes contradictory, range of beliefs concerning women and their behavior was discussed in the literature of the 1840s and 1850s. In her landmark 1966 article, Barbara Welter recognized the nineteenth century "true womanhood" ideal in literature, based on piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.[4] Twenty-three years later, Frances Cogan identified an autonomous, competing "real womanhood" ideal, more northerly in origin, that stressed intelligence, physical fitness, self-sufficiency, economic self-reliance, and careful marriage.[5] Aspects of each of these ideals, which share the concept of a separate sphere for women, were found in the Portland-area newspapers. In general, this material discussed the behavior, nature, and sphere of the ideal woman; provided suggestions on how to conform to the ideal; and informed on the consequences of ignoring the ideal. At times the ideal's validity was challenged, but in this chapter only the attempts to reform while still maintaining the concept of separate spheres are reviewed.

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[3]Mott, *American Magazines, 1741-1850*, 502-503.

[4]Welter, *Cult of True Womanhood*, 151-174.

[5]Cogan, 4.

Themes that emerged from the Portland-area papers involve women's qualities and her proper sphere, physical fitness and health, female education, preparing for marriage, marriage, housekeeping, motherhood, death, and heroines.

Woman's Qualities and Her Proper Sphere

In the early decades of the nineteenth century a transformation was taking place in American culture, especially in the increasingly urban Northeast. With the development of a market economy, the center of production shifted from the home to outside places of business, requiring that men be absent from their domiciles for long stretches of the day. The home, consequently, became a separate, private retreat. Middle class women remained in the home to become the domestic caretakers and were granted a distinct temperament appropriate to their new sphere.[6] Because they were for the most part sheltered from the temptations of the world, women were thought to be morally superior to men. In addition, American society was deeply religious between 1840 and 1860,[7] and women were considered naturally more religious than men. This "piety" makes up one of Welter's four cardinal virtues of the "true woman."

In the Portland-area newspapers such views of women were common. A clipping from a Boston weekly miscellany paper, the *Saturday Evening Gazette,*[8] claimed "Religion is everywhere lovely, but in woman peculiarly so. It makes her but little lower than the angels." Religion was particularly useful for females, the clipping continued,

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[6]Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 114-115.

[7]Carl Bode, *The Anatomy of American Popular Culture, 1840-1861* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959), xiii-xiv.

[8]Inaccurately referred to as the *Boston Evening Gazette.*

because "woman from her very nature, is destined to drink deeper from the cup of sorrow and suffering than the other sex. . . . Religion alone can disarm these trials, and enable her to preserve that equanimity and peace of mind so essential to happiness."[9]

Placing women on a pedestal was a natural result of recognizing her moral and religious superiority. The *Portland Transcript*, a New England Sunday miscellany paper, paid this tribute: "Woman is undoubtedly the best blessing of *man*, and they who elevate her noble qualities only perform an act of justice—the brightest examples of truth, constancy, and devotion, are found among *our* fair and beautiful sex [emphasis in original]."[10] "No society is more profitable, because none is more refined and provocative of virtue, than that of refined, sensible women," said *Merchant's Magazine*, a New York commerce periodical.[11] "God enshrined peculiar goodness in the form of woman."[12]

Women were thought to have other superior qualities as well. One clergyman, quoted in the *New York Times*, claimed that "not only do they [women] generally excel us in the nice perception of the proprieties of life, and in their tender sense of duty to both God and man, but they are equally before us in their instinctive faculty of foreseeing evil before it is upon us, and of wisely discerning the character and motives of men."[13] Another declared that "Women naturally speak better than men. They express themselves

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[9]*Oregon Spectator,* 28 December 1848, 3.

[10]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 16 April 1853, 1.

[11]Known as *The Merchant's Magazine and Commercial Review* from 1839 to 1850, then as *Hunt's Merchant's Magazine* from 1850 to 1860. Mott, *American Magazines, 1741-1850*, 696n.

[12]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 17 July 1852, 1.

[13]Ibid., 1 October 1853, 1.

more easily, more vividly, with more arch simplicity, because they feel more rapidly, more delicately."[14] Women were also considered natural nurses. One unnamed source stated, "It has often been remarked that in sickness there is no hand like woman's hand; no heart like woman's heart."[15]

Woman's supposed virtues and skills, though impressive, were not to be construed as suiting her for public life. One essay from an unnamed source praised woman for practicing her feminine arts within her proper sphere—in the parlor, dining room, chamber, and sick room, acting as a teacher to her children and "a companion and equal" to her husband—but criticized her if she sought to step across these bounds. It sternly informed that "in no situation can she be a politician, a preacher, lawyer, physician, or philosopher, without becoming a literary blue stocking, the antipodes of wife, and the most contemptible being on earth."[16]

Physical Fitness and Health

"True women" were often cast as pale, sickly creatures, their inherent delicacy constraining their actions to the domestic sphere. An actual inhibitor of women's physical activity was their heavy and constricting clothing—a winter outfit might weigh as much as forty pounds.[17] But some midcentury American media, such as *Harper's Weekly*, *Illustrated Christian Weekly*, and *Ladies' Repository*, as well as magazine fiction and

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[14]Ibid., 22 January 1859, 1.

[15]*Western Star*, 28 November 1950, 1.

[16]*Oregonian*, 26 June 1852, 4.

[17]Nina Baym, "Portrayal of Women in American Literature, 1790-1870," in *What Manner of Woman: Essays on English and American Life and Literature*, ed. Marlene Springer (New York: New York University Press, 1977), 212.

domestic novels, placed strong emphasis on physical fitness for girls and women, constituting one aspect of Cogan's "real womanhood" ideal.[18]

Although no Portland-area papers glorified female physical delicacy, the *Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times* was the strongest advocate of exercise and healthy habits for females. Often such literature appealed to a young woman's vanity rather than health, emphasizing that a fragile, wan demeanor was not attractive. One article from an unnamed source described young ladies as "caged birds of beautiful plumage, but sickly looks" and "pale pets of the parlor, vegetating in the unhealthy shade, with a greenish white complexion, like that of a sprout in a dark cellar." It encouraged young women to "go out in the open air and warm sunshine, and add lustre to your eyes, bloom to your cheeks, elasticity to your steps, and vigor to your frames. . . . Take early morning exercise—let loose your corset strings, and run up hill for a wager and down again for fun. Roam in the fields, climb the fences, leap the ditches, wade the brook and go home with an excellent appetite."[19]

"Sure Way for a Young Girl to Preserve Her Beauty," from an unnamed source, proposed a vigorous regimen, urging young women to "rise early, and take a cold plunge bath both Summer and Winter, and immediately after the bath, walk briskly two miles, or ride five miles on horseback." Perhaps anticipating some reluctance to pursue this routine, the article assured, "Accustom yourself gradually to this discipline, and it will be no hardship."[20] Gardening was another wholesome activity. A column clipped from Catherine Beecher's book on domestic economy recommended that fathers set a section of

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[18]Cogan, 29.

[19]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 16 October 1852, 4.

[20]*Western Star*, 19 December 1850, 1.

their yard aside so that girls could garden, an activity promoted as "peculiarly healthful and strengthening."[21]

One essay, taken from the *Parlor Annual*,[22] described the course of ill health in women. It argued that "in childhood and youth, girls are just as healthy, hardy, and capable of enduring fatigue, as boys. . . . Yet our men are much more healthy than women, and even young ladies." While men of the merchant class were active, their wives and daughters "have dragged the wearisome hours of the day in listless idleness or sedentary pursuits." Fashion was to blame, the essay concluded—"the daughters must be slim, fragile, pale, and delicate, with soft, white hands, to be worthy to rank with the sons of merchants."[23]

One female writer, from an unidentified source, charged men with women's ill health. "Why do we pinch our feet in tight slippers or wear thin gaiters in warm weather?" the writer asked. "To please the gents to be sure! What girl has not heard her uncle, brother, male cousin, nay, even her father, speak in raptures of small feet, and laugh at large ones? Can they blame us, then if we sacrifice comfort, and even health, to please them?" Similar reasons were disclosed for wearing too much clothing in summer and leaving the arms and neck bare in winter.[24]

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[21] *Oregonian*, 31 July 1852, 4.

[22] The *Parlor Annual* may be the *Parlor Magazine*, a short-lived Cincinnati, Ohio, annual magazine that published two volumes, one in 1853 and another in 1854. Alice Cary was the assistant editor. Mott, *American Magazines, 1850-1865*, 115n.

[23] *Oregon Weekly Times*, 5 August 1854, 4.

[24] Ibid., 26 July 1856, 4.

Female Education

Female education was increasingly accepted in American culture during this era. By 1850, at least half the nation's women could read and write, and in New England, literacy was almost universal.[25] Both "true" and "real" womanhood ideals advocated women's education.

An educated women could be useful in many respects, all fitting nicely into the concept of separate spheres. For one, education supplied women with a means for reflecting on their proper place. A clipping from Margaret Brewster's book entitled *Work, or Plenty to Do, and How to Do It* explained "No 'emancipated woman' . . . was ever a woman of thought; she emancipates herself because she has not thought, or has thought to very little purpose, of the noble place, and the influential duties which God has given her. . . ."[26] Another clipping, from an unnamed source, informed that, "The more they [women] are enlightened, so much the more we shall be. On the cultivation of the minds of women depends the wisdom of man."[27] Another blurb told of the Choctaw Indians who realized that educating women was important because it fell to women to raise and educate children.[28]

Although many agreed that educating women would do no harm, the content of that education was the source of some controversy. Should young women be schooled in what amounted to vocational training—cooking, sewing, and cleaning—be drilled in the

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[25]Woloch, 125-126.

[26]*Oregon Spectator*, 6 January 1855, 1.

[27]Ibid., 30 September 1854, 3.

[28]Ibid., 24 February 1855, 1.

basics—arithmetic, grammar, and geography—or be instructed in the more fashionable pursuits—piano, embroidery, dancing, and French?

"True womanhood" believers championed domestic skills over "finished" education, and at times these arguments appeared to stem from friction between urban and rural values. Fiction writer and *Harper's Monthly* editor Donald G. Mitchell, also known as Ik Marvel, addressed this issue before the Connecticut State Agriculture Society, carried in condensed form in an unnamed Hartford, Connecticut, paper.[29] "Don't teach your daughters French before they can weed a flower bed, or cling to a side-saddle," Mitchell exhorted, "and daughters! do not be ashamed of the pruning knife. . . . Study botany, learn to love nature, and seek a higher cultivation than the fashionable world would give you."[30] Mary Abbott[31] took a similar stance: "We know of no reason why the farmer's daughter should not be as intelligent, and polished in her manners, as the merchant's daughter; or why she should not play the piano and speak French, if her father is able to afford her these luxuries. If he is not, all these unnecessary accomplishments are rather a disgrace than an ornament to her."[32]

"Real womanhood" proponents also condemned "adornments," but urged cultivation of the female intellect in practical knowledge. An essay from *Mrs. Whittlesey's*

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[29]Mitchell wrote the "Editor's Easy Chair" for *Harper's Monthly* from 1851 to 1858. Longer fiction includes *Reveries of a Bachelor*, published in 1850. Mott, *American Magazines, 1850-1865*, 389.

[30]*Weekly Oregonian*, 3 July 1858, 4.

[31]Abbott, although appearing at times in the Oregon press, is not discussed in historical biographical encyclopedias.

[32]*Oregon Spectator*, 14 July 1854, 3.

Magazine,[33] a periodical for women and the home, remarked: "It has been the sin of past ages to dwarf and neglect the culture of the female mind; and, perhaps now, the system of education, in regard to them, is not as practical and thorough as it could be." The author felt more effort should be put into educating young women to think, rather than to "shine."[34] In a similar vein, another writer felt that girls should master basic studies, such as geography, arithmetic, spelling, and history, before being instructed "in what are merely accomplishments."[35]

Lengthening female education was also advocated. One writer claimed that considering a girl's education finished when she reached age sixteen could grant her only a very superficial knowledge.[36] The *Southern Lady's Companion*, a Nashville periodical, also for women and the home, discussed women's college education.[37] A four years' college course for women, the essay pointed out, included forty months of instruction in twenty sciences, two languages, history, fine art, and instruments—forty distinct studies in forty months. The writer promoted more focused, intensive studies in certain areas, and concluded, "The popular fondness for numerous and showy attainments, even were the system of teaching perfect, can lead to nothing but shallowness."[38]

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[33]The full title is *Mrs. Whittlesey's Magazine for Mothers*, founded in New York (1850-1852). Mrs. A. G. Whittlesey edited *Mothers' Magazine* until 1850, when she left to start her own magazine. Mott, *American Magazines, 1850-1865,* 57n, 555.

[34]*Oregon Spectator*, 21 November 1850, 4.

[35]Ibid., 2 September 1854, 3.

[36]*Oregonian,* 1 October 1853, 4.

[37]The *Southern Lady's Companion* was published from 1847 to 1854 at the office of the *Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate* and was edited for most of its existence by the Reverend M. M. Henkle. Mott, *American Magazines, 1850-1865,* 57n.

[38]*Oregon Spectator*, 7 January 1854, 2.

Preparing for Marriage

Much of the female education controversy revolved around preparing young women for marriage. Marriage was an important aspect of nineteenth century women's lives, and girls spent much time preparing for a "good" marriage by acquiring the domestic skills and moral virtues of wives.[39]

Some maintained that young women needed to be physically attractive to acquire a mate. Jane Swisshelm's "Letter to Country Girls," printed in her paper, the Pittsburgh *Saturday Visiter* (sic), advised that young women protect their skin by wearing a bonnet and gloves and by not bending over the cooking fire.[40] However, advice from the *Portland* (Maine) *Tribune* entitled "Pretty Hands" urged young women to spend less time on their looks and more time acquiring domestic expertise. It said, "Dear Miss, how do you contrive to make your hands so pretty? . . . A real man would prefer to see them blackened occasionally by coming into contact with pot-hooks and trammels, and calloused by a day or two's rubbing at the washboard."[41] Another said, "We will give to intellect, to immortality, to religion, and to all virtues, the honor that belongs to them. And still it may be boldly affirmed that economy, taste, skill and neatness in the kitchen, have a great deal to do in making life happy and prosperous." It warned that a dirty kitchen and bad cooking could drive the man from the home, and concluded, "none of our excellent girls are fit to be married until they are thoroughly educated in the deep and profound mysteries of the kitchen."[42]

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[39]Barbara Welter, *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), 10.

[40]*Oregon Spectator*, 29 November 1849, 1.

[41]*Western Star*, 27 March 1851, 1; *Oregonian*, 26 July 1851, 1.

[42]*Weekly Oregonian*, 27 September 1856, 1.

Too much attention to beauty and fashion often indicated more than a simple lack of domestic accomplishments. "Foolish Virgins" were warned that the "dashing belle" could neither make bread, roast a turkey, nor bake a pudding. Furthermore, not only was her head "nigh as hollow as a yellow pumpkin," her "moral nature" was "wholly uncultivated."[43] Belles in general were considered entirely unsuitable, while the media lauded the virtues of homely, modest, nice, and cheerful girls.

While handsome women, according to British essayist Anna Jameson, were "extremely ignorant and childish in their manners" because they neglected to improve their minds, the "ill-favored woman" knew "she cannot be loved for her face; this induces her to endeavor to draw attention by her intelligence and wit."[44] "Comforts for Homely Women" counseled that a young woman with a "figure agreeable and engaging, which inspires affection without the inebrity of love, is a much safer choice."[45] Simple dress alone could be an enticement, according to the *Portland Pleasure Boat*, a New England Sunday miscellany paper:[46] "No young woman ever looked so well, to a sensible man, (none other are worth having) as when dressed in a neat, plain, modest attire, without a single ornament about her person."[47] "Nice Girls," said one anonymous source, were "lively, good-tempered, good hearted, sweet-faced, amiable, neat, natty, domestic creatures." They were found "in the sphere of 'home,' diffusing around the domestic

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[43]Ibid., 24 July 1858, 1.

[44]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 24 April 1852, 1.

[45]*Oregonian*, 3 April 1852, 1.

[46]The *Portland Pleasure Boat* of Maine ran from 1845 to 1861. Mott, *American Magazines, 1850-1865*, 36.

[47]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 22 July 1854, 4.

hearth the influence of her goodness, like the essence of sweet flowers." These creatures were always active and never read novels.[48] Some promoted a good temper over all other virtues. One blurb succinctly warned, "Sulky females generally die old maids."[49]

Girls not only had to prepare themselves for marriage but also had to learn what to look for in a man, and some advice was dedicated to instructing young women on this subject. An article in England's *Monmouthshire Merlin* jokingly advised that a nice young man "parts his hair in the middle . . . plays the flute . . . doesn't smoke . . . [and] keeps a cat, and a regular account of his daily expenses."[50] Another explained that if a suitor "greets you in a loud, free, hearty voice; if he knows precisely where to put his hat, or his hands . . . if he fails to talk very kindly to your mother; if he sneezes when you are singing or criticises [sic] your curls, or fails to be very foolish in fifty ways in every hour, then, don't fall in love with him for the world."[51]

Others, especially advocates of "real womanhood," took a more sober view of the situation, admonishing women to make their assessments with a cool, practical eye. The *Washington* (D.C.) *Union* carried a true anecdote on a young foreign woman's response to a wealthy, though unfit, suitor. The woman, employed at a French manufacturing establishment, was sent on an errand to a prosperous household. No one greeted her when she rang at the house, but the door was ajar, so she entered. There she found a young man in the act of hanging himself, and "with great presence of mind, she, with her scissors, cut the cord." Several days later the father sent word for her to attend him, and

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[48]*Weekly Oregonian*, 27 February 1858, 1.

[49]*Oregon Spectator*, 30 September 1854, 3.

[50]*Oregonian*, 31 July 1852, 4; *Oregon Spectator*, 14 July 1854, 1.

[51]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 7 February 1857, 1.

told her his son wanted to marry her. She refused, explaining that "it is to no purpose that your son is rich; he wished to hang himself, and may wish to do it again. Nothing can remove that objection." The *Phrenological Journal*,[52] which ran the original piece, judged her resolution scientifically and sociologically responsible: "The poor girl made a wise decision, when the laws of phrenology and physiology, as they bear on hereditary descent, are taken into account. No person having a tendency to insanity or suicide has a right to transmit these appalling tendencies to posterity."[53]

A sound mind was imperative in a mate, but other qualities were important as well. Just as coquettes were not a good marriage choice for men, stylish gallants were not the preferred marriage material for women. Nevertheless, some apparently thought the "city-dandified" man was exactly what young women were looking for. One blurb grumbled, "Women are called 'softer sex' because they are so easily humbugged. Out of one hundred girls, ninety-five would prefer ostentation to happiness; and a dandy husband to a mechanic."[54] Preventing women from choosing such a man was the mission of some literature. In "The Young Wife," a story by Emily May,[55] one young woman married for money while her friend married modestly. Through the course of about a year, the wealthy man gambled away his money and in despair shot himself in the head, leaving his

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[52]Phrenology, the study of the cranium to determine a person's mental faculties, was extremely popular at this time. The *Phrenological Journal* was founded in Philadelphia and lasted from 1838 to 1911. Mott, *American Magazines, 1741-1850*, 447, 804.

[53]*Oregon Spectator*, 10 April 1851, 1.

[54]*Weekly Oregonian*, 4 July 1857, 1.

[55]May frequently wrote for the *Ladies' National Magazine* (later known as *Peterson's Magazine*), a competitor to *Godey's Lady's Book.* She edited the women's departments in *Peterson's* as well, and coedited *Arthur's Home Magazine.* Mott, *American Magazines, 1850-1865*, 308, 416n, 418.

wife alone and destitute. The other young woman, however, was happy in her humble cottage. The moral to this story, of course, was that "virtue and affection afford more lasting happiness than wealth and fashion!"[56]

Several other pitfalls besides the dandy faced the young woman seeking a marriage partner, and a bleak fate was usually visited on her should she have a lapse in judgement. Seduction was one hazard of courtship, and "true womanhood" literature repeatedly warned of this danger in the strongest terms. The *Cincinnati Columbian* newspaper described the "moral and mental shipwreck" of a girl who fell in love, became pregnant, and was subsequently disowned. Her friends shunned her and she eventually went insane.[57] Another article, written from facts taken from the Criminal Records of Edgefield District, South Carolina, was offered to "serve as a warning to our youthful readers against the indulgence of their vicious inclinations." In this "thrilling account," Mary Middleton was seduced and bore a child out of wedlock. Although she was disowned by her father, he eventually forgave her and reinstated her in his will. But her previous ill judgement and bad luck stayed with her—she married Findlay, not the child's father, but a man after her fortune. After that, "curses and blows were now all that she received from him." Eight week after they were wed he killed her.[58]

As these examples illustrate, women were harshly judged when they were seduced. Men, as the seducers, however, were treated far differently. One essay pointed out this double standard for men and women, observing that when a young man strayed from the virtuous path "gentleness and kindness are lavished upon him to win him back to

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[56]*Oregon Spectator*, 14 December 1848, 4.

[57]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 20 January 1955, 2.

[58]*Western Star*, 15 May 1851, 1.

innocence and peace." But when a young woman did the same, "she is *'BRANDED with INFAMY'* by every *'mother and daughter'* . . . and is henceforth driven from the way of virtue [emphases in original]." The author concluded that this system promoted "deep wrong."[59]

Some attempted to forestall a poor choice by advocating slow courtship and delayed marriage. Britain's *Medico-Chirurgical Review* cautioned that "for every month a woman spends in the married state between seventeen and twenty-one years of age, a year will be taken from the duration of her beauty and personal attractions."[60] New York's *Eclectic Magazine* [61] charged that "premature marriages are among the greatest evils of the times."[62] Others encouraged young women to heed their parents' advice to avoid the perils of courtship. In "The Widow Indeed," by Philadelphia fiction writer Richard Penn Smith, Mary disobeyed her widowed mother, Miriam, and married the handsome and athletic Mark Moreland, who, because of his idleness, was prophesied to come to no good by the elder and wiser of the community. Mark appeared to become more responsible after his marriage, and convinced Miriam to back him in business. But he was soon bankrupt, leaving Miriam destitute. Then, drunk one night, he fell with his two-year-old son beneath him, causing the boy to be an idiot. After that he deserted Mary, and she died soon after.[63]

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[59]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 20 March 1852, 4.

[60]*Oregon Spectator*, 26 January 1850, 4.

[61]The *Eclectic Magazine* (1844-1907) reprinted foreign (mostly English) periodical literature. Mott, *American Magazines, 1741-1850*, 306-309.

[62]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 2 September 1854, 4.

[63]*Oregonian*, 12 April 1851, 1.

As this story implied, acceding to parents' wishes in choosing a mate could protect the woman from grief, but this practice didn't always leave the woman satisfied. The first stanza of a poem by Julia Ward Howe (best known for "Battle Hymn of the Republic") expresses the feelings of a woman remembering an early, unpursued romance:

> When first we love, you know, we seldom wed;
> Time rules us all. And life, indeed, is not
> The thing we planned it out ere hope was dead;
> And then, we women cannot choose our lot.[64]

This melancholy wife and mother turned to religion for solace.

Popular opinion held that unmarried women had been found lacking; consequently, they were frequently the object of humor. One joke from an unnamed source, said: "Naoma, the daughter of Enoch, was not married until she was five hundred and eighty years old. Don't despair, old gals, some hope yet."[65] But marriage, although preferred, was not fated for all women, and "true womanhood" advocates advised making the best of the unmarried state, because, as one writer unflatteringly pointed out, "there is no more miserable being in existence than a woman, past the excitement of youth, aiming to be married."[66]

Others had more progressive views of the situation. Boston's semimonthly miscellany *Yankee Blade* [67] opined that it wasn't necessarily the case that an unmarried

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[64]*Weekly Oregonian*, 20 June 1857, 1.

[65]*Oregonian*, 15 January 1853, 4.

[66]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 1 August 1857, 1.

[67]The *Yankee Blade* was published in Gardiner, Maine, from 1843 to 1847, then moved to Boston, where it was issued until 1856, when it merged with the *Port Folio*. Mott, *American Magazines, 1850-1865*, 36.

woman wasn't marriage material. "It is among the possibilities of life, that a lady should prefer the independence of a single life to the *chances* of improving her condition by uniting her fortune with that of any man. It is yet more probable that a lady, failing to receive the addresses of any man whom she could respect and love, should have so much taste and heart as to refuse every other offer [emphasis in original]." Such was better than being a tormented wife.[68] The option to remain unwed, of course, was not available to most women of the era.

Marital Harmony

Marriage was a topic of much literature in the Portland-area papers, and each person's role in the relationship was often discussed. "Husband and wife must mutually bear and concede, if they wish to make home a retreat of joy and bliss,"[69] said one article, clipped from the *Ladies' Repository,* a Cincinnati Christian woman's magazine.[70] Despite this writer's view that compromise was the road to a happy marriage, much marital advice emphasized women's subordinate role. Writer and editor Caroline M. Kirkland[71] said in an unnamed source, "We avow that we judge no family to be truly and

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[68]*Oregonian*, 27 December 1851, 4.

[69]Ibid., 3 April 1852, 1.

[70]A Cincinnati Methodist, Samuel Williams, came up with the idea of the *Ladies' Repository* (1841-1876). He thought Christian women needed a magazine more sober than *Godey's Lady's Book.* Mott, *American Magazines, 1850-1865,* 301.

[71]Kirkland wrote for several women's and family magazines, including *Godey's* and *Graham's*, and general monthlies, such as the *Knickerbocker* and *Broadway Journal.* She also published a book of western sketches, *A New Home—Who'll Follow,* and founded and edited *Union Magazine*, a *Godey's* competitor, in New York in 1847. This was purchased in 1848, moved to Philadelphia, and became *Sartain's Union Magazine*, with Kirkland retained as editor. Mott, *American Magazines, 1741-1850,* 347, 546, 585, 609, 760, 769-770.

rationally happy, unless the head of it possess authority, in such sense that his known wish is law—his expressed will imperative."[72] In a similar vein, "Hints for Wives," from the *United States Gazette*, a Philadelphia Whig newspaper,[73] said "Obedience is a very small part of conjugal duty, and in most cases easily performed." By adherence to such duties, as well as through persuasion, sympathy, and cheerfulness, a woman could gain great influence.[74] Patrick Henry, in "Advice of a Father to his Only Daughter," written soon after her marriage, advised her, "never to attempt to control your husband by opposition, by displeasure, or any other mark of anger." A man expected of his wife "smiles, not frowns," and a difference with him "ought to be considered as the greatest calamity—as one that is to be most studiously guarded against."[75]

Several short stories illustrated actions women could take to achieve domestic harmony. In "Self Conquest," by Fanny Fern, a columnist for the Boston *Olive Branch*,[76] Emma, a young bride, was brought to live with her husband's parents. Her in-laws were cruel to her in many small ways, but even though Emma was very unhappy, she was too sensible to let Harry, her husband, know. Her reward for this fortitude was that Harry, who knew about the problem all along, bought a house in the country for just

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[72]*Oregonian*, 14 August 1852, 4.

[73]Mott, *American Journalism*, 187-188, 260.

[74]*Oregon Spectator*, 7 September 1848, 4.

[75]Ibid., 30 November 1848, 2.

[76]Fanny Fern, whose real name was Sara Payton Willis Parton, wrote first for the *Olive Branch* and *True Flag* of Boston, then moved on to the *New York Ledger*. She wrote books as well. Maurine H. Beasley and Sheila J. Gibbons, *Taking Their Place: A Documentary History of Women and Journalism* (Washington: The American University Press, 1993), 87-88.

the two of them. Furthermore, she gained his admiration for bearing all the petty annoyances uncomplainingly.[77]

"The Lady Lucy's Secret" by poet and prose writer Mrs. Newton (Camilla) Crosland, taken from the *Ladies' Companion* magazine,[78] underscores the importance of truthfulness in a relationship, as well as the need for women to acquire good money sense. Lucy, an English lady of quality and the daughter of a poor Earl, was married to an American "merchant-prince." Deeply in debt from frivolous spending, Lucy was forced to keep her creditors at bay by selling her dresses to an English Jewish woman masquerading as French "Antoinette." Lucy felt she couldn't tell her husband about her situation because she feared his scorn and wrath. The climax of the conflict came five years into the marriage when Lucy was faced with the necessity of selling her wedding dress. Rather than part with this symbol of her marriage, she revealed her dreadful secret to her husband, who forgave her, gently chiding "I think there are few husbands, Lucy, who do not estimate truth and candor as among the chief of conjugal virtues—ah, had you confided in me when first you felt the bondage of debt, how much anguish would have been spared you."[79]

Concern about money in "The Lady Lucy's Secret" was not just a convenient plot device. Between 1840 and 1890 the American economy was very unstable and subject to cycles of booms and busts. Thus, preparing women for adverse circumstances was the intent of some literature. One article observed, "A woman has her husband's fortunes in

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[77]*Oregonian*, 19 June 1852, 4.

[78]The *Ladies' Companion*, or *Snowden's Ladies' Companion* (1834-1844), was a New York imitator of *Godey's* and *Graham's*. Mott, *American Magazines, 1741-1850*, 626-628.

[79]*Oregonian*, 22 March 1851, 1.

her power, because she may or she may not, as she pleases, conform to his circumstances. This is her first duty, and ought to be her pride."[80] "A woman who truly loves her husband, will seldom trifle with his prosperity," the *Philadelphia Inquirer* newspaper observed.[81] And if economic calamity were to strike, nothing, according to Washington Irving, was more touching than observing a weak and dependent woman becoming "the comforter and supporter of her husband under misfortune, and abiding with unthinking firmness the bitterest blasts of adversity."[82]

Area newspapers also advised men on their marital obligations. "How to Treat a Wife," from an unnamed source, proposed, "First, get a wife; secondly, be patient. You may have great trials and perplexities in your business with the world; but do not therefore carry to your home a clouded or contracted brow."[83] In addition to leaving their problems at the office, men should be more understanding of women's labors, counseled one tender (albeit patronizing) poem:

> Be gentle! for you little know
> How many trials rise;
> Although to thee they may be small,
> To her, of giant size.[84]

"Fallacies of the Gentlemen," taken from an unidentified exchange paper, presented women's position more forcefully. Men's misconceptions included thinking

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[80]Ibid., 3 July 1852, 4.

[81]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 17 September 1853, 1. This newspapers, according to Mott, was called the *Pennsylvania Inquirer* until 1860. Mott, *American Journalism*, 188.

[82]*Oregon Spectator*, 7 September 1848, 4; *Western Star*, 19 December 1850, 1.

[83]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 1 April 1854, 1.

[84]*Western Star*, 6 March 1851, 1.

"that women are born to be their slaves. That dinner is to be ready for them the very minute they come into the house. . . . That they know what bonnet and dress become us so much better than we do."[85] An unnamed exchange paper delved into the repercussions of treating a wife unfairly: "it may require years to make a 'long suffering' woman as indignant as a man would become in a month, but she will get indignant at last, her affection will as inevitably decline, and the best and sweetest boon of life will be lost to the husband forever."[86]

Domestic Bliss

"Let home be now your empire, your world!"[87] This ringing refrain, directed at women, was a sentiment common to the era. Women, unless forced by circumstances to find employment beyond the threshold, were pressured to remain in the domestic sphere, there to maintain a civilized, relaxed, but well-run sanctuary to comfort the world-weary husband upon his return from a day's work. Society's well-being rested on the home, according to New York's *Christian Inquirer*,[88] and the cornerstone of the home was the "virtue of women."[89]

But it was hard work, not virtue, that kept a household running. Despite the steadily growing array of conveniences such as clothes dryers, sewing machines, and

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[85]*Oregonian*, 7 June 1851, 1.

[86]*Weekly Oregonian*, 15 August 1857, 1.

[87]*Oregon Spectator*, 16 September 1854, 3; *Oregon Weekly Times*, 20 January 1855, 4.

[88]The *Christian Inquirer* was a weekly New York Unitarian magazine. Mott, *American Magazines, 1850-1865*, 72.

[89]*Oregon Spectator*, 5 June 1851, 1.

how-to guides heralding the transformation of household drudgery into "domestic science," the day-to-day caretaking of the domestic empire was hardly something to sing about. Murmurs of complaint occasionally surfaced, requiring countermeasures by those seeking to keep women busily and quietly ensconced in the home. Bolstering attitudes was one technique. Lady Mary Stewart Wortley Montague, who moved in England's fashionable and literary circles, informed that "the most minute details of household economy, become elegant and refined, when they are ennobled by sentiment."[90] Fear was another tactic. One clipping from an unmentioned source charged American women with despising housework and warned that women neglected their domestic duties to the detriment of their health.[91]

Daughters who wouldn't help their mothers were often the target of reproach. Girls who shunned these activities were, of course, failing their own domestic educations and inadequately preparing themselves for marriage. Advice writer Sarah Ellis's essay "Idle Daughters," in *Anecdotes for the Young*, criticized young women who wouldn't help as their mothers slaved. "These individuals will often tell you, with an air of affected compassion . . . that poor, dear mamma is working herself to death." But when it was suggested that they aid their mothers, they were quick to reply that mother "could never never be happy if she had only half as much to do."[92] A male contributor to the *England Farmer* [93] felt mothers to blame for their daughters' negligence. He ventured that "many of them have never seen their mothers happy, or even reasonable or good humored, while

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[90]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 20 January 1855, 1

[91]Ibid., 15 January 1853, 1.

[92]*Oregon Spectator*, 10 April 1851, 1.

[93]Probably Boston's *New England Farmer* (1848-1871); Britain didn't publish an "English Farmer." Mott, *American Magazines, 1741-1850*, 809.

engaged in their domestic duties." He went on to remonstrate with women for toiling "from morning till night" yet still "making nobody comfortable" because of their complaints and sour moods. A sunny outlook was the remedy: housework, like husbands, should be met with good cheer, thereby making such duties attractive to daughters. Cultivating good conversation with your daughter while doing chores should provide good incentive, in this writer's view.[94]

"Harmony," writing for the *Ladies' Repository*, had a different angle on the home front. She observed that when a woman married, "the husband soon becomes avaricious enough to allow the woman of his love to become his most devoted drudge. Her life is thenceforth one of the most unremitting toil. It is nothing but cook and bake, wash dishes, thrash about among pots and kettles, wash and iron, churn, pick up chips, draw water, and a thousand other things," with chores increasing with the birth of each child. To expect women to perform housework, care for her children, and raise them correctly was asking too much—"The only wonder is, that the mother does not sink within this circle of everlasting drudgery." The problem was with the husband's lack of understanding of the amount of work that went into home maintenance, as well as American standards that made accumulating money important, when it would be well spent on hiring help for the home. "Harmony" urged women to reform this situation, but stopped short of advising women on how to carry out this reform, no doubt unwilling to suggest an avenue that could lead to domestic dissension.[95]

A writer for the Boston *Olive Branch*, probably Fanny Fern, was not as reticent with her advice. The answer, unlike "Harmony's," was not to hire assistance, but for

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[94]*Oregon Spectator*, 29 November 1849, 1.

[95]Ibid., 13 January 1852, 1.

men to help more around the house. "No wonder your wife was cross, getting supper with a baby in her arms!" the author wrote. "Why didn't you take the baby, and trot it, and please it? 'Room was all in confusion'—why didn't you put it to rights? 'You want a little rest!' So does your wife, but gets precious little, poor woman. . . . Put on your best smile the moment your foot touches the doorstep. Treat the littered room to a broad grin, and your wife to a kiss. Give the baby some sugar-plums and little Bobby a new picture book to busy his bright eyes with. Tell that poor, tired-looking woman that you've bought her a nice book to read, and that you're going to *stay at home evenings* [emphasis in original]."[96]

Motherhood

During this era, men's dominance in childraising matters gave way to women's influence, and almost all the middle class childrearing literature addressed mothers only.[97] "True womanhood" literature in particular exalted woman's role as mother. One clipping from the *Masonic Mirror*[98] marveled at how a mother could patiently sit "day after day, shaping and sewing some article for use or adornment for her little flock."[99] One essay glorified woman's role as the mother of men: "Great, indeed, is the task assigned to woman. . . . Not to make laws; not to lead armies; not to govern empires, but to form

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[96]*Oregonian*, 9 April 1853, 4.

[97]Carl N. Degler, *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 73.

[98]Probably Boston's *Masonic Mirror and Mechanic's Intelligencer.*

[99]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 29 July 1854, 4.

those by whom laws are made, armies led, and empires governed."[100] The *New York Organ* newspaper held the patriotic mother responsible for training her son to be "his country's hope and star of promise, in the mighty future of this nation."[101] Women were also expected to invest their children with religious values. "A mother teaching her child to pray, is an object at once the most sublime and tender that the imagination can conceive of,"[102] claimed one article. Such counsel was not to be taken lightly; a child raised incorrectly, Britain's *Church Chronicle* warned, could become a criminal.[103]

Much literature indicated that the mother's influence had a lasting effect on sons, well into adulthood. One essay from *Life Illustrated*, a weekly miscellany,[104] admonished young men to pause and consider whether "the path thou art treading evoke one lingering blush upon thy cheek, one emotion of shame! Bethink thee it is plowing deep furrows in thy mother's heart."[105]

Death and the Lady

Death was another favorite topic of the period, and women—as prospective brides, wives, and mothers—were idealized in death as well as in life, often inspiring maudlin stories and poems in the "true womanhood" mode. In the story "She Died in Beauty"

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[100]Ibid., 3 January 1852, 1.

[101]*Oregon Spectator*, 11 November 1854, 1.

[102]*Oregonian*, 12 June 1852, 1.

[103]*Oregon Spectator*, 21 November 1850, 2.

[104]*Life Illustrated* was established in New York in 1854. It merged with the *Phrenological Journal* in 1861. Mott, *American Magazines, 1850-1865*, 42, 559.

[105]*Weekly Oregonian*, 20 September 1856, 1.

Emily had been betrayed by a lover so she "yielded herself to doom and despair, and perished in the spring-time of existence." The narrator wrote sentimentally of her death and burial: "I gazed upon her as she was passing into eternity, and again I beheld her lowered into the tomb. And she glided away from earth, calmly and sweetly, and her pure spirit reposes in quiet with him who gave it."[106] The second stanza of a poem by Prentice, editor of the *Louisville Journal*, provides another example:

Mother, I love thy grave!
The violet, with its blossoms blue and mild,
Waves o'er they head; when will it wave
Above thy child?[107]

The Hero Woman

Women who defended hearth and home in times of war or crisis were also idealized and could be found in stories and poetry, as well as the occasional news article. The American Revolutionary War was the most common backdrop for fiction promoting this aspect of the ideal woman, but other conflicts, such as the French Revolution, also served. Heroines were presented as hardy, courageous, self-reliant, and resourceful, "real womanhood" attributes. While it may seem that combat transcends the boundary of acceptable female activities, women's defense of their home and family, even to the point of sacrificing themselves, can be seen as a natural extension of their nurturing instincts and duties. Many conflicts in these stories, in fact, did take place inside the home, with the woman protecting loved ones from invaders.

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[106]*Oregonian*, 3 July 1852, 4.

[107]*Weekly Oregonian*, 8 May 1858, 1.

In the story "Blanche of Monmouth," by Charles E. Waite, clipped from Boston's weekly miscellany *Flag of Our Union*,[108] Blanche, scarcely eighteen and "armed with pistols at her belt," followed her fiance, who was fighting with Washington at Monmouth. She watched the battle plain from nearby woods, witnessed the retreat of the American troops, and rode to tell Washington that the soldiers at the front would be falling back into his division. Washington was suitably grateful and asked her to ride with him as he rallied his troops. As they passed her house, Blanche noticed that the front door was open and heard the clashing of steel. She stealthily entered from the back and saw her mother in a faint and her father and fiance armed with swords, defending her home from six British soldiers. Blanche picked off two intruders with her pistols, then seized a sword and, "with a vehemence that resembled inspiration," beat back her foes. They fled, and Blanche returned to restore her senseless mother and tend her fiance's wounds.[109] Similarly, Catharine V— twice defended her home during the Revolutionary War from British sympathizers, in the process killing two men, one with a pistol and one at long range with a musket.[110] "The Hero Woman," by sensationalistic writer George Lippard, tells of Bess Wampole, who protected the ammunition cached in her house from several British soldiers by threatening them with a loaded rifle pointed at a powder keg until her brother could arrive. All three newspapers carried this story.[111]

Real, contemporary heroines were also glorified, providing some genuine foundation for this popular ideal. The *San Francisco Morning Post* reported that during

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[108]Mott, *American Magazines, 1850-1865*, 35.

[109]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 30 September 1854, 1.

[110]Ibid., 22 September 1855, 1.

[111]*Oregon Spectator*, 23 March 1848, 1, 2; *Weekly Oregonian*, 25 October 1856, 1; *Oregon Weekly Times*, 28 February 1857, 1.

one of their spectacular fires a woman appeared and ordered the formation of a bucket brigade. While working in the line herself, her dress caught on fire from falling cinders, so she ripped it off and worked in only her underdress. According to the *Post*, she "probably did more than any *man* in the line to preserve the ranks unbroken [emphasis in original]." The *Post* went on to praise, "It is said she had not a dollar of property at stake, but her energy of purpose affords a strong illustration of female heroism on occasions of public danger and calamity."[112] In an example closer to home, Oregon's Mrs. Mary A. Harris was granted a pension by the 1858 Territorial Legislature for her "gallant defense of her wounded husband and child against a numerous band of Indians on October 9th and 10th, 1855, during the Indian hostilities in Rogue River Valley."[113]

Defense against an immediate threat seems to be the key to this ideal. Women who chose the offense, such as joining the army as soldiers, were not welcomed and invariably disguised themselves as men to pass. One female soldier of the Mexican War, who had dressed as a man and was eventually discovered and discharged, was reported as applying for the pay and bounty land given to veterans. The *Baltimore Sun* felt that she might be successful on a technicality, because the law granting these benefits applied to soldiers, not men.[114]

Reform-Minded Women

The nineteenth century reform movement was rooted in women's religious work in missionary, charitable, and tract societies during the early 1800s, centered in the

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[112] *Oregon Spectator*, 17 July 1851, 2.

[113] *Weekly Oregonian*, 16 January 1858, 2.

[114] *Oregonian*, 18 April 1854, 1.

northeastern United States. By the 1830s women's goals had expanded to include abolition, temperance, peace, and moral reform, their interest and expertise in such matters based on their supposed moral and religious superiority.[115] The Portland-area papers did discuss women's involvement in reform movements, especially abolition and temperance.

Abolition

The abolition crusade began in 1831, when William Lloyd Garrison established the *Liberator* and formed the New England Antislavery society. From the outset women were welcomed into this reform, and by 1838 more than one hundred female antislavery societies had been established throughout New England and the Midwest.[116] Because of its controversial nature, abolition found only moderate coverage in the Oregon press. Many Oregon residents, newspaper editors included, were Southern sympathizers.[117]

A few articles, however, did discuss women's involvement with the antislavery movement. One news story on a New England Anti-slavery Convention held in Boston on May 26, 1852, reported that "of the audience about two-thirds were females of every shade of color."[118] Another blurb told of the many women present at an abolition convention at Worcester, Massachusetts, including abolitionist and women's rights activist Abby Kelley (Foster).[119] Journalist Grace Greenwood (Sara Jane Lippincott) wrote

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[115]Woloch, 167-168.

[116]Ibid., 182.

[117]E. C. Hibben, who succeeded John Orvis Waterman as editor of the *Oregon Weekly Times* in 1857, was a staunch Southern Democrat. Turnbull, 53.

[118]*Oregonian*, 7 August 1852, 1.

[119]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 28 February 1857, 2.

about men who had been imprisoned for helping slaves to freedom in Washington's *National Era*, the antislavery journal that published *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a serial.[120] Jane Swisshelm, an ardent abolitionist, criticized the Hon. Moses Hampton, Pennsylvania's Allegheny County Congressional Representative who refused to resign his seat after saying he would. "Those opposed to the strengthening, or spreading, or perpetuating of the institution of slavery, have great reason to regret Mr. Hampton's second thought. He has done nothing during his residence at the Capitol to indicate that the people whom he represents have any will on the subject of freedom, or are not the willing tools of the slave power."[121]

One clipping offered the opinion of "Parson" Brownlow, itinerant Methodist preacher and editor of the *Knoxville (Tenn.) Whig*,[122] of Harriet Beecher Stowe. Rather than criticizing her on literary grounds (he suggests *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was a family collaboration) he attacks her appearance: "But merciful God! she presents to the world the most hideous physiognomy ever gazed upon by the eye of man! She is as ugly as Original Sin—an abomination in the eyes of civilized people! A tall, coarse, vulgar looking woman—stoop-shouldered, with a long yellow neck, and a peaked nose—through which she speaks. . . ." Schnebly of the *Spectator* admitted he was no fan of Stowe but felt this diatribe "altogether out of place."[123]

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[120]*Oregonian*, 17 May 1851, 1.

[121]*Oregon Spectator*, 2 January 1851, 1.

[122]Despite Brownlow's tone in this article, the *Whig* was a Union paper, and was the last to leave the south. Mott, *American Journalism*, 262, 361-362.

[123]*Oregon Spectator*, 13 October 1853, 2.

Temperance

Temperance was a much less heated issue than abolition and because of the strong antiliquor sentiment in Oregon, was a common theme in the Portland-area press. Articles and stories with this theme were usually aimed at men because they were the primary consumers of alcohol, but women often appeared as victims or reformers.

"The Wife's Temperance Speech" told one woman's perspective on drinking men: "Go feel what I have felt, go bear what I have borne—sink 'neath a blow a father dealt, and the cold world's proud scorn; then suffer on from year to year, thy sole relief the scorching tear."[124] A clipping from England's *Star of Temperance* [125] describes the wife and mother's situation in poetic terms in "The Widow's Petition to the Rumseller":

> Beneath yon willows shade, unnoticed and unknown,
> There by that turf, with lonely wild-brier crowned,
> He for whose sake I've suffered long alone,
> My heart's first love a drunkard's grave has found.
>
> I could not mingle with the laughing throng
> That dance along this giddy path of life,
> 'Twas not for me, t'enjoy the cheerful song,
> For I was doomed the wretched drunkard's wife.
>
> And he for whom I now appear before thee
> (with fever'd brain, perhaps in accents wild,)
> He for whose sake, I, kneeling here, implore thee
> Has known the sorrows of the drunkard's child.[126]

Happy was the woman whose husband had signed the temperance pledge, according to Governor Briggs of Massachusetts, whose speech at Lowell was printed in

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[124] *Weekly Oregonian*, 18 September 1858, 1.

[125] This journal was published in 1836, according to Winifred Gregory, ed., *Union List of Serials in Libraries of the United States and Canada*, 2d ed., (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1943).

[126] *Oregon Spectator*, 20 April 1848, 4.

the *American Temperance Union.*[127] "I shall now have no more solicitude in reference to your becoming a drunkard," said the grateful wife. "I shall spend no more wakeful midnight hours. I shall no more steep my pillow in tears."[128]

Women, however, were not always victims, but often took an active role in reforming the inebriate. One temperance story, taken from a sermon given by the Reverend J. B. Owen in Liverpool, England, told how a Manchester man gave his wife enough money for a pint of ale each day before he went to a pub to drink. For their anniversary he was downcast because he didn't have enough money for a holiday. His wife, however, pulled out the "little capital" she had saved by not using her money for alcohol. The man felt "ashamed, conscience smitten and chagrined" when he learned his wife had saved her share. He was reformed, and the money was the nucleus for a "shop, factory, warehouse, county seat, [and] a carriage," and he became mayor of his burrough.[129]

Shaming seems to have been a popular approach for women intent on saving their loved ones from alcohol abuse. One anecdote illustrates this technique with a dialogue:

> "'Is a man and his wife both one?' asked the wife of a certain gentleman, in a state of stupification, as she was holding his aching head in both hands.
> 'Yes, I suppose so,' was the reply.
> 'Well, then,' said she, 'I came home drunk last night, and ought to be ashamed of myself.'"

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[127]No doubt New York's *Journal of the American Temperance Union* (1837-1865). Mott, *American Magazines, 1850-1865,* 210.

[128]*Oregon Spectator*, 9 November 1848, 3.

[129]*Oregonian*, 17 July 1852, 1.

The writer solemnly concluded, in contrast to the humorous punchline, "This back-handed rebuke from a long-suffering and loving wife effectually cured him of his drinking propensities."[130]

News blurbs described women in more public roles, reforming society at large, not just family members. One blurb described a Worlds' Temperance Convention, held in New York in September of 1853 at which women's rights reformers Lucretia Mott, Antoinette L. Brown, "Mrs. Lilly (of Bloomer notoriety)"[131] and many other notable women attended. Several of these women addressed the meeting, at which the Maine Liquor Law was the topic of discussion.[132] Other blurbs discussed the increasingly militant measures female antiliquor advocates were taking. In Otsego, Michigan, women armed with hatchets and pickaxes marched to a local hotel and drinking establishments and wrecked the alcohol containers. "In one or two instances they rolled barrels containing liquor into the streets, and there broke them open and let the liquor flow loose."[133] At Mount Pleasant, Ohio, about fifty women attacked a tavern, demolished the casks, and dragged the owner through the spilled liquid.[134] Another blurb announced that the women of Akron, Ohio, spent a couple hours emptying casks, smashing decanters, breaking bottles, and "raising the d---l generally."[135]

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[130]*Weekly Oregonian*, 8 August 1857, 1.

[131]No doubt referring to Amelia Bloomer, editor of the *Lily*.

[132]*Oregon Spectator*, 12 November 1853, 2.

[133]*Weekly Oregonian*, 3 March 1855, 1.

[134]Ibid., 10 March 1855, 2.

[135]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 24 April 1858, 2.

Women in the News

Pioneers were informed on various women's activities in addition to reform. Many of the women reported on were well known. For example, Portland-area papers noted when Sara Payson Eldredge (Fanny Fern) married James Parton;[136] reported that Pennsylvania chartered a medical college for women in Philadelphia with Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman medical college graduate and licensed physician, a candidate for the surgery chair;[137] observed the death of Margaret Fuller in an extended obituary;[138] and discussed Swedish novelist Frederika Bremer's visit to Mobile.[139]

Activities of lesser-known women were discussed as well. One article, originally clipped from a Paris paper, informed that Madame La Grange, a Parisian lady, pled her own case before a tribunal of justice. The article concluded, "there can be no doubt but that women would be great lawyers."[140] Another reported that eighty-one women in the United States were postmasters, many in important offices.[141] One blurb said, "Two lady reporters, Miss Harriet Farming Read, of the *Charleston Courier*, and Miss Windle, of the *Boston Post*, are to take their seats in the United States House of Representatives this session [1858]."[142] An unnamed source reported that a Mrs. Montgomery, whose husband, Lieutenant Montgomery, had died in Oregon, had been made Commandant of

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[136]*Weekly Oregonian*, 5 April 1856, 1.

[137]*Oregon Spectator*, 29 August 1850, 2.

[138]*Oregonian*, 12 April 1851, 1.

[139]Ibid., 22 March 1851, 2.

[140]Ibid., 27 September 1851, 1.

[141]*Oregon Spectator*, 20 March 1851, 3.

[142]*Weekly Oregonian*, 13 February 1858, 1.

U.S. Fort Gratiat at the head of the St. Clair river. Mrs. Montgomery was the daughter of General Northrup.[143]

Advances in employment for women were also reported. One blurb in the *Cincinnati Gazette* detailed how five women were recruited to work at that paper as compositors. The paper reported that they were doing well, and they were making more money for less labor than in their former positions, with steady employment. The blurb brightly predicted, "In another year several hundred will find profitable employment in this new field."[144]

More controversial work situations were covered as well. New York's *Journal of Commerce* told how women were filling the offices of men at expensive hotels during the New York strikes. Dislike for the striking laborers was apparent in the closing lines: "We have no doubt they will find that the strikers have struck out a decided improvement for them (the hotel keepers) and their guests, as well as for the girls and the interests of society."[145] A different view on labor was apparent in one unnamed source, which sang out, "Bravo! for the girls of Lowell!" The blurb informed that when the director of the mill cut out fifteen minutes of the men's lunch, the "girls" of Lowell—all eight hundred of them—refused to work, leaving the mill idle. The source concluded, "We fear the men would not have done as much for the girls."[146] Women were reported as strikers as well. One blurb reported that "the Factory Girls at Pittsburg have had another disturbance and riot (similar to the one last summer) growing out of a 'strike' among the female operatives

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[143]Ibid., 5 July 1856, 2.

[144]*Oregon Spectator*, 10 March 1854, 2.

[145]*Oregonian*, 2 June 1853, 1.

[146]Ibid., 28 August 1852, 2; *Oregon Weekly Times*, 18 September 1852, 4.

engaged in the factories there."[147] An unnamed source, probably in Connecticut, said, "The girls of Fairhaven, Ct., who struck for higher wages for opening oysters, have obtained their demands. They now receive two and one-half cents per quart, instead of two, as heretofore, for opening the bivales [sic]."[148]

Women criminals were also in the news. Women who were aberrant in conducting their motherly duties were often considered particularly newsworthy. The *Philadelphia Ledger* reported the case of a woman who left a baby on the boat after taking passage from Baltimore to Philadelphia,[149] and the *Ottowa (Illinois) Constitutionalist* reported that fifteen to twenty women whipped, tarred, and feathered a young woman accused of maltreating a child.[150] Other women criminals made the news as well. Matilda Wyman was imprisoned in East Cambridge, Massachusetts, house of correction for life for setting fire to a house where she was employed as a domestic, and which she had previously robbed, according to a source, probably in Massachusetts.[151] One unnamed source, probably from Boston, reported that female thieves were common in Boston and that six women had had their pockets picked by female thieves in stores.[152]

Women were also reported as the victims of crime. In a Louisville house of prostitution a woman was shot, then the gunman shot himself, according to the *Louisville*

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[147]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 28 August 1851, 2.

[148]*Oregon Spectator*, 21 March 1850, 1.

[149]Ibid., 17 April 1851, 1.

[150]*Oregon Spectator*, 30 September 1851, 4.

[151]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 7 January 1854, 2.

[152]*Oregon Spectator*, 19 September 1850, 1.

Journal.[153] A woman of Matamoras, Texas, reported the *Brownsville Flag*, had been flogged to death as a witch because of her work with herbs and the her perceived ability to transform into a black cat.[154] A Dr. Beale who had been sentenced to a Pennsylvania penitentiary on a charge of raping a woman under chloroform in his dental office was pardoned by the governor, according to one clipping, probably from a Pennsylvania newspaper.[155]

Women's Contributions

Editors of this era encouraged women to contribute to papers, and these entreaties appeared in the Portland-area press. A Cleveland newspaper editor encouraged young women to write because "it would help the reader as well as the writer, by infusing into the public mind more of the tenderness of thought than can be found in the grosser business and political writings of the day."[156] But at least one editor, from Illinois, thought women had better things to do, and met a contributor's efforts with, "If Mary will send us an affidavit that she has washed her dishes, mended the hose, and swept the house the week after she was 'blasted with poetic fire,' we will give in, and startle the literary world from its lethargy. For the present we say, *darn* your stockings, and *darn* your poetry, too [emphasis in original].[157] Nevertheless, women were entering the literary world in increasing numbers in the 1850s.

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[153] *Western Star*, 21 November 1850, 3.

[154] *Weekly Oregonian*, 7 March 1857, 2.

[155] *Oregon Weekly Times*, 19 January 1856, 2.

[156] *Oregon Spectator*, 28 December 1854, 1.

[157] *Western Star*, 21 November 1850, 3.

Numerous clippings in the Portland-area papers came from the pens of women, accounting for an average of 5% of the *Spectator's* clippings, and about 2% of those of the *Oregonian* and the *Times.* Fanny Fern (Sara Payson Willis Parton) was the most frequently quoted source, followed by journalist Jane Swisshelm, but several other women were clipped for Portland-area papers as well. In addition to the women mentioned above, these include (American unless otherwise noted) Swedish writer Frederika Bremer, writer and editor Lydia Marie Child, writer Mary Denison, essayist Margaret Fuller, poet Frances Gage, short-story writer Elizabeth Gaskell, writer and editor Sarah Josepha Hale, British poet Mary Howitt, poet Rosa Montrose, poet and editor Frances Osgood, poet and short-story writer Lydia Sigourney, writer Harriet Beecher Stowe, and many lesser known poets, fiction writers, essayists, and "Farmer's Wives."

These female contributors often wrote for and about women, but their interests also transcended the domestic sphere. Grace Greenwood, for example, wrote a biographical sketch on the Norwegian violinist Ole Bull[158] and an essay on the discovery of the Pacific Ocean.[159] Mrs. T. J. Carney of the *Olive Branch* , who doesn't appear in historical biographical encyclopedias, promoted work reform in an essay equating society with an express train bound for destruction.[160]

Trends in Coverage

In the *Spectator*, the percentage of space taken by clippings on women rose from about 13% in the 1846-1849 period to 24% from 1850 to 1854. The *Oregonian* and

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[158]*Oregonian*, 10 July 1852, 4.

[159]*Weekly Oregonian*, 4 September 1858, 1.

[160]*Oregonian*, 6 September 1851, 1.

Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times displayed an average of 36% and 29%, respectively, for the years 1851-1854, decreasing to 14% and 18% from 1855 to 1859. Unfortunately a paper spanning from 1846 to 1859 was not available, but it does appear when the three papers are viewed as a whole that a peak in clippings on women occurs between 1850 and 1854.

The cause of this pattern is not easy to determine. Interestingly, the apparent peak and decline coincide with the increased attention to women's rights and dress reform in the early 1850s, and the subsequent decline in coverage in the latter half of the decade (see Chapter IV), but clippings on women's rights and dress reform, composing less than 1% of the entire newspaper clippings, were too infrequent to have caused the overall pattern. Perhaps these controversial issues generated a greater interest in women in general. The use of women's contributions, most discussing women's concerns, may account for the pattern as well. The *Spectator* and *Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times* show a similar increase and decrease in the number of clippings by female contributors, but the *Oregonian* shows a reverse trend.[161] Whatever the cause of the increase of clippings on women in the early half of the decade, the decrease could be attributed to increasing coverage of the slavery issue.

Conclusion

Oregon's frontier audience was treated to numerous clippings on women from a variety of newspapers, magazines, and to a lesser extent, books. Some of this material

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[161]For the *Spectator*, women's contributions before 1850 are less than 1%, increasing to 9% from 1850 to 1854. The *Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times*, averaging 3% from 1851 to 1854, decreased to less than 1% from 1855 on. The *Oregonian*, however, shows a reverse trend, averaging less than 1% from 1851 to 1854, increasing to 3% from 1855 to 1859.

overtly advised women on their behavior; some presented women's activities in American reform movements; some was informative, providing news without commentary; and some was merely entertaining. Such clippings kept the frontier audience apprised of women's role in events in the United States and provided women a continuing link with their place in American culture. A large portion of this clipped information was directed to women, indicating the importance of frontier women as an audience.

Material discussing popular ideologies of women came mostly from magazines, while information on reform-minded women and news items came mainly from newspapers. Periodical and newspaper clippings on women were mostly of Northeastern flavor, with cities of origin being New York; Boston; Philadelphia; Pittsburg; Washington, D.C.; Baltimore; and Portland, Maine. The South and Midwest were also represented, with items selected from Cincinnati; Ottowa, Illinois; Louisville; and Nashville media. British periodicals and newspapers were also sampled, indicating the continuing British influence on the American media.[162] Most of the periodicals were miscellanies and women's magazines, carrying a variety of essays, news, and entertainment literature. Others magazine types include those devoted to medicine and/or science, Christianity, temperance, Masonic ideas, rural interests, foreign literature, and commerce.

The popular ideology of women presented in the media could at times be contradictory. Some items supported the virtuous, pious, dependent "true" woman, while others advocated her more robust, well-educated, self-sufficient "real" counterpart. Both ideals worked within the concept of separate spheres. The Portland-area papers displayed

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[162]American newspaper and magazine editors regularly pilfered items from the English media. Mott, *American Magazines, 1741-1850*, 392; Mott, *American Magazines, 1850-1865*, 129.

a fairly even distribution of this material, although the *Times* did support exercise and general health for women more strongly than the *Spectator* or *Oregonian.*

Historians have long explored the extent to which frontier women departed from social ideals held in the United States. Many have concluded that Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis—that the frontier liberated the individual from social, class and psychological constraints—did not hold true for women, that the ideology of women's place was transported to the frontier and retained. Others have asserted that frontier women did gain a greater level of independence and had more opportunities to venture into the public sphere than their Eastern sisters. However, while the extent of frontier women's adherence to traditional norms has been the subject of much debate, little has been written about how these norms may have been reinforced and perpetuated. This chapter shows that the popular ideology of women presented in the American media was at the fingertips of anyone in the Portland area with access to a local newspaper.

This is not to say that the ideals presented in frontier newspapers necessarily influenced or accurately reflected frontier women's activities. In many cases, U.S. modes probably were at odds with Western experience. However, the literature about women carried in Oregon papers may have served as a link with the past for Western women and as an ideal for behavior, less easily attained on the frontier, but pursued nevertheless.[163]

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[163]Proof that women used media to help recreate traditional norms on the frontier is hard to find, but some evidence does exist. For example, a maternal mother's group, which was a common association for U.S. women in the 1820s and 1830s (Mary Ryan, *Empire of the Mother: American Writing about Domesticity, 1830-1860* [New York: Harrington Park Press, 1985], 56) was founded in the late 1830s at a mission in what is now Washington State. *Mother's Magazine* was the focal point of their group discussion. Later another maternal association was founded in the Portland area when some of the members from the mission moved there. Clifford M. Drury, "The Columbia Maternal Association," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 39 (1938): 99-122.

CHAPTER IV

CLIPPINGS OF WOMEN: WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND DRESS REFORM

> The intelligent, sensible, and true women, of course view the 'Woman's Rights' agitators in no very favorable light.
> —*Oregonian,* December 18, 1852

> A young lady appeared in the streets in an eastern village in the new style of pettiloons and short gown; the dogs took after her, taking her to be some strange animal, run her some distance, and treed her on a high fence.
> —*Oregon Weekly Times,* December 13, 1851

The women's rights movement was born of the mid-nineteenth century reform mentality. In general, women in the early nineteenth century were excluded from higher education, many types of jobs, and the pulpit, and were denied property rights, suffrage, and guardianship of their children.[1] Although hints of women's unease with their lot are evident as early as 1792 with the publishing of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman,* by Mary Wollstonecraft, an English woman, American rumblings on women's reform didn't begin in earnest until the late 1830s when abolitionists Angelina and Sarah Grimké began writing on these issues.[2] Organized efforts to discuss women's rights developed in the late 1840s, with the first women's rights convention taking place in 1848 in Seneca Falls,

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[1]Woloch, 192.

[2]The occasional earlier American efforts have been identified, such as the 1790 two-part article by Judith Sargent Murray printed in *The Massachusetts Magazine* entitled "On the Equality of the Sexes," as well as Frances Wright's lecture in 1828 and Ernestine Rose's lectures during the 1830s. Donna A. Behnke, *Religious Issues in Nineteenth Century Feminism* (Troy, New York: Whitston, 1982), 9-11; Judith Papachristou, *Women Together* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 23.

New York. Throughout the 1850s, national and state conventions were held and local meetings took place in small towns in Ohio, New York, Massachusetts, Indiana, and Pennsylvania. Women were also involved in lobbying, testifying before legislators, making speeches, collecting signatures on petitions, and writing pamphlets, newspaper articles, studies, and briefs. Activity mainly occurred in the Northeast and Midwest; Southerners for the most part shunned the movement because of its association with abolition. The outbreak of the Civil War brought a temporary halt to the movement.[3]

Dress reform, a response to the era's long, heavy, and confining skirts with their constricting stays and corsets, became a much-discussed issue in 1851 with the appearance of the "Turkish style" or "bloomers," consisting of pantaloons and a short skirt. Several women's rights activists tried the new style, including the Grimké sisters, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, Paulina Wright Davis, Elizabeth Smith Miller, and Amelia Bloomer (whose name became permanently associated with the outfit because of her support of it in her newspaper, the *Lily*). Although freedom of movement through dress reform was only one small concern among many women's rights issues, the new style soon took on a life of its own, with wearers often being the target of criticism and ridicule on the street and in the media. To the chagrin of women's rights activists, the outfit seemed to detract from serious discussion of the more important women's rights issues. Recognizing this fact, Stanton gave up the outfit by 1854 and urged others to follow suit. Bloomer, probably one of the longer wearers, continued its

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[3]Papachristou, 29, 42, 47; Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 1, 2d ed. (Rochester, New York: Charles Mann, 1889), 310.

use for six to eight years.[4] Because dress reform did become a separate, very incendiary, and highly publicized issue, it is discussed at length in this chapter.

Information on early press coverage of women's rights, including dress reform, is anecdotal, provided by first-hand observers in *History of Woman Suffrage*, edited by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage. These women's rights activists agreed that women's issues were largely disparaged by the media. The first convention in 1848, for example, was extensively published and "unsparingly ridiculed by the press."[5] Press coverage of the first National Women's Rights Convention, held in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1850 continued in this vein, according to Paulina Wright Davis: "From North to South the press found these reformers wonderfully ridiculous people. The 'hen convention' was served up in every variety of style, till refined women dreaded to look into a newspaper."[6] The press at the fourth annual meeting, held in Indianapolis in 1854, "as usual, ridiculed, burlesqued, and misrepresented the proceedings. . . ."[7] Coverage, however, may have begun to change in the mid-1850s. At the October 1855 National Convention at Cincinnati, Ohio, Convention President Martha C. Wright (a sister of Lucretia Mott) stated that although most papers still

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[4]D. C. Bloomer, *Life and Writings of Amelia Bloomer* (Boston: Arena Publishing Co., 1895; reprint, New York: Schocken Books, 1975), 69; Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap, 1975), 84, 363; Papachristou, 40-41; Stanton et al., 127-128, 470, 844.

[5]Stanton et al., 73.

[6]Ibid., 219.

[7]Ibid., 307.

made light of the reform, "the newspapers which ridiculed and slandered us at first, are beginning to give impartial accounts of our meetings."[8]

Dress reform received similar coverage: "Some praised and some blamed, some commented, and some ridiculed and condemned."[9] Media attention probably waned after 1854, when many stopped wearing the costume. Interestingly, women's rights coverage apparently became more favorable in the mid-1850s, about the same time that "bloomers" were put aside by most women's rights activists (although negative press on women's rights preceded adoption of the Turkish style).

Sympathetic coverage on women's rights and dress reform occurred as well. Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*, was an unfailing proponent of women's rights, and the abolitionist papers, such as Frederick Douglas's *The North Star* and Gamaliel Bailey's *National Era*, were favorable as well. Other newspapers running support articles include the *Syracuse Standard*, Boston *Atlas and Daily Bee*, and Omaha *Nebraskan.*[10]

Portland-area newspapers carried clippings on women's rights from a variety of American (and a few British) newspapers and magazines, including many that supported the reform. This chapter will discuss trends in coverage in the Portland-area papers as well as the variety of factual information and social values presented. (Women's rights conventions were not taking place in Oregon at this time, although women did have access to bloomers. Local discussions of women's rights, including dress reform, will be addressed in the next chapter.)

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[8]Ibid., 164.

[9]Bloomer, 68.

[10]Papachristou, 45-46, 260; Stanton et al., 74-75, 111, 126, 517, 606, 626.

Trends in Oregon Newspaper Coverage

Women's rights (including dress reform) received less than 1% of the total clipping space in each of the three newspaper. Among the clippings mentioning women (about 20% of the total clipping space for three newspapers), the space given to women's rights varied; in the *Spectator* women's rights took up 4%, in the *Oregonian* less than 1%, and in the *Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times* 1.5%. In comparison, women's involvement in temperance received 9%, 0%, and 1.5% of the space among women's clippings in the *Spectator*, *Oregonian*, and *Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times*, respectively. Although the space allotted to women's rights and women's efforts in temperance is comparable (except, perhaps, for the *Spectator*), the tone of the coverage was very different; women's work in temperance, on the whole, received favorable reviews.

Editors frequently commented on the articles they clipped, sometimes offering their opinion in a few succinct remarks, other times using the article as a springboard for an opinion piece of their own. Articles several times removed from their source could accumulate editorial comments each time they were clipped, making ascribing editorial remarks to their respective person or paper difficult. An article promoting a belief or theory could acquire a negative tone when an editor clipped it and commented on it for his or her own paper. Women's rights articles seem to have provoked an especially large amount of editorial comment.

All women's rights and dress reform items for each of the newspapers were counted and categorized (as positive, neutral, respectfully negative, disparaging, or as jokes) for 1851, 1852, 1854, and 1858 (the *Spectator*, however, was not available for

most of 1852 and ceased printing before 1858).[11] Positive items include arguments in favor of woman's rights as well as favorable notices of conventions, such as that they had been conducted with dignity. Positive bloomer items observed that the outfit was pretty or that the wearer was modest. Neutral items simply stated that a convention had taken place or that a woman in the bloomer outfit had been seen. Respectfully negative items disagreed with the reforms but discussed them seriously, without resorting to name-calling. Disparaging items made light of or insulted women's reform, often with references to "strong-minded women" or their "manly pretensions." Jokes usually took up only a line or two of space and made light of the reforms (although in one joke the woman actually prevailed). As noted above, editors often remarked on items, giving the article a different overall tone.

Although the *Spectator* ran two items that mentioned women's rights in 1849 and 1850,[12] the bulk of coverage hit the Portland-area papers in 1851. The *Spectator* led the others in coverage that year, with 8 items on women's rights, 33 on bloomers, and 3 on both, for a total of 44. Of the combined 1851 *Spectator* women's rights and dress reform articles, 15 (34%) were positive, 8 (18%) were neutral, 4 (9%) were respectfully negative, 13 (30%) were disparaging, and 4 (9%) were jokes. One of the positive items was editorialized on negatively, giving the article an overall negative slant.

The 1851 *Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times* carried four mentions of women's rights, 22 mentions of bloomers, and 2 items that discussed both, for a total of 28. Of the combined women's rights and dress reform articles, 6 (21%) were positive, 2 (7%) neutral, 1 (4%) respectfully negative, 12 (43%) disparaging, and 7 (25%) were jokes.

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[11] An item or mention comprises a range of material, including news articles, anecdotes, stories, poems, and jokes.

[12] *Oregon Spectator,* 4 October 1849, 1; Ibid., 12 December 1850, 4.

Negative editorial remarks were interjected into one of the positive items and one of the neutral items, giving a slightly negative impression to both.

In contrast, the *Oregonian* carried 8 items concerning women's rights, 3 on bloomers, and 1 article that discussed both, for a total of 12 items. The *Oregonian's* relatively scanty coverage can be explained by the availability of only 27 issues for that year.[13] Of the combined women's rights and dress reform articles, 3 (25%) were positive, 2 (17%) neutral, 1 (8%) respectfully negative, 5 (42%) disparaging, and 1 (8%) was a joke. In the *Oregonian*, six of the bloomer items were presented together, with a negative editorial comment by Dryer, giving an overall negative effect to the coverage (including the one positive and one neutral item). A positive bloomer item also was negatively commented on by an editor.

In 1852 coverage had already begun to decline. The *Times* in that year carried 1 item on women's rights, 8 on bloomers, and 1 combination. Six of the bloomer items were disparaging or were jokes. The *Oregonian* carried 2 items on women's rights, 2 on bloomers, and 2 combination, for a total of 6. More interesting than the total number of items, perhaps, is the fact that none of the items carried in 1852 in the *Oregonian* treated this subject positively: although no jokes were present, the items either criticized or satirized the movements. (One item disagreed respectfully, but the editor's negative comments gave the article an overall negative tone.) The *Spectator* is not discussed for 1852 because it was suspended in March and did not resume printing until August of 1853.

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[13]In 1851, 27 issues of the *Oregonian*, 52 of the *Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times*, and 53 of the *Oregon Spectator* were available. For 1852, 50 editions of the *Oregonian* and 52 of the *Times* were available. For 1854, 53 editions of the *Oregonian* (including California extras), 52 of the *Times*, and 48 of the *Spectator* were available. For 1858, 52 issues of the *Oregonian* and 50 issues of the *Times* were available.

By 1854 coverage of these issues had decreased further. The *Oregonian* carried 2 women's rights items, 1 that made light of the movement and 1 joke. The *Times* carried 3 on women's rights, 1 on bloomers, and 1 combination. Four of these items were disparaging. The *Spectator* carried 6 items on women's rights and 4 on bloomers, with 2 positive and 1 neutral slant. By 1858 the issues were even less present in the Oregon press. The *Oregonian* carried 4 items, all on women's rights. Two were neutral and 2 were jokes. In one of the jokes, the woman got the upper hand. The *Times* carried only 1 item, a joke about bloomers. In 1858 the *Spectator* was no longer in print.

While the number of items decreased through the decade, the negativity increased. Of the combined 1851 total of 84 items for all three newspapers, 24 (29%) were positive, 12 (14%) were neutral, and 48 (57%) were negative (including respectful, disparaging, and jokes). In comparison, for the combined 1852, 1854, and 1858 total of 38 items, 4 (11%) were positive, 5 (13%) neutral, and 29 (76%) negative.

The three newspapers however, had their own individual slants on the topics. For the years 1851 and 1854, the *Spectator* carried 17 positive items (31%), 9 neutral (17%), and 28 (52%) negative, including jokes. The *Oregonian* for 1851, 1852, 1854, and 1858 contained 3 positive items (13%), 4 neutral (17%), and 17 negative (71%). The *Times* for the same years carried 8 positive articles (18%), 3 neutral (7%), and 33 negative (75%). The positive press in the *Spectator* may be attributed to Schnebly's support of moderate dress reform, although he did not like bloomers. Interestingly, Schnebly contributed some of the most negative remarks about women's rights in general.

The Oregon frontier received a truly broad perspective on women's rights issues, with clippings taken from a variety of domestic and foreign newspapers and magazines by Oregon editors. Positive or neutral reports were taken from Amelia Bloomer's temperance and women's rights paper, the *Lily*, Horace Greeley's pro-reform *New York Tribune*, the

abolitionist *National Era*, the Boston *Olive Branch*, early home of Fanny Fern (Sara Payton Willis Parton), who came out for women's rights in 1858, the *Lowell Offering*, published by women who worked at the Massachusetts mill, Jane Swisshelm's Pittsburg *Saturday Visiter* (which also made disparaging remarks about some women's rights issues and bloomers), as well as the *Syracuse Standard*, *Oswego (New York) Journal*, *Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican*, *Barnstable (Massachusetts) Patriot*, *Columbus (Ohio) Statesman*, *Cincinnati Commercial*, *Urbana (Illinois) Citizen*, *Muscatine (Iowa) Journal*, *St. Louis Times*, and *London Ladies' Gazette*. Positive or neutral journals include New York's *Water Cure Journal* and Pennsylvania's *American Law Register*.

Negative reports in newspapers and magazines were numerous and also came from all regions of the United States (and from England). A few of the more noteworthy newspapers include the *New York Herald*, *New York Times*,[14] *Boston Post*, *Boston Times*, *Boston Transcript*, *Washington Union*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, *Minnesota Pioneer*, *Louisville Journal*, *Lynchburg Virginian*, *London Court Journal*, *London Sunday Times*, and *Punch*. Magazines include the New York's sport paper, *Spirit of the Times*, the New York literary magazine, the *Knickerbocker*, Cincinnati's *Literary Journal*, and the British variety journal *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*.

Women's Rights

Women's Conventions

Many of the clippings in the Portland-area newspapers on women's rights reported on the lecturers and activities at women's rights conventions. After the first in 1848,

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[14]Stanton et al., 546-547, describe the *Herald* as "Satanic" in its opposition to women's reform. The *Times* was more conservative, but still worked to maintain the status quo.

national woman's rights conventions were held annually throughout the 1850s, with the exception of 1857. Ohio also held annual meetings to promote women's interests during the 1850s.[15] Coverage clipped for the Portland-area newspapers often included editorial comments, by either the original writer or editor or the local editor.

Because women's public speaking in front of "promiscuous" audiences (those containing both men and women) was considered improper by many Americans, the behavior of convention attendees captured press attention. One clipping, describing the second national convention of 1850 held in Worcester, Massachusetts, at which many women spoke, noted that "it was conducted with remarkable dignity, and has compelled respect even from very many of those who oppose its objects. The sessions continued through three days, and the discussions were marked by ability and earnestness."[16] Although it did inform on the behavior of the participants, this clipping did not present information on the issues discussed.

Another clipping describing the Worcester convention quoted Abby Kelley Foster, who traveled and spoke on abolition throughout the 1840s and occasionally lectured on women's rights. In her speech, quoted from an unstated source, Foster demanded that men and women be treated equally: that women be educated with men, own their own property, have the right to vote, and be allowed to attain civil, religious, and military offices. Foster, known for her rousing style, said, "I do not come to ask them [rights], but to demand them; not to get down on my knees and beg for them, but to claim them."

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[15]Keith Melder, *Beginnings of Sisterhood: The American Woman's Rights Movement, 1800-1850* (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 151-153.

[16]*Oregonian*, 13 December 1851, 2.

These words prompted one editor to quip that her next appearance would "doubtless be at a militia muster."[17]

After the 1848 convention at which activist Lucretia Mott's husband, James Mott, was asked to preside, women took a more active part in holding offices at these meetings, which also attracted notice from the press. An unidentified Syracuse newspaper, probably covering the third national women's convention of September 1852, said this of the meeting's organization: "Lucretia Mott was called to the chair, and Paulina Duns, of R. Island, Mrs. E. O. Smith, of Brooklin, C. W. Nicholls, of Battleboro, Gerrit Smith and Sarah L. Miller, of Pennsylvania, appointed Vice Presidents." These attendees examined the country's constitution to see which parts should be set aside, and then declared the right of every woman holding property to resist taxation until she acquired the right to vote. The reporter noted that the convention was "largely and enthusiastically attended."[18] This article provided readers with important information about the movement, including the names and concerns of the primary people involved. The statement on attendance let readers know that the movement was taken seriously.

Conventions were not always reported so glowingly, however. At a woman's rights convention in Cleveland in 1853, reported to be a scene of bickering and angry discussion,[19] William Lloyd Garrison, an ardent abolitionist and woman's rights advocate, was said to have been involved in a theological discussion with Nevin, a parson, which ended in Nevin's "tweaking" Garrison's nose.[20] Schnebly of the

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[17]*Oregon Spectator*, 6 March 1851, 1.

[18]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 27 November 1852, 2.

[19]*Oregon Spectator*, 3 December 1853, 1.

[20]Ibid., 3 December 1853, 2. This incident is described in Stanton et al., 139-144.

Spectator showed his viewpoint of the movement by frequently being the local carrier of these negative reports. He also described the principal message at a New York women's convention as "the usurpation of man"[21] and said that women at those meetings "rendered themselves so ridiculous . . . that their meetings were broken up through the instrumentality of their own discordant sentiments."[22]

Women's Rights Issues

In addition to reporting on women's conventions, the Portland-area newspapers also carried clippings on some women's rights issues, such as education, employment, and legal matters.

The 1820s and 1830s saw great strides in female education, with advances gained by Emma Willard, founder of the Troy Female Seminary in 1821; Catherine Beecher, who traveled and lectured on education reform and worked to gain funding for seminaries in the 1830s; and Mary Lyon, who founded the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in 1837. All sought to change the emphasis in the curriculum from fashionable topics to more intellectual fare.[23] Yet many women were disappointed in their attempts to study the classics, the sciences, or other demanding intellectual disciplines, even at women's colleges, where the curriculum was geared to training missionaries and teachers. Women advocates sought educational opportunities comparable to those of men, including access to all subjects at all levels of education, as well as institutions of equal caliber.[24] A

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[21]*Oregon Spectator*, 12 November 1853, 2.

[22]Ibid., 3 December 1853, 2.

[23]Catherine Clinton, *The Other Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), 45; Melder, 16-22.

[24]Melder, 155.

Spectator article clipped from the *Cleveland Herald* argued that women's education was not restricted and placed the blame for women's lack of intellectual development firmly on women. Frivolous female education, the writer claimed, was the fault of the mothers, who decide the education of the children.[25]

Employment compensation was another aspect of women's reform. In occupations employing both sexes, such as teaching or sewing, women earned about one-half to one-third of the wages paid to men.[26] One essay attempted to expose how the popular version of the pedestaled female worked against fairness in employment compensation. It remarked that women were not allowed to pursue "fair avenues of employment more appropriate to her faculties than man's" and men could "usurp all lucrative trades, or pay the female operative half the price for the same amount of work." At the same time, men "put on a false smile of adoration in the presence of beauty . . . we make her our dear pet—our pretty doll—our half angel, whom we worship with about as much sincerity of heart as exists in our fashionable churches on Sabbath day." The essay concluded that "What our society wants, is more true respect for women . . . and less of this veneering of gallantry."[27] One news story discussed pay inequities, describing how a woman in Minnesota dressed as a man so she could cook for a logging crew. She needed money, but as a woman she could only earn $4.00 per month, compared with $30.00 per month as a man.[28]

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[25]*Oregon Spectator*, 10 December 1853, 2.

[26]Melder, 155.

[27]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 17 June 1854, 4.

[28]Ibid., 24 September 1853, 1.

Yet one woman opposed the women's rights movement because she claimed it did not do justice to inequities in employment compensation. Phoebe Patterson[29] wrote about her appeals to several women's rights advocates regarding the pittance paid to working women, such as seamstresses, to the *New York Times*, which opposed women's reform. She claimed that "as to *assisting industrious females to a better competence for their labor*, they have a horribly unconquerable antipathy to the idea, lest it detract from their *own agitations or profits* [emphasis in original]." This prompted her to endorse the paper's views "about the vanity and selfishness of these women and men," whom she considered "as destitute of benevolence and tenderness of heart, and love of truth, as their persons are unattractive."[30] Patterson's claims may have had some validity. Many antebellum women's rights reformers were of the middle class and may have had an inexact understanding of the needs of working class women.[31]

The Portland-area newspapers also carried clippings on legislation affecting women and on women who pursued voting rights. One news item reported when the rights of married women came before the Indiana Constitutional Convention. The proposition was to apply the full right of separate property to married women.[32] Another, from an unstated source, reported in 1853 that the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention found it inexpedient to act on a petition in favor of the right of women to vote on the acceptance of the constitution.[33] Some women took their own initiative in

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[29]Phoebe Patterson does not appear in historical biographical encyclopedias.

[30]*Oregonian*, 19 November 1853, 1.

[31]Melder, 157.

[32]*Western Star*, 13 February 1851, 3.

[33]*Oregon Spectator*, 2 September 1853, 1.

procuring the right to vote. A clipping from the *Cincinnati Times* told how Henrietta Burke[34] wore men's clothing to vote. After voting once, she went to try it again but was recognized. When it was discovered that she was female, she was arrested and served twenty days.[35]

Nevertheless, women were making some progress through the courts. The *Oregonian* reviewed a case printed in December 1854 in the *American Law Register*, a legal magazine published in Pennsylvania, in which a Pennsylvania court decided "that no indictment can now be sustained in that state against a female as a common scold." Although Dryer sarcastically editorialized that women "have already invaded the legislature, and are now melting the judges," he also said that "such changes are safe, wholesome, and in unison with the progress of the age. They are likely to be made durable, being made little by little, and thus not endangering the whole fabric of law."[36]

Lucy Stone

Women who toured, lectured, and wrote on women's reform attracted a large percentage of the coverage on women's issues. Lucy Stone was one such woman. After Stone received her undergraduate degree in 1847 from Oberlin, the first co-educational college (it became co-ed in 1837) and one of the few open to women, she embarked on a speaking tour on behalf of antislavery and women's rights.[37] The most positive item about her in the Portland-area press, clipped from the *Syracuse Chronicle*, praised Stone

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[34]Henrietta Burke does not appear in historical biographical encyclopedias.

[35]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 25 June 1853, 2.

[36]*Weekly Oregonian*, 10 March 1855, 1.

[37]Clinton, 45, 72.

for her oration even though it disagreed with her views on women's rights and bloomers.[38] Since childhood she had been opposed to marriage for herself because of the inequities of being a wife and made no secret of her beliefs; her views on marriage, as well as her marriage to Henry Blackwell, an abolitionist and an astute businessman,[39] were the focus of the Portland-area press's attention.

When Stone asked, "Marriage, what is it?" a clipping from the *Dayton Gazette* said to answer this "you must lay aside your *manly* pretensions. . . . give up your unsexed, unsexing philosophy, and go straight ahead as nature's purest, noblest impulses direct [emphasis in original]." These supposed natural impulses were to marry and have children.[40] When Stone said, "Marriage is to woman a state of slavery. It takes from her the right of her own property and makes her submissive in all things to her husband," both the *Spectator* and the *Times* carried the rebuttal by Ella Wentworth's Journal[41] that said: "Marriage is a state of slavery! Aye! but the bonds are silken and easily worn. Marriage is the sanctifier of love—an institution which acknowledges the right of women to be protected and the duty of man to protect her."[42]

Considering her views on the institution, its not surprising that Stone required some modifications of her marriage ceremony to suit her beliefs. Henry Blackwell, who

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[38]*Oregon Spectator*, 16 September 1853, 4.

[39]Elinor Rice Hays, *Morning Star: A Biography of Lucy Stone 1818-1893* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961), 20-21, 87-88, 104.

[40]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 15 October 1853, 1.

[41]Ella Wentworth's Journal is probably the *Literary Journal*, edited by "Ella Wentworth" and others in Cincinnati. This magazine on women and the home lasted less than a year. Mott, *American Magazines, 1850-1865*, 58.

[42]*Oregon Spectator*, 28 April 1854, 1; *Oregon Weekly Times*, 10 November 1855, 1.

was used to remarkable women, his sister Elizabeth Blackwell being the first woman in the United States to hold a medical degree,[43] was of the same mind as Stone and helped write a protest into their marriage ceremony. In it he renounced the marital rights of men so that he and Stone would be joined as equals. In addition, the word "obey" was omitted from the May 1855 ceremony.[44] The *Boston Daily Advertiser*, a Whig paper, reported that Stone was wed "under protests. . . . She protests against the existing laws of marriage, and, as a wife, claims a right to be a completely independent and separate individual, such as she was before marriage." The *Times* observed that Stone and Blackwell had "by mutual consent formed a co-partnership" and concluded that "Lucy's protest don't amount to much," perhaps suggesting that editor Waterman thought the marriage not much more than a business agreement, with the protests not meaningful.[45]

Even after her marriage the newspapers reported on Stone, who kept her maiden name. The *Oregonian* observed when Stone refused to pay tax on some property she owned because she felt that since she was denied the rights and privileges of citizenship allowed males and she should not be taxed. "The collector will probably test by law the validity of Lucy's plea," was the dry response.[46]

Jane Swisshelm

Jane Swisshelm, a writer and occasional lecturer on women's rights and anti-slavery, also received a relatively large proportion of the women's rights coverage.

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[43]Elizabeth Blackwell graduated from Geneva Medical College in 1849 at the top of her class. Hays, 87-88, 104.

[44]Ibid., 128-129.

[45]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 7 July 1855, 2.

[46]*Weekly Oregonian*, 13 March 1858, 1.

Swisshelm created the Pittsburgh *Saturday Visiter* in 1848 and as its editor wrote about many women's reform issues, such as taxation without representation and domestic drudgery, as well as on other, non-reform topics.[47] She was also a ardent supporter of married women's property rights and sued her husband for property she had inherited.[48] One of the *Oregonian's* clippings identified Swisshelm as "the man-woman in all except the trousers,"[49] undoubtedly referring to her support of women's rights and disdain for bloomers.

Swisshelm, who was not a radical reformer, was concerned that women's rights conventions would lure "fools and fanatics" who would mar serious efforts at women's reform. She attended the 1851 Akron convention intending to "modify the madness" but felt she had failed and didn't attend another convention for twenty years.[50] The moderate views she presented at this convention apparently appealed to Waterman of the *Oregon Weekly Times* and Schnebly of the *Spectator*, who offered clippings of her ideas.

In a speech at the Akron convention debating the equality of the sexes, Swisshelm said that "the physical right to be taken care of" was one of woman's rights, explaining that "our physical weakness will ever be our strongest argument for claiming all legal, intellectual, and moral powers of defense." She also said that meeting at a convention to discuss women's rights to enter the workforce was "sheer nonsense," pointing out that "there is no law to prevent woman from following almost any business, and why do they not take their right to work at anything they please? . . . There is no use in claiming rights

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[47]Melder, 144-145.

[48]Woloch, 191.

[49]*Oregonian*, 12 April 1851, 1.

[50]Jane Grey Swisshelm, *Half a Century* (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg and Company, 1880), 142-144.

for those who do not want to use them, and those who do, should just take them."[51] Such sentiments were shared by other women reformers, such as Jane Elizabeth Jones, who felt it better to take rights, show independence, and establish equality, rather than to "tarry to discuss the question."[52] The Swisshelm article, carried in the *Oregon Weekly Times*, claimed this to be a "very sensible speech" and urged her to "keep on making more of the same sort."[53]

Another Swisshelm speech given at the 1851 Akron convention was reviewed by the *Cincinnati Commercial*, a newspaper of that city. In opposition to a resolution promoted by radical strain at the convention, Swisshelm claimed that if women were deprived of rights it was from carelessness or neglect, not "criminal injustice" and "gross tyranny." Despite her arguments, the more radical resolution passed.[54] Although she apparently disagreed with several propositions at that convention, Swisshelm did think that women should have the right to vote on the prohibition of dram shops.[55]

A Woman's Place

Although Swisshelm's moderate views were clipped by local editors Waterman and Schnebly, much more negative items were also printed in the Portland-area papers, many attempting to contest women's reform by affirming women's traditional role.

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[51]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 21 August 1851, 1.

[52]Melder, 153.

[53]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 21 August 1851, 1. It's not clear whether this is the viewpoint of the original writer or that of the *Times* editor.

[54]*Oregon Spectator*, 9 September 1851, 4.

[55]Ibid., 18 November 1851, 4.

Female detractors—those who for whatever reason enjoyed residing in their appointed sphere—were often enlisted for this duty. An article in which a young woman at the 1851 Akron convention urged women to resume their place was carried in both the *Oregonian* and the *Spectator*. She said, "For her own part, she loved man, individually and collectively, better than woman, and so, she was sure, did every one of her sex, if they, like her, would utter their real sentiment. She was more anxious for man's elevation and improvement than for woman's, and so was every true woman." Her views were considered "quite sensible" by the reporter.[56]

Another clipped article claimed that "the intelligent, sensible, and true women, of course view the 'Woman's Rights' agitators in no very favorable light." It quoted one "true-hearted" woman who argued that "woman is a helpmeet to her husband; she is to share, not his labors and pursuits,—for in these she would be but an inferior assistant, of less value than one of his own sex, —but his affections, his destinies, his joys and his sorrows." Her sentiments were also considered "sensible," as well as "worth all the trash uttered at the late Syracuse Convention."[57]

Another woman put her views more bluntly. She hoped that the "female croakers" would fail in their endeavors before her daughter came of age, "for sooner than have her occupy the position of Miss Stone, or any other traveling lecturer, we would see her fill an early grave."[58]

Men, of course, had their own reasons for opposing women's reform. One of the most interesting clippings on why women should remain in their sphere told of the shift in

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[56]*Oregonian*, 4 October 1851, 1; *Oregon Spectator*, 7 October 1851, 4.

[57]*Oregonian*, 18 December 1852, 4.

[58]*Oregon Spectator*, 14 July 1854, 3.

the balance of power that would occur as a result of women's reform. Presented as a letter written from the future perspective of 1900, this article in the style of Orwell's *1984* direly predicted that if the female agitators had their way, the world would see women ministers, women in Congress, a female Attorney General, women foreign leaders, and even a woman President. In this future world, men would not have the right to vote. In one scenario, a man who attempted to lecture on men's rights was "pelted from the stage by a volley of stones from the females, whose rights he had assailed."[59]

Other arguments appealed to religion, the basis for many of society's constraints on women. Saint Paul's teachings that women should keep silent in the churches and that women should be commanded by their husbands were interpreted by many as reasons to exclude women from public speaking, especially in the pulpit, and to uphold men's dominance over women in most aspects of their lives.[60] Many women's rights activists, especially the public speaking Grimkés, Lucy Stone, and Amelia Bloomer, took exception to these teachings. A clipped article from a Baptist magazine or newspaper[61] condemned the women's movement because it claimed society would be disrupted by women moving beyond the sphere appointed for her "by her own constitution and by God." The writer

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[59]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 16 April 1853, 1.

[60]In the King James Bible the The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians 11:3 reads ". . . the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man. . . ." The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians 5:22-23 reads "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church. . . ." The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians 14:34 reads "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law."

[61]The magazine or newspaper was entitled *Baptist* [?]*der*, with the last word of the name indecipherable. The word could be *Recorder*, but no periodical with that title was mentioned in Mott's *American Magazines, 1850-1865* or *American Journalism*, or in Gregory's *Union List of Serials.*

also said that women who wanted to remain "lovely" and who did not want to "blaspheme" should shun the movement.[62]

Stronger terms than this were often used in the attempt to ensure women did not venture beyond their sphere. As with Jane Swisshelm and Lucy Stone, many other female women's rights advocates were described as "man women," "manly," and "strong minded," calling their femininity into question. Harriet Hunt, a homeopathic physician and women's rights advocate, asserted that because women paid taxes they should have representation. The unidentified source in which she was quoted referred to her as "Miss Dr. Hunt" and charged that "strong minded women" who felt this way were not wives and mothers.[63] The most hostile attack in any of the papers came from Schnebly, editor of the *Spectator*, who described attendees at "A Woman's Rights or *Hen's* Convention" as "frozen hearted old maids and barren women."[64]

The effect such "strong-minded" women were thought to have on society was similar to the supposed effect they had on the men around them. The *Albany* (New York) *Transcript* described the husband of Elizabeth Oakes Smith, she a woman's rights advocate as well as an author, as a "poor, broken-down man, in consequence of the bad treatment of his wife." He had once been a man of talents and literary ability but was now a "cowed and spiritless misanthrope" with a failing marriage. The writer editorialized: "Well may Mrs. Smith give her advice to wives to subdue their husbands at home, for she speaks as one having experience of what such caudling can accomplish."[65]

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[62]*Oregon Spectator*, 17 December 1853, 1.

[63]Ibid., 26 November 1853, 1.

[64]Ibid., 3 December 1853, 2.

[65]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 5 November 1853, 1.

The logic behind such items was this: when women broke out of their traditional role, men were forced to assume the woman's role, thus becoming less than men. One clipping sarcastically explored this theme using the name "Mrs. Smith," perhaps in allusion to Elizabeth Oakes Smith, discussed above. It said the "model husband," who "would satisfy the stoutest advocate of 'woman's rights' at the late Massachusetts Convention . . . never takes the newspaper and reads it before Mrs. Smith has a chance to run over the advertisements, marriages, deaths, &c. he always gets into bed first on cold nights to take off the chill for his wife. If the children in the next room scream in the night, he don't expect his wife to take an air bath to find out what is the matter. He has been known to wear Mrs. Smith's night-cap while in bed, to make the baby think it was its mother. We wonder if ladies love such 'lords' as this!"[66]

Fiction

Stories and jokes, like the parody above, often reveal the feelings of the public on women's reform, and many exhibit the theme of women "usurping" men's traditional place in society. One joke said, "No lady will be admitted to the next 'Woman's rights' Convention, who does not smoke, shave, and sing bass. The officers are expected to wear whiskers."[67] One women's convention parody clipped from New York's *Spirit of the Times*, a sports paper, proposed the following resolutions: "No tea, coffee, or wine drinking, except for the ladies . . . . No breakfast to be kept hot for the lazy louts; ditto dinner; ditto supper." One "speaker" at this convention said "I want to vote, become a

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[66]*Oregonian*, 27 March 1852, 4.

[67]*Oregon Spectator*, 17 April 1851, 1.

millingtary ossifer, speechify, throw myself onto my country, make money, lose money, and be somebody."[68]

The next joke suggests that if women were no longer going to act like ladies—submissive and modest—then men were no longer going to extend them the courtesies expected from gentlemen of the era. "'Will you please to permit a lady to occupy this seat?' said a gentleman to another, the other day, in a railroad car. 'Is she an advocate of woman's rights?' asked the gentleman who was invited to 'vacate.' 'She is,' replied he who was standing. 'Well, then let her take the benefit of her doctrine, and stand up.'"[69]

Some jokes alluded to the supposed aggressiveness that detractors felt such women displayed, such as the following from the *Western Star*: "Woman's Rights—If she cannot be captain of a large ship, may she always command an almighty *smack*!"[70] This joke was slightly altered and printed in the *Spectator* about four months later and in the *Oregonian* a month after that. Some jokes, such as the following from the usually supportive Democratic New York *Evening Post*,[71] twisted the women's words and applied sexual innuendos: "In a late speech, Lucy Stone said, 'We know there is cotton in the ears of men. Let me look for hope in the bosom of women.'" The paper replied, "She probably meant to say, 'better look for hope in the eyes of men, for we know there is cotton in the bosoms of women.'"[72]

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[68]*Oregonian*, 24 April 1852, 4.

[69]*Weekly Oregonian*, 11 September 1858, 1.

[70]*Western Star*, 17 April 1951, 4; *Oregon Spectator*, 12 August 1851, 4; *Oregonian*, 27 September 1851, 1.

[71]Stanton et al., 546-547, considered the *Evening Post* one of the champions of women's rights.

[72]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 2 February 1856, 4.

In one joke, however, carried by the *Atlantic Monthly*, the woman got the upper hand. In this joke Kate was asserting the wife's right to control her own property and was advocating equality of the sexes. When her husband asked her why, if men and women were equal, did animals like men better than women, Kate replied, "there is more affinity between you and the brutes."[73]

Dress Reform

Elizabeth Smith Miller is often cited as the first to wear the "Turkish dress"—pantaloons and a short skirt extending a little below the knees. Miller wore the outfit to visit Elizabeth Cady Stanton, her cousin, in Seneca Falls, and inspired Stanton and Amelia Bloomer to try the outfit. After Bloomer announced her experiment with the new style in the next issue of the *Lily*, a newspaper devoted to reform, she received hundreds of letters from women inquiring about the dress and asking for patterns. She felt she was in a position from which she could not retire and continued to wear the style "on all occasions, at home and abroad, at church and on the lecture platform, at fashionable parties and in my business office" for six to eight years. Because the outfit received so much coverage in the *Lily* from Bloomer, the press coined the phrase "Bloomer Costume."[74]

Sightings

Bloomers usually caused a sensation wherever they appeared, and many newspapers reported such sightings. A description of the clothing was often a primary aspect of the reports, as in the following clipping from the Washington D.C. antislavery

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[73]*Oregonian*, 14 August 1858, 1.

[74]Bloomer, 35, 65-69.

journal that published *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a serial, the *National Era.* The *Era* described the outfit worn by Bloomer and some women of Syracuse, New York, as consisting of "full Turkish trousers, fastened at the ancles [sic], and skirts coming down a trifle below the knees. The waist is made loose, and according to the tastes of the wearer."[75] The frequently supportive *Syracuse Standard*[76] announced that the new style looked "decidedly tidy and neat, and imparts to the wearer quite a sprightly and youthful appearance."[77]

But the behavior, not the appearance, of bloomer-clad women was frequently the object of scrutiny. One clipping on a Boston woman in the style said "the young lady was alone, appeared quite modest, and of course 'was the observed of all observers.'"[78] The *London Ladies' Gazette* reported that four young women at Lowell in the Turkish outfit "certainly made a very neat and pretty appearance, and behaved themselves in a most modest and becoming manner."[79] An item from the *Lowell Offering*, a paper edited by women who worked at the Massachusetts mill, described Miss Weber, a young Belgian woman's rights activist[80] who appeared in the Parisian fashion of black dress coat and pants with a buff vest. According to the *Offering*, "her every word, look and action is

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[75]*Oregon Spectator*, 29 July 1851, 4.

[76]The *Syracuse Standard* gave at least two encouraging reviews of the Syracuse National Convention, held in September 1852. Stanton et al., 520, 542.

[77]*Oregon Spectator*, 26 June 1851, 3.

[78]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 21 August 1851, 2.

[79]*Oregon Spectator*, 30 September 1851, 4.

[80]A letter on dress reform by this woman, Helene Marie Weber, was read at the 1850 convention in Worcester, Massachusetts. She apparently also wrote several tracts on the Rights of Woman. Stanton et al., 224-225.

characterized with the most refined womanly delicacy."[81] New York's *Oswego Journal* said two women in the "short Turkish dress" accompanied by men at a steamboat landing were all "evidently people of cultivation."[82] Of course, not all women in the new outfit were cast as ladylike. According to the Democratic *Boston Post*, "two handsome Bloomers . . . were on board the Mayflower, bound to Hingham, and excited mush attention, particularly when they went to the bar and called for a drink!"[83]

A *St. Louis Times* clipping, however, shifted the focus of discussion from the wearers to the watchers, saying with some disgust that the behavior of the observers "does not speak well for the politeness of the people." In this account a young woman in bloomers was accompanied by a gentleman into a jewelry store. Many people "beset the door, and gaped in as though a grizzly bear or an elephant were on exhibition.—Worse still, remarks were made by the crowd, highly offensive and improper. . . . The lady and her attendant attempted to escape by the back door, but the rabble crowd . . . rushed round the block and besieged the alley exit on Chestnut st." The man and woman were forced to pass through the crowd to escape.[84] The *St. Louis Times* may not have supported the outfit but apparently did defend the right to wear it unmolested.

Health

In addition to descriptions of sightings, the new style prompted serious discussions on health reform. The *Springfield Republican*, a Massachusetts Whig

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[81] *Western Star*, 20 February 1851, 2.

[82] *Oregonian*, 19 July 1851, 1.

[83] *Oregon Weekly Times*, 2 October 1851, 2.

[84] Ibid., 15 November 1851, 1.

newspaper, considered women's clothing equipped with stays or stiff with whale bone physically destructive and exclaimed: "Now if there be a man in christendom who can look upon this prisonhouse, instrument of torture, and slow murder—this leg-tangling, back-beating, hip-depressing, chest-compressing, arm-imprisoning, breath stopping, disease-inducing apparatus known by the name of 'woman's dress'—and not exclaim 'away with the miserable humbug,' he is a very small pattern of a man."[85]

Another article, clipped from the *Water Cure Journal*[86] and prefaced with a sarcastic note by editor Goodrich, also displayed strong feelings about dress reform. It said, "More that half of the females in this country are killed, (that's the word,) . . . by the too prevalent custom of wearing tight waists, whalebones, and long heavy skirts, until—not until a good old age, but until wearied nature sinks to an early rest." The writer then called on the press to encourage dress reform.[87] A news item also attested to the dangers of current fashion; it reported that a young woman died in Bristol, England, "from the compression of the stomach and viscera by tight lacing."[88]

Others, however, used medical reasons in an attempt to discredit the garment. As with her moderate views on women's reform, Jane Swisshelm's arguments opposing bloomers were popular with the Oregon press; concern that the garment impaired women's health was just one of her reasons for not liking the outfit. She felt that trousers worn

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[85]Ibid., 7 August 1851, 2.

[86]The *Water-Cure Journal and Herald of Reform* was established in 1845 and was devoted to physiology, pathology, hydropathy, and physical, moral and intellectual development. This very popular progressive magazine ran for fifteen years under this title and fifty years more under other names related to health and hygiene. It claimed a circulation of 50,000 shortly after 1850. Mott, *American Magazines, 1741-1850*, 441.

[87]*Oregon Spectator*, 20 January 1855, 1.

[88]*Oregonian*, 5 July 1851, 4.

without being suspended from the shoulders were less healthful than skirts because she thought they created a strain when sitting.[89] Horace Mann, an education reformer, in a lecture at which mostly women attended, disclaimed the new attire as unsuitable on the basis that women's organs are different from men's and, consequently, less suited to wearing pantaloons.[90] Another clipping, from the *London Court Journal*, defended the corset, claiming that when it was used in moderation it was, perhaps, actually beneficial to the health.[91]

Free Movement and Modesty

Freedom of movement, an issue related to health as well as comfort, was also a press topic. The weight and constriction of traditional clothing was objectionable to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who frequently contributed temperance and woman's rights articles to the *Lily*.[92] Dryer of the *Oregonian* clipped one of her dress reform articles from that paper, sarcastically (and mistakenly) identifying her as its "editor or editress." Stanton said, "for us, common place, every-day, working characters, who wash and iron and brew, carry water and fat babies up stairs and down . . . run our own errands, through mud or snow, shovel paths and wash in the garden, why 'the drapery' is quite too

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[89]*Oregon Spectator*, 11 November 1851, 1;*Oregon Weekly Times*, 22 November 1851, 2.

[90]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 19 June 1852, 1.

[91]*Oregon Spectator*, 16 December 1854, 1.

[92]Bloomer, 46-47, 70.

much—one might as well work with a ball and chain."[93] Stanton herself wore bloomers at home, abroad, and on the lecture platform for two or three years.[94]

Henry Ward Beecher, a prominent Brooklyn minister and Harriet Beecher Stowe's brother, also promoted the costume, in certain circumstances, because of the freedom of movement it allowed. Beecher felt that in the country, "where the fields are to be travelled, the rocks climbed, brooks crossed and recrossed, fences scaled, bushes and weeds navigated," a woman in a long dress and petticoats was a "ridiculous abomination." While he was not fond of the new costume, he did feel that it "leaves the motion free, dispenses with half the help from without, and above all, avoids needless exposure of the person."[95] One newspaper considered this freedom beneficial to the city dweller as well. In describing a woman of Auburn, New York, dressed in the short skirt and trousers, a paper, probably of that town, said: "The lady seemed ready for any agency. If the streets were in bad condition, she was capable of gliding along without the least inconvenience; if they were dry and dusty, her dress was not called upon to do the drudgery of a broom; and if it became necessary for her to quicken her pace, on account of a threatening storm, she was ready to put herself in competition with the most fleet of foot of the opposite sex. We say, hurrah for the short dress and trowsers."[96]

Swisshelm, like Henry Ward Beecher, felt that the wide skirts of women were impediments in rural areas, but her sense of propriety compelled her disapproval of the outfit and she voiced this disapproval emphatically: "It would be too humiliating to be

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[93]*Oregonian*, 20 September 1851, 4.

[94]Bloomer, 70.

[95]*Oregon Spectator*, 2 December 1854, 1.

[96]Ibid., 22 July 1851, 4.

met and mistaken for a man. We would a great deal rather be arrested as a sheep thief. We shall use all our influence to preserve man's right to his pantaloons inviolate."[97] Modesty also was lacking in the garment, Swisshelm thought. She felt that the short skirt revealed too much, especially when bending to pick something up because the back of the short skirt rose, making it even shorter. When squatting in the costume, she cautioned, one had to make sure that the skirt did not catch on the knees.[98] When one female advocate of the style proposed in a letter to the Philadelphia *Saturday Post* that women not only adopt the Turkish dress for riding but also the masculine style of riding, Swisshelm exclaimed in the *Visiter*, "A woman, bestriding a horse under such circumstances, or in any costume—whew! May the good angels preserve us from all future improvements or reforms!"[99] In Greeley's pro-reform *New York Tribune* one writer criticized what she thought was Swisshelm's excessive modesty, claiming that viewers should be able to "contemplate a pair of legs in trousers with as much calmness as a pair of bare arms or shoulders." She pointed out that "our most fashionable men and women will coolly look at the female form on canvass, or in marble, without any drapery, and it is the sheerest affection that they are so shocked at the bare idea that a woman has legs."[100]

Eventually Swisshelm retreated from her strong stance and said she considered the costume to be "very convenient and appropriate in many places, and on many occasions:

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[97]*Western Star*, 2 January 1851, 4.

[98]*Oregon Spectator*, 11 November 1851, 1; *Oregon Weekly Times*, 22 November 1851, 2.

[99]*Oregon Spectator*, 25 November 1851, 2.

[100]Ibid., 11 November 1851, 4.

but do not think we should ever like it, for 'full dress' or an evening costume."[101] Swisshelm, who was fearful for fashionable women who dressed with "the long whale bones sticking down into their sides, the tight strings tied round the small of the back, and the weight of the skirts dragging them to their grrves [sic],"[102] advocated in the *Visiter* a real but modest reform in dress and urged women to wear less clothing and less heavy clothing.[103]

Other Persuasion

In addition to appeals to health and modesty, other arguments were employed to dissuade women from wearing the new style. Comparisons with slave women and Native American women were sometimes used, possibly because the authors thought white women would shun such a likeness. A writer for the Massachusetts Whig paper *Springfield Republican* claimed the style was years old among black female slave cotton pickers.[104] A *Minnesota Pioneer* article said that bloomers were not a new fashion because they had been worn by "Native American ladies" for a long time and were still being worn.[105] Dryer of the *Oregonian* said that "as we have not seen any lady, other than *Chenook hyas cloochernan*, wearing the dress 'a la Turk,' of course we cannot say

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[101]Ibid., 23 September 1851, 2.

[102]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 29 November 1851, 1.

[103]*Oregon Spectator*, 11 November 1851, 1; *Oregon Weekly Times*, 22 November 1851, 2.

[104]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 14 August 1851, 1.

[105]*Oregon Spectator*, 2 December 1851, 4.

anything about it."[106] Undoubtedly Dryer meant this as a slight; chenook hyas cloocherman in Chinook jargon, the trade language of early Oregon, means big Indian woman.[107] Schnebly of the *Spectator* also remarked that Oregon's native women inhabitants wore a similar outfit.[108]

Ridicule was another technique used to discourage women from assuming the style. The *Boston Gazette* told the effect of showers on the new costume: "The Turkish trousers lost their graceful contour, and flapped round the pedestals of the wearers like a wet banner round a flag staff, while the tunic was deprived of its stiffness. The fair Bloomer was in a most awkward position, and reminded the Gazette of a seriously indisposed hen, who had been caught some way from her roost in a thunder storm."[109]

Portraying women in the outfit as immoral was another technique used to dissuade its adoption. The following clipping from the *Lynchburg Virginian* makes such a point with a play on words: "Monday, about noon, Main street was adorned with a new edition of Bloomerism, revised, corrected and greatly abridged—The copy, like the original, was bound in *Satan*, stamped in *guilt*, and dedicated to the public [emphasis in original]."[110] Threatened masculinity, perhaps the key to concern about women's morality, is evident in many clippings hostile to the reform. A correspondent of the high-culture *Boston*

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[106]*Oregonian*, 19 July 1851, 1.

[107]Edward Harper Thomas, *Chinook: A History and Dictionary of the Northwest Coast Trade Jargon* (Portland: Oregon Metropolitan Press, 1935).

[108]*Oregon Spectator*, 2 December 1851, 4.

[109]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 9 October 1851, 1.

[110]Ibid., 23 October 1851, 2.

Transcript [111] pointed out the "advantages" to women's wearing of the new outfit in the following sarcastic excerpt. "They can perch their feet about on high back chairs, railings, mantle pieces and window sills without hindrance—in short, they can sprawl about promiscuously, miscellaneously, masculinely and generally."[112]

As the above excerpt shows, some thought that women became less feminine when in bloomers. By this reasoning, men who favored the new style were considered less manly. One clipping, apparently a true account probably first printed in a Syracuse newspaper, reported that a young woman "of the Bloomer order" who had married in Syracuse was "serenaded" by "some rowdies." She fired a gun over their heads and they ran away, but finding that no one was hurt, they returned the next night. "She answered their impertinence with a charge of shot," which, according to the paper, "was no more than they deserved." The story then ended with, "We hope the lady's husband was not alarmed at the row. We find no mention of him in the account."[113] The sly implication is that the man allowed his wife to face danger alone.

Fiction

Discussions of the topic were often carried out in fictional form in poems, stories, and jokes. The fifth and sixth stanza of the poem "The Bloomer" illustrates the idea that women in bloomers were less feminine and threatened male sexuality:

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[111]The *Boston Transcript* was touted as an organ of Boston culture by Mott, *American Journalism*, 217.

[112]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 25 September 1851, 2.

[113]Ibid., 8 October 1853, 1.

Ah! well-a-day, the bard may say,
Shall one bestow his kisses on;
A shameless maid, who's not afraid
To put a pair of breeches on?

She'll make him feel, from head to heel,
Whatever else he hitches on;
He has no right right [sic], by day or night,
To put a pair of breeches on.[114]

The story "The Bloomer Costume," from an unidentified source, opens with Mr. and Mrs. Caudle in bed and her asking his permission to make a pair of bloomers. "I'm sick of hearing about it," was his reply, "sick of seeing great green girls galloping round the streets with ankles like an elephant, toes turned in, and great soup plates of hats turned over their ugly faces." Mrs. Caudle was not deterred by his unflattering description of women who wore the costume; she dug her elbow into his side to keep him awake. Mr. Caudle next threatened to wear petticoats if she wore bloomers, but this did not prevent her further requests. In the end he relented and said she could make herself a bloomer outfit. Even though the woman in this story gets her way, the man's dominance and masculinity is affirmed by her asking his permission for the new outfit, and the overall effect is one of ridicule for the movement. The setting of this story, a bed, is unusual for this era and highlights the sexual tension this issue created. Both the *Oregon Weekly Times* and the *Oregonian* printed this story.[115]

Role reversal was a common story theme, and the fictional men often resorted to wearing petticoats to get their women out of "breeches." In "A Bloomer Story," Jedediah Doughkins' wife, "a round oily little woman," made herself bloomers with the help of her friend, the lisping Rhuty Tute. Jedediah, a Yankee farmer, arrived at the house and, after

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[114]Ibid., 16 October 1851, 4.

[115]Ibid., 3 July 1852, 1; *Oregonian*, 10 July 1852, 4.

viewing the two in bloomers, wondered, "was it a pair of fat fairies he was gazing at?" This unsightly turn of events prompted the following exchange: "'If yeou [sic] don't go and take [off] them vulgar-lookin' half trowsers, and that scimpy lookin' frock, I'll go right off and dress myself in petticoats, and ride straddle into town on the gray mare.' Mrs. Doughkins screamed. 'I'll tell yeou, I'll do it.'" This threat succeeded and she never wore bloomers again.[116] The humor of the story aside, two things are apparent: The women are portrayed as unattractive and the man's sexuality is threatened.

Jokes on the topic were plentiful and used different methods to make their point—that the outfit was not fit for "ladies." One simply made fun of the outlandishness of the costume: "A young lady appeared in the streets in an eastern village in the new style of pettiloons and short gown; the dogs took after her, taking her to be some strange animal, run her some distance, and treed her on a high fence."[117]

Many jokes involved a play on words, as in the following: "A lady dressed in long skirts is in full *bloom*, but a lady in pantaloons is a *Bloomer*."[118] "The first Bloomer, Punch [a British paper] thinks, was Joan of Arc, who wore a short tunic of tights, and was otherwise clad in *mail* attire."[119] "It is said that the Bloomer movement is helped along mostly by those ladies who are *panting* for excitement."[120]

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[116]*Oregon Spectator*, 24 February 1852, 1.

[117]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 13 December 1851, 4.

[118]*Oregon Spectator*, 16 December 1851, 4; *Oregon Weekly Times*, 17 January 1852, 1.

[119]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 6 March 1852, 1.

[120]Ibid., 15 May 1852, 1.

But many jokes alluded to the supposed greater extent to which women were exposed when wearing the Turkish costume,[121] such as the following: "A writer on 'dress,' who deserves hanging, says that 'young women should let their judgement be seen by the frugality and simplicity of their apparel.' Our modern young ladies are 'frugal' enough in some parts of their dress, heavens knows; and as to letting 'their judgement be seen,' that is nearly all that is not exhibited."[122] One joke took a personal jab at Amelia Bloomer and also remarked on the masculinity of the attire: "A Mrs. Bloomer, editress of the Lily, as an advance from the weakness of her sex, has adopted the 'short dress and trousers.' So far so good. When does the lady begin to shave?"[123]

But these jokes, which might provoke a chuckle or head shake from a modern reader, are indicative of real hostility toward the reform. Such hostility is evident in a clipping that discussed a court decision by a Massachusetts judge in which women who dressed in "male attire" could not prosecute for rape; their only redress was through an action of assault and battery.[124]

Conclusion

Several points can be made about coverage of women's rights and dress reform in the Portland-area newspapers, both from the statistics and the contents of the clippings.

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[121]Descriptions indicate that no additional flesh was exposed with this outfit, and some, such as Amelia Bloomer, considered the outfit to be much more modest than the fashionable dresses that left a large portion of women's chests and arms bare.

[122]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 2 January 1858, 4.

[123]Ibid., 6 December 1851, 4.

[124]*Oregon Spectator*, 16 September 1851, 1.

Most striking is the number of items on reform in the Portland-area papers. Although less than 1% of the clippings seems low for any topic, one might not even expect word of women's rights to be printed in a frontier paper in the Oregon Country, let alone have some information on this subject available to the public every one or two newspaper issues throughout 1851.

Even more surprising is the large amount of positive coverage women's rights received in the Oregon press, in opposition to first-hand accounts of the predominantly negative slant of the press. In 1851, for the combined papers, 29% of the items were positive and 14% were neutral. For the later years, 1852, 1854, and 1858, 11% of the items were positive and 13% were neutral. Even though some of the positive items did contain negative editorials, injecting a negative tone into those particular pieces, the number of positive items still seems high. The stated negativity by the American media may have been exaggerated by women's rights activists, whose own perceptions were not objective. Also possible, but doubtful, Oregon editors may have received more positive reviews in their exchange papers, or Oregon editors may have chosen to print more of the positive reviews.

Also noteworthy in the statistics is the rapid decrease in coverage of both women's rights and dress reform after 1851. This pattern is evident in each of the three newspapers, and is curious because the era's women's rights activists give no indication that coverage decreased after 1851. Unfortunately there is no quantitative survey that discusses women's rights coverage at the time in the American media. If coverage did decrease throughout the United States after 1851, a few reasons can be offered. Diminished coverage may have resulted from a decline in interest for the topics; they became old news. Also, dress reform was largely discarded by 1854, which would account for lack of coverage in later years on this topic. However, included in the decline

is the increasing percentage of jokes—from 20% in 1851 to 60% in 1858. Also likely is that the press became more hostile to the reforms as more women joined the movement. Agitation spread to the Midwest and gained grass roots appeal, lifting the movement from an oddity to an actual threat to the status quo, perhaps provoking a backlash of infrequent, and mostly negative, coverage. Also possible is that the issues received decreased coverage in the Oregon papers alone, an occurrence for which there is no explanation.

Also evident in the statistics is that in 1851, when the issues received the most coverage, discussion of dress reform overshadowed that of women's rights. Once again, this pattern was evident in each newspaper, and fits with first-hand observation that dress reform was detracting from serious discussion of other women's rights issues. Perhaps this uneven coverage can be explained by the fact that dress reform was easily observed, whereas other women's rights advocacy was not so physically evident. This concern over what women wear rather than what they think does, however, invite comparison with the media's attention in the 1960s and 1970s to alleged bra-burning rather than equal rights.

Amelia Bloomer herself said that "we all felt that the dress was drawing attention from what we thought of far greater importance—the question of woman's right to better education, to a wider field of employment, to better remuneration for her labor, and to the ballot for the protection of her rights."[125] Schnebly of the *Spectator* also noted that the attention to bloomers "sounded the death knell to 'womans' rights' conventions, at least for the present."[126] On the other hand, in the Portland-area press women's rights were very rarely discussed until 1851, when bloomers appeared, even though three women's rights conventions had been held since 1848. Even though these early meetings were said

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[125]Bloomer, 70.

[126]*Oregon Spectator*, 4 November 1851, 2.

to receive a great deal of publicity, the bloomer controversy may have helped focus attention on women's rights in the media, even though it detracted from serious and extensive coverage of the issues.

Inferences about the various editors, who were the gatekeepers at the newspapers,[127] can also be drawn. The *Oregonian* offered the least coverage of these two topics, indicating that Dryer was, at the very least, somewhat disinterested. He did, however, indicate a desire to keep his female readers informed, saying on one occasion that "the new fashion . . . is the subject of many paragraphs in the Northern papers, and that our fair readers may not be left in the dark on a subject which must excite their curiosity, we notice some of them."[128] That Dryer did not favor the new dress is evident in his closing statements, which likened the new outfit to that worn by Native American women. Greater coverage, however, did not necessarily indicate advocacy. The *Spectator* carried more information on women's rights than the other two newspapers, but Schnebly, who was the editor from 1850 to 1854, when most of the items were printed, was the most hostile to women's reform, describing female advocates as "frozen-hearted old maids and barren women." Schnebly, however, also carried the greatest positive number of bloomer items, probably because of his own support for moderate dress reform. The *Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times* didn't carry as many reports as the *Spectator*, but did contain the least amount of hostile editorializing. Despite their own opinions on the issues, the editors did provide a variety of information, especially in 1851.

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[127]At the *Spectator* and *Oregonian* the editors were also the owners during this period. At the *Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times*, the editor was not the owner, and the owner had the right to fire the editor if the information printed was not considered acceptable.

[128]*Oregonian*, 19 July 1851, 1.

Information on women's rights and dress reform was clipped from a variety of newspapers and magazines, from the Northeast, Midwest, South and abroad, from pro-reform papers and more conservative sheets, providing a truly broad perspective for the frontier audience. Even though these ideas were filtered through gatekeepers—the local editors—the editors did print a variety of information, regardless of their beliefs, indicating they felt an obligation to inform the public, not just further their own opinions.

Women's rights and the media have always made a strange pair. First-hand accounts of the earliest women's rights movement report the ridicule women's rights issues generally received in the press, but in the same breath inform that such coverage "struck the key-note for similar gatherings in several of the Northern States. Without the least knowledge of one another, without the least concert of action, women in Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts, sprang up as if by magic, and issued calls for similar conventions."[129] Even though many newspaper accounts described the movement negatively, even the disparaging articles carried the important message that women were starting to stand up for their rights. This news was spread across the United States, galvanizing more women into action. Such coverage spread even to the Oregon frontier. The relatively large amount of coverage, eclectic sources, and variety of opinions on these controversial issues in the Portland-area press suggest that being isolated on the frontier did not necessarily mean being ill-informed about important national movements, even unpopular ones that sought to shake the foundations of tradition.

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[129]Stanton et al., 102.

CHAPTER V

LOCAL WRITINGS ABOUT AND BY WOMEN

A youngster well dressed and shaved very clean,
Will start out to court a young Miss of thirteen,
And while his heart fails as he offers his hand,
He whispers with courage, "You're a section of land."
—*Oregon Weekly Times,* November 29, 1851; *Oregonian,* June 5, 1852

The increasing wealth of our citizens can not be more
appropriately applied, than by giving their fair daughters
a liberal education.
—*Oregon Spectator,* November 1, 1849

The extent to which frontier papers presented information about local women has been briefly examined by a few scholars, but has not received thorough investigation. Most who write about this topic agree that little space was devoted to local women or their activities,[1] and some maintain that the few entries that did discuss frontier women talked about their behavior, morality, appearance, or availability for marriage, not their work or beliefs.[2] In addition, little, if anything, has been written about how frontier women may have used the local newspaper as a tool for speaking to the local community, either through letters and advertisements or, more artistically, through poems and essays. One factor limiting the extent to which women were discussed in frontier newspapers may be the Victorian notion that a woman's name should appear in newspapers only three times in

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[1]Armitage, 238; Keen, 78-79; Riley, *Frontierswomen,* xii; Riley, *Images,* 190.

[2]Halaas, 98-99; Jameson, 147-148.

their lives: for birth, marriage, and death. Women themselves may have thought it unseemly to have their names appear in print.

In the Portland-area frontier newspapers, local mention of women occurred in three forms: in items by editors, in submissions by local contributors, and in notices and advertisements.[3] By count, about 4% of the editorial items, 17% of the local submissions, and 14% of the notices and ads in the three newspapers mentioned women.[4] Local women also submitted letters and essays, notices and advertisements, and poetry (not all of which discussed the female experience). While not attempting to categorize and present every locally created item in the Portland-area papers mentioning women, this chapter will reveal the diversity of local items discussing women. It will also provide samples of frontier women's contributions to the local newspapers to show the extent to which women were involved in the local community and how they contributed to cultural development on the frontier.

Boosting

Oregon was strongly promoted in books, newspaper articles, and lectures during the 1830s and 1840s by Boston ice merchant and aspiring fur trader Nathaniel Wyeth, schoolteacher Hall J. Kelley, Virginia congressman John Floyd, and Missouri Senators

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[3]In the *Oregon Spectator*, about 12% of the total newspaper space was taken by items written by the editor, 20% by local submissions, and 25% by advertisements and notices. In the *Oregonian* 9% of the total newspaper space was taken by editorials, 14% by local submissions, and 51% by notices and advertisements. In the *Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times* 9% was taken by editorials, 10% by local submissions, and 43% by notices and advertisements.

[4]In the *Spectator* 5% of the editor's pieces, 15% of the local submissions, and 13% of the notices and ads mentioned women; in the *Oregonian* 3% of the editorial items, 18% of the local submissions, and 13% of the notices and ads mentioned women; and in the *Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times* 4% of the editorial items, 18% of the local submissions, and 15% of the notices and ads mentioned women.

Thomas Hart Benton and Lewis F. Linn (the latter three had never been to Oregon). Protestant missionaries, who flooded the region on a tide of revivalism, encouraged settling as well. The promotion seems to have worked; between 1840 and 1860 "Oregon fever" induced about 53,000 people to make the overland journey to Oregon.[5] Many of the early promoters encouraged family emigration, and women on the frontier provided the stability and rudimentary civilization that lured additional settlers. The Donation Land Claim Act of 1850, based on the generous grant system set up by the territory's provisional government, also encouraged female settlement by giving each white male citizen eighteen or older 320 acres of land if single, and an additional 320 if married.[6]

A newspaper, by virtue of its existence alone, boosted a region as a symbol of civilization, and Oregon newspapers were sent all over the United States through the exchange system. In addition, many consider boosting in complimentary editorials and local submissions one of the main endeavors of frontier newspapers, and to be sure, the Portland-area newspapers did devote some space to the size of locally grown vegetables, the excellence of the land, and the wealth to be made in Oregon. These efforts were particularly evident during the gold rush, when editors doubled their efforts to keep Oregonians in Oregon and draw others to the region. Actual boosting in Oregon's newspapers, however, took up only about 2%, 0.05%, and 0.2% of the entire newspaper space for the *Spectator*, *Oregonian*, and *Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times*, respectively. The boosting percentages rise to 5%, 2%, and 1% when articles on Oregon's description, exploration, and development are included, but still seem rather small, given the presumed boosting function of frontier papers. On rare occasions the boosting involved women.

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[5]Schwantes, 78-86.

[6]Ibid., 103.

The boosting that did mention women took various forms. Lauding the physical attractions of Oregon women was the *Oregonian* editor's technique in a simple blurb remarking on Portland women enjoying the spring sunshine. "No land beneath the sun can boast of 'fairer, lovelier daughters,' than Oregon," said Dryer.[7] Promoting women's brains, rather than beauty, was *Spectator* editor Goodrich's tack, in an attempt to encourage women to contribute to his paper: "The announcement that there are females in this country that can and will exercise their minds and use their pens in raising the standard of scientific and polite literature in our rising Territory, would show to the inhabitants of far-off countries that we are a highly civilized and cultivated people, and that we live in an enlightened locality."[8]

Another writer combined one strain of the United States ideal of womanhood (that of the healthy, industrious worker) with a boosting attempt to lure women to the Oregon frontier. In the article "Girls of Oregon" the writer claimed to prefer "rosy cheeks to the more fashionable pale and delicate. A pretty hand I much admire, but I do not think the broom, the dusting brush, or even the wash-board inflicts any permanent injury to them." Then, with a curious attempt to entice women to immigrate, the writer said, "There is no country in the world where women are better appreciated by the other sex . . . than in Oregon. Girls, then while you have got a chance, hold on to your rights. In the Atlantic States the ladies have never had their rights. . . . Never was there such an opportunity for woman to labor for her own interests and those of the human family, as here in Oregon."[9] The mention of "rights" was undoubtedly a reference to the women's rights debates taking

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[7]*Weekly Oregonian*, 14 March 1857, 2.

[8]*Oregon Spectator*, 14 April 1854, 2.

[9]*Western Star*, 6 March 1851, 2.

place in the United States over equal education and employment opportunities, property holdings, and the vote. The "rights" mentioned by this writer as more plentiful on the frontier may have been about property rights, referencing the 320 acres allotted by the Donation Act to a woman, if married, "to be held by her in her own right," although it is doubtful that the act was intended to allow women management authority.[10]

Women's Rights and Dress Reform

Other women's rights, however, did not appear to be actively pursued in Oregon; at least the papers did not report much of a local following.[11] Perhaps this was due in part to a fear of speaking out. Margaret Jewett Bailey, who became editor of the Ladies Department for the *Oregon Spectator* in 1854, wrote on women's rights in the department and retained her position as editor for only six weeks. Her story is fully covered in the next chapter.

Dress reform, one small crusade among many women's reform issues, did receive the occasional mention in the Portland-area press. One local experiment with bloomers inspired the following from *Spectator* editor Schnebly: "there has been no public exhibition of the new costume by any of our city belles; but we learn that, a few days since, to gratify the curiosity of a few, two ladies rigged themselves out in full dress, *a la Turk*, and afforded not a little merriment to their beholders."[12] In addition, apparently at

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[10]Some argue that the act probably did not mean women were given power to manage the land. Chused, 16.

[11]Lack of newspaper coverage, of course, does not necessarily imply lack of activity, especially for unpopular movements that challenged the status quo. Oregon's woman suffrage campaigns in 1884, 1900, 1906, 1908, 1910, and 1912, spearheaded by Oregon frontierswoman and woman's rights activist Abigail Scott Duniway, were largely ignored by the Oregon press. Kessler, *Fight for Woman Suffrage*, 43-58.

[12]*Oregon Spectator*, 2 September 1851, 2.

the end of the school term at Calapooya, the teacher and another young woman, dressed in Bloomers, were led onto the stage by their "lords" and exchanged marital vows to, as the writer put it, "trot in double harness."[13]

Only one local woman wrote about dress reform, in a plea to initiate adoption of bloomers in Oregon. Identifying herself as "Stella" in a piece for the *Spectator's* Ladies Department, she claimed that if the bloomer had been created in France, the fashion capital, not the United States, the style would be more acceptable to American women. But even if the fashion were universally adopted in the United States, she thought "our Oregon ladies would incline to be, to just such an extent behind the times. They must cling to the old custom of dragging their fine dresses in the mud until the fashion leaders tell them it is not genteel." Stella felt that if some of the "fashionable Oregon City ladies" were to start wearing bloomers others would adopt the style. "Stella's" comments, however, may have been in jest, because in the same article she wrote in disparaging terms about recently fired Ladies' Department editor Margaret Jewett Bailey and her inappropriate attire.[14]

Despite the few references to bloomers in the newspapers, there must have been some local market for them because Wilson, Wakefield & Co. advertised them in the *Weekly Oregonian* in 1857 and Harker's store advertised them in the *Weekly Oregonian* and *Times* in 1858.[15]

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[13]Ibid., 10 December 1853, 2.

[14]Ibid., 25 November 1854, 1.

[15]*Weekly Oregonian,* 11 April 1857, 3; Ibid., 3 July 1858, 3; *Oregon Weekly Times*, 10 July 1858, 3.

Traditional Beliefs

Just as few locally written items explored the progressive ideas of women's rights and dress reform, few local submissions discussed women's traditional place in society, an interesting contrast with the numerous clippings from United States papers that expounded on women's traditional sphere of influence. One notable exception, a poem by a local woman, Elizabeth Markham, was written "for amusement" and submitted to the *Spectator* upon request. Following are three of the poem's eleven stanzas.

> No light that shines in yonder sky
> Can cheer the soul like woman's eye;
> No depths of seas, no shining sands
> Contain in them such wealth for man.
>
> Yes! woman's love is a holy light,
> Time cannot dim its radiance bright;
> A brilliant star that God has given,
> To lead man's erring feet to Heaven.
>
> In every age since time began,
> Her chastity unrivalled stands;
> And virtue's reins she will control,
> Till stars and planets cease to roll.[16]

This poem puts women on a pedestal, a common "true womanhood" perception of the era, and discusses her superiority in religious matters. Other locally written poems also explored religious themes.

Domestic Relationships

Receiving far more coverage on the Oregon frontier than boosting, women's rights and dress reform, or women's traditional place, were domestic relationships, including courtship, marriage, separation, and divorce.

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[16]*Oregon Spectator*, 21 March 1850, 4.

Marriages were important on the frontier not only because they were social mileposts for both women and men, but also because women were a source of labor, children, and—under the Donation Act—land. The 320 acres women represented moved some men in newspaper columns to jokingly refer to marriage as "securing a half section," getting the "full grant," and so on. Women, however, were also greedy for real estate and apparently set their caps for men who had arrived in time to claim a large settlement. The following poem, entitled "Oregon," testifies to the peculiar nature of courtship and marriage in the region:

> This is a great country, that none will deny,
> The inducements are great for large and small fry;
> The mines offer wealth at once to our hand,
> And then besides this, is the section of land.
>
> A youngster well dressed and shaved very clean,
> Will start out to court a young Miss of thirteen,
> And while his heart fails as he offers his hand,
> He whispers with courage, "You're a section of land."
>
> A crusty old bachelor homely and gray,
> Remarks with a sigh as time passes away;
> "I hate all the women, but yet it is plain,
> I must get married soon, or lose half my claim."
>
> A Miss of but twelve comes home from a meeting,
> And boasts, with renown, of a bachelor's greeting:
> "He spoke so polite and pressed my small hand,
> And Mr. —, you know, has a section of land.
>
> I know he is old and not very good looking,
> Both wrinkled and gray, and so crusty, 'tis shocking!
> I hate the old sinner, the abominable man,
> But I guess that I'll take him for his section of land."
>
> I love Mr. L. he is young and he's pretty,
> He is learned, and he is smart, agreeable and witty.
> But he came in but last spring, as I understand,
> Therefore he can't claim a full section of land."

So Miss wisely concluded and made up her mind,
Although, in the pantalet line, but a child,
That should Mr. — offer, she would accept his hand,
And barter her love for a section of land.

And now I suppose, as the time is nearly over,
For which a full section can be claimed any more,
The cry will be raised at the back of our wand—
Young tillicums[17] watch your half section of land.

But we hope that at length the time will arrive,
With prospect so fair for our country to thrive,
When all will reject the contemptible plan,
That mates real merit with a section of land.[18]

Advertising for a spouse in the newspaper was one manifestation, although uncommon, of the matter-of-fact approach to marriage in the Oregon country, perhaps influenced by the lure of real estate.[19] In one advertisement in the *Western Star*, appearing in 1850, a man sought a white woman sixteen to twenty-five years of age. Fortune and beauty were not requirements.[20] A woman a few months older than twenty-five responded, but hesitated modestly in pursuing the matter, saying "I cannot think of disclosing myself till such time as I am assured of the Gentleman's sincerity; a few lines addressed to me, Post Office, Milwaukie, will be attended to."[21]

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[17]In Chinook jargon, the early trade language of Oregon, tillicum meant people of any population or nation (but usually not chiefs). Thomas.

[18]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 29 November 1851, 1; *Oregonian*, 5 June 1852, 4.

[19]The *Oregon Weekly Times*, however, recognized this phenomenon as one that was found more extensively elsewhere. "Wives are advertised for now as regular as most other commodities—at least, in the good city of New York," the paper observed. *Oregon Weekly Times*, 20 September 1856, 2.

[20]*Western Star*, 28 November 1850, 3.

[21]Ibid., 5 December 1850, 2.

Seventeen-year-old "Miss Kate" also turned to the newspaper for matrimonial assistance. Her ad said she "is near, or perhaps rather under, the medium size, has light hair and blue eyes, and considers herself, at least, tolerably good-looking. Is gentle-natured, kind, and fond of social enjoyment." To be considered, she wrote, suitors must be "phrenologically and physiologically as well developed as advertiser; not over 24 years of age, and not over about five feet and eight inches in height." Again, in this case, wealth was not a concern.[22] A few weeks later editor Goodrich reported that Miss Kate had already received twenty-three applications, three of which she answered, and regretted that his "billet-doux" (love letter) was not one of the favored three.[23]

Frank N. Osgood, also advertising in the *Spectator*, had a somewhat extensive and precise list of requirements for a prospective bride: "To please," he wrote, "she must not be under 18, nor over 21 years of age, of medium size, with dark blue eyes and dark brown hair; must be a slave to no bad habits, and in the enjoyment of good health; must understand washing, ironing, cooking and sewing, and the general routine of household duties. . . . She must be intelligent, prudent, amiable, and kind, and have a mind to appreciate and a heart to love one who can truly love her in return." A hint of a progressive attitude toward women is revealed in his closing lines. The woman who met his requirements would find him to be "one who respects the rights of woman, but will not allow her to infringe on his."[24]

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[22]*Oregon Spectator*, 28 April 1854, 3. Phrenology, the study of the cranium to determine a person's mental capacities, was very popular at this time. The *Spectator* advertised the *American Phrenological Journal* in its advertising columns and suggested that all young man and women would benefit by having copies. The *Oregonian* advertised books on this subject. *Oregon Spectator*, 20 January 1852; *Oregonian*, 12 April 1851, 2.

[23]*Oregon Spectator*, 12 May 1854, 2.

[24]Ibid., 5 May 1854, 3.

But the checklist approach was not the only method for acquiring a mate; some men steered a more romantic course by writing poetry. Newspapers acted as a forum for the heartfelt efforts of these sentimental admirers. The poem "To Miss Susan" conveys one Romeo's appeal:

> I beg assistance from above;
> Kind cupid haste my pen to move,
> While I in raptures write my love
> To Susan.[25]

The poem "My Anna" is written with similar sensitivity.

> Dearer far than all the treasures
> That the earth can ever claim,
> Are the thoughts, when I am lonely,
> Of my Anna's cherished name.[26]

T. G. Drake, second lieutenant aboard the British ship Modeste,[27] chronicled his relationship with poems "To Mary" while on a trip to Puget Sound.[28] John Jones indicated that his heart may have gone out to more than one, with his "Bachelor Recollections.—No. 1 to Miss Kate S——k"[29] and "Bachelor Recollections No. 2 to Peggy."[30]

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[25]Ibid., 23 July 1846, 3.

[26]*Oregonian*, 29 May 1852, 4.

[27]Bancroft, 576n.

[28]*Oregon Spectator*, 12 November 1846, 2; Ibid., 10 December 1846, 2; Ibid., 29 April 1847, 4.

[29]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 5 November 1853, 4.

[30]Ibid., 19 November 1853, 4.

As John Jones's poems suggest, not all romances led to marriage. Irene Ingleson wrote bitterly of unrequited love in her poem, "To the Interpreter":

I remember well how I heard,
"For every bird there was a mate;"
Go find thine; but thou'st taught my soul
To ever distrust and hate.
But when round thy neck her arm shall twine,
Her head on thy bosom sink,
Thy thoughts will turn to her you wronged—
"Thy curse will be—*to think*!"[31]

Interracial courtship and marriage probably occurred more frequently on the Oregon frontier than in the United States, especially in the early years among the male fur trappers and Native American women, but they were rarely discussed in the local newspapers, let along encouraged. Nevertheless, one item did remark on the influx into California of Chinese women, "displaying their eye-brows arched according to the Norman style of architecture, and their pretty little feet." A poem about the courtship of a Chinese couple accompanied the short article, along with a blurb explaining that the poem could be adapted "to suit an outside barbarian." What would now be considered racism mars the poem, but the suggestion that white men might find it useful for courting Chinese women indicates that some social mores were relaxed in the West. This is the third stanza of four.

Six moons have travelled through the skies
And softly gleamed on Kiang-O,
Since first thy beauty met my eyes,
Light of my soul, my Ho-Ang-Ho.[32]

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[31] *Weekly Oregonian*, 28 November 1857, 1.

[32] *Oregonian*, 21 August 1852, 4.

In contrast to the sentimental and didactic marital fare offered by clippings from U.S. papers, many of the locally generated newspaper items on marriage in the new country involved legal cases pertaining to the Donation Land Law. Aaron Wait, an attorney and former editor of the *Spectator*, wrote to the *Western Star* in 1851, complaining that under the Donation Act the wife was allowed to hold either half of the claim. Consequently, if the husband was in debt, the couple could retain the half with the most valuable property.[33]

Other newspaper articles discussed how the Donation Land Law dealt with interracial marriages. In one case a man tried to use a portion of a couple's 640 acres. He based his claim on the fact that the wife was Native American; therefore, the couple could hold only 320 acres. The court decided that the couple could hold the full grant, explaining that many early Oregon male settlers married native women and it was not the intention of the act to discriminate against these men. The judge acknowledged that this decision sidestepped the question of the estate disbursal of a deceased man whose wife was Native American.[34]

Another interracial marriage case involved the estate of a man who had been in a common law marriage with an native woman. The claim of the children of Calvin Tibbits to their father's estate was resisted on the ground that they were illegitimate. Tibbits had purchased a Native American woman, Louisa, for his wife and settled with her on a claim on the Clatsop Plains "where they kept house, and carried on a farm, and accumulated property, living and cohabitating together in all respects as a married couple." Tibbits called Louisa "sometimes his wife and sometimes his woman" but stated that he had never

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[33]*Western Star*, 3 April 1851, 3.

[34]*Weekly Oregonian*, 9 December 1854, 2.

been married to Louisa and did not intend to be. He died, and she died shortly thereafter. The presiding judge decided that by common law, which had not been changed by statute in the territory, marriage was a civil contract requiring no formal words or other ceremony and could be entered into by the parties without the aid or presence of an officer, priest, or witness. The essence of the contract—that the parties agreed to cohabit with each other and no other during life—was satisfied; therefore, the children were legitimate and were awarded the entire estate.[35]

Women's writing provides a more personal side to marriage than do the legal debates. The printing of one woman's article on her marriage, as well as a response by another woman, indicates that marriage may have been a subject on which women could speak publicly on the Oregon frontier. Emily, in "Trials in the Life of a Doctor's Wife," told of her unhappy marriage to Dr. Sprague. "On every important and interesting occasion," she said, "the Dr. was sure to be called upon, and I of course deprived of the pleasure I might otherwise have enjoyed." This lifestyle was hers until the couple moved to Oregon in 1847 and the doctor retired. She concluded, "Now girls, if you want to get married and expect to augment your happiness by so doing, don't fall in love with a Doctor."[36]

About one month later another woman wrote to tell of her experiences as a doctor's wife. She, however, felt greatly enriched through her marriage, explaining that, "It is true . . . [on some occasions] my husband was from home much of his time for days and weeks together, but what lady is there (Emily excepted) who expects or wishes ever to have her husband always in attendance." She informed readers that "though the practice

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[35]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 1 October 1853, 2.

[36]*Oregonian*, 26 April 1851, 1.

of medicine incurs great responsibility though it is attended with hardships and privations, yet it brings its own reward. . . ."[37]

Six months after gold was discovered in California in 1848, two-thirds of the Oregon men had left for California,[38] undoubtedly sorely testing marriages in the region. Amid the *Spectator* editor's articles lauding the comforts of home, the money to be made in Oregon business, and the benefits of agriculture over mining, nestled Elizabeth Markham's emotional poem "The Departure." Following are four stanzas of this nine-stanza poem detailing her perspective of the mass exodus of Oregon men to the California mines:

> That glittering gold is dearly won,
> That disunites congenial minds,
> Our fathers, husbands, friends and sons,
> Have fled to California's mines.
>
> A weeping mother, bathed in tears,
> In black despair her bosom swells,
> And wrapped in dark foreboding fears,
> A mother's love, what tongue can tell.
>
> It's like the thornless, budding rose,
> Its treasures are as yet untold,
> It's lasting as Mount Helen's snows,
> And purer than the virgin gold.
>
> The father leaves his happy home,
> Let fancy paint the parting scene,
> His weeping consort sad and lone,
> The troubled Ocean rolls between.[39]

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[37]Ibid., 24 May 1851, 2.

[38]Snyder, 50.

[39]*Oregon Spectator*, 1 November 1849, 4.

Although melodramatic, this poem conveys the real fears of women left behind—that their loved ones would not return. Danger lurked at the destination and in the journey itself. The poem "The Lost at Sea" by Minnie Martha Mistletoe details one mining-related catastrophe, the sinking of the Central American with passengers returning from the California mines. Following are the fourth and fifth stanzas of thirteen:

What was gold now;
Though on each brow
Toil-drops stood many a day.
As slave-like they delved away—
'Twould not bribe the winds to stay.
Waves cease their flow.

See! out they pour
Their wealth of ore
As though 'twere veriest dross,
And purses on sofas toss
Lest the weight render their loss
Of life more sure.[40]

With the men seeking gold in California mines, women's work increased to include more than their usual share of plowing, planting, harvesting, and selling, in addition to their everyday cooking, cleaning, and childrearing. Markham's poem suggests that women grimly bore the departure of their menfolk, but some women were undoubtedly unwilling to shoulder additional burdens or to await their husbands' return. The *Oregonian* carried a notice of the divorce of the Yancys after two months of marriage. After they had wed, the husband had gone to California, probably gold seeking. The woman filed for and received a divorce, and she was restored to her maiden name.[41]

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[40]*Weekly Oregonian*, 12 December 1857, 1.

[41]Ibid., 12 July 1856, 3.

Nevertheless, divorces were difficult to obtain in the United States in the 1840s and 1850s, and a stigma was usually attached to any individuals involved in such a procedure. With this in mind, it is somewhat surprising that ten divorces were announced in the *Spectator* in barely a year's time, from July 1846 to September 1847 (the number discussed dropped after 1847). At least one involved a woman who was not a resident of the area, indicating the reluctance of some women to move west with their husbands. Another divorce, discussed twelve years later by the Oregon Legislature, also involved a woman, an Iowan, who refused to move West with her spouse, indicating that even with almost two decades of development Oregon's attractions were not enough for some.[42]

Separations probably occurred in the West more frequently than divorces, and notices of separations occasionally appeared in the local press. One notice announced the separation of a couple and the man's resolution to no longer take responsibility for his wife's debts. Signed by John Holman, the notice read "Whereas my wife, Martha Holman, has left my bed and board without any just cause or provocation, this is therefore forewarning all persons not to give her any credit on my account, as I am determined not to pay any debts of her contracting."[43] Other separation notices were similar.

Only the barest hints in the newspapers indicate that prostitution took place in the Portland area. One item told how a man named Spaulding was roughed up and forced to leave Portland, "being guilty of some indiscretions in a house of ill fame in the city." The *Oregonian* editor dryly remarked, "It occurs to us gentlemen, that the proper way to eradicate an evil is to remove the *cause* [emphasis in original]."[44]

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[42]Ibid., 15 January 1859, 1.

[43]*Oregon Spectator*, 1 October 1846, 4.

[44]*Weekly Oregonian*, 11 November 1854, 2.

Women and Violence

Some suggest that domestic violence against women was common in the West, a result of the patriarchal culture, not individual pathology.[45] Violence against women sometimes resulted from the clash of cultures as well. On most occasions, isolation probably kept such assaults well out of the public eye in Oregon, but sometimes the violence did attract public notice and was published in the local newspapers.

Murders received extensive coverage from all the papers, which reported on trials as they unfolded and often carried statements of the criminal before execution. Adam E. Wimple[46] and William Burris,[47] both charged with murdering their wives and setting fire to their houses to cover the crime, attracted a great deal of newspaper coverage. Other crimes of violence against women, such as attempted murder and rape, were also reported, although probably not as frequently as they actually occurred. In one case, a Portland man attempted to shoot his wife through the window of her mother's house at Linn City because she had left him. He missed her, then fatally shot himself.[48] In another case, J. H. McMullen of Portland, who had recently separated from his wife, followed her to the house of a Mr. Owens near Corvallis, informed her that he had come to kill her, then shot her three times, none of which were fatal. He then killed himself.[49] One item briefly announced that the rape of a woman had occurred in Yamhill county, near Lafayette, and

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[45]Graulich, 112-114.

[46]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 31 July 1852, 2; Ibid., 4 September 1852, 2.; Ibid., 11 September 1852, 2;*Oregonian*, 25 September 1852, 2; Ibid., 9 October 1852, 2.

[47]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 5 May 1855, 1; *Weekly Oregonian*, 14 April 1855, 2; Ibid., 5 May 1855, 1-2.

[48]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 23 August 1856, 2.

[49]*Weekly Oregonian*, 15 March 1856, 2.

that the accused had been arrested and was awaiting trial.[50] Only one incident of a woman committing a violent crime was reported in the newspapers. Charity Lamb, who killed her husband with an ax, was the first woman in the territory to be arraigned for murder, and her case elicited much publicity.[51]

Some violence against women involved non-white men. When the violence consisted of murder, the incidents did not receive the coverage the all-white murder cases did, probably because in such instances lynching often occurred. This precluded the need for a trial or an opportunity for extensive reporting. For example, when the Reverend Clark's wife and son were killed in a fire by a Native American, the *Oregonian* simply noted that the man was lynched.[52] Non-murder incidents involving non-white men and white women also received little coverage. When an Native American man allegedly raped a white girl he was summarily killed.[53] When an Native American allegedly raped a white woman a few miles from The Dalles he was hanged by the citizens of The Dalles.[54]

When violence against women involved a non-white man and woman, neither the newspapers nor the legal system took much notice. One item reported that at Astoria a Chinook man killed a woman of his tribe by splitting her head open with an ax.[55] There

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[50]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 10 July 1852, 2.

[51]*Oregon Spectator*, 19 May 1854, 2; Ibid., 26 May 1854, 2;*Oregon Weekly Times*, 20 May 1854, 2; Ibid., 22 July 1854, 2.; Ibid., 14 September 1854, 2; Ibid., 23 September 1854, 2; Ibid., 30 September 1854, 1-2; *Weekly Oregonian*, 22 July 1854, 1; Ibid., 16 September 1854, 1; Ibid., 30 September 1854, 1-2.

[52]*Weekly Oregonian*, 18 August 1855, 2.

[53]*Oregon Spectator*, 1 June 1848, 2.

[54]*Weekly Oregonian*, 27 February 1858, 2.

[55]Ibid., 24 January 1857, 2.

was no talk of any legal proceeding, probably because such incidents were outside the jurisdiction of the Oregon courts. One blurb read, "A negro man named James D. Saul was brought to this city recently from the mouth of the river, charged with having caused the death of his wife, an Indian woman." The man was examined by Justice Hood, released, and said to be "at large and likely to remain so."[56] However, not all incidents with native women were ignored. When McGonegal, apparently a white man, shot his wife, a Native American, the judicial system did take action because the woman's kinsmen were angered and wanted him executed. His case was reported to be pending trial.[57]

Indian Wars

The discord caused by the surge of Euro-Americans into the region provoked more than isolated incidents of interracial conflict. The war that began with the killing of the Whitmans is the most famous example of white conflict with the region's native population. In 1836, the mission of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman was built at Waiilatpu on the banks of the Walla Walla River twenty-five miles upstream from the Columbia, near the slopes of the Blue Mountains. In 1847, after measles and dysentery brought to Waiilatpu by emigrants killed an estimated 50% of the Cayuse population in less than two months, the Cayuses sought revenge. The Indians killed the Whitmans and eleven others and destroyed the mission buildings on November 29, 1847. A few whites escaped and the rest were taken captive. Shortly after the beginning of the new year, after the survivors were ransomed, five hundred volunteer riflemen from the Willamette Valley and the Cayuses commenced fighting in the first "Indian War" in the Pacific Northwest. After

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[56]*Oregon Spectator*, 24 December 1846, 2.

[57]*Weekly Oregonian*, 19 July 1856, 2.

two years the Cayuses relinquished five tribesmen, who were taken to Oregon City, tried, and hanged in 1850.[58]

The *Spectator* tried to keep Oregonians apprised of developments in the war, which led to a controversy over women's use of a public forum. In one report, Captain H. J. G. Maxon told of the military's battles with Indians and made several requests of the civilians at home: "Mothers, evince that pure and noble patriotism characteristic of your sex, by sending up a few warm garments. —and daughters evince your angelic influence for your country's good, by withholding your fair hand, and fairer smile from any young man who refuses to turn out to defend your honor & your country's rights."[59]

Oregon City women responded patriotically, promptly meeting to ascertain how best to aid the soldiers. Formal officers were elected at this meeting—it was "called to order by Mrs. Hood, when Mrs. Thornton was called to the chair, and Mrs. Thurston appointed Secretary." The women resolved to form a society to support the war by raising funds and collecting clothing, among other endeavors. An address, sent to the army with the clothing raised by the women, said in part, "We have not forgotten that the soul-sickening massacre, and enormities at Waiilatpu were committed in part upon our sex. We know that your hardships and privations are great; but may we not hope, that through you these wrongs shall not only be amply avenged, but also that you inscribe upon the hearts of our savage enemies, a conviction never to be erased, that the virtue and lives of American women will be protected, defended, and avenged by American men."

Fifteen young women also responded to Captain Maxon's letter, pledging to comply with his request "and to evince, on all suitable occasions, our detestation and

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[58]Schwantes, 73-76, 81.

[59]*Oregon Spectator*, 6 April 1848, 2.

contempt for any and all young men who *can*, but *will not* take up arms and march at once to the seat of war, to punish the Indians who have not only murdered our friends, but have grossly insulted our sex [emphasis in original]."[60] This loyalty to the soldiers sparked a controversy, the heart of which, apparently, was the propriety of young women being so publicly outspoken.

The *Oregon Free Press*, edited by past *Spectator* editor and future governor George Curry, ran a column attacking the young ladies' response, curiously, on the day before the response actually appeared in the *Spectator*, according to the newspaper dates. It was entitled "An Apology for the 'Fifteen Young Ladies'" and sarcastically berated them for their words. "Some say, 'they [the young women] ought to have expressed their intentions in a more mild manner—not have come out in the Governor's newspaper—striking us dumb at the outset,'" said the writer. "No sir, Oregon . . . may rejoice that she has within her borders a flock of INDEPENDENT FEMALES* to warn her of danger [emphasis in original]." The asterisk referred the reader to a note that said, "The Ladies will pardon me for comparing them to geese. The circumstances are so very similar." Along with the message that young women should not proclaim their views in a public forum, the writer also made the points that honorable men did not need prompting from women to do their patriotic duty and that it was unseemly for young women to so aggressively push men toward a war in which men had already died.[61]

This "apology" evoked a rebuttal in the *Spectator* by one young woman, who said that the article had been written "for mere amusement, with no intention of its becoming a subject for newspaper comment." The woman also suggested that those behind the

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[60]Ibid., 30 April 1848, 3.

[61]*Oregon Free Press*, 29 April 1848, 2-3.

apology "to excuse the boldness of females in publishing their sentiments" were probably those at whom their boycott was directed. In any case, the young woman informed, "we are not penitent for the fault."[62]

The soldiers for whom the young women were saving themselves were caught in the middle of this controversy and responded diplomatically. At a meeting held by the First Regiment of Oregon Riflemen, the soldiers wrote a letter in which they first extended their "heartfelt and unfeigned thanks" to the women of Oregon City, even though six weeks had gone by and the clothing was not yet in evidence. Then they responded to the young ladies' pledge with an attitude both modest and bemused. They claimed no knowledge of Maxon's request, but did not condemn it, nor did they wholeheartedly accept or disparage the young ladies' response: "Yet, when we know the backwardness of many young men, in turning out in defence of their country . . . we are compelled to admit the propriety of such an expression; yet we feel that our little service to our country has not been such as should entitle us to any pre-eminence over those who may have remained in the valley, for we feel that we have done nothing more than our duty,—and consequently deserve no higher consideration in your estimation, than we were entitled to before we left the social circle. Yet we acknowledge it is a source of pleasure to us to know that the well wishes of the young ladies of Oregon are in our favor. . . ."[63]

The Whitman Massacre and aftermath was only the initial clash in thirty years of conflict in the Pacific Northwest between whites and Native Americans, characterized by intermittent periods of peace, hostility, and full-scale war. Dryer, known

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[62]*Oregon Spectator*, 18 May 1848, 1.

[63]Ibid., 15 June 1848, 1.

on occasion to promote the extermination of the native population,[64] carried two items involving women and the wars with Indians. On behalf of the women of Portland, Dryer presented banners to the Benton and Linn county companies of volunteers, who were preparing to go to the northern war with the Yakimas.[65] In a show of gratitude, the Benton volunteers halted in front of "Mrs. G and Mrs R's residences" and gave "three hearty cheers." More banners were given to men going to fight in the southern war with the Rogue River tribes. One was presented by S. Ellsworth Esq. on behalf of the ladies of Lane county to Captain Latshaw and his company and another was given to the Benton County company.[66]

Education

The Portland-area newspapers ran a number of items pertaining to education in Oregon, discussing women's role in education, local women schoolteachers, the value of educating females, and school examinations of local female students. Many of the newspapers items discussing education were school advertisements.

According to one anonymous local writer, children must be educated to enable them to eventually perform the tasks of adults. The local writer's answer to this need is similar to what U.S. newspapers and magazines were proposing—mothers were the key: "The mother is infallible in the eyes of the little one—she cannot err, the ideas she may advance are received as infallibly correct. Then what an opportunity is here offered for the mother to advance her child in the first rudiments of education." The writer ended with a

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[64]Carey, 570n.

[65]*Weekly Oregonian*, 27 October 1855, 2.

[66]Ibid., 1 March 1856, 2.

patriotic appeal: *"Then let the mothers of Oregon come forth in their strength, and the next generation will be an ornament to, as well as an assistant in the spreading abroad the fame of this growing republic* [emphasis in original]."[67]

During the antebellum years, women's role in educating in the United States gradually expanded beyond tutoring their own children to becoming schoolteachers. Oregon had its share of women teachers as well. One writer discussed Mrs. Willson, who was in charge of the female department at Salem's Oregon Institute. "In a country like this," said the article, "where so much depends on the correctness of the principles employed and inculcated in the education of our daughters, and in the formation of their character, we consider her eminently useful in this department, and hope she may continue."[68] A Miss Blackler was reported to be the teacher of a city school opening in Oregon City that was established by the city council and supervised by city authorities.[69]

Young, single female teachers in Oregon, however, were popular among Oregon bachelors, a result of the Donation Act. One article reported that the Secretary of the American Board of Education, influenced by Governor Slade of Vermont, was sending six to eight females teachers to Oregon from Vermont. Waterman of the *Times* regretted that the number were not larger and hinted that the young women would find themselves much admired in the woman-starved West: "A friend at our elbow expresses a hope that the teachers are young and rosy cheeked . . . and says that if their services should not all be required as teachers, he is in *town*, pr'haps [emphasis in original]."[70] About seven

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[67]*Oregon Spectator*, 24 June 1847, 4.

[68]Ibid., 19 March 1846, 4.

[69]Ibid., 5 November 1853, 3.

[70]*Western Star*, 27 February 1851, 2.

months later an article clipped from the *Philadelphia Dollar Newspaper* told the fate of these young women. Although each paid $500 bonds guaranteeing that they would not get married within a year after their arrival in Oregon, they were apparently "in danger of going off with a will." Editor Dryer of the *Oregonian* wouldn't comment as to the truth of the allegations, but did remark that he was certain that many single male Oregonians would gladly pay the $500 for "a good wife."[71] And, if true, one could hardly blame the women for going back on their words. As one local contributor pointed out, Oregon teachers were paid very little, and women teachers were paid even less than men,[72] an inequity that was true all across the United States and one addressed by contemporary women's rights activists.

Female education was increasingly favored in the United States in the nineteenth century, and this attitude was found in frontier Oregon as well. Ideas on funding women's education found a forum in the March 1846 issue of the *Oregon Spectator*, which discussed the closing after a year and a half of service Salem's Oregon Institute.[73] A writer who was apparently associated with this Methodist school for girls and boys wrote that at an exhibition the female students acquitted themselves well in serious mental pursuits: "As to the 'fair sex,' we have nothing to say of their graceful forms, or elastic step; but we received a very favorable opinion of their *intellectual* attainments [emphasis in original]." In addition, the girls displayed their substantial knowledge of history, grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, and geography, which compelled the writer to wistfully wonder, "where will these things end? Shall they be encouraged or not? If encouraged,

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[71] *Oregonian*, 4 October 1851, 2.

[72] *Oregon Weekly Times*, 7 January 1854, 1.

[73] Robert Carlton Clark, 604.

what will be the influence on the community, and the results to our infant country?"[74] Such thoughts on female education were becoming more common in the United States as women increasingly attempted to receive higher educations. Apparently enough thought that education in Oregon, for males and females both, was important—the Oregon Institute reopened in August of 1846.[75] By 1851 the Institute offered drawing, needlework, music, and experiments in chemistry and natural philosophy.[76] It became Willamette University in 1853.[77]

Others considered female education in the new country important as well; schools devoted solely to female education in the Portland area received support from many quarters—private donors, the public, and religious organizations. Mrs. N. M. Thornton's girl's school, established in 1847, was a private school that adhered to some of the more traditional ideas on female education. Thornton's advertisement proclaimed that she taught "all branches of an English education as well as plain and fancy needle work, drawing and painting in mezzotinto and water colors."[78] History, religion, and patriotism were also covered at one school examination.[79] Mrs. Hill also advertised her "school for young ladies."[80]

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[74]*Oregon Spectator*, 19 March 1846, 4.

[75]Ibid., 20 August 1846, 3.

[76]Ibid., 25 November 1851, 3,

[77]Robert Carlton Clark, 604.

[78]*Oregon Spectator*, 7 January 1847, 3.

[79]Ibid., 21 February 1850, 2.

[80]*Weekly Oregonian*, 17 February 1855, 3.

Some of the girl's schools in the Portland area were called academies or seminaries, a relatively new term in female education. In the 1820s such schools, meant to prepare women for missionary and teaching work, appeared in New England and between 1830 and 1860 spread throughout the United States. Some of the educators of these schools promoted academic studies, rather than "ornamental" accomplishments designed to help a young woman attract eligible men.[81]

The Clackamas County Female Seminary was one such school, established in 1849 by an enactment of the legislative assembly and located in Oregon City on donated land. The school, founded as a "female seminary of learning in science and literature," was required to be free of association with any religious sect and was the first nonsectarian school organized in the territory for the education of young women exclusively. Apparently no thoughts went to stinting the girls' education: George Abernethy, former governor of the Provisional Government and one of seven trustees, all men, was appointed to procure "musical instruments, school apparatus, and whatever other articles may be necessary to furnish in the best style the Seminary." The intent behind the female seminary was simply stated by one person writing to the *Spectator*: "The increasing wealth of our citizens can not be more appropriately applied, than by giving their fair daughters a liberal education."[82]

Oregon City's pride in the seminary is evident in the periodic examinations reported in the local newspaper. In one review the editor praised the students and teachers, then said, "We are glad to see that we have a school in our midst so much deserving of our commendation. It places our community in a position that will enable it

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[81]Woloch, 126.

[82]*Oregon Spectator*, 1 November 1849, 2; Ibid., 27 December 1849, 2; Carey, 720.

to rank shortly with the long-matured systems of the Atlantic states."[83] A review signed by five trustees reported, "The general impression . . . was that our daughters may here obtain a *thorough mental education, combined with the best moral training* [emphasis in original]."[84]

Examinations at the Portland Academy and Female Seminary, a Methodist institution, were also reported in the local newspapers. Its first building was completed in 1851, and the school was incorporated in 1854. The seminary encouraged thinking minds in many ways. At one school exhibition, the advocates of "woman's rights" and of "woman's sense" was heard. It is not clear whether the two were opposite ideals of a debate and, if so, which side won, but it is evident that important issues involving women were discussed. Also presented were remarks on "fashionable society" and "fashionable education" and the benefit of education to the community.[85]

At least one female literary society owed its founding to local education. Several young women who had attended the Portland Academy and Female Seminary formed the Young Ladies Literary Society and created and contributed to a periodical called *The Wreath.*[86] A few meetings and activities of this society were reported in the *Weekly Oregonian.* At one meeting Reverend Chamberlain delivered a lecture on "The True

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[83]*Oregon Spectator,* 18 November 1851, 2.

[84]Ibid., 26 August 1853, 2

[85]*Weekly Oregonian,* 26 August 1854, 2; *Oregon Weekly Times,* 26 August 1854, 3.

[86]This literary effort may have been the development of an early prototype. At one examination held at the Methodist Church, probably the precursor to the Portland Academy and Female Seminary, the exercises closed "with the reading of the fourth number of a paper styled 'The Acorn,' made up entirely of original articles composed by the young ladies of the school." *Oregon Weekly Times,* 18 September 1851, 2.

Character and Dignity of Women" and a young woman read from *The Wreath.*[87] The Reverend C. S. Kingsley delivered a lecture on another occasion, accompanied by another reading of *The Wreath* and "some choice singing."[88] The society actively sought to improve itself; it held an entertainment at the Academy, with the proceeds devoted to purchasing books for the society's library.[89]

Temperance

Temperance was an issue that concerned many in the United States, and that concern was transported to the Oregon frontier long before the arrival of settlers. The Hudson's Bay Company curtailed the sale of liquor to Indians as early as 1821. Missionary Jason Lee established a temperance society among trappers in 1836 and, along with U.S. investigator William Slacum, persuaded the trapper Ewing Young to abandon his plans to set up a still. Later, many settlers felt that alcohol use would retard Oregon's prosperity, and the legislative committee passed a prohibitory liquor law in 1844.[90] The adherence to this law concerned many citizens; in 1846 the *Spectator* reported that "a large and respectable meeting of the ladies and gentlemen of Oregon City" met to discuss its violation and appoint a vigilance committee. They resolved to "oppose the reign of King Alcohol" with the motto "peaceably, if we can; but forcibly, if we must."[91]

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[87]*Weekly Oregonian*, 8 March 1856, 2.

[88]Ibid., 9 August 1856, 2.

[89]Ibid., 3 May 1856, 2.

[90]Carey, 318-319, 390; John E. Caswell, "The Prohibition Movement in Oregon: Part 1, 1836-1904," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 39 (1938): 235.

[91]*Oregon Spectator*, 19 March 1846, 3.

Sentiment for prohibition declined in the next few years. In 1846, after action by the legislature, liquor became subject to licensing, and license fees from the sale of liquor became an important source of revenue.[92] Many remained strongly in favor of prohibition, however, prompting the formation of a Washingtonian Temperance Society in Oregon City in 1847, headed by the notorious mountain man and drinker Joseph Meek.[93]

The Washingtonian temperance movement, which emerged in Baltimore in 1840 among the artisan classes and quickly gained a mass following, embraced alcoholics and abstainers, evangelicals and nonreligious types, and men and women of the lower-middle and working classes. It was in these societies and their sister organizations—the Martha Washington societies—that women began to take a more prominent role in temperance reform, including increased participation and public speaking.[94] In Oregon, also, women were encouraged to join and participate in this movement. The *Spectator* in October of 1847 reported that at one Washingtonian meeting in Oregon City, "the ladies of this city and vicinity were invited to sign the pledge, and cooperate with us."[95] The attempt to gain female members was repeated a few weeks later with the appeal: "*Ladies! one and all!!* give us your presence and *names* next Saturday, if you please [emphasis in original]."[96]

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[92]Robert Carlton Clark, 308.

[93]Carey, 390.

[94]Ian R. Tyrrell, *Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800-1860* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1979), 159-160, 179-183.

[95]*Oregon Spectator*, 30 September 1847, 1.

[96]Ibid., 14 October 1847, 3.

Although Washingtonian groups were primarily grass-roots self-help organizations that encouraged the sharing of experiences,[97] the association in Oregon pursued legislative action. Early in 1848 the Oregon Washingtonians resolved to amend the territory's Organic Law from regulating liquor to prohibiting the introduction, sale, and manufacture of all intoxicating drinks.[98] Toward this end, as the *Spectator* reported, a committee of three women drew up a memorial in accordance with this resolution to present to the legislature, which was then in session in Oregon City.[99] The women's committee reported at the following meeting that their memorial, with seventy-four signatures, had been given to the legislature.[100]

Such efforts appear to have been successful. The question of whether to regulate or prohibit liquor was submitted to a vote of the people, and prohibition won by a narrow margin.[101] Enthusiasm for the reform continued, and the *Spectator* announced not long after the Organic Law was amended that the names of forty women and men had been added to the Washingtonian Society's roster.[102] Other organizations arose as well. The Clatsop Total Abstinence Society was reported in the *Spectator* to have ten male and thirteen female members, who "agreed to not use intoxicating liquors, nor traffic in them

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[97]Tyrrell, 163-164.

[98]Prohibitionists within the Washingtonian organization tended to be of the propertied middle class and members of mainstream evangelical denominations, which matches the characteristics of many Oregon immigrants. Tyrrell, 216.

[99]*Oregon Spectator*, 6 January 1848, 4.

[100]Ibid.

[101]Robert Carlton Clark, 308.

[102]*Oregon Spectator*, 1 June 1848, 3.

as a beverage, . . . and [would] discountenance their use throughout the community."[103] Nevertheless, despite the efforts of prohibitionists, the legislature in 1849 passed a license bill. The following two years saw several amendments to the license act, granting smaller license fees and allowing the selling of greater quantities of alcohol.[104]

A new organization arose in Oregon in the 1850s to combat the use of alcohol, the Sons of Temperance. This fraternal organization emerged in 1842 in New York in an attempt to make the sometimes rowdy Washingtonians more respectable. The group adopted passwords, initiation rites, regalia, mottoes, symbols, and honorific titles from other fraternal orders to enhance the social attractions of teetotalism.[105] National membership peaked in 1851 with 238,902 members. A sister organization, the Daughters of Temperance, also arose, reaching peak membership in 1848 with 30,000 members.[106]

The *Oregonian* was the local newspaper that supplied most of the reports of Temperance and women through the 1850s, many involving Sons of Temperance organizations.[107] Even though this was ostensibly a fraternal order, in Oregon women spoke before the local divisions on many occasions, and these speeches were often reported in the press. In one case, the women of Portland presented the Portland Division of the Sons of Temperance with what Dryer described as a "splendid banner, as a testimonial of regard for their efforts made to prevent the spread of intemperance."

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[103]Ibid., 9 November 1848, 1.

[104]Caswell, 244.

[105]Tyrrell, 203-204, 212

[106]Jack S. Blocker, Jr., *American Temperance Movements: Cycles of Reform* (Boston: Twayne, 1989), 49.

[107]Prohibition was more popular among Whigs than Democrats, and Dryer was a devout Whig. Tyrrell, 261.

Eveline Chapman made the presentation and delivered a speech on the effects of alcohol consumption, especially on women with alcoholic husbands: "We look upon Alcohol as the enemy of our race," she said, "and the use of intoxicating liquors as one of the greatest evils to which society is exposed. . . . And ah! how many a heartbroken wife does our land present, forced to weep silent and alone over their prospects, once bright, but now blighted forever by Alcohol, that holds in his chains the wretched husband. . . ."[108]

Isabella S. Walker addressed the Pacific Division of the Sons of Temperance at a banner presentation in Salem. Her speech explains why many women spoke publicly for this reform: "Should woman be silent and inactive in this great cause? Has she not suffered enough in the past from the evils of intemperance, to feel an intense interest in the progress of every institution, which has for its object the downfall of that arch-enemy of man? . . . The history of former years, will tell the sad tale of her woes. She MUST, she *will* awaken every energy, and put forth every exertion, to assist in the great work of moral reform [emphasis in original]."[109]

Bibles, as well as banners, were given by women to the Sons of Temperance. Sarah E. Thompson spoke at one such presentation on behalf of the ladies of Clatsop.[110] At the presentation of a bible to the Lafayette Division by the women of Lafayette, however, the Reverend J. W. Miller spoke on behalf of the ladies, indicating that some women were still not comfortable with public speaking.[111] Not all women's or men's addresses to Temperance organizations were published. When a group of women of the

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[108]*Oregonian*, 19 June 1852, 2.

[109]Ibid., 17 July 1852, 2.

[110]*Weekly Oregonian*, 29 July 1854, 1.

[111]Ibid., 10 June 1854, 1.

Methodist Church presented a Bible to the Multnomah Division of the Sons of Temperance, Dryer didn't have room to print the address by the woman presenter, H. S. Jacobs.[112]

Little has been written about the Daughters of Temperance organization in Oregon. One of the few items discussing it in the local newspapers announced that it and the Sons of Temperance had joined, creating one organization. Dryer commented on the benefit of such a move: "As we believe firmly in unity of action to accomplish great ends, and entertain the highest regard for female influence . . . we are decidedly in favor of the arrangement."[113] The new organization attracted many male and female members.[114]

Even though women were often encouraged to join and speak to temperance organizations, it's doubtful that they were allowed to hold authority. For example, adult women and men could join the Yamhill County Temperance Society, but only males twenty-one or older were eligible for office.[115]

One aim of the temperance movement in Oregon was the enactment of laws limiting the use of alcohol in the region, such as those instituted in 1851 in Maine. The Maine Liquor Law had a search and seizure clause whereby no sale was required to have taken place before a conviction could be obtained, the seized liquor could be destroyed, violators faced mandatory imprisonment after the third conviction, and the selling of alcohol for medicinal purposes was rigidly controlled. By 1855 this stringent law had

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[112]Ibid., 24 May 1856, 2.

[113]Ibid., 1 March 1856, 2.

[114]Ibid., 15 April 1856, 2.

[115]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 4 September 1852, 1.

been adopted in modified form in twelve other states and territories.[116] Oregonians also reviewed this law for their territory. One notice for a meeting to discuss the Maine Liquor Law announced "the ladies are respectfully invited."[117]

Hattie H., a woman referred to by the *Times* as "our 'Down East' Lady Correspondent," wrote an article about the benefits of the Maine Liquor Law for the *Times*, apparently while residing or visiting in the East. Hattie H. said with apparent satisfaction that since the passage of the law in Maine, "we do not now see the drunkard that once reeled along our streets nor the 'moderate drinker,' whose bleared eye and trembling hand too plainly told that he was following the drunkard in the downward course. . . ."[118] Whether her words were persuasive is not known, but support grew for the Maine law in Oregon, and an effort was made to get its supporters into Oregon's 1854-1855 legislature. Some of these candidates were elected, but in general this campaign failed.[119]

Prohibition petitions were presented to the legislature in 1855, 1857, and 1859, testifying to the strength of the Oregon movement.[120] Reform efforts were also carried out at the municipal level, and women took active part in such work. In Salem, women circulated a petition "remonstrating against granting licenses to the grog shops of this precinct" and collected more than one hundred women's names to present to the Board of

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[116]Tyrrell, 252-258.

[117]*Oregonian*, 3 July 1852, 3.

[118]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 28 August 1852, 1. Hattie H. wrote other items for the *Times*, so she must have had some connection to the Portland area, perhaps having lived there herself or having a relative who did so.

[119]Caswell, 245-246.

[120]Ibid., 247-248.

Commissioners for Marion County. The petition informed that even though women were not allowed to vote they could influence their husbands, brothers, and sweethearts. Such influence was not to be taken lightly; the article's writer warned the Commissioners, "if you go against the prayer of the ladies, you may never be elected again."[121]

Women contributed in other ways to the temperance movement, including moral appeals in poetry. Following is the third of an eight stanza poem by Elizabeth Markham:

> Be wise, shun the viper, it wounds you, it kills—
> The poisonous infection produced by the still,
> Disdain such pollution, stand firm on your guard!
> In life a high station, in death a reward![122]

It would be incorrect to assume, however, that all Oregon women supported temperance. The *Spectator* reported in November 1850 that in the U.S. District Court, Clark County, Oregon Territory, Maria Haggy was indicted on two counts for selling liquor to Indians.[123] Even so, women's work in temperance in the United States and Oregon helped build female networks for later women's rights campaigns.[124]

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[121]*Weekly Oregonian*, 14 April 1855, 2.

[122]*Oregon Spectator*, 10 January 1850, 4.

[123]Ibid., 7 November 1850, 2.

[124]In the late 1870s the national temperance crusade, now a female-run movement led by Frances Willard of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, joined the woman's suffrage drive, and the WCTU often dominated the subsequent suffrage campaigns. The joining of the unpopular prohibition message with arguments for the vote spelled disaster for the suffrage movement in Oregon and other states. Flexner, 186-189; Kessler, *Fight for Woman Suffrage*, 52.

Slavery

Abolition, an issue that occupied many women in Northeastern states, was not as popular as temperance among Oregonians. Many Oregon residents, including the influential Joseph Lane and *Oregon Weekly Times* editor E. C. Hibben, supported slavery and promoted the Southern viewpoint. Some argued that Oregon's mild Willamette Valley climate was well-suited to slave labor. Others worked to keep all African-Americans, slaves and settlers alike, out of Oregon. The 1843 provisional government excluded African-American settlers, as did the constitution for statehood, created in 1857. Concern over whether Oregon would be brought into the Union as a free or slave state inspired local meetings and debates.[125] Two local newspapers reported that Oregon women were present at one Free Soil meeting.[126]

Churches and Other Organizations

During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, ministers directed their crusade toward women, who became increasingly active in church-related events.[127] Women participated in similar activities in Oregon as well, such as sponsoring suppers to raise money for their churches.

A church supper notice was typically worded like the following, from the *Oregonian*: "The ladies are getting up a tea party, for the purpose of raising funds to purchase lamps, &c. for the Presbyterian Church; at which a supper will be furnished

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[125]Schwantes, 97, 102-104.

[126]*Weekly Oregonian*, 7 July 1855, 2; *Oregon Weekly Times*, 7 July 1855, 2.

[127]Clinton, 42.

at $1"[128] A variety of churches used such events to raise money, including the Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Baptists, and Methodists. All were given good press. For example, the *Times* reported that the tea party, or Ladies' Fair, mentioned above was "a fine affair" and raised about $500.[129] As might be expected, the *Times* and *Oregonian* often contained similar notices and reviews of the events.

Secular organizations formed in Oregon as well. The Independent Order of Odd Fellows, a fraternal benevolence society, held a celebration in 1854 at which every member was reportedly responsible for bringing at least one woman.[130] The Degree of Rebekah was adopted by the Odd Fellows in 1851, allowing wives of members with a high degree to join. In 1852 the widows of these members also became eligible.[131] Oregon also had a Degree of Rebekah, and its members were praised when the celebration mentioned above was reviewed in the newspaper. An Odd Fellow remarked that the organization "will ever welcome the 'Fair Rebeckas' [sic] to their arms, and hail them as co-laborers in their glorious work."[132] At another meeting, Mrs. Thurston, on behalf of the sisters of the degree, presented the lodge with a Bible and made a speech.[133]

Other secular Oregon organizations were the Yamhill County Agricultural Society and Washington County Agricultural Society. The Yamhill organization determined to

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[128]*Oregonian*, 1 November 1851, 2.

[129]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 15 November 1851, 2.

[130]Ibid., 15 July 1854, 3.

[131]J. Powley, *Concise History of Odd Fellowship* (Ontario: The Grand Lodge of Ontario, I.O.O.F., 1943), 41.

[132]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 22 July 1854, 2.

[133]Ibid., 4 November 1854, 2.

hold a fair, and women's participation was apparently invited, for a prize was to be given for, among other things, "the best Oregon made bed quilt."[134] The Washington society was also to have a fair, with a Ladies' Department.[135]

Other Community Involvement

A variety of miscellaneous community events involving women were reported locally, including being in a choir at the First Annual Celebration of the Sons of New England Residing in Oregon,[136] being admitted free to meetings of the Portland Lyceum,[137] and being present at a meeting in Oregon City for naming the steamer Lot Whitcomb.[138]

One woman was more closely involved with the steamer Lot Whitcomb. On its maiden voyage, the steamer became stuck on a sand bar in the rapids below the Oregon City. The *Spectator's* editor, upon hearing about the steamer's plight, sent word to Elizabeth Markham, a frequent contributor of poems to the paper, that he would hold his presses if she would write a few lines celebrating the steamer's arrival. This delay apparently allowed the *Spectator* to appear on the streets, complete with the new poem, as the steamboat made its belated arrival in Oregon City.[139] Markham completed the poem

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[134]*Weekly Oregonian*, 8 April 1854, 2.

[135]Ibid., 11 July 1854, 1.

[136]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 24 December 1853, 2.

[137]Ibid., 13 December 1851, 2.

[138]*Western Star*, 12 December 1850, 3.

[139]Villard Street Poets, *With Her Own Wings* (Eugene: Oregon Search Program, 1977), 192-193.

"Lines, composed whilst the Lot Whitcomb made her first ascent of the rapids" in three stanzas, concluding with:

Success to the steamer,
Her Captain and crew,
She has our best wishes attained.
Oh! that she may never,
While running the river,
Fall back on the sand bar again.[140]

Entertainment

Various recreations involving local women were printed in the Portland-area papers. The HBMS (Her Britannic Majesty's Ship) Modeste's captain and crew figured in many local entertainments, at a time when the United States and Great Britain were wrangling over the destiny of the region. President Polk's belligerent campaign posturing, which produced the slogan "Fifty-four Forty or Fight," referring to his estimation of where the border between British and American interests should be established, contributed to the tension over the region. The Modeste, which had visited the Columbia in the summer of 1844, arrived again in late 1845 and stayed throughout 1846 near Fort Vancouver to protect "Her Majesty's subjects from the number of persons arriving by way of the Rocky Mountains."[141] Captain Baillie and the officers and crew of the Modeste attempted to stay on cordial terms with the Americans, putting on several plays, a ball, curling matches, and horse races. One Hudson's Bay Company official, however, felt that the ship's presence "produced anything but a tranquilizing effect upon the American portion of the population, and the presence of the British flag was a constant

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[140]*Oregon Spectator*, 5 June 1851, 1.

[141]*Oregon Historical Quarterly,* "HMS Modeste on the Pacific Coast 1843-47: Log and Letters," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 61 (1960): 408-436, 413.

source of irritation."[142] In addition to general American displeasure with the British presence, the teetotaling American element was critical of the British navy's liquor consumption. The treaty was signed in June of 1846 that settled the Oregon Country boundary at the forty-ninth parallel. The Modeste weighed anchor in May of 1847.[143]

Margaret Jewett Bailey submitted this poem to the *Spectator* regarding the position of Oregon in the boundary dispute. The following lines are the first stanza of "New Columbia":

> "The 'Lion' yet remains away:
> Nor 'Stars' illume our desert way:
> *He* finds supplies in India's clime;
> *They* shine on other lands sublime.
> Success to the land that's enlightened and free;
> Success Old Columbia, success unto thee."[144]

The first entertainment item to explicitly mention women was a comedy and ball sponsored by Captain Baillie and his gun-room officers in February of 1846 at which "a brilliant assemblage of the 'fair sex' of Oregon" attended.[145] The second Modeste entertainment reported in the *Spectator* provoked a controversy on the propriety of naming women in a public forum. This event, which took place in the spring of 1846, involved a play one day, followed by a picnic the next, at which "gentlemen vied with each other in politeness to assist the 'blooming fair' to and from their saddles." At a ball and a supper after the picnic, the reporter noted that "the 'fair sex' were more numerous, and even more

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[142]Ibid., 414n.

[143]Ibid., 413-414, 414n.

[144]*Oregon Spectator*, 26 November 1846, 4.

[145]*Oregon Spectator*, 19 February 1846, 2. A number of the young women in the play were, in fact, the daughters of Oregon settlers. Bancroft, 574.

bewitching in their dresses, step, and grace, than on former occasions." A list of men and women who attended the entertainment was also included.[146]

The reporter was criticized in the *Spectator* by "XYZ" for his indiscretion at naming the women who participated. "Now, I think, the ladies will not thank this 'lover' for the great parade he has made of their names in your paper, coupled with such outrageous flattery," said the detractor. "It may be all right enough, but it is novel and unheard of; and I cannot but think that one of the young ladies mentioned would blush if she was one of the fair sex whose name was paraded in the Spectator as possessing so much beauty, ease, and grace in her step. I say, I think the young lady would blush."[147]

The reporter defended himself by accusing XYZ: "One paragraph of his production breathes the very essence of envy, where he alludes to the flattering compliments paid to the beauty, grace, &c., of the ladies of Tuality Plains who attended these innocent gaities, and which he in the supremacy of his wisdom, seems disposed to condemn." The praise, he insisted, was not flattery and was entirely appropriate.[148] The controversy appears to have died after this retort. The appropriateness of naming women in a newspaper was probably XYZ's main concern, but the fraternization of British seamen with American women may have contributed to his hostility.

Other entertainments reported in the papers as involving local women include pleasure excursions on local ships, such as the Lot Whitcomb or Mountain Buck.[149]

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[146]*Oregon Spectator*, 14 May 1846, 2.

[147]Ibid., 25 June 1846, 2.

[148]Ibid., 23 July 1846, 2.

[149]*Oregonian*, 7 June 1851, 2; *Weekly Oregonian*, 1 August 1857, 2; *Western Star*, 6 February 1851, 2; Ibid., 15 May 1851, 2; *Oregon Weekly Times*, 10 July 1851, 2; Ibid., 9 July 1853, 2.

When the Multnomah was launched many women were present and five or six were on board. The *Spectator* editor employed a bit of boosting along with the notice of this event, saying, "Oregon is improving rapidly in this particular: we have now some of the fairest of the fair to look upon."[150] One item reported that Captain Le Roy of the steamship Columbia invited ladies and gentlemen on board his vessel to dine.[151] In an announcement for the Turn Verein Picnic it was reported that "pretty much 'everybody and his wife' will be there."[152] One item described a ball given at the Metropolis Hotel to Captain Withers by his friends. It reportedly entertained many men and women.[153]

Sometimes the local women supplied the entertainment. On one occasion at the Methodist Church "the young ladies and misses of Oregon City, favored the citizens of Portland with a display of their vocal powers." Such occasions may have provided an opportunity for the unwed to observe eligible mates. The editor reported that, "we noticed several unmarried gentlemen among the audience, whose eyes fairly sparkled with delight, and their countenances indicated that they inwardly vowed to live no longer in single blessedness."[154]

The entertainments of theatrical troupes that toured the territory often received coverage, and many such groups had female members. Thoman's theatrical troupe boasted Miss Lizzie Gordon, Miss Pelby, and Miss Williamson.[155] Mrs. Emily P.

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[150]*Oregon Spectator*, 10 July 1851, 2.

[151]*Oregonian*, 27 December 1851, 2.

[152]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 15 May 1858, 2.

[153]*Weekly Oregonian*, 23 August 1856, 2.

[154]Ibid., 21 July 1855, 2.

[155]Ibid., 3 January 1857, 2; Ibid., 14 March 1857, 2.

Lesdernier toured the area, giving poetic and dramatic readings.[156] Miss Louisa Graves, a vocalist, accompanied by John Kelly, a vocalist and violinist, also entertained in the region.[157] The Chapmans, a singing, dancing, and theatrical troupe, was said by the *Oregonian* to have a superior actress in Mrs. Chapman and a good dancer in Mrs. Heywood.[158] Several of these groups knew the advantages of good public relations. The Chapmans, for example, gave a benefit to Willamette Fire Company No. 1, with two banners presented by Miss Caroline,[159] and to the Vigilance Hook and Ladder Company No. 1, at which another banner was presented by Miss Caroline.[160]

The Fourth of July was an occasion for celebration as well as a chance to demonstrate patriotism for the United States and build community ties. The newspapers covered Fourth of July celebrations and usually reported that the women received toasts for their patriotic efforts. The presence of women at speeches on these occasions is shown by the speakers' addressing of both sexes.[161] The first public celebrations by the settlers of the Fourth of July to be reported took place in 1846, in Oregon City and Salem. At Oregon City a public dinner was served, after which toasts were read, with cheering and gun firing, but without alcohol consumption. The celebration was colored by the situation between Great Britain and the United States, several toasts pointedly referring to

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[156]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 19 September 1857, 2; *Weekly Oregonian*, 26 September 1857, 2.

[157]*Weekly Oregonian*, 22 May 1858, 2.

[158]Ibid., 1 January 1859, 2.

[159]Ibid., 11 July 1857, 2.

[160]Ibid., 15 August 1857, 2.

[161]*Oregon Spectator*, 6 August 1846, 1; Ibid., 8 July 1847, 2.

allegiance to the United States and its superiority.[162] Women were the subject of one toast at the Oregon City celebration, but took a more active part at Salem. There, Mrs. Horace Holden and Miss Looney presented a banner to a local military organization, the newly organized Oregon Rangers.[163] Unfortunately, at the Salem celebration "the heavy fall of rain prevented the ladies from marching as was anticipated." The women were participating, if not marching, however; there were "in attendance at the stand, a large number of the Oregon fair."[164]

At one Fourth of July celebration women received full honors for their entertainment efforts. The paper announced that the "Committee of Arrangements" consisted of "Mrs. Comfort, Mrs. G. A. Barnes, Mrs. Silver, Mrs. Wilbur, Mrs. Kingsley, And Miss Chapman—assisted by Gentlemen Comfort, Barnes, Davis, Wilson, Dennison, Day, Griffin" and others.[165] Women's competence in such endeavors was noticed by editor Dryer for another year's celebration: "the fact that the ladies have taken 'hold of the necessary ropes' augurs with unerring certainty that 'a good time is coming.'"[166] At one Fourth of July celebration in Portland, the flag of a newly organized independent volunteer company was presented "by some patriotic ladies of this

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[162]Ibid., 4 July (9 July on inside), 1846, 2.

[163]Ibid., 23 July 1846, 2.

[164]Ibid., 23 July 1846, 4.

[165]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 10 July 1851, 2.

[166]*Oregonian*, 3 July 1852, 2.

city."[167] The Fourth of July addresses on temperance by two women to local Sons of Temperance organizations were also carried by the press.[168]

Advertising

Advertisements for goods and services made up a large proportion of the Portland-area frontier newspapers. In the *Oregon Spectator* and *Oregonian* about 18% of the advertisements for goods mentioned products for women. In the *Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times* this number was slightly higher, at 21%. Goods mentioned as specifically for women include dress fabrics, gaiters, corsets, whalebone hoops, hose, shoes and boots, kid gloves, mantillas, bonnets, India Rubber hair pins, combs, purses, and parasols. Women's jewelry and decorative tools were also advertised, including bosom pins, coral necklaces and armlets, rings, earrings, gold and silver thimbles, and Daughters of Temperance jewelry. Evidence that bloomers had reached the West, as mentioned above, is apparent in *Oregonian* and *Times* advertisements for two different shops.[169] Advertisements for work boxes, work cases, cabas, card cases, porte-monies, mantel ornaments, pen holders, knitting needles, and furniture also mentioned their manufacture for women. Books on maternity, midwifery, and the diseases of women were also available. Pictures with text were few in these early frontier advertisements, but one ad did show a woman at a sewing machine and requested the attention of "housekeepers."[170]

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[167]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 8 July 1854, 2.

[168]*Weekly Oregonian*, 24 July 1854, 1.

[169]Ibid., 11 April 1857, 3; *Weekly Oregonian*, 3 July 1858, 3; *Oregon Weekly Times*, 10 July 1858, 3.

[170]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 15 January 1859, 4.

Other advertisements for products and services also targeted women. Several livery stables advertised ladies' saddles and gentle horses for women.[171] For the comfort of female travelers, the Western Hotel offered a ladies' parlor.[172] One bath house with private baths was "expressly for the accommodation of Ladies, Children, and Families."[173] The Metropolitan Bath House advertisement informed that "the Ladies Department is elegantly fitted up with Double Baths, and so arranged that Ladies will enter and leave the premises by a private entrance." The women who visited this establishment would also be served by a female attendant.[174] Local restaurants, including a local ice cream saloon, also advertised their services for women.[175]

A few advertisements tried to gain women's attention more aggressively. Park and Vanduyn, travelling daguerreans, enjoined "Ladies do not forget us, as our stay is short, intending to leave for Oregon City soon."[176] I. B. Francis devoted one section of an advertisement "To the Ladies" to announce "I have just opened a splendid assortment of Brocade, Black and Rept Silks for Dresses. A beautiful article of Valparaiso Dress Goods, silk warp Alpacas, Marinoes, English and American Prints, Black Silk Mantillas,

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[171]In the *Oregonian* 36% and in the *Times* 22% of the livery ads mentioned tack or animals for women. The *Oregon Spectator* sample had no livery ads for women.

[172]*Weekly Oregonian,* 8 April 1854, 3; *Oregon Weekly Times*, 1 July 1854, 4. Hotels, boarding houses, and bath houses mentioned services for women in 15%, 16%, and 21% of the advertisements for the *Spectator*, *Oregonian*, and *Times*, respectively.

[173]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 5 July 1856, 3.

[174]Ibid., 1 January 1859, 3.

[175]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 5 July 1856, 3; *Weekly Oregonian*, 5 July 1856, 3. In the *Oregonian* 50% and in the *Times* 53% of the restaurant ads mentioned women. None of the *Oregon Spectator* restaurant ads in the sample mentioned women.

[176]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 6 March 1852, 3.

Canton Crape, Marino, Cashmere and Rob Roy Shawls, superior Grass and Linen H'ks., bonnets, Gaters, Walking and India Rubber Shoes, Thread lace, Lace Collars, Underbraces, Under Clothing, &c."[177] In a later advertisement Francis announced the opening of a Ladies' Department at his store.[178]

Other shops sold exclusively to women and therefore directed their ads toward women. One advertisement said "The Ladies of Portland, Vancouver, Oregon City, And all others visiting the city, are respectfully informed that Day & Myrick Have just opened a new Store Especially for the Ladies' Trade." This store offered embroideries, laces, bonnets, and shoes.[179] Likewise, Simon Brothers used their advertising space to "respectfully call the attention of the Ladies to their New and Beautiful stock of Staple and Fancy dry goods, bonnets, ribbons, perfumery, &c., &c., &c."[180] The City of Paris Dry Goods Store, which offered "a splendid assortment of Ladies' Garments," used a similar technique with the notice that said "the attention of THE LADIES is most respectfully solicited to an examination of our goods [emphasis in original]."[181]

About 20% of the doctors' advertisements specifically mentioned their services for women.[182] Such advertisements include the medical partnership of Broy and

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[177]Ibid., 2 April 1853, 4;*Oregonian*, 1 January 1853, 3.

[178]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 6 January 1855, 3; *Weekly Oregonian*, 23 June 1855, 3.

[179]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 4 July 1857, 3; *Weekly Oregonian*, 12 September 1857, 3.

[180]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 2 January 1858, 2.

[181]Ibid., 3; *Weekly Oregonian*, 3 April 1858, 3.

[182]In the *Spectator*, *Oregonian*, and *Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times*, respectively, 24%, 20% and 21% of the doctor's ads mentioned women.

Wilson,[183] J. B. Cole, M.D., of San Francisco,[184] and P. Welch.[185] Some local doctors offered women nontraditional treatment. Dr. H. McKinnell, for example, treated "female afflictions" using homeopathic techniques (using drugs in small doses).[186] Dr. A. R. T. Locey, a "Botanic Physician" who used herbs, said he would "pay particular attention to the diseases of women and children."[187] One physician billed himself as an obstetrician.[188]

Special comforts were sometimes offered to women by doctors. Dr. E. H. Griffin, a "surgeon dentist," announced that "ladies from the country, can be provided for in my family, while being operated for," and Dr. J. R. Cardwell, a "dental surgeon," offered to visit women at their homes. W. Warren, who had abandoned the old school teaching and gathered his remedies from the "vegetable kingdom," claimed experience with "all the afflictions and difficulties that are incident to the female race" and offered to visit women at their houses.[189]

Sometimes doctors advertised treatment for sexual diseases. Dr. R. McCaffrey of San Francisco advertised that he treated syphilis and other genital diseases. "Ladies and gentlemen who desire to become patients without calling at the rooms of the Institute, can

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[183]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 6 March 1852, 2.

[184]Ibid., 3 January 1857, 3; *Weekly Oregonian*, 7 March 1857, 3.

[185]*Weekly Oregonian*, 12 September 1857, 4.

[186]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 2 January 1858, 3.

[187]*Oregon Spectator*, 7 January 1847, 3.

[188]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 19 January 1856, 3.

[189]Ibid., 27 December 1851, 2; *Oregonian*, 3 January 1852, 4.

be attended at their residences," he announced.[190] A Dr. Brown, who manufactured "Lemon Syrup," "Sweet Cider," and "that most excellent and healthy beverage, Sarsaparilla Beer," also consulted on the "delicate diseases" of men and women.[191]

L. J. Czapkay of San Francisco probably offered the most controversial medical service in the Oregon papers. In addition to helping the women of Oregon and California with their "brain, lungs, heart, stomach, liver, womb, blood, kidneys, and all diseases peculiar to their sex" he performed abortions. His offer for such services was not particularly discrete: "All married ladies, whose delicate health or other circumstances do not allow to have an increase in their families," his ad announced, were asked to write or call "and they will receive every possible relief and help. The Doctor's offices are so arranged that he can be consulted without molestation." At 1 1/4 columns, this advertisement was longer than any other of that issue.[192] It is perhaps his abortion services that incurred criticism from other doctors of the region. A few years after he began running his abortion ad, Dr. Czapkay ran another ad defending himself against doctors who called him a charlatan in the *Pacific Medical and Surgical Journal*.[193] The *Times*, clipping from another local paper, the *Argus*, critically described the *Oregonian* as being "Czapkay's organ."[194]

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[190]*Weekly Oregonian*, 2 August 1856, 2.

[191]*Oregon Spectator*, 19 September 1850, 3.

[192]*Weekly Oregonian*, 2 February 1856, 4.

[193]Ibid., 12 February 1859, 3. The *Pacific Medical and Surgical Journal* was not available for inspection.

[194]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 15 January 1859, 2.

Abortion was considered differently in the 1800s than it is now. Underlying the practice of abortion in the United States in the nineteenth century was the traditional British common law notion of "quickening," the first perception of fetal movement by the pregnant woman, which usually occurred in the midpoint of gestation. Most Americans did not consider a prequickened fetus a distinct human with a separate existence, and the early laws reflected these beliefs. After quickening, however, abortion without just cause was considered a crime.[195] After 1841, however, the laws restricting abortions began to change and increase. Traditional doctors were behind much of the legislation, for two reasons: nontraditional doctors, who were increasingly performing abortions, created competition with traditional doctors, causing traditional doctors' incomes to fall sharply, and traditional doctors knew that quickening in itself was not an important step in fetal development, and therefore performing abortions at any time in fetal development went against the Hippocratic Oath.[196] The public may not have questioned the idea of abortion, provided it occurred early in pregnancy, and were probably not shocked by Czapkay's advertisement. But traditional doctors, those who attacked him in the *Pacific Medical and Surgical Journal,* may have perceived him as competition or may not have approved of abortion, even before quickening. Or their criticism may have been based on another aspect of his practice, perhaps his methods.

Medicines were also promoted in the newspapers for women's use. A product called family vegetable medicine, made by Dr. J. G. Kreichbaum, was touted as good for many things, including "female weakness."[197] Dr. Guysott advertised his "Improved

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[195]James C. Mohr, *Abortion in America: The Origins and Evolution of National Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 3-4.

[196]Ibid., 20-27, 34-37.

[197]*Oregonian*, 7 January 1854, 3.

Extract of Yellow Dock and Sarsaparilla," available in quart bottles. Billed as "the best female medicine known," this substance was said to be good for "Incipient Consumption, Barrenness, Lucorrhea or Whites, Irregular Menstruation, Incontinence of Urine, and general gloomy state of mind."[198] Graefenberg's vegetable pills "for obstruction of the menses,"[199] "Marshall's Uterine Catholicon," said to cure diseases of the womb,[200] and Holloway's Pills for "delicate females" were also advertised. "All irregularities and ailments incident to the delicate and sensitive organs of the sex are removed or prevented by a few doses of these mild, but infallible alternatives," claimed the Holloway's ad.[201] Many of these items were intended for use as abortifacients. As the number of abortions climbed in the 1840s-1860s, the amount of abortifacient medicine produced also rose. Ads for mixtures claiming to cures such female problems as "irregularities," "menstrual suppression," "stoppages," and "obstructions" were known to refer to the termination of pregnancy[202] Kreichbaum's vegetable medicine for "female weakness" may also have had the same use. The term "female weakness" may have the same meaning—pregnancy—as does the term "delicate females" in Holloway's ad.

Some women owned their own establishments and advertised them in the papers. Mrs. Soucher, a milliner with a shop in Oregon City, expressly advertised "To the Ladies of Oregon City, and vicinity."[203] Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Mosier advertised their

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[198]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 1 July 1854, 4

[199]Ibid., 15 January 1853, 4.

[200]Ibid., 7 January 1854, 4; *Weekly Oregonian*, 16 January 1858, 3.

[201]*Weekly Oregonian*, 7 March 1857, 3.

[202]Mohr, 53, 61-62, 65, 71.

[203]*Oregon Spectator*, 10 February 1855, 2.

millinery and mantua making shop to "the ladies of Portland and its vicinity" as well.[204] Other ads proclaimed that Mrs. Davis and Walker were "prepared to alter, bleach, and trim bonnets in the most fashionable style,"[205] Mrs. M. A. Limerick had started her own millinery establishment,[206] and Mrs. Crait performed dressmaking and needlework.[207]

Services other than those involving clothing were provided by women as well. One woman advertised her skills as a midwife, informing that she had studied at the Imperial Lying In Institute in St. Petersburg, Russia.[208] As mentioned above, Mrs. Thornton and Mrs. Hill advertised their schools in the newspaper. Mrs. Hill also advertised her dancing academy, and Mrs. E. D. Thomas advertised her private boarding house.[209] "The Celebrated Diviner," Madame de Cassina of San Francisco, announced she "explains the past and predicts the future," as well as instructs in "Egyptian Astrology."[210] The meaning of de Cassina's advertisement may not be as straightforward as it appears. Abortionists in the nineteenth century frequently advertised in papers as astrologers and clairvoyants, the meaning of which was clearly understood by contemporary readers.[211]

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[204]*Oregonian*, 25 September 1852, 3.

[205]*Weekly Oregonian*, 1 July 1854, 3.

[206]Ibid., 23 June 1855, 4.

[207]Ibid., 2 February 1856, 2.

[208]Ibid., 16 January 1858, 3.

[209]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 5 July 1856, 3.

[210]Ibid., 1 January 1859, 3.

[211]Mohr, 55.

Help wanted advertisements also appeared in the newspapers. In one ad a woman eighteen to twenty-five years of age was desired as a chambermaid for the Columbian Hotel.[212] In another, a female servant who could cook and perform general house work was wanted.[213] One notice advertised the need for "good Tailoresses, to make 100 sack coats, and 200 vests."[214]

Conclusion

Four points can be made about women's involvement in newspapers on the Oregon frontier, several of which call into question the notion that newspapers have traditionally been a forum for men to talk to men.

First, women appeared in Oregon's frontier papers in a variety of topics, including boosting, women's rights and dress reform, women's traditional sphere, courtship, marriage, separation, divorce, prostitution, crimes of violence, Indian wars, education, temperance, slavery, churches and other organizations, miscellaneous community events, entertainment, and advertisements. Although the variety is large, the overall number of items, though more than expected, seems somewhat small. For example, during the period of this study, the *Spectator* carried ten items on women and temperance, the *Oregonian* eleven, and the *Times* three. The *Oregonian* had five notices about church fundraising, three referring to the same event; the *Times* had six notices, two referring to the same event; and the *Spectator* had no notices. The number of school-related items is much greater because many such items were advertisements that repeated. As stated, by

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[212]*Oregonian*, 12 April 1851, 3.

[213]Ibid., 2 July 1853, 3.

[214]*Oregon Spectator*, 7 January 1854, 4.

count, about 4% of the editorial items, 17% of the local submissions, and 14% of the notices and ads in the three newspapers mentioned women.

Many locally written items about women discussed women's activities, such as attending community events, fundraising for churches or for soldiers, and being active in temperance. Some items discussed women's place in society, such as their being superior educators or more pious, or their having clout with the voting public (on temperance). Others discussed women in the new country, such as how they were affected by or influenced property holding under the Donation Land Law. Local events involving women, such as their speeches before temperance organizations were also published. Such items not only reported women's activities, but also their thoughts and ideas. It is noteworthy that local editors considered women's opinions suitable for publication.

Nevertheless, writing about women in the newspaper involved a certain etiquette. One resident complained when one report listed the names of several women who appeared at an entertainment sponsored by members of the British officers of the ship Modeste. The complaint may have arisen because of the youth of the women named or because of the tension between the United States and Britain.

Second, women on the Oregon frontier used newspapers as a tool, within certain limits. It was acceptable for women to advertise for spouses in the newspaper, to respond to advertisements for wives, and to use the paper as a forum for a discussion on marriage. The persuasive writings of "Stella" and Hattie H., and women's advertising of their services, such as teaching and making clothing, were also appropriate. It was apparently not proper, however, for young women to participate in more public discussions, such as making a pledge to soldiers or to urge men to war. As with naming young women attending a local entertainment, the war controversy may stem from the age of the women; older women whose similar ideas appeared in the paper were not criticized. Nevertheless,

the fifteen young women involved apparently saw the newspaper as a tool for getting their ideas into print, and at least one used it to defend their actions to the public.

Third, men considered the newspaper a tool for speaking to women. Through the newspapers a male writer appealed to women to join the Washingtonian society, several men submitted poetry to women, and Captain Maxon wrote to adult women of the community as well as unwed younger women. Men also used advertisements to speak to female community members.

Fourth, women contributed their ideas to local newspapers artistically, through prose and poetry, including Elizabeth Markham,[215] Margaret Jewett Bailey, Minnie Mistletoe, Myra Mistletoe, and Irene Ingleson. Many others may have contributed without submitting their names. Women were, in fact, encouraged to write for local newspapers. Goodrich of the *Oregon Spectator* said if women submitted their work "they would not only be conferring a lasting favor upon us . . . but would also introduce a new and very pleasing feature into the literary life of the Territory."[216] Although not all editors were as blatant in their efforts to secure female writing, each newspaper did print items written by women. Often local women's efforts contained elements of established norms regarding women, such as their role as spiritual caretakers of society. Some dealt with personal feelings, such as Irene Ingleson's poem on unrequited love. And a few items spoke in more general terms of American life, such as on themes of temperance, religion, or death. A large number of women's contributions, however, discussed the frontier experience—

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[215]Elizabeth Markham, who apparently was run over by a buffalo herd on her journey to the Oregon Country with her husband, arrived in Oregon City in 1847 and became the proprietor of a store by the Willamette falls. She lived in Oregon City ten years. Edwin Markham, her son, who also became a poet, said this her: "My mother was a Roman matron, a woman of power, one who could have led an army to battle." Villard Street Poets, 192-193.

[216]*Oregon Spectator*, 14 April 1854, 2.

the arrival of a steamer or men's departure to the gold mines. These contributions demonstrate that women participated in defining and describing frontier culture.

In conclusion, women's activities were published in Oregon's frontier newspapers, indicating their pursuits were of interest to the local community. Advertisements targeted women, suggesting they were important subscribers. Women also took an active role in newspapers, using them as advertising tools and forums for their discussions on marriage, temperance, and war, as well as for their artistic contributions. Such facts are remarkable, given the research to date. Nevertheless, it should be made clear that restrictions were placed on what written about women and what women wrote, determined by the moral proprieties of the day and the gatekeeping editors.

CHAPTER VI

LADIES' DEPARTMENTS

> . . . whatever is estimable and excellent in female character to encourage. . . .
> —Margaret Jewett Bailey, *Oregon Spectator,* May 12, 1854

Ladies' Departments are an intriguing aspect of Oregon's frontier newspapers because the newspaper format clearly indicates that women, a minority in the territory, were a valued audience. Even though none of the Oregon Ladies' Departments was longlasting, their existence implies some effort by editors to engage female readers. Ladies' Departments, however, usually presented a traditional viewpoint of women. When Margaret Jewett Bailey, editor of the *Spectator's* Ladies' Department, sought to stretch the boundaries of acceptable discussion by advocating women's rights and municipal reform, society and the gatekeeping editor removed her. Even so, historical women's departments are helpful in ascertaining the information editors of the time thought would (or *should*) be of interest to women, knowledge that can be applied to newspapers without Ladies' Departments. This chapter will discuss the history of Ladies' Departments, provide general information on those of Oregon's frontier, then present Bailey's short-term experience as a Ladies' Department editor.

History of Ladies' Departments

Little has been written about Ladies' Departments, making those of Oregon's frontier difficult to place in a historical context. For the most part, newspaper departments devoted to women have not been recognized as occurring until much later in the century.

Ishbel Ross observes that "housewives did not read the papers before 1870," when columns "For the Ladies" appeared.[1] Frank Luther Mott also notes that features for women and syndicated women's columns were common in the Sunday papers in the 1870s and 1880s.[2] Later, at the turn of the century, the growth in department-store advertising, directed mainly to women in the home, induced newspapers to offer more information that would appeal to women.[3] Marion Marzolf suggests that advertising played an earlier role, causing the increase in women's columns in newspapers in the 1880s and 1890s.[4]

Mentions of departments for women in newspapers before 1870 occur serendipitously. A clipping in the *Oregon Weekly Times* issue of April 8, 1854, remarks that the papers of the time were all the same in look and content. The writer, Plimpton,[5] preferred the old-time papers and those from out-of-the-way places, such as the *Republican* from Dowagiac, Michigan, which featured a "Ladies' Department" and a "Farmer's Column," among other entries.[6] This suggests that Ladies' Departments of the 1840s and 1850s may have been artifacts from an earlier age and/or may have occurred more frequently in frontier or rural areas.

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[1]Ross, 14.

[2]Mott, *American Journalism*, 482-483.

[3]Ibid., 509.

[4]Marzolf, 20-21.

[5]Plimpton apparently was not particularly famous, and does not appear in modern journalism encyclopedias or dictionaries.

[6]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 8 April 1854, 1.

Ladies' Department in actual newspapers of the 1840s and 1850s are hard to find. Given Plimpton's assertions, one might think that big-city dailies, which emphasized commerce rather than community, might not carry such departments. To be sure, a sampling of the *New York Times*, the *New York Daily Tribune*, the *New York Herald*, and the New Orleans *Daily Picayune* for the 1840s and 1850s provides no evidence for such departments. The *Chicago Daily Tribune*, however, did contain a "Home Department" in late 1852 through mid-1853, "edited by a lady," which could be considered a close relative of Ladies' Departments. One writer places the end of Chicago's frontier phase at 1848, when the railroad arrived,[7] so the occurrence a few years later of this department is somewhat in line with Plimpton's reference to out-of-the-way places. No Ladies' Departments were found in weeklies from several other frontier regions, however.[8] Perhaps infrequency and a fleeting existence are characteristics of the early newspaper Ladies' Departments.

Many magazines, mostly catering to rural interests, had Ladies' Departments throughout the nineteenth century. Many of these departments had women editors, and women's rights was often the subject of discussion.[9] Rural journals and country

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[7]Bessie Louise Pierce, *A History of Chicago: Volume I, The Beginning of a City, 1673-1848* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937).

[8]Several weekly and daily newspapers were sampled, including the *Arkansas State Gazette*, the *Chicago Democrat*, the *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, the *Daily Pioneer and Democrat* (St. Paul, Minnesota), the *Daily Town Talk* (San Francisco), the *Democratic Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), the *Gazette* (St. Joseph, Missouri), the *Milwaukie Daily Sentinel and Gazette*, the *Daily Missouri Republican* (St. Louis), the *New Orleans Bee*, the *New York Evening Post*, the *Nevada Journal* (Nevada City, California), the *San Antonio Herald*, the *San Diego Herald*, the *Springfield Advertiser* (Missouri), the *State Gazette* (Austin, Texas), and the *Texas Democrat* (Austin, Texas).

[9]Albert Lowther Demaree, *The American Agricultural Press, 1819-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), 160-179.

newspapers had very much in common; both were written for rural settings, with agriculture the main theme. These publications often were so similar that journalism historian Frederick Hudson classifies several as newspapers, while Mott calls them periodicals.[10] Both agree that the lines are difficult to draw. Magazine Ladies' Departments therefore may help bridge any information gaps between newspaper Ladies' Departments of the 1840s and 1850s and their later incarnations, the modern women's pages. Oregon's Ladies' Departments provide a few sturdy planks along this trail.

Oregon's Ladies' Departments

Sections entitled "Ladies' Department" occurred on four separate occasions from 1848 to 1854, in two of this study's papers. In the *Oregon Spectator*, Aaron E. Wait's department ran from November 9, 1848, to December 14, 1848, with two Ladies' Departments; Margaret Jewett Bailey's department, lasting six issues, ran from May 12, 1854, to June 16, 1854; and C. L. Goodrich's, with twenty-one issues, ran from August 11, 1854, to February 24, 1855, just a few weeks before the *Spectator* suspended publication. Bailey was hired by Goodrich to edit the Ladies' Department for the *Spectator*, while Goodrich remained main editor. The *Oregonian's* Ladies' Department ran from June 19, 1852, to October 2, 1852, with sixteen issues. Not every consecutive paper in these series contained a Ladies' Department.

Newspapers without Ladies' Departments, however, still contained much information about, by, and for women. The *Western Star/Oregon Weekly Times* did not

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[10]Frank Luther Mott discusses the use of the terms periodicals, magazines, papers, and so forth in Mott, *American Magazines, 1741-1850*, 5-9. Frederick Hudson, *Journalism in the United States from 1690 to 1872* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1873), 330-334.

offer a Ladies' Department, but did contain a "Family Reading" column from 1850 to 1851 that seems to have been meant for children, teen-agers, and adult men and women.

The *Spectator* and *Oregonian* Ladies' Departments contained most of the information formats found in the regular newspaper columns, including essays, lectures, speeches, biographical sketches, news blurbs, stories, poetry, words of wisdom (pithy sayings of one or two sentences), and jokes. Themes were similar as well, including items on women's behavior, nature, and place in society, education, fashion, courtship, love, marriage, childraising, widowhood, religion, and temperance. Items of general interest without a female theme were also present, such as social commentaries on treatment of the poor and riding the omnibus, didactic pieces on saving money, and biographical sketches on famous people such as Napoleon. A few seemingly odd items were also present, including information on the production of the Galena lead mines[11] and the benefit of glass coffins (which apparently was that ". . . the remains of the departed being entirely protected, decomposition goes on very slowly").[12] These odd items appeared mostly in Dryer's columns.

On the other hand, themes one might expect to find in the Ladies' Department were absent. Local news involving women was not printed in the Ladies' Department; for example, the blurb on Salem women presenting a "splendid banner" to the Sons of Temperance was carried on page two, rather than in the Ladies' Department on page four.[13] Other information that one might expect to be in this department was also presented elsewhere, such as a household hint on the *Oregonian's* front page directing

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[11]*Oregonian*, 31 July 1852, 4.

[12]Ibid., 10 July 1852, 4.

[13]Ibid., 17 July 1852, 2.

readers to "rub your griddle with fine salt before you grease it, and your cakes will not stick."[14] This advice could have been meant for women *and* men, who often had to cook for themselves on the frontier. Literature and poetry, often intended for both men and women, could occur inside or outside the Ladies' Departments. A temperance story about how a man felt "ashamed, conscience smitten and chagrined" when his wife had been saving money while he'd been out drinking was printed for the benefit of men, not women, and was placed outside the Ladies' Department.[15]

Clippings in the Ladies' Departments came from a variety of sources and authors. Dryer typically provided clippings from newspapers,[16] while Goodrich,[17] Bailey,[18] and Wait[19] relied more on magazines. Clipped authors (American if not otherwise noted) include French novelist Honoré de Balzac; Swedish novelist Frederika Bremer; Governor Briggs of Massachusetts; novelist Mary Denison; journalist, short-story writer, and

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[14]Ibid., 31 July 1852, 1.

[15]Ibid., 17 July 1852, 1.

[16]Dryer's sources include the *Boston Journal, Boston Olive Branch, Boston Post, Boston Republican, Boston Times, Boston Traveller, Cincinnati Commercial, Cincinnati Price Current, Cincinnati Sunday Paper, Contootook Transcript, Delaware Gazette, Liverpool Mercury, London Times, Minnesota Pioneer, New York Picayune, Philadelphia Sun, St. Louis Intelligencer, Savannah (Missouri) Sentinel, Troy Whig*, and *Worcester Aegis.* The *New York Picayune* is a comic paper Mott categorizes as a periodical.

[17]Goodrich's newspaper sources include the *American Citizen* (New York), *Baltimore Sun, Cleveland Plain Dealer, New York Mirror, Philadelphia Ledger, Punch* (London), and *St. Louis Republican.* Magazines include *Arthur's Home Gazette, Bentley's Miscellany, the Farmer and Planter, Godey's Lady's Book, Life Illustrated, London Court Journal, New York Pick* (Picayune), *Water Cure Journal*, and *Western Journal.*

[18]Bailey's sources include *Godey's Lady's Book, Graham's Magazine*, and the *Hartford Times.*

[19]Wait's sources include the *Ladies' Companion* and *American Temperance Union.*

novelist Fanny Fern; editor, journalist, and literary critic Margaret Fuller; essayist Washington Irving; essayist, short-story writer, and editor Caroline Matilda Kirkland; educator, writer, and editor Horace Mann; short-story writer and editor Emily May; poet Rosa Montrose; poet, editor, and writer Frances Osgood; Mississippi Congressman and orator Sargeant Prentiss; poet Lydia Sigourny; editor and activist Jane Swisshelm; British writer William Makepeace Thackeray; U.S. Attorney General and writer William Wirt; and British writer Lady Emelina Stewart Wortley.

Several aspects of the Oregon Ladies' Departments, such as amount of space, placement in the newspaper, origin of items (whether clipped, written by the editor, or locally submitted), and attention to particular themes, can be compared, revealing a distinct "personality" for each department.

Dryer, Wait, and Goodrich devoted about the same amount of their newspaper space to their Ladies' Department, two to three columns, or about 8%.[20] Bailey, under Goodrich, had the largest Ladies' Department, averaging about 10% of the total newspaper space. Bailey and Goodrich apparently frequently argued over the amount of space to be allotted to her department; if Bailey had had her way, the percentage would have been even larger. Placement of the department also differed among editors. Dryer, Wait, and Bailey each had their departments on pages three or four of their newspapers. Eight of Goodrich's Ladies' Departments ran on page three, but the final thirteen appeared on page one.

Comparisons of percentage of clipped, editor-written, and locally contributed items also reveal distinct styles. About 97% of Dryer's information, by space, was clipped or from unidentified sources; he wrote no editorials that could be identified as his, and about

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[20]Dryer and Wait were at 8%, and Goodrich was at 7%.

2% of the space was composed of local contributions (the remaining 1% was taken by the department's main heading). Wait's style was similar to Dryer's in that most, if not all, of his items were clipped. In contrast, under Bailey about 75% of the material, by space, was written by her, with the remaining 25% clipped or of indeterminate origin. Nothing identified as from local contributors was evident in her columns. Goodrich's Ladies' Department, however, consisted of a healthy percentage of local women's contributions, about 16%. Goodrich also contributed a fairly large percentage of personal editorials, about 9%, by space, although this pales in comparison with Bailey's 75%.

The discussion of women's issues in the various departments also differed. Information on women's traditional role in society took up about 27% of the total space for Dryer and 24% for Goodrich, but Bailey devoted less than 1% of her space, two items, to such ideas, and one item was actually introduced into her department by Goodrich. In contrast, about 19% of her total space was devoted to nontraditional work for women and women's rights, especially promoting women's education, while Goodrich used 10% of his space on nontraditional women's place, women's rights, and women's education. Bailey did not discuss dress reform, whereas Goodrich committed 5% of his column to this topic (although dress reform articles in Goodrich's department are suspect because they may have been used to mock Bailey and her attire). Dryer devoted about 2% of his space to women's rights, including dress reform, and 4% to the recognition of women's accomplishments. Dryer did not explore the controversy of educating women. (Wait had too few Ladies' Departments to effectively compare by theme.)

Second to discussions of women's rights for Bailey were pieces advocating community improvement, composing 13% of her columns by space. Bailey encouraged local women to engage in charitable work, such as forming sewing societies to relieve

those beset by fire, sickness, or crime. She also urged the community to do something about the uneven sidewalks and the unsightly, unavoidable tobacco spit, complaints that apparently did not go over well with the founding fathers. Goodrich, in contrast, urged women to partake in more frivolous pursuits, such as designing bouquets and head-dresses. Neither Dryer nor Wait discussed or encouraged local women's activities.

Margaret Jewett Bailey

Margaret Jewett Bailey's editorship of the Oregon Spectator's Ladies' Department provides insight into the thought that went into providing information for women on the frontier and what was considered proper discourse for women in frontier newspapers.

Writing for newspapers was an accepted occupation for women of this age, and was often encouraged in newspapers by newspaper editors themselves. Likewise, female newspaper editors during this period were unusual but not unheard of. Even on the frontier women took up the editorial pen; six women were the main editors for western frontier papers in the 1850s, all in California. This number doubled in the 1860s, with regions expanding to include Idaho and Oregon.[21] Bailey's choice of occupation, therefore, may not have been questioned, but her personal background, personality, and the topics on which she chose to speak were controversial.

Margaret Bailey could be considered one of the "strong-minded women" of which detractors of women's rights of her time complained, a trait revealed in her at an early age. In 1837, Margaret Smith, in her mid twenties, traveled to Oregon to work as a missionary against the wishes of her family. She married Dr. William Bailey in 1839 and began the life of a pioneer woman, clearing land, building fences, planting crops, and tending

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[21]Sherilyn Cox Bennion, *Equal to the Occasion: Women Editors of the Nineteenth-Century West* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1990), 3.

animals. Life with Dr. Bailey, a physically abusive alcoholic with a hair trigger temper, was an unending struggle. In 1854, after fifteen years of a marriage peppered with separations and reconciliations, Margaret at last settled for the stigma of divorce. She received only $100 on which to live, probably because Bailey was a well-known man in the community with many powerful friends. Afterward, Margaret drew on her skills as a seamstress, teacher, nurse, and writer. That year she also became editor of the *Spectator's* Ladies' Department.[22]

Although she never claimed to or admitted to supporting the same women's rights as Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone, or Elizabeth Cady Stanton, such as property rights and the right to vote, her life story as revealed in her book *The Grains* attests to a woman strongly dissatisfied with women's lot. In Bailey's first *Spectator* column she described her mission as presenting readings "calculated to elevate the standard of piety, morality, usefulness and refinement" and to encourage "whatever is estimable and excellent in female character," typical true womanhood sentiments, but she also said that "Woman's Rights will be defended here . . . according to our own fancies on the subject. . . ." and promised to explain her ideas further in a subsequent issue. Bailey's "fancies" were that women should be educated but remain in their sphere, ideas more in line with mainstream reformers such as Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of *Godey's Lady's Book.* A bit ambiguously, Bailey felt that women were not suited for public duties, but neither should they be confined to the nursery, kitchen, or parlor.[23] Nevertheless, her views, which she introduced in her first column but never fully explained until it was too late, probably were in part responsible for her firing.

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[22]Bailey, 307.

[23]*Oregon Spectator*, 12 May 1854, 4.

Problems between Goodrich and Bailey are evident by the second issue. Here Goodrich took some of the space he had promised her, instead printing a list of letters that had arrived by ship, leaving the Ladies' Department one column when he had promised three. He asked forgiveness from the ladies for "infringing upon their 'rights'" by taking space, explaining that he made up for it by printing a story in another section.[24] That story, however, was not of Bailey's choosing, and the reference to "rights" was a poke at Bailey's discussion of women's rights in her first issue.

In her fourth column, Bailey introduced a new feature. She wrote that she had a conversation with a Mrs. A—, a fictitious, humorous foil created by Bailey to verbalize her more controversial ideas. A— remarked that it vexed her to walk in public with her long dresses because the sidewalks were covered with tobacco spit from "loafers" sitting on boxes. Furthermore, when A— went into stores she found spit on the floors and on the sides of the counters and men standing around listening to her talk to the store clerk. On the same day, Bailey made sure the readers knew that Goodrich had put a few in a previous Ladies' Department that she had not chosen, including a Jane Swisshelm essay on dancing.[25]

Goodrich seemed to dislike the criticism and responded to Bailey on page two of that paper. He remarked that "if the cigar-stumps, tobacco saliva, or any other filth which is unavoidably left upon the sidewalks, is so certain to soil the long dress, we would politely suggest, to that 'new acquaintance' that she take some WIDE TUCKS, in those dresses which she may happen to have on hand, and in future construct them in the

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[24]Ibid., 19 May 1854, 2.

[25]Ibid., 2 June 1854, 4.

Bloomer style" or have a "darkie" or "native" hold the skirt above the pavement [emphasis in original]. He also permanently cut Bailey's department to two columns.[26]

By the fifth issue, it's apparent that Bailey has offended more than her editor. Bailey observed that "if we speak in too harsh terms of the side walks, stumps, rocks & c., the 'City Fathers' will think that we are really going to turn Women's Rights advocates at once, and take their privileges from them." This didn't stop her, though; instead it launched Mrs. A— into another speech: "I am glad you mentioned sidewalks; goodness me; aint [sic] they dreadful?" She observed that the sidewalks were so uneven that she feared going out after dark. A— also wondered why Bailey had less room in the paper. For her part, Bailey also complained about her column being cut, mentioning twice more that she didn't have enough space for pressing concerns.[27]

Goodrich once again responded in his columns. "Why, blazes with your whims, Madam A—, we know a dozen expert young ladies who could run a foot-race from the Baptist Church to the Island Mill, and not break a limb, nor even fall down! They would carry with them, however, none of your tripping, dragging, silk brooms, which look to us as if they would get most any body down."[28]

The following week, the June 16, 1854 issue, was the final week for Bailey as editor. She remarked, "in a call from A—, she said she had taken the hint that her fault-finding was not acceptable. . . ." Then, apparently to dispel any controversy about her views on women's rights, Bailey discussed her stance. She explained that she was not in favor of women becoming legal voters, and she was not in favor of women holding

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[26]Ibid., 2.

[27]Ibid., 9 June 1854, 4.

[28]Ibid., 2.

office because "we believe woman is out of her proper sphere when she takes this bold stand." However, she was strongly in favor of education.[29] She did not mention her thoughts on the property rights of married women, a topic that must have been a sore spot with her after her inequitable divorce settlement, but did remark that "unsuitable marriages" were "the most glaring and formidable evil which exists in society."[30]

Initially Bailey and Goodrich's parting was cordial. Goodrich announced in her last issue that she was leaving on amicable terms. Later, however, their feud became more public and more nasty. One week after she had gone, Goodrich explained that he fired her because she had pressed him with "hypocritical smiles and seductive influences" to publish her book, *The Grains*, which he said that he refused to do on several occasions.[31]

Her book was printed, not by Goodrich, but by Carter and Austin of Portland, publishers of the *Oregon Weekly Times*, with the first volume coming out in August of 1854. Goodrich, of course, promptly criticized it.[32] The *Oregonian* did the same in the form of letters by "Quintus" and "Squills," who said "To call it trash, would be impolite, for the writer is an 'authoress.'"[33] Bailey answered "Squills" in the last page of the second volume of *The Grains*. "Come on to combat," she wrote, "and, with the help of Omnipotence, we defy you!" Then she took aim at Dryer: "For the benefit of our readers who may think to subscribe for the *Oregonian*, we will say that we have seen *one* clean number of that periodical. It made its appearance in the month of August, 1854, when the

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[29]Ibid., 16 June 1854, 3.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid., 23 June 1854, 3.

[32]Ibid., 26 August 1854, 2.

[33]*Weekly Oregonian*, 5 August 1854, 2.

editor was on top of Mount Hood. . . ." She defended her reasons for publishing *The Grains* as well, saying ". . . we consider the expenditure of *millions*, if necessary, none too much to remove the foul aspersions cast upon a helpless female by her enemies [emphasis in original]."[34]

One would hardly describe the hard-hitting Bailey in such dainty terms, and her opponents did not subscribe to this picture she presented. Her challenge, in fact, provoked Dryer into an all-out assault in the "Oregon Style" of journalism.[35] He found her second volume immoral and indecent, and suggested that she could be arrested for distributing obscenity.[36] Simultaneously, Bailey took out a three-column paid advertisement in the *Oregon Weekly Times*, the only one of the three papers that found something positive in her literary efforts and whose owners published her book.[37] Here she defended *The Grains*, saying it "was not intended to merit literary honors; it is a business affair merely, and no attempt has been made by the author to render it possessed of literary worth. . . ." Then she released another arrow at the Oregon press, exclaiming "It is very gratifying to find that while our book has not been praised, it has neither been deprecated, and shows that the press in Oregon is not altogether in unprincipled hands."

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[34]Bailey, 310-311.

[35]"Oregon Style" journalism, rife with invective and name-calling, was carried out by Oregon newspaper editors, usually against rival editors and political opponents. Turnbull, 81-82.

[36]*Weekly Oregonian*, 9 September 1854, 2. The charge of obscenity arises from an incident that Bailey recounts in *The Grains*. To induce Margaret to marry him, a man at the mission she traveled west to join told the mission elders that he and Margaret had fornicated. The elders then forced Margaret to "admit" the sin by threatening to send her from the mission.

[37]*Oregon Weekly Times*, 2 September 1854, 2.

Most of her ad, though, was used to clarify her experience with the Ladies' Department. She explained that Goodrich had said she was to "use the scissors at her discretion;" that is, she was to have total control of the selections for the department. Goodrich, however, frequently turned down her religious pieces and inserted items of his own choosing. He had also decreased the three columns they had agreed on to two, and made light of her and her department elsewhere in the paper. He then asked her to leave, she said, because he had received a few complaints and didn't want to lose subscribers. She went into great detail on several aspects of their relationship, and finally suggested that his lack of manners in his treatment of her could perhaps be excused by his youth and inexperience.[38]

Goodrich responded a week later, calling her an outright liar and "a suspicious hag." He also observed that he had had "hundreds" of letters denouncing her and her department, then agreed with Dryer that perhaps she ought to be arrested for her obscene writings.[39] These, for the most part, were the last words in the dispute, except for the occasional piece Goodrich ran that mocked her attire and personality.[40]

Conclusion

Oregon's frontier Ladies' Departments contribute knowledge on the origin and development of columns for women, on women's significance as newspaper viewers on

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[38]Ibid., 9 September 1854, 2-3.

[39]*Oregon Spectator*, 16 September 1854, 2.

[40]Little is known of Bailey's later literary efforts. She did not complete the remaining four volumes of *The Grains*, and she continued to have difficulties on the marriage front, with two additional unfortunate matches. She lived for some time in Salem, and died in 1882 in Seattle, apparently destitute. Evelyn Leasher and Robert J. Frank, "Introduction," in *The Grains*, 15-18.

the frontier, and on information considered appealing to women. Bailey's struggles in particular illustrate that the amount of thought that went into providing newspaper material for women as well as the limits of being a frontier woman editor.

Ladies' Departments have long been ignored among discussions of the party press and penny paper, but departments devoted to women's interests, quietly reposing among the columns of out-of-the-way newspapers and rural magazines, contribute significantly to our understanding of the origin and development of modern-day women's pages. These early departments indicate that women were an important audience in the antebellum years, even on the sparsely populated frontier. Their existence indicates that editors have a long history of trying to attract the female reader, long before advertising played a significant role in newspaper income.[41] The many appeals by newspaper editors to women, enjoining them to write for newspapers, along with the praise they spoke of women subscribers, support this viewpoint.[42] But even though Oregon newspaper editors actively enlisted women readers, writers, and editors, for the most part they presented

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[41]Advertisements in newspapers for women's items such as mantuas, stays, hats, and coats occurred even in the earliest newspapers, those existing between 1690 and 1765, and increased throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries along with other advertising, but advertising did not begin to play a large role in newspaper revenue until the latter decades of the nineteenth century. At that time, advertisers increasingly targeted women and urged newspaper publishers to print information that appealed particularly to women. Gerald J. Baldasty, *The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 64-65, 78-79, 126-127; Mott, *American Journalism*, 58, 503, 597.

[42]The *Spectator* ran a clipping from a Cleveland newspaper encouraging young women to write because "it would help the reader as well as the writer, by infusing into the public mind more of the tenderness of thought than can be found in the grosser business and political writings of the day." *Oregon Spectator*, 28 December 1854, 1. An *Oregonian* clipping of the editor of the *Boston Republican* said, "Women are the best subscribers in the world to newspapers, magazines, &c." The editor claimed he had never lost a dollar to female subscriber and also thought that women read the paper more thoroughly than men. *Oregonian*, 26 June 1852, 4.

only a narrow, mainstream view of the female world, preferring to avoid controversial ideas.

Oregon frontier women may have been considered a significant audience for several reasons. Women may have had access to money, which would make them important subscribers, or more likely, they strongly influenced the family members who generally controlled the money—the men. Also, women may have held significant clout as community builders and civilizers, an audience one may want to cultivate and appease, perhaps without expecting any direct recompense through newspaper subscriptions. Another reason could be that Ladies' Departments boosted the region. Such a column may have looked good to eastern readers, as an example of the extent to which the frontier had become civilized. A farsighted editor might think that such boosting would eventually result in more subscribers. It seems unlikely that editors tried to gain women readers to increase advertising sales because in this age subscriptions paid for papers, not advertising.

The content of Oregon's Ladies' Departments is helpful in determining information editors thought appealing to women, an elusive subject. On the frontier, where more men were present than women, it is sometimes difficult to know for whom information is printed. Recipes, for example, may have been followed by bachelor men as well as women, and stories were read by both as well.[43] Furthermore, even advice written for women could be clipped for a male audience, such as the article "How a Lady Should Wash Herself."[44] Ladies' Departments, therefore, can be guideposts for determining

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[43]One man on a boat to the California gold fields in 1852 wrote, "I read a whole library of trashy novels and learned Shakespeare by heart." McIntyre, 55.

[44]Oregonian, 7 June 1851, 1. See page 42 of this study for more information on this clipping.

information meant for women when no Ladies' Department is present. The diversity of Oregon's Ladies' Departments indicates that information editors thought would be of interest to women extended far beyond behavioral and household concerns.

The Ladies' Departments of Dryer, Wait, Bailey, and Goodrich reflect the distinct personalities of their editors. They varied by their total space, origin of items (whether clipped, written by the editor, or locally submitted), attention to various themes, and placement. Bailey showed the most willingness to put her own personal stamp on the Ladies' Department, and a large amount of her department consisted of original material. Her department had the least amount of information promoting the traditional ideas of womanhood, and she seemed the most interested in using the department as a forum for urging local women to aid their community as well as a sounding board for her own ideas on municipal reform. Goodrich talked directly to women in his column and encouraged them to try their own hands at essays, stories, and poetry. He also seemed to want to distance himself from Bailey and therefore ran a number of items on women's traditional place.

The placement of the Ladies' Departments is interesting in light of discussions of the position of modern women's pages.[45] In the *Oregonian* the Ladies' Department was always on page four, and in the *Spectator*, was usually on page three or four. This placement would seem to indicate that women's issues were considered less important than men's and were therefore placed away from the front page (although stories with

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[45]Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, for example, argues that when women's issues are relegated to their own section, they are "ghettoized," reinforcing the view that the material is only appropriate for women and that it is less serious and important than general news. Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, "The Women's Movement and the Women's Pages," in *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media*, eds. Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan, and James Benet (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 217. Harvey Molotch concurs, saying that women's ideas are thought to be trivial and are relegated "separately and unequally" to the women's pages. Molotch, 181.

female protagonists and didactic information for women were often carried on page one when no Ladies' Department was present). For the last thirteen issues, however, the *Spectator's* Ladies' Department was on page one.

Why Goodrich made this deliberate change in format is unknown. His paper at the time was undergoing some financial difficulties, and in fact went out of business March 10, 1855. It's possible that Goodrich moved the Ladies' Department to the front page, giving it more prominence, in the hopes that more women would be attracted to the paper and provide the much-needed funds for its continuance. This would suggest that women had control over money or a strong influence over those who were in control. On the other hand, the new placement could reflect a new typesetting technique; the editor may have typeset the information as soon as it was gathered or was written, and the women's department information may have consistently been the first information he collected.

The controversy surrounding Bailey, which eventually involved every newspaper of this study, highlights several aspects of Ladies' Departments and the constraints of women editors on the frontier. Her struggles with Goodrich over content and space (he placed items in her department which she found objectionable, and he would not allow some of her religious pieces) show that what was considered appropriate reading material for women could be the subject of debate, and supplying information for women on the frontier was not merely an afterthought. The fact that Goodrich was willing to take space from the Ladies' Department when he deemed necessary, however, shows that catering to women's interests was not his highest priority.

Even more controversial than the clippings were Bailey's discussions of women's rights, which she mentioned in her first issue without fully explaining her viewpoint. This apparent extremism undoubtedly caused some concern. In the end, what she claimed as her beliefs were rather moderate, but other aspects of her department belied these words.

Her public advocacy of municipal reform, for example, probably stretched the boundary of acceptable discourse for women on the frontier. (Male editors, on the other hand, did talk about municipal improvements, without any apparent repercussions.[46]) Women apparently were welcomed into public conversations in the Oregon frontier papers in only a few ways, such as when discussing love and marriage, or promoting temperance and patriotism. The humorous persona of Mrs. A— did not shield Bailey from criticism.

Furthermore, in a small community like Oregon City, Bailey's personal problems could not go unnoticed. Her battles with Goodrich over the amount of column space and selections, as well as her direct and somewhat argumentative personality and her pressuring him to publish her book, probably had some part in her termination, but her divorce, which simply was not acceptable to many of her era, was undoubtedly the source of some public dissatisfaction. People probably disapproved of her and preferred she not have such a public position. Although Goodrich probably did not receive "hundreds" of letters criticizing Bailey and her Ladies' Department, he undoubtedly did get a few, and even a few letters in the small frontier market could bode ill for the struggling *Spectator*. In any case, whether she was fired over her content, her personality, or her marital status, her experience shows the relatively small range of acceptable public behavior for women, even on the frontier.

There's no doubt that Oregon's Ladies' Departments were enjoyed by frontier women. One local woman took Dryer to task for his criticism of the *Spectator's* Ladies' Department, saying, "it seems very much as though the 'Oregonian' considered the ladies or anything pertaining to their 'department' far beneath his gentlemanly attention." Then she optimistically predicted "we believe that a time will come when a paper which contains

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[46]In 1852 Dryer called on the city fathers to do something about the stumps clogging the streets of Portland. *Oregonian*, 3 July 1852, 2.

an extensive department filled with articles suitable for the ear and the taste of the ladies, will have a circulation wider even, than that of the 'Oregonian.'"[47]

Why, then, with such support, were Oregon's Ladies' Departments so short-lived? Several reasons come to mind. Dryer and Wait may have suspended theirs because they thought there were not enough women to warrant such a department. Or perhaps people had complained. If the departments had been marketing ploys to gain subscribers, perhaps they had served their purpose. Or maybe gathering the information and providing space for the format proved to be too much trouble. Goodrich, on the other hand, seemed to view a Ladies' Department as a way to save his paper, and thus put it on page one. He discontinued his Ladies' Department only when he knew the paper was lost and he was winding down production.

Whatever their duration, Ladies' Departments indicate that women were an important audience on the frontier. They provided a link with traditional values and information on women's reform issues, extended their format for local contributions, and delivered news one might not typically consider of interest to women. In general, however, Oregon's Ladies' Departments promoted a moderate view of women. Those seeking to stretch the boundaries of woman's sphere were rejected both by the public and the gatekeeping editor.

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[47]*Oregon Spectator*, 3 February 1855, 1.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

> The Ladies will always find something in our columns for their especial amusement and profit; and we shall be assiduous in our endeavors to cater for their taste.
> —*Western Star,* November 21, 1850

Modern newspaper publishers, looking for ways to increase readership in this age of sagging sales, may be able to learn from this 145-year-old pronouncement. Today's women are turning their backs on newspapers. In the 1970s more women than men read newspapers, but while the number of both men and women readers has decreased in the last twenty years, the number of women readers has declined more swiftly. Now the percentage of daily newspaper readers is 5% higher for men. Women, of course, are busier now than they ever were before, but studies have shown that lack of time is not the culprit; women still find more time to read than men, they're just reading more books and magazines.[1] Why? As Karen Schmidt and Colleen Collins in a 1993 *American Journalism Review* article put it, "If a generation of women is showing less interest in daily newspapers, critics would argue that perhaps it's because daily newspapers haven't shown much interest in them."[2]

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[1]Susan Miller, "Opportunity Squandered—Newspapers and Women's News," *Media Studies Journal* 7 (1993): 166.

[2]Karen Schmidt and Colleen Collins, "Showdown at Gender Gap," *American Journalism Review* 15, no. 6 (1993): 39.

Figuring why newspaper publishers should want to attract women readers in the modern age is simple. Women are responsible for 81% of consumer buying in the United States; consequently, advertisers most want to reach women. Three-fourths of newspaper revenue comes from advertising. If papers can't reach women, advertisers may decide to take their business elsewhere—to magazines, for example.[3] But understanding why newspaper publishers may have wanted to appeal to women 145 years ago, when little revenue came from advertising, is a little more difficult. Between 1825 and 1850 the number of women's magazines were increasing and creating competition, causing many periodicals to print information slanted more to women's interests. Even magazines aimed primarily at men were furnishing fashion plates and household hints.[4] Newspapers of this age also printed more women's matter,[5] one might conclude because of competition with magazines or with other newspapers. Magazines had few advertisements in this age,[6] and even though advertisers did pay for space in newspapers and were therefore a small factor in newspaper income,[7] there is no indication that advertisers had any influence in the increase of newspaper items attractive to women. The increasing female audience alone must have caused publishers to increase content concerning women. If women were considered valuable subscribers they must have had access to money to buy reading material, perhaps taken from their household funds, or they may have had

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[3]Miller, 166.

[4]Mott, *American Magazines, 1741-1850*, 348.

[5]Mott, *American Journalism*, 304.

[6]Mott, *American Magazines, 1741-1850*, 516-517.

[7]Mott, *American Journalism*, 298-302.

influence over the male head of the household, who had direct access to the necessary cash.

Several pieces of evidence indicate that women were considered part of Oregon's frontier audience, even though women were outnumbered by men in the Oregon Country by almost two to one, and therefore did not represent the same buying power as in the long-settled areas of the East. The female audience and women correspondents were spoken to directly by editors in the papers (some editors even tried to get them to write for the paper), and local contributors asked women to come to meetings or to perform special tasks (such as send warm clothing to the soldiers fighting the Indians). Goods were advertised that only women would use, such as parasols, hair pins, and bonnets, and services, including midwifery, were offered for the specific use of women. In addition, many ads sought the particular attention of women by calling on "Ladies" to read the advertising space. Ladies' departments in themselves indicate some effort by frontier editors to engage the female audience specifically. The above lines from the *Western Star's* prospectus also assured women in particular that they would always find something in the paper of interest to them. Appealing to women may have even been an aspect of newspaper competition on the Oregon frontier. The *Oregon Spectator* editor put the Ladies' Department on the front page, perhaps hoping to attract more women subscribers to pay for his failing enterprise.

Boosting the region may have been another reason why content concerning women was printed. Frontier editors may have thought that by printing information about women and women's contributions, women East of the Rockies would be made aware that their newspaper needs would be served in the West and consequently view the frontier in a more favorable light. Such information may have also made the frontier appear more civilized to prospective women settlers. Not only would editors profit by attracting

women through increased subscriptions, other members of the community would benefit as well. More women on the frontier meant more marriages, and consequently more men able to claim double the acreage under the Donation Land Act. Such an explanation is in keeping with other boosting practices in the West. Some suggest, for example, that the men of Utah offered women suffrage to attract more women to the area, not because they necessarily believed women were entitled to voting rights.

Following is a summary of the information on women the Portland-area frontier papers offered and local women's contributions, as well as a discussion of the reasons editors may have offered such information. Whether this information was intended for local women or to attract other women to the area, such information served local women in many ways.

The Portland-area newspapers offered clippings on the popular ideologies of true and real womanhood, both of which presented a traditional view of women that supported the concept of separate spheres. Topics included women's qualities and her place in society, physical fitness and health, female education, preparing for marriage, marriage itself, housekeeping, motherhood, death, and heroines. The explanation for why editors printed this material is simple: they wanted to appeal to frontier women or attract more women to the area, and therefore chose material on women from popular women's periodicals and family-oriented newspapers. In the mid-nineteenth century the mainstream ideologies of real and true womanhood dominated magazines such as *Godey's*, the *Ladies' Repository*, *Harper's*, and the *Ladies' Companion* and their newspaper competition.

Editors could have been unconscious of the content of these clippings, and merely randomly chose material about women to fill their papers. *Spectator* editor Goodrich's

struggles with Margaret Jewett Bailey over the content of the Ladies' Department, however, suggest the opposite: that editors were concerned with the content on women they offered, perhaps to ensure that they didn't offend anyone or to suit their own personal preferences. It could also be true that editors were very aware of the content and actually wished to restrict frontier women's behavior to traditional norms. Rather than offering information they thought local women would enjoy, they presented items they thought local woman should read. This seems unlikely, but again Goodrich's efforts to limit Bailey in her selections for the Ladies' Department do indicate that a particular viewpoint was being sought, by editor Goodrich, in any case.

The traditional views of women clipped from mainstream American media probably did work to reconstruct and perpetuate traditional norms on the frontier, whether or not editors were actively seeking to guide women's behavior. Such clippings may be the key to understanding why women retained traditional values once they reached the frontier, an occurrence that has puzzled frontier historians for some years. Ironically, while women are often described as the civilizers of frontier society, newspapers, usually owned and run by men, may have been a major force in keeping women's behavior on the frontier within existing norms.

However, popular ideas on womanhood were probably welcomed by lonely, isolated frontier women. Surely not all (or perhaps even many) women who traveled to Oregon considered themselves oppressed and saw a move to the frontier as an opportunity to discard their former identities along with the concept of separate spheres. On the contrary, reminders of what it meant to be an American woman of the nineteenth century may have been the only anchor for these women whose lives were a sea of change. Such ideas may have been nurtured as dearly as the flowers seeds from home gardens women

brought with them on the Oregon Trail. Newspaper clippings provided these reminders, supplying the link that helped reinforce previously held views and perpetuate traditional norms on the frontier.

Nevertheless, a large portion of the popular ideals may not have meant much in a practical way for the frontier female audience. In Oregon, where women were scarce and being married for a man meant having access to more real estate under the Donation Land Law, about the only preparation a girl needed to be considered eligible for matrimony was for her to have entered her twelfth year; housekeeping expertise would have been a bonus. Advice literature on heeding parent's warnings on unsuitable mates may have also held little meaning for young unmarried women. One historian has suggested that parents in Oregon Country encouraged their children to marry young so that the parents could be in control of vast tracts of land.[8] Perhaps editors, aware of this phenomenon, ran articles discouraging youthful marriage for the benefit of parents as well as children.

The housework woes of women in the States may have seemed insignificant in comparison with frontier women's household, child care, and farming chores, all conducted in primitive conditions. Probably more important to these women were ideas of dress reform, which allowed freedom of movement and relief from the restrictions of stays and corsets. Admonishments to remain active may have also been lost on frontier women, many of whom walked several miles each day on the overland trip to Oregon and were engaged in the strenuous physical activities of clearing, planting, hauling water, and so on once they arrived. But even though frontier women may not have needed to go out of their way to get exercise, the physical activity promoted in the real womanhood ideal was more in line with their experience than items idealizing the fragile, listless parlor pet.

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[8]Frances Fuller Victor, *The River of the West* (Hartford, Connecticut: Columbian Book Co., 1870), 324.

Popular ideas on religion, childraising, and female education probably continued to hold meaning for frontier women. Glorified death and women heroes may have taken on an even larger role in frontier women's lives, since life was a little more precarious on the frontier. But even though all the advice and ideas of the popular ideology did not necessarily mesh with frontier women's experiences (they probably didn't influence or accurately reflect the lives of all women in the States, either), this information probably was useful in another way to frontier women. Its familiarity may have evoked memories of the past and eased the loneliness of frontier women's isolated lives.

Frontier editors rounded out their clippings on women with information on women in reform, especially temperance, and general news. The antiliquor sentiment was strong among Oregon's frontier editors and other residents, and therefore it is no surprise that temperance was promoted in the papers. Temperance reform was also an acceptable activity for women in this era. Clipped information on female temperance activists may have spurred Oregon women to become active in the reform—to speak before local temperance societies and circulate petitions, for example. General news reports of women were probably chosen as tidbits to entertain and inform frontier readers. With this material the local female audience was keep apprised of what other women in the States were doing.

Initial discussions of women's rights and dress reform were extensive and positive in the Oregon frontier press. Women's rights, including dress reform, received 84 mentions in the combined papers in 1851. Although discussion of women's rights made up less than 1%, by space, of each of the frontier newspapers, the total number of items

for 1851 is high, considering the mainstream nature of the newspapers and the amount of coverage of the Oregon suffrage campaigns later in the century.

Despite idealistic claims that newspapers seek to educate the public on all important issues, the ideas of nonconformists and challengers to the status quo have rarely seen much coverage in the mainstream American press. Owners of the mainstream media are hardly likely to tolerate ideas that may topple them from their positions of power in society. Female challengers have another strike against them when it comes to getting their ideas in print. The ideas of women's rights activists may have been denied access to the press, as Lauren Kessler points out, simply because men were threatened by the idea of female equality.[9] These forces hold true for mainstream community newspapers on the frontier as well.

In this light, initial positive and extensive reports on women's rights and dress reform in the Portland-area papers seem surprising. Later press coverage of Oregon's women's suffrage campaigns provides a basis for comparison. In 1851 the *Spectator* carried 44 women's rights, including bloomer, stories in 53 newspaper issues, the *Oregonian*, 12 stories in 27 issues, and the *Times*, 28 in 52 issues. On average, 83%, 44% and 54% of the newspapers, respectively, printed women's rights information, with a combined average of 67% (on average, 67% of all the newspapers issues for 1851 had a women's rights or dress reform story). In Oregon in 1906, 165 stories on suffrage appeared in 12 Oregon newspapers during the two-month period prior to a women's suffrage election. This averages to 23% of all the issues carrying a suffrage story, with a range from 0% in the *Corvallis Gazette* to 112% (meaning issues contained more than one story) in the *Portland Oregon Journal.* The *Oregonian* was second from the top in

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[9]Kessler, *Fight for Woman Suffrage*, 54-55.

coverage at 62%. Newspapers in 1906 printed the largest amount of coverage for any of the suffrage campaigns of 1884, 1900, 1908, 1910, and 1912.[10]

The number of mentions of women's rights and dress reform in 1851 in Oregon seems substantial compared with the later press coverage. Even though the percentage of 1851 women's rights and dress reform discussions falls within the range of the later suffrage percentages, each of the individual 1851 averages is well above the average combined percentage for the 1906 suffrage campaign, which generated the largest number of newspaper stories on suffrage of the six Oregon campaigns. Furthermore, Oregon, of course, was the heart of the Oregon suffrage campaigns. One might not expect the antebellum fledgling women's rights movement to get any attention from the press on a frontier that was far removed from the center of these struggles.

A few reasons may account for why the frontier press provided initial strong and positive coverage of women's rights. Women's rights may have seemed like an important national movement that deserved attention. Discussions by some of the frontier editors suggest that they did feel some duty to inform their frontier audience of ideas on dress reform, if not other women's rights. Editor Dryer of the *Oregonian*, no fan of bloomers, offered information on the reform so that "our fair readers may not be left in the dark on a subject which must excite their curiosity." More likely, however, the early women's rights movement was seen as an oddity by early frontier newspaper editors, who liked to amuse their readers with curiosities.

It is also possible that the issues and events seemed new and were therefore newsworthy, demanding initial substantial coverage. But just how "new" were these ideas? The first women's rights convention, in Seneca Falls, took place in 1848 and the

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[10]Ibid., 46-48.

movement took off from there. One might expect some delay for such information to reach the frontier, perhaps six months, but certainly not years. In the *Spectator* (the *Oregonian* and *Times* did not present a full year of coverage until 1851), two mentions were printed prior to 1851, one in 1849 and one in 1850, but 44 mentions were printed in 1851. This shows that women's rights were not substantially discussed until 1851, when dress reform came on the scene. Even then, mentions of bloomers outweighed mentions of other rights by about 3 to 1.

Women's reform issues of property rights, access to higher education, and equal pay did not actually receive much attention in the West until women's appearance came into the discussion. Lack of initial coverage probably did not occur just on the frontier; the exchanges were probably printing little information on the issues for the frontier editors to clip. Women's rights activists of the mid-nineteenth century felt that press coverage of bloomers detracted from serious discussion of other women's rights issues. One wonders, however, if bloomers hadn't appeared, whether other women's rights issues would have received as much press attention. Dress reform may have actually drawn attention to all women's issues.

After 1851, coverage of women's rights and dress reform in the Portland-area papers quickly diminished and became more negative. In 1851, for the combined papers, 29% of the items were positive, 14% neutral, and 57% negative. For the combined later years, 1852, 1854, and 1858, only 11% of the items were positive, with 13% neutral and 76% negative. From totals of 44, 12, and 28 in the *Spectator*, *Oregonian*, and *Times* in 1851, coverage dropped in 1852 to 6 items in the *Oregonian*, and 10 in the *Times* (the *Spectator* temporarily suspended printing early in 1852 and resumed in 1853). By 1858

the *Oregonian* carried only four items, and the *Times* just one (the *Spectator* was no longer in print).

Several reasons may account for the swift change in the Portland-area press from initially somewhat positive and extensive coverage to almost entirely negative and infrequent press. If initial reports were seen as little more than curiosities, there would be no reason to criticize them. Only later, when women's rights agitation spread to the Midwest and gained grass roots appeal, would the status quo become threatened, causing the gates of access to shut on any lengthy or positive discussion. It is also probable that in the beginning the mainstream press had not yet rallied to provide a united front. Once some of the leading conservative editors, such as James Gordon Bennett of the *New York Herald* and Henry J. Raymond of the *New York Times* offered their negative opinions on the topic, other editors, including those from the Portland area and their exchanges, may have followed suit. Simultaneously, pro-reform papers such as the *Lily*, *New York Tribune*, and *National Era* may have stopped being clipped (either by Portland editors, or earlier in the process by exchanges), effectively excluding alternate views from the discussion on the frontier.

It is also possible that not only were initial women's rights discussions tied to discussions of dress reform, their later decrease may have been tied to the reform as well. Once women started to abandon bloomers in the mid-1850s, and therefore were generating less press coverage on the reform, attention to other women's rights issues also dropped. Other forces may be at work here as well, however, such as increasing attention to the impending war between the states. The latter could be checked by looking at the amount of coverage on women's rights after the war.

Also interesting is the increase in discussions of true and real womanhood during the early 1850s, when women's rights and dress reform were generating press coverage,

and subsequent decrease in the late 1850s. These traditional beliefs may have been printed as a countermeasure to the women's rights movement. When these gentle persuasions were observed not to be working, they decreased, and another tack was taken—coverage of women's rights simply declined and became more hostile. Again, however, increasing tension over slavery could have snatched press away from women's rights and traditional ideas of women. Also, not all ideas of true and real womanhood worked against women's rights issues. Ideas of female education and physical activity for women were more moderate in stance but urged reform, nevertheless. This may mean that women's rights advocates may have opened the doors change.

These ideas are not necessarily in contradiction. Extremists, although attacked by the status quo, often tend to pull the rest of the country in their direction. Therefore it is not unlikely that while some mainstream popular discussions of women shunned the women's rights movement, other material in the popular press suggested moderate reform.

Even though press coverage of women's rights was initially delayed and the amount of coverage quickly decreased and became more hostile, frontier women did receive information on women's reform in the Portland-area newspapers. These clippings may have been the first news women received on this important national movement. The effect of this news on the frontier varied. The criticism Margaret Jewett Bailey received after boldly announcing her support of women's rights in her Ladies' Department, even though her views proved moderate, shows that even mentioning the reform on the frontier could create hostility. It is also true that dress reform was somewhat ridiculed by the Portland-area press, but bloomers may have been considered more acceptable on the frontier than other aspects of women's rights. Advertisements for bloomers first appeared in the Portland-area papers in 1857, well after the initial surge of coverage, suggesting that

the style quietly endured on the Oregon frontier. This is in line with first-hand observations by activist Frances Gage, who noted that even after many women's rights advocates gave up the garment for political reasons, it continued to be worn in seminaries and rural areas.[11] Consequently, women's rights activists may have succeeded in doing what they set out to do—initiate a change to a healthy alternative in women's dress.

Local women received coverage in the frontier press, more than one might expect, in light of other studies. Frontier women were discussed in the Portland-area papers in many ways, including in news items, for example, on the Donation Land Law, crime, and disasters; in blurbs recognizing women's involvement in community activities such as church fundraisers, temperance meetings, and Fourth of July celebrations; and in local discussions of education, marriage, temperance, fashion, and hostilities with the native population. They also were appealed to in advertisements for clothing and doctor's services, and women advertised themselves as teachers and seamstresses. Women also submitted poetry on a variety of topics including love, mining, the homes and families left behind, and death on the frontier.

Although such items may not have occurred on a weekly basis in the Portland-area papers, they did appear frequently enough not to seem out of the ordinary. This finding is interesting in comparison with other research, mainly on mining frontiers, that indicates frontier women were rarely noticed in local newspapers. Margaret Nan Haines, however, points out in a study of newspapers from nineteenth century agricultural and mining towns in southeastern Oregon, that newspaper coverage was more favorable toward women in

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[11]Stanton et al., 128.

the agricultural town, with a woman to man ratio closer to equal.[12] This may mean that the editors tailored their information for their respective audiences, or that people who chose to live in mining towns, audience and editors alike, were more critical toward women. In any case, the ratio of women to men appears to be an indicator of the type of coverage local women were likely to receive.

It seems probable, then, that on the Oregon frontier, with a woman to man ratio closer to equal than one would expect on a mining frontier, newspapers would provide more information on women and speak about women more positively. As discussed above, Oregon women were considered by editors and local contributors to be part of the local audience, and printing information on their local activities would be one way to engage this audience. In addition, women of this age were considered to have expertise in certain matters—temperance, marriage, fashion, and women's education, for instance—so it is no wonder that Oregon women's writings on these subjects were publicized. Women were also making great strides as contributors to various media in this age, and editor Goodrich, at least, thought their efforts would "introduce a new and very pleasing feature into the literary life of the Territory."[13]

Editors on the Oregon frontier were probably also interested in boosting the area to attract more women, and writing about women in the local community and printing their contributions would be ways to do so. Editor Goodrich of the *Spectator*, for example, encouraged local women to write because it would "show to the inhabitants of far-off

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[12]Haines, 201-202.

[13]*Oregon Spectator*, 14 April 1854, 2.

countries that we are a highly civilized and cultivated people, and that we live in an enlightened locality."[14]

On the other hand, discussions of women and women's participation in the Portland-area newspapers were constrained by contemporary ideas of propriety and conformity. It was considered inappropriate by at least one reader to name and praise the "dresses, step, and grace" of young women who took part in a picnic and ball, and the editor of the *Free Press* took fifteen young women to task for their vows printed in the *Spectator* to withhold their favor from young men who wouldn't volunteer as soldiers to fight the native population. Margaret Jewett Bailey's experiences as editor of the *Spectator's* Ladies' Department well illustrates the limits placed on women's speech that challenged the status quo. Her writing on women's rights apparently offended many in the community, and her discussions of municipal reform also went unappreciated.

Such limitations may be attributed to the precarious nature of newspapering on frontier as well as the personal outlooks of the editors. The complaints about naming young women and allowing them access to the press may have caused editors in subsequent situations to pause before printing similar remarks. With regard to Bailey, the Portland-area frontier editors and owners were men of the nineteenth century, and were unlikely to themselves appreciate or promote ideas that challenged their supremacy. As a consequence, Bailey, who would have been a voice for women's reform on the frontier, was effectively excluded from newspaper discussion.

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[14]Ibid.

Information on and by women in frontier newspapers no doubt meant a great deal to the female audience, despite limits placed on content. First, printing information on local women's activities not only disseminated information to the sprawling frontier "community," it helped foster a sense of community by making women feel part of the larger group. Because of the Donation Land Act's 640-acre grant, most women on the Oregon frontier led isolated lives in remote locations. Learning about other women in the region may have helped these women battle loneliness. Second, women's ideas may have helped shape the laws and social mores of the frontier, especially in the temperance crusade. The temperance speeches of frontier women before local societies, their essays and poems, and their petition drives were printed in the local papers and may have influenced other members of their communities to vote to curb liquor use in Oregon . This coverage may also have inspired other women to join these efforts. Third, advertisements would have helped women with the tasks of everyday living, such as shopping and finding a doctor for themselves and their children. The newspapers also helped businesswomen advertise their services, and was a tool to help women find extra work to supplement their incomes. Ads may have also helped women limit the size of their families. And fourth, women's artistic efforts defined the frontier experience for local residents and for others considering moving to the frontier. Statements made in personal essays and poems described feelings and events in emotional terms that would provide more insight into frontier living than the news articles.

In sum, this study shows that information on women made up a substantial part of frontier newspapers and that such information may have served frontier women in many ways. Some ideas, however, were constrained by contemporary ideas of propriety and women's place in society. This information suggests readership among frontier women

was important, that boosting may have played a part in content, and that attracting women subscribers may have even been an aspect of frontier newspaper competition.

Many of the functions these papers served for women would be important only on the frontier—easing the loneliness of a life of isolation, recreating the social order, redefining themselves and their culture—but some functions of frontier newspapers are sought by women readers in modern times, such as supplying basic help with everyday lives, news of the community, and role models of women active in local issues. Should modern newspaper publishers heed such interests and needs, women may continue as valuable newspaper readers for another 145 years.

APPENDIX

NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES TO APPEAR IN PORTLAND-AREA PAPERS

Following is a sample of periodicals cited as sources in the Portland-area papers of this study. The newspapers are organized by region, Northeast, Midwest, South, Far West, and Foreign, and listed alphabetically. Some states and the District of Columbia are itemized separately. The magazines are divided into agricultural journals and other magazines, and listed alphabetically. The names are written as they appeared in the Portland-area papers.

Newspapers

Northeast

Massachusetts

Baltimore American, Baltimore Patriot, Baltimore Sun, Barnstable Patriot, Boston Christian Observer, Boston Courier, Boston Daily Advertiser, Boston Journal, Boston Mirror, Boston Museum, Boston Olive Branch, Boston Post, Boston Reformer, Boston Republican, Boston Times, Boston Transcript, Boston Traveller, Lowell Offering, Springfield Republican

New York

Albany Journal, Albany Transcript, American Citizen, Buffalo Gazette, Buffalo Republic, Evening Post, Geneva Gazette, Independent, New York Atlas, New York Budget, New

York Commercial Advertiser, New York Courier, New York Courier and Enquirer, New York Express, New York Herald, New York Journal of Commerce, New York Mirror, New York National Democrat, New York Organ, New York Sun, New York Times, New York Tribune, Oswego Journal, Rochester American, Spirit of the Times, Syracuse Chronicle, Syracuse Standard, Troy Whig

Pennsylvania

Crystal (Pennsylvania) Fountain, Pennsylvania Enquirer, Philadelphia Daily Register, Philadelphia Dispatch, Philadelphia Ledger, Philadelphia North American, Philadelphia Post, Philadelphia Sun, Philadelphia Sunday Paper, Pittsburg Post, Saturday Visiter

Washington, D.C.

National Era, National Intelligencer, Washington Globe, Washington Sentinel, Washington Star, Washington Union, Washinton Telegraph

Other Northeastern Papers

Bangor Mercury, Bangor Whig, Burlington (Vermont) Free Press, Burlington (Vermont) Sentinel, Concord Patriot, Concord Statesman, Contoocook (New Hampshire) Transcript, Delaware Gazette, Hartford Courant, Hartford Times, Haverhill Gazette, New Hampshire Telegraph, New Haven Palladium, Newark Daily Advertiser, Newark Daily, Providence Journal, Yarmouth (Maine) Register

Midwest

Illinois

Chicago Democrat, Chicago Journal, Chicago Tribune, Illinois Journal, Urbana Citizen

Ohio

Cincinnati Columbian, Cincinnati Commercial, Cincinnati Dollar Newspaper, Cincinnati Enquirer, Cincinnati Gazette, Cincinnati Price Current, Cincinnati Sunday Paper, Cincinnati Times, Cleveland Herald, Cleveland Plaindealer, Columbus Statesman, Dayton Gazette, Dayton Journal, Marietta Intelligencer, Ohio Repository, Ohio State Journal, Springfield Expositor, Toledo Republican

Other Midwestern Papers

Detroit Free Press, Detroit Tribune, Evansville (Indiana) Journal, Fort Wayne Times, Indiana Sentinel, Minnesota Chronicle, Minnesota Pioneer, Muscatine (Iowa) Journal, New Albany (Indiana) Ledger, Terre Haute (Indiana) Journal, Western Chronicle (Centreville, Michigan)

South

Louisianna

New Orleans Bulletin, New Orleans Crescent, New Orleans Delta, New Orleans Picayune, New Orleans Tropic

Missouri

St. Louis Intelligencer, St. Louis Republican, St. Louis Reveille, St. Louis Times, St. Louis Union, Savannah (Missouri) Sentinel

Other Southern Papers

Alabama Journal, Athens (Georgia) Messenger, Charleston Mercury, Danvers Courier, Fayetteville North Carolinian, Franklin (Tennessee) Review, Greenville (South Carolina)

Patriot, Little Rock Democrat, Louisville Courier, Louisville Journal, Lynchburg Virginian, Memphis Eagle, Missouri Republican, Montgomery Ledger, Pottsville Journal, Vicksburg Sentinel, Wheeling (West Virginia) Intelligencer

Far West

California

Alta California, California Star, California Sunday Dispatch, Evening News (San Francisco), Placer Times, Sacramento Union, San Andreas Independent, San Francisco Globe, San Francisco Herald, San Francisco Sun, San Joaquin Republican

Other Western Papers

Pioneer and Democrat (Washington Territory), Star Marine Journal (Astoria), Table Rock Sentinel (Jacksonville)

Foreign

Great Britain

Dublin Freeman, Dublin Nation, Edinburgh News, Edinburgh Review, Glasgow Chronicle, Liverpool Mercury, Liverpool Times, London Athenaeum, London Daily News, London Morning Chronicle, London Times, Monmouthshire Merlin, Worcester Aegis, Worcester Transcript

Other Foreign Papers

Friend of China, Montreal (Canada) Courier, North China Herald, Panama Echo, Polynesian (Honolulu), Quebec Gazette, Sandwich Island News

MAGAZINES

Agricultural

Albany Cultivator, American Agriculturist, Boston Cultivator, Country Gentleman, Farmer and Mechanic, Farmer and Planter, Genessee Farmer, Indiana Farmer, London Farmer's Magazine, Maine Farmer, Massachusetts Farmer, Michigan Farmer, New England Farmer, Ohio Farmer, Prairie Farmer, Valley Farmer, Western Agriculturist

Other Magazines

American Law Register, American Quarterly Review, Arthur's Home Gazette, Atlantic Monthly, Baptist Register, Bentley's Miscellany, Blackwood's Magazine, Christian Advocate, Christian Inquirer, Chronicle of Western Literature, Church of England Quarterly Review, Cincinnati's Literary Journal, Dublin University Magazine, Eclectic Magazine, Godey's Lady's Book, Graham's Magazine, Harper's Monthly, Home Journal, Hunt's Merchant's Magazine, Journal of the American Temperance Union, Knickerbocker, Ladies' Companion, Ladies' Repository, Life Illustrated, the Lily, London Court Journal, London Ladies' Gazette, Masonic Mirror and Mechanic's Intelligencer, Merchant's Magazine and Commercial Review (and its later incarnation, Hunt's Merchant's Magazine), Mrs. Whittlesey's Magazine for Mothers, Neal's Gazette, New York Pick (Picayune), Odd Fellow, Phrenological Journal, Portland Pleasure Boat, Punch, Reese's Medical Gazette, Sartain's Magazine, Scientific American, Southern Lady's Companion, Star of Temperance, True Flag, Water Cure Journal, Waverly Magazine, Western Christian Advocate, Western Journal, Yankee Blade, Youth's Cabinet

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