

Significant Events in the History of Oregon Women and Citizenship

compiled by Kimberly Jensen

- 1850:** Donation Land Claim Act. Federal law applies to Oregon land claims and is the first U.S. land policy in which married women can claim land in their own names (as opposed to single women and widows). The law applied to Native women married to white American men.
- 1853–1865:** Treaties between the U.S. government and Oregon Native peoples consolidate independent communities and leaderships into federally recognized tribes. Individual tribal members are not U.S. citizens. Native women could gain some rights as citizens through marriage with white American men.
- August and September 1857:** Delegates to the Oregon State Constitutional Convention decide that voting will be for white male citizens only.
- 1864:** Federal law allows “competent” Native men and women to testify in trials.
- 1866:** Oregon legislature passes a miscegenation law prohibiting whites from marrying African Americans, Chinese Americans, Native Hawaiians, and other Native peoples.
- 1870:** First Oregon woman suffrage organizations form in Albany and Salem.
- 1871:** National American Woman Suffrage leader Susan B. Anthony tours Pacific Northwest with women’s rights advocate Abigail Scott Duniway.
- 1871–1887:** Abigail Scott Duniway publishes *The New Northwest*, a women’s rights newspaper.
- November 1872:** Four Portland women, Abigail Scott Duniway, African Mary Beatty (an African American), Maria Hendee, and Mrs. M.A. Lambert, in concert with women in other states, cast their votes in the election based on the Fourteenth Amendment definition of citizenship. The election judge does not count their ballots, placing them under the ballot box.
- 1873:** Oregon State Equal Suffrage Association organized.
- 1878:** All Oregon taxpayers, regardless of gender, may vote in school elections.
- 1878:** Married women’s property act passes Oregon legislature.
- 1884:** Woman suffrage on the Oregon ballot for the first time. For: 11,223 (28 percent); Against: 28,176.
- 1893:** The Oregon legislature passes Senate Bill 78, allowing women twenty-one years of age or over, citizens of the United States, and residents of Oregon, to be “eligible to all educational offices within the state.”

- 1896:** *State Ex Rel. v. Stevens* decision of Oregon Supreme Court declares 1893 law making women eligible for educational office unconstitutional.
- 1897:** Portland Branch of the National Council of Jewish Women organizes sewing school for what will become Neighborhood House.
- 1898:** In *Harris v. Burr* decision, Oregon Supreme Court upholds taxpaying women's right to vote in school elections.
- 1900:** Woman suffrage on Oregon ballot for second time. For: 26,255 (48 percent); Against: 28,402.
- 1900–1908:** Women appointed to offices before woman suffrage: Lillian Tingle, Portland Market Inspector, 1905; Esther Pohl Lovejoy, M.D., Portland City Health Officer, 1907, and Sara A. Evans succeeded her later that year; Lola Baldwin, Oregon's and the nation's first female police officer, 1908.
- 1902:** Oregon adopts initiative and referendum system.
- 1903:** Oregon legislature passes law making it illegal for employers to have women work for more than ten hours per day in certain industries. The U.S. Supreme Court upholds the law in the 1908 *Muller v. Oregon* decision.
- 1905:** National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) holds national convention in Portland in conjunction with the Lewis and Clark Exposition. Members launch the 1906 woman suffrage campaign in Oregon.
- 1906:** Woman suffrage on Oregon ballot for third time. For: 36,902 (44 percent); Against: 47,075.
- 1907–1922:** Women who are U.S. citizens who marry noncitizens lose their citizenship status through federal legislation. The 1922 Cable Act nullifies this for all except women who marry men ineligible for citizenship.
- 1908:** Woman suffrage on Oregon ballot for fourth time. For: 36,858 (39 percent); Against: 58,670.
- 1910:** Woman suffrage on Oregon ballot for fifth time. For: 35,270 (37 percent); Against: 59,065.
- 1912:** Woman suffrage on Oregon ballot for sixth and final time. For: 61,265 (52 percent); Against: 57,104. Coalitions, including twenty-three groups in Portland alone and dozens of associations across the state, use new tactics of mass advertising and campaigning to achieve victory.
- 1912–1920:** Oregon women work for the vote at the federal level through the National American Woman Suffrage Association and the Congressional Union.
- 1914:** Marian B. Towne, Democrat of Jackson County, is the first woman elected to the Oregon House of Representatives.
- 1915:** Kathryn Clarke, Republican of Douglas County, is the first woman elected to the Oregon Senate (January special election). Oregon Women's Legislative Council begins lobbying efforts.
- 1916:** Umatilla voters elect Laura J. Starcher mayor with an all-female city council, including Bertha Cherry, recorder; Lola Merrick, treasurer; and

Stella Paulu, Gladys Spinning, Anna Means, and Mrs. Chauncey Brownell as council members.

January 12, 1920: Both houses of the Oregon legislature adopt House Joint Resolution 1, introduced by Representative Sylvia Thompson, making Oregon the twenty-fifth state to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment.

October 1920: Marie Equi, M.D., begins her prison term in San Quentin for speaking out against the First World War. She will serve a year and a half.

November 1920: Esther Pohl Lovejoy, Democrat from Oregon's Third District, is the first woman to run for U.S. Congress from Oregon in a general election; she gains 44 percent of the vote. An all-female slate of candidates wins election to the Yoncalla city council, including mayor Mary Goodell Burt and council members Jennie Lasswell, Bernice Wilson, Nettie Hanan, and Edith Thompson.

1921: Oregon voters approve jury service for women.

1924: Federal Indian Citizenship Act makes U.S. citizenship possible for all Native women and men.

1934: The federal Indian Reorganization Act creates a context for elected tribal government, and Oregon women begin leadership roles in these governments.

1937–1939: Nan Wood Honeyman represents Oregon in U.S. House of Representatives.

1942–1949: Japanese American women in Oregon are relocated to concentration camps for “wartime security.”

1950s: Termination of federal recognition of several Oregon tribes. Some women in the non-terminated Umatilla and Warm Springs Confederations elected to governing boards.

1952: McCarran Walter Act enables first generation Asian women and men to acquire citizenship but also contains a prohibition preventing “aliens” who were homosexual or considered to be homosexual from entering or remaining in the United States.

1955–1975: Edith Green represents Oregon in the U.S. House of Representatives, works for Title IX legislation to support equity in education and sports.

1960: Mercedes Deiz becomes first African American woman lawyer admitted to the Oregon bar. In 1969 she becomes the first African American woman appointed a district court judge.

1960–1960: Maurine Neuberger represents Oregon in the U.S. Senate, the only woman in the history of the state to do so.

1973: Oregon legislature ratifies the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and re-ratifies it in 1977 as a show of support in the continuing national campaign (the ERA has not yet been ratified).

1974: Portland is the first city in Oregon to adopt civil rights protections for lesbian and gay residents and bans anti-gay discrimination in city jobs.

1960s to 1970s: Coalition of women in the Oregon legislature including Betty

Roberts, Vera Katz, Nancie Fadeley, Mary Rieke, Norma Paulus, and Gretchen Kefoury, with some of their male colleagues, work to pass laws that would address women's separate and unequal citizenship in marriage, work, health, and legal status. Lawmakers and others work with the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, the Oregon Council on Women's Equality, the Oregon Women's Political Caucus, the Women's Rights Coalition, and the Women's Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union to prohibit discrimination of women in employment and retirement and in public accommodations and in higher education. Legislation opens credit access for women, addresses domestic violence, and identifies pregnancy leave as a benefit.

- 1973:** Oregon Supreme court finds the state's statute on abortion to be unconstitutional.
- 1977:** Norma Paulus becomes first woman elected to statewide office as Secretary of State; Paulus is elected Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1990 and again in 1994. Mae Yih becomes Oregon's first Asian American woman elected to the House of Representatives.
- 1979:** Oregon Supreme Court in *Gunther v. Washington County* expands equal pay for equal work toward comparable worth.
- 1982:** Betty Roberts becomes the first woman on the Oregon Supreme Court. In *Hewitt v. State Accident Insurance Fund Corporation (SAIF)* Roberts argued the Oregon constitution provided equal rights protection.
- 1985:** Margaret Carter becomes the first African American woman elected to the Oregon legislature, representing Multnomah County in the house from 1985 through 1997 and in the senate from 2001 to the present 2009 session.
- 1987:** Gov. Neil Goldschmidt signs an executive order prohibiting discrimination against lesbians and gays in state employment.
- 1991:** Avel Gordly elected to Oregon House of Representatives; in 1996, she becomes the first African American women elected to the Oregon Senate.
- 1991–1995:** Barbara Roberts is first and only woman to serve as Governor of Oregon.
- 1991:** Gail Shibley, Oregon's first openly lesbian or gay legislator, is appointed to office.
- 1997:** Susan Castillo is the first Latina in the Oregon legislature representing Lane County in the Senate from 1997 to 2002; elected Superintendent of Public Instruction in 2002 and reelection in 2006, leaves post 2012.
- 2004:** Multnomah County issues marriage licenses to same-sex couples. The county issues licenses to 3,022 couples in five weeks, until Governor Kulon-goski and the courts order the county to stop. Measure 36, passed by voters in November 2004, prohibits marriage between couples of the same sex. In *Li and Kennedy et al. v Oregon* (2005) the Oregon Supreme Court invalidates Multnomah County marriages.

2007: Oregon legislature passes the Oregon Family Fairness Act protecting domestic partnerships.

August 2008: Coquille Tribe passes the Marriage and Domestic Partnership Ordinance, which “recognizes same-sex marriage and extends to gay and lesbian partners, at least one of whom must be Coquille, all tribal benefits of marriage,” apparently the first tribe in the nation to do so.

2012: Three women are Tribal Chairs in Oregon: Charisse Soucie (acting), Burns Paiute; Delores Pigsley, Siletz; and Cheryle Kennedy, Grand Ronde.

June 2012: Ellen Rosenblum becomes interim attorney general, making her the state’s first female attorney general.