Mother of Western Suffrage – Abigail Scott Duniway Susan Butruille

Many words could describe Abigail Scott Duniway. Witty. Hard-edged. Acerbic. Her own grandson, the late David C. Duniway, former Oregon archivist, went so far as to say she may have delayed Oregon suffrage with her biting tongue. Above all, Abigail Scott Duniway was persistent.

Consider. Abigail Jane Scott – they called her Jenny then – grew up in a world in which wives could toil from morning to night and not own one cent of the money they might earn, not even the clothes they wore, or the children they bore. All was owned by the husband. It was a world in which a woman had no vote in home or community, yet could lose everything to a decision or judgment not her own. In a world in which a lady was supposed to know nothing of birth control, a woman could become permanently disabled from bearing too many children. A husband determined where his family would live, even if it meant a 2,000-mile trek on foot across an unknown and dangerous land.

This was the world Abigail Scott Duniway came to know very well. When men who voted didn't get it when Abigail confronted them with the logic of equal suffrage, it was enough to give anyone a biting tongue.

On her way to becoming the Northwest's foremost suffragist, women's rights advocate, and leading newspaper publisher, the teenaged Jenny kept her family's Oregon Trail journal. In those pages, she recorded encounters with death and cruelty and nearstarvation, as well as scenes of heart-wrenching beauty and human kindness. As a wife, she was called upon to support her growing family. With but a few months' formal schooling, she taught school (on half a man's salary), barely keeping ahead of her students. As the owner of a millinery shop, she learned firsthand the plight of other women with no rights. Jons Lengis hoto Dring

Knowing that her forte was "scribbling," Abigail

Scott Duniway turned to writing. She eventually wrote three complete novels, 21 serialized novels, her autobiography, and volumes of poetry including an epic poem. She campaigned for women's rights and human rights in the pages of her own newspaper, *The New Northwest*, for sixteen years. Her lectures, writing, and women's rights organizing gained her notoriety from coast to coast. Along the



way, Abigail fought prejudice, prohibitionists, preachers, national suffrage leaders, the liquor industry, rich matrons, and her own brother, Oregonian publisher Harvey Scott. Through it all, it was Abigail Scott Duniway's stubborn persistence that kept alive her simple belief in "absolute freedom for the mother sex."

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