

WOMAN VOTE

CORVALLIS — Husbands and wives go to the polls together now in Oregon but half a century ago that didn't happen. The men went, but the women stayed home.

There wasn't, in fact, a woman voter in all of Oregon in 1909.

The reason, of course, is that women were not allowed to vote in the state until 1912.

The long struggle by women for "equal rights" is one of the most interesting chapters in the state's development, according to Dr. Joseph W. Ellison, head of the history department at Oregon State college.

A widely known historian and author, Dr. Ellison is

writing a book on the women suffrage movement in America. It is tentatively titled, "Women Are Also Born Free and Equal" a statement that at the turn of the century.

Oregon was in the middle in the suffrage movement, Dr. Ellison noted from his extensive research. It trailed Idaho, Washington, and California in giving women the right to vote but was still head of several other western states.

The national woman movement for equal political and economic rights was launched in 1848 with Susan leaders. In Oregon, the movement began about 1870 with Mrs. Abigail Scott Duniway as the champion of the cause for women.

To Dr. Ellison, Mrs. Duni-

way ranks as one of the great women of the west.

Abigail Scott came to Oregon in 1852 as a girl of 17, Dr. Ellison relates. Despite little formal education, she became a school teacher, writer, businesswoman, editor and most of all a dedicated and able crusader. Shortly after her marriage to Ben. C. Duniway, he was hurt in an accident and incapacitated for farm labor. The family burden then fell on Abigail or "Jenny" as she was called.

During her work in Albany she heard all kinds of stories of women's problems, hardships and injustices. The fact that women were denied equal educational, professional, political and economic rights—equal pay for equal work, for example—deeply troubled her. "One half of the women are dolls, the rest of them are drudges, and we're all fools," she reportedly said. Her way to better things was to win voting rights for her sex, Mrs. Duniway moved to Port-

newspaper devoted to "enfranchisement of women." The first issue of the "New Northwest" appeared May 5, 1871. It declared itself for "free speech, free press, free people, and compared favorably in editorial excellence with the Oregonian, edited by Abigail's brother, Harvey Scott, Dr. Ellison says.

The New Northwest, published for about 15 years, was praised and denounced. Mrs. Duniway was maligned as an infidel, free thinker, a dangerous crazy woman."

In 1871, Susan B. Anthony came to Oregon and toured the state with Mrs. Duniway organizing suffrage groups.

Though a mother of five children, Mrs. Duniway found time and energy not only to continue with her newspaper but to travel across the state speaking for women's rights. At Jacksonville in 1879, she was showered with eggs. When she returned a week later for a second meeting, no woman of the town were allowed to attend and local feeling ran so high that the sheriff obliged to protect her.

In 1882, the question of woman suffrage was put on the ballot. It was decisively beaten. The same thing happened in 1884. The question of woman suffrage then died down for a time, Dr. Ellison reports. But after the adoption

of the initiative and referendum system in Oregon, the question of woman suffrage was referred to the voters-- or men-- in 1906, 1908, and 1910. Each time the margin of defeat grew smaller.

Finally in 1912, the measure passed by a vote of 61,265 to 57,104.

Mrs. Duniway, then 77, was given the privilege by Governor Oswald West of drawing up the proclamation declaring the results of the election and heralding the right of women to vote.

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