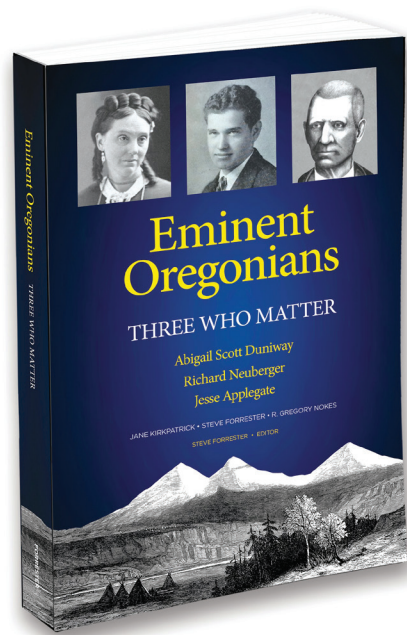


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Three who mattered

‘Eminent Oregonians: Three Who Matter,’ is a new book by Jane Kirkpatrick, Steve Forrester and R. Gregory Nokes. • The authors tell the stories of Abigail Scott Duniway, a leading suffragette; Richard Neuberger, an influential U.S. senator; and Jesse Applegate, a pioneer who helped establish the Applegate Trail. • The Astorian is publishing excerpts from the book.

MORE ABOUT THE BOOK » FORMER CONGRESSMAN LES AU COIN REVIEWS ‘EMINENT OREGONIANS’ • A4

RICHARD NEUBERGER

Neuberger possessed an extraordinary reportorial instinct, and after a month-long stay in Germany in 1933 he returned to New York with a story to tell. He sought out the offices of *The Nation*, a weekly investigative magazine founded in 1865, and talked with one of the editors.

Ernest Gruening listened to the young writer and decided to commission him to write what he would later describe as an “epoch-making article.” When “The New Germany” appeared in the October 4, 1933, issue, “it was the first realistic firsthand revelation in any American magazine of what was taking place in Nazi Germany.” The article is bracing reportage, with sickening details of violence inflicted on Jews, young and old.

The historical significance of “The New Germany” has been largely forgotten, and in large part so has Neuberger. But his story is still relevant, as the times he lived through were no less perilous to democracy than those of the early twenty-first century.

Richard Neuberger inhabited three eras. Born in 1912, he was seventeen years old on Black Monday in 1929, and within four years he was immersed in prewar Nazi Germany. In 1945, as an aide to U.S. Secretary of State Edward Stettinius, he was present at the United Nations Conference in San Francisco, an event that would define the postwar world.

Finally, his election to the United States Senate in 1954 was pivotal in making Texas Senator Lyndon B. Johnson majority leader, a prelude to an era of landmark liberal legislation that would peak in the 1960s.

Looking back at that life, six decades after his death at age forty-seven, we can see that he lived at a fast pace and took big risks. He was like a meteor, a brilliant light streaking through the night sky and suddenly gone.

— Steve Forrester



Richard Neuberger at his typewriter.



Abigail Scott Duniway was a leading suffragette.

ABIGAIL SCOTT DUNIWAY

Her accomplishments were astonishing. She gave birth to six children; cared for her disabled husband; wrote poetry, twenty-two novels, and numerous essays and editorials; gave at least 1,750 speeches; owned and ran two schools and a millinery; and established a newspaper, the *New Northwest* — one of the few women in the country to do so — engaging her family in the business and then holding it all together. She also took on Portland-area powerbrokers, including the liquor industry, wealthy elites, Confederacy-leaning neighbors, religious leaders opposed to suffrage, her competitor-editor brother, and eventually her own compatriots over the best way to fight for women’s liberty.

Abigail was a commander of the social media of her time. Her letters to the editor were today’s op-eds. She ran the Duniway Publishing Company, a media empire that included a weekly newspaper and a press for printing tracts and posters for the cause of women’s suffrage. Her weekly updates of her travels and the political scenery were the blogs of the era. She investigated issues related to prisons and asylums and social justice concerns affecting the Chinese. She gave speeches, submitted journalistic articles to other newspapers, and wrote essays that both encouraged and provoked. Her voice was distinctive, often witty or acerbic.

Fifty years earlier she might have been put on trial as a “scold,” as writer and newspaper owner Anne Royall was in 1829 for calling out corruption and speaking her mind despite the efforts of men to silence her. Abigail’s brother, Harvey Scott, editor of the *Oregonian*, was her greatest rival and likely her most complicated relationship.

— Jane Kirkpatrick

JESSE APPLGATE

While Applegate is best known for the emigrant trail into southern Oregon, his most important contribution to the region is largely overlooked — he helped steer Oregon away from becoming a slave state. A considerable degree of pro-slavery sentiment existed in Oregon when its future was being decided in the mid-nineteenth century, especially among many of its leaders.

Whether Oregon would become a slave state was the dominant issue facing delegates to the 1857 Constitutional Convention. While Applegate was not an abolitionist, he stridently opposed extending slavery to Oregon and other United States territories. “Whoever is against the extension of slavery is of my party,” he declared in 1855, “whoever is for it is against me. My platform has been one single plank.”

Applegate’s story is a window on Oregon’s formative era — its years of aspiration

as well as its nascent racism.

Born in Kentucky, Applegate was among Oregon’s earliest pioneers, one of several captains of the 1843 wagon train from Independence, Missouri. Known in western history as the Great Migration, it brought a thousand settlers to the region, more than doubling the white population. Better educated than most settlers, Applegate quickly assumed a leadership role in a region that was contested by the United States and Great Britain.

He was elected in 1845 to the Provisional Government’s Legislative Committee, the region’s first legislature, where he made his first overt public stand against slavery in his adopted home.

— R. Gregory Nokes

A wagon train splitting off between California and Oregon.

