

Hattie

continued from page 9

"It appears that Hattie and Emerson did not have children, but we have not determined if there are any friends or family who would like to be involved. And we are historians so we're always looking for a better photograph or a more accurate story."

So far, only one photograph of Hattie Redmond has been located. The most recent news story about Redmond, is from 1941. The Oregonian reported that Redmond had sued John F. Ebele for \$15,000 after his car hit her on S.E. Powell Boulevard at 33rd Avenue. Redmond is described in the **Bosco-Milligan Foundation's 1997**

'Cornerstones of Community,' as a janitor at the Federal Building. Her 1913 voter registration card says she was a hairdresser. What's beyond doubt is that she was a leader in the movement for equal rights.

"The important thing is that obviously African American women were battling both racism and sexism," says Kimberly Jensen, the Western Oregon University professor who is vice president of the Oregon Women's History Consortium, which runs the Century of Action project.

"Their work is very significant. They organized among five churches and they had links to the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs. So they were very much aware of the suffragist movement here in Portland, but also they were linked to the national movement."

Then as now, activists had to work to build support for their cause.

"At the Aug. 1 meeting of the Central Campaign Committee, the group announced that it had doubled its membership and that 'the editor of their paper, The Advocate, favored the movement,'" writes Professor Jensen in her Oregon Historical Quarterly article about suffragist Esther Pohl Lovejoy and the 1912 campaign, "Nei-

ther Head nor Tail to the Campaign." Getting supporters to meetings wasn't always easy.

"Mrs. Redmond says that while there were 2,500 women of voting age in the city, just 14 women attended the meeting," The Oregonian reported, Sept. 17, 1912. "She attributed this largely to the influence of their husbands and ignorance of the benefits to be derived from the franchise."

Black Women Key to 1912 Victory

The law that gave the vote to Oregon women did pass in 1912. The margin was small, 52 percent in favor, compared to just 37 percent when the same issue was on the ballot in 1910. Jensen argues that the victory came about because the movement built a coalition that crossed race and class lines. Black Portlanders and also the Chinese American community, were a key part of that strategy.

In fact, Black women had been pushing hard for voting rights from the earliest days of the women's suffrage movement. In 1872, along with women across the nation, Mary Beatty and Abigail Scott Duniway turned out to the polls and tried to vote. Beatty was described in news reports as a "colored" woman.

But racism became more of a problem toward the turn of the century and Black women were excluded from working with White suffragists. Duniway rejected confrontation in favor of winning over powerful male voters with humor and gentle persuasion. The new generation embraced in-your-face activism and coalition building.

"In Portland, women argued that they needed the vote to promote legislation to build clean communities and to ensure pure food and milk," Jensen says.

Food safety was an important issue.



Esther Pohl Lovejoy, a doctor and from 1905-1909 Portland's City Health Officer, complained that, "for several years the women of this city were unable to secure any protection" when "hundreds of little children" died from "an impure milk supply."

Pohl Lovejoy's own son Freddy was just 7 years old when he died from drinking "tainted milk."

"Having the vote meant you could have your say on a whole range of issues," Dilg says. "It gave them a tool that women didn't then have, to make their voices known."

Did Other Barriers to Voting Exist?

Finding out about the lives of people of color living in Portland 100 years ago is challenging. Jan Dilg and Kimberly Jensen say that to the best of their knowledge, Black women were voting after 1912.

Professor Darrell Millner at Portland State University says Black men were voting from 1870. That's the year the 15th Amendment was enacted, banning voting restrictions on race grounds. Millner says Black women were voting from 1912, eight years before the passage of the 19th amendment gave women across the nation the right to vote.

Proving that Redmond herself probably did vote, Terry D. Baxter a Multnomah County administrator, located a photograph of Hattie Redmond's voter registration card, filed in 1913.

Yet Oregon has a murky history of racial discrimination. From its earliest days, exclusion laws prevented Black Americans from settling or owning property in the state. And it was not until 1927 that the ban on Black residents was removed from the constitution.

Efforts to end discrimination in public places were rebuffed as late as 1950, when a move to outlaw discrimination in public places throughout the city of Portland was defeated. Beatrice Canady, the journalist and co-editor of 'The Advocate,' lobbied Salem on the issue as early as 1919. Decades later, after a campaign by the Portland NAACP with support from Sen. Mark Hatfield, Oregon's Public Accommodations Law was passed in April 1953. If you have a connection to Hattie Redmond or any information to offer, Century of Action wants to hear from you. Email fo@centuryofaction.org If you have any photographs, writings or family stories about the first Black voters, The Skanner News would love to hear from you.

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