

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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in the Department of General Science presented on June 17, 1977.

Title: The Oregon Eugenic Movement:
Bethenia Angelina Owens-Adair

Abstract approved:


Dr. Paul Farber, Department of General Science

In 1906, applying Charles Darwin's evolutionary theories to the human race, Sir Francis Galton introduced the concept of eugenics, "the science of the improvement of the human race by better breeding." The rediscovery in 1900 of Mendel's laws of genetic inheritance and an upsurge in hereditarian thought set the stage for the eugenic movement in America. That movement was organized in 1906 when the American Breeders' Association formed a committee on eugenics to study the heredity of the human race and to evaluate the threat to society of "inferior blood." Under the leadership of respected biologists, eugenic field workers, themselves amateur social reformers, collected family pedigrees hoping to find a pattern in the inheritance of human defects. These pedigrees, carelessly and inconsistently constructed, formed the basis of "scientific" evidence used by eugenicists campaigning for human sterilization legislation.

Eugenic reform became a popular movement that by 1915 had attracted the interest and support of the "thinking" members of American society. A model eugenic sterilization law drafted by Henry Laughlin in 1914, proposed sterilization of 10 percent of the population, including the feebleminded, insane, criminal, epileptic, alcoholic, diseased, blind, deaf, deformed, and dependent. By 1931, thirty states had passed similar sterilization laws and 12,145 sterilizations had been performed under auspices of those laws. Eugenic sterilization legislation was codified into the General Laws of Oregon in 1920. The leading advocate for eugenic sterilization legislation in Oregon was that state's first woman doctor, Bethenia Angelina Owens-Adair. She first introduced a sterilization bill into the Oregon legislature in 1907 and reintroduced it in each legislative session until its successful passage in 1917. Owens-Adair's interest in eugenic reform was an outgrowth of her education and professional experience in medicine, coupled with her active involvement in the campaigns for women's suffrage and prohibition. Her ten-year fight to include sterilization legislation in Oregon's laws resulted in the formation of the Oregon State Board of Eugenics, later named the Oregon State Board of Social Protection. During the 68 years of this board's active operation, 2,648 Oregonians were sterilized in the name of eugenics.

The Oregon Eugenic Movement: Bethenia Angelina Owens-Adair

by

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A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the

degree of

Master of Science

June 1978

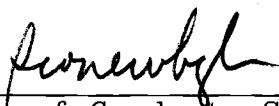
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Dedicated with love and appreciation
to my parents
who always accepted my collect phone calls

August 1977

HUMAN STERILIZATION



**DR. B. OWENS ADAIR, Author of The Famous
"HUMAN STERILIZATION" BILL
of Oregon**

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I. INTRODUCTION

In 1920 a bill was codified into the General Laws of Oregon that made mandatory the sterilization of certain classes of defectives and degenerates. Oregon was one of thirty states to pass sterilization laws in the name of eugenics, the "science of the improvement of the human race by better breeding." By 1931, under the auspices of those laws, 12,145 sterilizations were performed on the nation's feeble-minded, insane, criminal, epileptic, alcoholic, diseased, blind, deaf, deformed, and dependent persons.

The nationwide American eugenics movement reached its zenith between 1900 and 1930. It was an outgrowth of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, which was applied by eugenists to the human race in the name of social reform. The rediscovery of Gregor Mendel's laws of genetic inheritance in 1900 lent eugenics an air of scientific authority that would give the movement considerable force during the next three decades. The perfection of simple sterilization techniques around the turn of the century gave eugenists the means for putting their theories into practice, and in 1907 the first legislative battle was won as Indiana passed the nation's first eugenic sterilization law.

The American eugenics movement is traced in this thesis from its beginnings with Darwin's theories through its association with racist policies to its ultimate decline

during the Nazi regime in Germany. In particular, the eugenic movement in Oregon is discussed and related to the larger national campaign for eugenic sterilization.

The eugenic movement in Oregon was championed by a woman named Bethenia Angelina Owens-Adair. In addition to being an outspoken advocate of sterilization legislation, Owens-Adair is remembered as a vocal advocate of women's suffrage, temperance, and prohibition. She also holds the distinction of being one of the first pioneers to settle in Oregon, and was the first woman doctor in that state.

In 1907, after her retirement from active medical practice, Owens-Adair authored a eugenic sterilization bill, which she introduced into the Oregon legislature. It failed to pass that year, but with undaunted enthusiasm Owens-Adair reintroduced her bill in each successive legislative session until its passage in 1917. As part of her campaign for public acceptance of eugenics, Owens-Adair gave numerous public speeches and lectures and wrote innumerable articles for the general press.

Owens-Adair's uncritical acceptance of eugenic ideals and promotion of human sterilization as an effective method of social reform reflects the mood of the nationwide eugenic movement. Eugenics, originally devised as a science, became a reform movement backed not by scientists but by social activists. Owens-Adair fits the characterization

of that era's typical eugenist--only peripherally acquainted with the principles of heredity but willing to use the science of genetics as supposed justification for the planned manipulation of the human race.

II. THE AMERICAN EUGENIC MOVEMENT 1900-1930

Modern American eugenics, or "the science of the improvement of better breeding," began on another continent with the work of an Englishman named Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911).¹ From a family of influential scientists and businessmen, Galton was trained in medicine and mathematics. When left financially independent through an inheritance at age 22, Galton was free to pursue his interests in travel and statistics. He was soon elected to the Royal Society and became actively involved in most of Britain's scientific societies.

It was Galton's cousin, Charles Darwin (1809-1882), who provided the theories on which Galton would base his future research. In On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection,² published in 1859, Darwin explained evolution as a struggle for existence between members of a species that were variously endowed with variable traits. As individuals won or lost the struggle for survival, the variations they carried were perpetuated or lost from the population and evolution proceeded.

Ironically, Darwin was reluctant to apply his evolutionary theory to mankind. In Origin of Species, Darwin avoided discussion of the subject, fearing that such a focus would detract from the major emphasis of his work. In an 1857 letter to Russell Wallace, Darwin wrote:

"You ask whether I shall discuss 'man' . . . I think I shall avoid the whole subject, as so surrounded with prejudices; though I fully admit that it is the highest and most interesting problem for the naturalist."³

Indeed, a simple statement in Origin of Species was Darwin's only reference to the problem: "In the distant future I see open fields for far more important researches. . . . Light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history."⁴ Less cautious than his cousin, Galton embarked on the research Darwin avoided and drew a direct connection between evolution and man.⁵ Galton set out to show how heredity and variation worked in humans through a series of broad statistical studies.

His first work was a compilation of the pedigrees of famous men, published in 1869 in Hereditary Genius.⁶ Galton, no doubt proud of his own impressive pedigree, argued that mental ability--outstanding ability in this case--is inherited. This premise accepted, it followed that heredity rather than environment was the important factor in man's development. Galton went on to define the basics of eugenic doctrine: mankind is shaped by heredity and by controlling that heredity, the future of the species can be molded.

In addition to showing that mental ability was inherited, Hereditary Genius included some practical suggestions for increasing the "natural ability" of the

human race. Galton wrote that human breeding and marriage patterns should be controlled to encourage the fit to marry and reproduce early; the weak and unfit to do so later in life.

At the time his book was published, Galton's reviewers felt he had over stressed the role of heredity in determining character, and had not considered fully the roles of family influence and social class. The reviewers generally did not accept Galton's proposal that an individual's intellectual capacity could be gauged by his accomplishments.⁷

In 1871, Darwin himself discussed the effect of natural selection on human society in The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex.⁸ Darwin believed that natural selection did act on modern civilization, though not to the extent that Galton suggested. Instead, Darwin said the direction of civilization was mainly guided by social and cultural influences not affected by natural selection. Darwin agreed with Galton that civilization has done much to eliminate the factors of natural selection:

With savages, the weak in body or mind are soon eliminated; and those that survive commonly exhibit a vigorous state of health. We civilised men, on the other hand, do our utmost to check the process of elimination; we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed, and the sick; we institute poor-laws; and our medical men exert their utmost skill to save the life of every one to the last moment. . . . Thus the weak members of civilised societies propagate their kind. No one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of man.⁹

However, Darwin was careful to point out that civilization does not, as Galton believed, completely eliminate natural selection: "Although civilisation thus checks in many ways the action of natural selection, it apparently favours the better development of the body, by means of good food and the freedom from occasional hardships. This may be inferred from civilised men having been found, wherever compared, to be physically stronger than savages."¹⁰

Darwin's documentation was generally overlooked, as was his discussion of the relationship between society and natural selection. Instead, attention focused on Darwin's major themes in Descent of Man, which dealt with the roles of natural and sexual selection in human evolution. The possibility that man descended through natural selection from an ape-like ancestor rather than having been created by a supreme deity became a much-debated issue among the scientific community.¹¹

Darwin's theory of natural selection was vigorously attacked during the 1870s. As a result, Darwin increasingly emphasized the inheritance of acquired characteristics as a mechanism of evolution.

The Neo-Lamarckians, whose views were most popular from 1870 to 1890, believed that the environment could cause biological adaptations in an organism, and that those changes would be inherited by its offspring. In other words, they claimed that acquired characteristics were inherited.¹²

Galton's writings, however, continued to be anti-Lamarckian as he rejected the widely held belief in the inheritance of acquired characteristics. The Neo-Lamarckian view of eugenic thought implied that heredity could be partially controlled by the environment.¹³ If this were true, a planned program of regulated breeding would be largely unnecessary because social reform could improve the heredity of future generations. Galton was one of the few who repudiated the idea that social reform could alter the inherited character of future generations.¹⁴

Galton used the word "eugenics" for the first time in Inquiries Into Human Faculty and Its Development, published in 1886. As he used the term, eugenics meant the "science of improving stock," and to that end, encompassed selective marriage and "all influences that tend in however remote a degree to give to the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable than they otherwise would have had."¹⁵

During the 1880s, Galton studied family pedigrees to determine the statistical relationships in hereditary patterns. In Natural Inheritance, published in 1889, Galton used distribution curves and correlation coefficients to explain individuals' inheritance patterns.¹⁶

By this time other scientists were beginning to reject the Lamarckian school of thought and accept the hereditarian

theories Galton had embraced earlier. The change came when August Weismann (1834-1914), a German biologist, developed his germ-plasm theory and caused an upsurge of Neo-Darwinian thought. Weismann seemed to invalidate the claim that acquired characteristics were inherited. Weismann cut off the tails of adult mice, which thus "acquired" a tailless characteristic. Nonetheless, the offspring of the tailless mice inherited normal tails.¹⁷

Weismann proposed a different theory of inheritance. He said that the reproductive germ plasm remained "immortal" through succeeding generations and held determiners for each somatic trait. By 1895, Weismann's theory had convinced a large number of biologists, causing the Neo-Darwinian school to replace the Neo-Lamarckians in prominence.¹⁸

Since Weismann's theory could be easily interpreted as extremely hereditarian, when it gained prominence most scientists felt justified in thinking heredity more important than environment. Weismann had said that all traits that were biologically inherited were inherited through the germ plasm at conception. Weismann's followers interpreted his statements as implying that all human traits were biologically inherited.¹⁹ The adoption of this belief set the stage for a hereditarian program of eugenics.

Two other events lent support to a hereditarian viewpoint. The rediscovery of Gregor Mendel's (1822-1884) laws of heredity in 1900 lent the movement further support and

started the modern science of genetics, upon which most of the eugenic doctrine that followed would claim to be based. Biologists began to link the theories of Mendel and Weismann with the mutation theory of Dutch botanist Hugo de Vries (1848-1935). That theory stated that evolution occurred through the mutation of the total genetic complement of a species. Taken together, the three theories showed that evolution and variation occurred through biological rather than environmental causes and thus nature was more important than nurture.²⁰

As Lamarckism decreased in popularity, the eugenicists who were not satisfied with social reform had a basis on which to attack it. The implications of the new theories of heredity were made clear--if bad heredity could not be improved through social reform, then consideration must be given to the way in which different segments of society reproduce.²¹

The British eugenics movement provided the stimulus for the movement in America and the scientific doctrine upon which it was based. Galton's studies showing that intellectual ability is inherited, and the studies of his disciple, Karl Pearson (1857-1936), showing that moral and intellectual characteristics are inherited in the same way as physical traits, formed a sound basis for the belief that better breeding will improve man's mind and body.²²

Galton and Pearson were leaders of the "biometrical"

approach to the study of heredity. That approach dominated genetic research in England from 1900-1915. The researchers did not follow the Mendelian theory that heredity was determined by genes inherited in predictable ratios. Instead of working with "discontinuous traits" (traits that appear in one form or another) the biometricians worked with "quantitative or "metrical" characteristics. They believed that metrical traits, including human intelligence, are manifested in any of a number of ways that vary along a continuous scale. Rather than investigate the heredity of individuals, they studied patterns in large populations and developed statistical methods to carry out their work. Those methods have since been widely used in population biology.

In contrast, hereditary research carried out in America after 1900 was largely Mendelian. During this early period the science of genetics was closely tied with eugenics through the researchers and institutions associated with both fields. As a result, research in human genetics became equated with eugenics.²³

As interest increased in Mendelian genetics at the turn of the century, research turned to the study of pedigrees and breeding experiments in plants and animals. This interest and the formation of the American Breeders' Association in 1903 led to the organization of the American eugenics movement. At its second meeting in January 1906, the association formed a committee on eugenics to study the heredity of the human

race and to evaluate the threat to society of "inferior blood." The members of the committee became the driving forces behind the American eugenics movement; the most influential among them was Charles Davenport (1866-1944).²⁴

While a professor at Harvard University, Davenport became interested in the statistical studies of Galton and Pearson.²⁵ Davenport also quickly embraced the theories of Mendel and de Vries and by 1904 felt that living organisms were simply combinations of biologically inherited traits and that the characteristics of the adult form could be found in the fertilized egg.²⁶

His hereditarian views proved influential in the eugenics movement. In 1902, Davenport was appointed director of the Station for Experimental Evolution at Cold Spring Harbor on Long Island. Here he conducted work in experimental genetics and later in eugenics. In 1909 Davenport became secretary of the American Breeders Association's Committee of Eugenics where he organized committees to expand the study of human heredity.

As a well-respected biologist, Davenport's leadership of the Committee of Eugenics lent considerable importance to its investigations. Under Davenport's guidance, ten research subcommittees were formed to encourage university and institutional research on the hereditary cause of feeble-mindedness, insanity, epilepsy, criminality, deafness, and eye defects.²⁷

The Committee of Eugenics, and the Eugenics Record Office at Cold Spring Harbor, also under Davenport's direction, became the two most important American organizations for human genetics research.

Davenport's goal was to turn Cold Spring Harbor into a national center for eugenics. He convinced philanthropist Mrs. Edward Henry Harriman that money spent on eugenics would be much more effective than money spent on charity, and in 1910 she bought 80 acres near Cold Spring Harbor. Later that year the Eugenics Record Office began operation there under Davenport's direction, and it rapidly became a center for the American eugenics movement. The eugenics field workers trained there made surveys and collected extensive family histories from defective people and residents of asylums, prisons, and institutions.

Davenport's studies and those of the eugenics workers he directed were based on the scientific theory of genetics he had adopted. Linking the theories of Mendel and de Vries, Davenport believed that unit characters arose by sudden mutation, were indivisible, and were inherited independently. Consequently, Davenport saw environment as unimportant in the evolution of living organisms. This was the hereditarian position he applied to man in his eugenics work.²⁸

Davenport's uncritical application of Mendelian genetics to man typified the action of biologists in the first twenty years of this century. Davenport and other

scientists believed that every physical characteristic, every facet of personality and all the intricacies of mental capacity were inherited according to simple Mendelian ratios.²⁹

Davenport and other eugenicists during the century's first decade considered investigations in human heredity to be the leading branch of eugenic research. By investigating human pedigrees they hoped to find the law of heredity that determined each human trait.³⁰

As a respected biologist and member of the National Academy of Sciences, and as the acknowledged leader of American eugenics, Davenport was in a powerful position to mold the future of the movement. He had the potential to insure quality in eugenic research and confine the ensuing eugenic legislation within the boundaries of what was then known about human heredity. However, under his direction amateur eugenics field workers pre-empted professionals in collecting pedigree studies, devised more for eugenic application than for the pursuit of knowledge. These studies were eventually accepted as the scientific basis for eugenic breeding programs.

The work conducted under the auspices of the Eugenics Record Office was often careless and inconsistent. Davenport insured biased studies by instructing field workers to search for patterns of inheritance that fit Mendelian ratios, thereby emphasizing genetic influences and eliminating environmental factors. Davenport's own investigations

after 1906 into human heredity contained the same, uncritical Mendelian predispositions. He remained convinced that all human traits followed Mendel's laws of inheritance, a view he held until his death in 1944. And though Davenport stressed the importance of investigation into the workings of human heredity, he supported legislation that was not supported by scientific knowledge, such as eugenic sterilization laws and the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924. Although subsequent investigation has shown that more traits follow Mendelian patterns in man than in any other organism, early studies did not support the extreme hereditarian views of Davenport and his followers.³¹

Davenport's studies strengthened a belief widely held in the 19th century, that mental disease was symptomatic of an inherited weakness. In Davenport's work, a wide range of mental illness, along with a variety of personality oddities, were attributed to the action of a single gene. Davenport's methods of collecting family pedigrees and recording the simple presence or absence of traits, and his apparent attempt to mold the results into Mendelian ratios were subject to criticism by the scientific community. But Davenport's faith that intelligence, personality, and morality were determined by heredity was a belief that was widely shared. So was the hope that eugenics could shape a better world by eliminating defective genes.

The center for the study of these defective genes and their manifestation in the feeble-minded was the Vineland Training School for the Feeble-minded, located in New Jersey. Its director was psychologist Henry H. Goddard (1866-1957).

Goddard and his field workers tested for the Mendelian inheritance of feeble-mindedness and in 1914 claimed that it was a simple recessive trait.³² Goddard also found a direct correlation between crime and feeble-mindedness in a study of juvenile delinquents. But perhaps most influential were Goddard's family history studies of the feeble-minded children at Vineland.

The most famous of these studies was of the family of Deborah Kallikak, a feeble-minded girl who have lived at Vineland Training School since the age of eight. Goddard wrote that the Kallikak study was part of a campaign to evaluate the

mental condition of the children who lived in the Institution, with a view to determining the mental and physical peculiarities of the different grades and types, to getting an accurate record of what deficiencies each child had and what he was capable of doing, with the hope that in time these records could be correlated with the nervous system of the child, if he should die while in the Institution and an autopsy be allowed.³³

The Kallikak family was of particular interest, since it provided "a natural experiment of remarkable value to the sociologist and student of heredity."³⁴ Two separate lines of the Kallikak family were traced. Both lines originated with one man, Martin Kallikak, but one line

was generated by a feeble-minded woman, the other by a "woman of quality." Predictably enough, the eugenics field workers found the first line included feeble-minded and sexually immoral persons, alcoholics, criminals, and several people born out of wedlock. The second line, descendants of the woman from a good family, included well-respected doctors, lawyers, and judges.

As Goddard described the lesson to be learned from the Kallikaks:

we have here a family of good English blood of the middle class, settling upon the original land purchased from the proprietors of the state in Colonial times, and throughout four generations maintaining a reputation for honor and respectability of which they are justly proud. Then a scion of this family, in an unguarded moment, steps aside from the paths of rectitude and with the help of a feeble-minded girl, starts a line of mental defectives that is truly appalling. After this mistake, he returns to the traditions of his family, marries a woman of his own quality, and through her carries on a line of respectability equal to that of his ancestors.³⁵

Goddard believed the perpetuation of defective heredity to be both dangerous and futile.

The Kallikak study was published in 1913 for popular reading and contained vivid and convincing descriptions of the squalor and poverty in which the feeble-minded subjects of the study lived. The report was filled with subjective judgements and moralizing, and lacked any kind of scientific accuracy. Although the entire study dealt with feeble-mindedness, the term itself was never defined.

Goddard did invoke a note of caution into his study, but assured his readers that the methods used were adequate to insure correct identification of the feeble-minded. He wrote, "if the reader is inclined to the view that we must have called a great many people feeble-minded who were not so, let him be assured that this is not the case. On the contrary, we have preferred to err on the other side, and we have not marked people feeble-minded unless the case was such that we could substantiate it beyond reasonable doubt."³⁶

Evidently his methods were persuasive, for Goddard's study was taken as proof that heredity alone was responsible for feeble-mindedness, and that environmental reform could not correct the mistakes of heredity.³⁷

Goddard concluded that "feeble-mindedness is hereditary and transmitted as surely as any other character. We cannot successfully cope with these conditions until we recognize feeble-mindedness and its hereditary nature, recognize it early, and take care of it."³⁸ Goddard suggested segregation through colonization and sterilization as possible courses of action to stop the proliferation of feeble-minded persons like the Kallikaks.

The image of the feeble-minded as a threatening force was powerful enough to elicit widespread legislation for their control. The social reformers and members of the public who supported such legislation believed it was

scientifically justified by the investigations of respected biologists and eugenists. Accordingly, the popularized eugenics movement became a type of scientific reform.³⁹

However, the fatalistic doctrines of Goddard and Davenport, who said that since heredity caused poverty and criminality environmental reform was useless, drew criticism from scientific circles.

As faults were found with the Binet Intelligence Tests,⁴⁰ widely used to ferret out the feeble-minded; as attitudes toward criminality expanded to include environmental as well as hereditarian causes; and as the character and abilities of feeble-minded persons in institutions were more fairly evaluated, the alarmist attitude about the feeble-minded ended.⁴¹

By 1920, criticisms were levelled at earlier attitudes toward and studies of the feeble-minded. The critics pointed out that eugenics field workers often presupposed a family was feeble-minded, then used that assumption in recording family traits. One critic wryly commented that traditional medical education was really unnecessary since eugenics field workers needed only to listen to a few lectures on feeble-mindedness before making surgical, medical, and psychiatric evaluations based on a conversation or a court record.⁴²

Critics stressed that many common forms of mental disease were environmentally caused, and that the simple

Mendelian inheritance of mental disease had not been proven. To that end, environmental reforms were recommended in order to improve living conditions, end malnutrition, and fight disease.

In the 1920s the new attitude toward the feeble-minded brought a more rational program for their care. It included research into the physiological causes of feeble-mindedness, early diagnosis in public schools, more education in care of the feeble-minded, and preparation of certain institutional inmates for a productive life on the outside.

But this enlightened attitude toward the feeble-minded was confined to technical journals and could not offset the popular belief in the menace of the feeble-minded. Goddard's studies, even though he had by this time abandoned the hereditarian views they contained, continued to be the most widely used source of information on the feeble-minded. Through the 1920s campaigners nationwide continued to seek institutionalized care for the feeble-minded and to pass sterilization laws. The view prevailed that many Americans were of low intelligence and that these undesirables, including vagabonds, the poor, the unskilled, Negroes, and immigrants, were breeding into and degrading the few families still possessing a good heredity.⁴³

The campaigns for custodial care and sterilization of the feeble-minded and restricted marriage of defectives were vigorously supported by some eugenists. Others

decried these schemes on the basis that scientific knowledge, public opinion, and common sense did not justify their implementation. As appeals were made to the voters to pass legislation, the public became familiar with eugenic reform goals. The support the public gave to eugenic legislation was reinforced by the support given by experts from charitable organizations, state institutions, and universities who were up-to-date in their studies of psychiatry, criminology, and the feeble-minded.

By 1915 the American public was familiar with the concept of eugenics. It represented a social movement that was discussed in the press, presented at public lectures, argued at club meetings and studied at universities. It attracted the interest and support of the "thinking" members of society, including doctors, professors, social reformers, and the clergy.

But between 1914 and 1924, while eugenics was gaining widespread popularity, it lost the support of geneticists, the scientists who had first given eugenics its scientific credibility. Developments within the science of genetics proved to geneticists that the assumptions on which eugenics was based could not hold up under scientific test.

By 1909 investigations into the heredity of plants showed that variations could be linked to the environment. The ideas of "genotype" (the organism's genetic makeup) and "phenotype" (traits produced by genes interacting with the

environment) were introduced. The experiments suggested that genes could be quite sensitive to the environment in which they were expressed, indicating that development is determined both by heredity and environment.

The Hardy-Weinburg law, formulated in 1908, showed that gene equilibrium in human populations could be mathematically predicted. The implications were great. It became clear that elimination of a gene or trait from a population is a very complex and time-consuming proposition. This contradicted the eugenicists' declaration that control of a certain trait was easily achievable through selective breeding.

By 1913, American geneticists had shown experimentally that most traits are not determined by single genes. As traits determined by multiple genes were discovered in man, it was clear that Mendelian inheritance patterns applied to relatively few human characteristics. This too ran contrary to eugenicists' claims that all human characters followed simple Mendelian patterns.

As geneticists became aware of these developments, their enthusiasm for eugenics declined--not because they disagreed with the goals of eugenics but because they believed the implementation of the science was not scientifically justifiable or feasible.⁴⁴ Believing the eugenic ideal was still valid, the geneticists did not communicate their disillusionment to the general public, saving their critiques for the technical press.

So, although many geneticists no longer believed eugenic reform possible, eugenists and the public did not share that sentiment. Davenport continued to be enthusiastic about eugenics. He and other eugenists did not realize the implications of the multiple gene theory, the interaction of environment with heredity, and population studies. As the eugenic movement became less allied with science, it became more closely tied to politics and the battle for eugenic legislation.

In 1914 the national Committee on Provision for the Feeble-minded was established and included among its members superintendents of institutions for the feeble-minded, representatives of state charity boards, a member of the National Committee on Mental Hygiene and several prominent eugenists including Charles Davenport, Henry Goddard, and David Starr Jordan (1851-1931).

Together they led a eugenic campaign in conjunction with local civic and charitable groups. Their goals were to set up state commissions to investigate local feeble-minded residents, and to educate the public in the work of the Committee of Provision. The Committee perpetuated the idea of the menace of the feeble-minded and at the same time urged the public to put the feeble-minded in institutions where they would be safe from the rigors of the outside world.

From 1910 to 1920 the campaign for institutional care of the feeble-minded reached almost every state. As a result, the number of institutions caring for the feeble-minded tripled. And care for the feeble-minded outside institutions grew rapidly as medical clinics, public education, and institutional parole of the feeble-minded became a reality.⁴⁵

The issue of sterilization of the feeble-minded was much more open to debate than was the issue of their custodial care, which elicited none of the moral and legal objections that accompanied sterilization legislation. As the American eugenics movement became associated with sterilization of the feeble-minded, the sterilization issue became an effective target of the opponents of eugenics. The critics of sterilization (and many of the supporters of sterilization) agreed that the laws were not scientifically supported. Since they were aimed at people in institutions, the laws were a form of class legislation, and, in addition, the laws were often cruel and punitive in nature. Many laws were carelessly drawn and were not vigorously enforced. Sterilization legislation was not supported by either the Committee on Provision for the Feeble-minded or the National Committee for Mental Hygiene.

Some convincing arguments against sterilization were made by leading eugenists. One was that as sterilization removed the risk of pregnancy, fornication and the spread of venereal disease would increase. Many objected to

sterilization on moral grounds, believing that no one should have the right or power to force sterilization on anyone else. The Catholic Church proved to be a substantial force against the enactment of sterilization laws, saying that sterilization and birth control were sins against nature because they interfered with reproduction. Finally, scientific arguments against sterilization pointed out that sterilization could not reduce the incidence of a recessive gene. This was particularly important since Davenport and his followers believed that mental defects were recessive traits.⁴⁶

Arguing the other side, supporters of sterilization stressed its eugenic benefits, saying sterilization would stop reproduction of all types of feeble-minded and degenerate persons. They also claimed that sterilization would prevent the unfit from facing the responsibilities of parenthood; it would be fitting punishment for sex offenders; and it would have therapeutic value for habitual criminals.

The movement to pass sterilization legislation was led by Henry H. Laughlin, assistant director of the Eugenics Record Office at Cold Spring Harbor. Laughlin conducted studies through his "Committee to Study and Report on the Best Practical Means of Cutting off the Defective Germ-Plasm in the American Population," which was a branch of the American Breeders' Association.

The Committee took the view that germ-plasm was public property, belonging to society as a whole rather than to the individual. The Committee recommended segregation and sterilization of the 10 percent of the population they called defective, and promised that such a program, along with mass education in the principles of heredity, would rid the country of its undesirable germ-plasm within two generations.⁴⁷

Laughlin urged sterilization of those who might produce socially inadequate offspring. Candidates for sterilization included the feeble-minded, insane, criminal, epileptic, alcoholic, diseased, blind, deaf, deformed, and dependent. In his model sterilization law, Laughlin recommended that the socially unfit be considered for sterilization whether in an institution or not; thus the law would not be criticized as class legislation. To assure due process of law, Laughlin suggested that the state's chief eugenicist make a study of the heredity of the candidate for sterilization before obtaining a court order for the action.⁴⁸

The nation's first sterilization law was passed in 1907 in Indiana and in the next ten years 15 other states passed similar laws. They were California, Connecticut, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Hampshire, New York, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, and Wisconsin.

By the end of World War I, several of the sterilization laws had been declared unconstitutional, and in other states the laws were not well enforced. During the 1920s, most of the states with sterilization laws added amendments or passed new laws to meet constitutional requirements. The revised laws required that sterilization not be invoked as a punitive measure, that it not be used as class legislation against institutionalized people, and that due process of law be guaranteed. During that decade, fourteen more states passed their first sterilization laws: Alabama, Arizona, Delaware, Idaho, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia.

The laws in these states were written with more attention to prevailing sentiment in the courts. More than the first group of sterilization laws, the second set of laws provided for due process through notice, counsel at court hearings, and appeal procedures. They did not specifically call for sterilization of perverts and rapists and thus were not punitive, and they applied equally to all defectives and thus were not considered class legislation.⁴⁹

Thirty states had passed sterilization laws by 1931 and in 27 states the laws were still operative, though not always strictly enforced. In the 24 years after passage of the first sterilization law 12,145 sterilizations were

performed in America under the auspices of these laws.

Twice as many sterilizations were performed on the insane than on the feeble-minded, and few sterilizations were performed on epileptics and criminals. By 1958, the number of sterilizations performed for eugenic reasons reached 60,296 and by that time, more feeble-minded than insane persons had been sterilized. The majority were women.⁵⁰

The sentiment behind the sterilization laws can be traced to the late nineteenth century when social reformers and medical professionals were interested in helping society's unfortunates. As hereditarian theories became prevalent, the professional reformers, including physicians, psychiatrists, criminologists, social workers and prison and hospital officials, began to believe that environmental reforms could not solve the problem. Eugenic sterilization was proposed as a means to improve the bad heredity that caused feeble-mindedness, criminality, and dereliction.

The first legislative campaign for sterilization was waged in the 1890s. In 1897 a sterilization bill was introduced into the Michigan state legislature and defeated. During that decade, administrators at the Kansas State Institution for Feeble-minded Children sterilized fourteen boys and fourteen girls without legal backing before public outcry forced an end to that program. In the late nineteenth century public opinion opposed sterilization for two major reasons. First, the widely-held belief in the inheritance

of acquired characteristics indicated that sterilization was unnecessary as a eugenic measure. Second, the only known method of sterilization, castration, seemed to be a crude type of mutilation that caused unintended behavioral changes in the subject.

After 1900, these objections to sterilization were overturned. Criminal anthropology had become a popular field, and by suggesting that physical and mental defects were hereditary in origin, anthropologists indicated that the eradication of unhealthy germ plasm was necessary.

The hope that environmental reform would cure society's ills was diminished as credence in Lamarck's theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics decreased. The popularization of Mendel's laws of inheritance provided supporters of sterilization with a biological explanation and justification for their proposals.

Perhaps most important in gaining public support of sterilization programs was the development of two safe and simple sterilization operations. These procedures, vasectomy for men (cutting and tying the vas deferens) and salpingectomy for women (cutting and tying the fallopian tubes), did not disturb the body's hormonal balance or appear to cause the latent effects common with castration.⁵¹

These combined forces were strong enough for eugenists to win legislative battles. The nation's first sterilization

law, passed in Indiana in 1907, set the tenor for other legislation that followed. It made compulsory the sterilization of all the state's institutional inmates who were insane, idiotic, imbecilic, feeble-minded, or who were convicted rapists and criminals, when recommended by a board of experts. Subsequent laws in other states broadened the range of hereditary defectives who were candidates for sterilization to include sexual perverts, drug fiends, drunkards, epileptics, and diseased and degenerate persons.⁵²

While Henry Laughlin aroused public support for sterilization laws, claiming the scientific validity of eugenic sterilization, most of the nation's geneticists turned against such legislation. They believed the laws were premature and that in-depth study of human heredity should precede legislation. However, despite their concern, geneticists did not actively work against the passage of sterilization laws. Some geneticists supported sterilization in selected cases, especially as a means to eradicate feeble-mindedness, considered to be a Mendelian recessive trait as late as the 1920s. Interestingly, many eugenists agreed with geneticists that sterilization laws were not justified by the current science of heredity. There was also a feeling that sterilization laws were being passed through the leadership and efforts of a few individuals and that public support was not great enough to demand strict enforcement. That, in fact, turned out to be the case. With the exception of California,

most states did not enforce their sterilization laws to the full extent possible.

The sterilization laws, though designed for eugenic reasons, were actually used in most cases as social tools. Few efforts were made to trace the genetic pedigrees of those being sterilized, and sterilizations were not performed solely on people with known hereditary defects. Instead, sterilizations were performed mainly on social problem groups: people who were impoverished or dependent on charity, and those with loose sexual standards or having illegitimate children. Institutions for the feeble-minded sterilized inmates before releasing them to preclude the possibility of pregnancy and the burdens of parenthood. Such programs were carried out not so much for eugenic purposes but to improve the chances of survival of the feeble-minded and insane after their release from institutions.⁵³

Despite the questionable eugenic effect of the nation's sterilization laws, their constitutional validity was determined in 1927. In that year the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Virginia sterilization law and brought renewed enthusiasm to the sterilization campaign. In the decision of that case, Buck vs. Bell, Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote that sterilization is one of the police powers of the state, and that the world would benefit if society prevented the unfit from propagating. In a now-famous passage, Holmes declared: "Three generations of imbeciles

are enough."⁵⁴

After World War I, the eugenics movement and campaigns for sterilization legislation began to move away from questions of heredity and move toward questions of race and the immigration of various races into this country. The issue of immigration restriction, like sterilization legislation, was an area where genetic and other biological factors were important and eugenicists very influential.⁵⁵

As the war ended, the American public began to voice a fear of the consequences of unlimited immigration. Concern for immigration patterns dated to the post Civil War period, when immigrants from non-Anglo-Saxon countries of southern and eastern Europe began to arrive in this country in addition to the traditional immigrants from northwest Europe. As more attention was focused on differences within the white race, the Anglo Saxon type came to be regarded as superior.

Along with feelings of Anglo Saxon superiority, many Americans developed a genuine fear of and hostility toward immigrants. Anglo Saxon Americans who considered themselves "natives" worried that ethnic minorities might displace them, both in numbers and in power. From 1870 on, demands were made for the restriction of immigration, and, finally, the Immigration Restriction League was formed.

The notion of Nordic superiority was promoted and popularized in the 1920s by the Eugenics Committee of the United States of America, which became the most powerful

Congressional lobby for restriction. Nordic stock, considered to be the native American type, was an amalgamation of the English, Dutch, and Scotch-Irish settlers who had first set the character of the nation.

The Emergency Act of 1921 was passed as a temporary measure to keep immigration into the United States from European countries at three percent of each nation's natives living in America during the census of 1910. This act was passed primarily for economic reasons, to stop the influx of Europeans into an already overcrowded labor market.

By 1924, however, racial arguments became most important in the consideration of immigration restriction. Supporters of restriction argued that the Nordic type would be replaced by the biologically inferior, "new" immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. The permanent Immigration Restriction Act of 1924 limited annual immigration from each European nation to two percent of that country's natives living in the United States during the 1890 census. This legislation effectively reduced the proportion of immigrants from southern and eastern European nations.

In the first two decades of this century, much was written about the restriction of immigration as a biological imperative. One of the most influential works was The Passing of the Great Race, written in 1916 by

Madison Grant.⁵⁶ In his book Grant characterized the European immigrants as members of inferior races, threatening

to eliminate the genetically pure "Nordic race" that had founded the nation. After World War I, when Grant's work gained the attention of Congress and the public, it greatly furthered the cause of racial propagandists.⁵⁷

Grant and other eugenists promoted immigration restriction as a form of Social Darwinism, claiming that an individual's hereditary makeup was accurately measured by his economic and social status. The poor quality of the immigrants' heredity could be measured, they said, by the disease, illiteracy, poverty, and crime found in immigrant neighborhoods.

Grant's doctrines of Nordic superiority won scientific approval and generated a great deal of public interest. As popularized in the press and presented at legislative hearings, Grant's racist ideas became an important part of American thought.⁵⁸

Two genetic arguments were made by eugenists promoting restriction. First, they claimed that since heredity outweighed environmental factors, the immigrants' undesirable characteristics could not be improved. Second, they stressed that crossing a Nordic individual with an immigrant would be a "disharmonious crossing," sure to result in offspring inferior to both parental strains.

This idea was based on the results of agricultural experiments that showed "reversions" to wild type in some crossings of domestic strains. Eugenists used these

experiments to argue that closely related races, like the Nordic strains, could safely interbreed. Crossing dissimilar strains, they said, would result in offspring that reverted to the lowest type. To protect the quality of the native stock and maintain racial homogeneity, eugenists promoted selective immigration restriction, which they won in 1924.

In 1920, Henry Laughlin was appointed as the expert on eugenics of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization. For nearly a decade, Laughlin testified before the committee about the threat of inferior races, and supported his claims with a large amount of statistical data.

Laughlin's reports that biologically inferior immigrants threatened to destroy American stock were criticized before a Congressional panel by Herbert Jennings, a highly respected geneticist. Laughlin disregarded the criticisms and for a while his eugenic arguments for immigration restriction were received by legislators and the public as unbiased and scientifically accurate. His writings and those of other eugenists were widely played in the popular press until public demand for a "biological" restriction law reached a zenith.⁵⁹

Laughlin's testimonials also impressed the chairman of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, Albert Johnson. Johnson had already shown a powerful prejudice against foreigners, and Laughlin's data convinced Johnson that his hatred was justified by

science. In 1923, Johnson was elected president of the Eugenics Research Association.⁶⁰

When Johnson's immigration bill was passed into law in 1924, Congressmen believed they were following a dictate of science. The genetic arguments used by eugenists implied a scientific sanction of immigration restriction that was difficult to oppose. The prejudice and fear that had built up against foreigners during World War I could now be scientifically justified by restrictionists. The regret that many geneticists felt later came too late.⁶¹

More regrettable than this American misuse of genetics and eugenic ideals was the perversion of these sciences in Germany. The eugenics movement in Germany began at the turn of the century and, as in America, was characterized both by legitimate and biased research.

When Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) came into power, eugenics became an important part of the Nazi regime. Hitler had been a long-time advocate of race betterment through eugenics and his goal of national regeneration depended on the application of "biological principles" to society. His Eugenic Sterilization Law was enacted on July 14, 1933 to stop the flow of "less worthy" genes. Unlike other countries that passed sterilization legislation, Germany's law was carried out on a huge scale. More than 250,000 people were sterilized under this law, which led to Hitler's euthanasia law, enacted in 1939. Under the euthanasia law 50,000

people were killed within two years--a sort of small-scale test after which millions of other "undesirables" were murdered. One historian of eugenics wrote, "It is a tragedy of Galton's heritage that the man who took his ideas most seriously should pervert the concepts of genetics."⁶²

Though most American geneticists disapproved the Nazi race doctrines from the start, many of the eugenisists did not distinguish Nazi ideology from the goals of eugenics. Many American eugenisists openly praised the German Sterilization Law, not realizing the political motives behind it.

The racist doctrines promoted by American eugenisists were those that gained the widest support among the American people. In the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924 eugenisists found their greatest triumph. This campaign was considerably more effective than eugenisists' efforts to obtain hygienic marriage laws and sterilization legislation.

However, the greatest success of eugenics was also its downfall. The link between eugenics and extreme racism was the factor that brought its public repudiation. When racism could no longer be scientifically justified, and when Hitler's Nazis demonstrated the force of race prejudice in the name of eugenics, the American public turned against eugenics and the hereditarian attitudes it emphasized. After Hitler's shocking application of eugenic ideas, the American public was ready to forget altogether the meaning of the word eugenics.⁶³

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⁴⁰The tests were named after Alfred Binet (1857-1911), French psychologist who, impressed with Galton's standardized tests to measure the psychology of individual differences, adapted those methods to include visual testing material, paving the way for projective testing. His scales for measuring intelligence were widely used between 1905 and 1911 and showed that one to three percent of the population was feeble-minded, including a large proportion of the armed forces, and the majority of the nation's criminals, prostitutes, tramps, and paupers. The tests were later shown to be biased on the basis of the subject's cultural heritage, as discussed in Haller, Eugenics, p.96.

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III. PIONEER ADVOCATE OF EUGENICS IN OREGON: BETHENIA ANGELINA OWENS-ADAIR

The unquestioned "pioneer advocate" of eugenics and eugenic sterilization legislation in Oregon was the state's first woman doctor, Bethenia Angelina Owens-Adair(1840-1926).¹ During her lifetime this influential Oregonian also promoted temperance, prohibition legislation, women's rights, and suffrage along with her work in eugenics.²

Born in 1840 in Missouri, she was the second of nine children of Thomas and Sarah Damron Owens. The family moved west to Oregon in 1843 as part of the first pioneer settlement of the Pacific Northwest. They first settled on the Clatsop Plains near Astoria, then later in the Umpqua Valley, across the river from Roseburg.

Owens-Adair received no formal schooling until the age of 12. At that time she attended a three-month session held by an itinerant teacher passing through her neighborhood. On May 4, 1854, at the age of 14, she married Legrand Hill, who had formerly been a farmhand for her father. Two years later her only son was born. At age 18, she divorced her husband, won custody of her child and resumed her maiden name.

That same year she entered a Roseburg elementary school to complete her basic education alongside her younger brothers and sisters. In 1860 she moved to Astoria and for the next five years attended classes while supporting

herself and her child by taking in laundry and selling wild blackberries, and by a succession of teaching jobs.

By 1867 Owens-Adair was back in Roseburg where she taught herself to make hats and subsequently opened a dressmaking and millinery shop. She turned over her successful business to a sister after six years and moved to Philadelphia to pursue a career in medicine. After a year of training at the Eclectic Medical College in Philadelphia, she returned to Portland with her M.D. degree.

Specializing in women's and children's afflictions, Owens-Adair set up her Portland practice in 1874 and offered "medicated vapor baths combined with electricity in treating rheumatism and chronic diseases."³ Unfortunately, the dean of the Eclectic Medical College was subsequently convicted of selling bogus degrees, and Owens-Adair became known as a "bath doctor" among orthodox physicians.

In 1878, at the age of 38, Owens-Adair again left Portland for Philadelphia to seek admission to an orthodox medical college. Turned down at Jefferson College because she was a woman, Owens-Adair enrolled instead at the University of Michigan Medical School. Following her graduation in 1880, she spent a summer of clinical and hospital work in Chicago, completed another six months of postgraduate study in Michigan and toured several hospitals in Europe. With these impressive credentials, Owens-Adair returned to

Portland in the fall of 1881 and set up a second, more orthodox and highly successful practice.

During the next twenty years, Owens-Adair became a respected and well-known leader in the medical profession and was quite active in the Oregon State Medical Society. Along with her professional career, she remained an outspoken advocate for women's rights and temperance.

But her impact was greatest in the eugenics movement, a cause she did not actively support until after her retirement in 1905. By this time she had married Colonel John Adair, a West Point graduate whom she had known in her youth. They made their home on Sunnymead Farm near Astoria, which in time became the hub of her eugenics campaign.

Owens-Adair first introduced her eugenic sterilization bill into the Oregon legislature in 1907, the year Indiana adopted the nation's first sterilization law. The Oregon bill died in the legislature, but Owens-Adair reintroduced it in each successive session until it passed in 1913. However, Oregon's Governor West vetoed the 1913 bill, which was later put to a referendum and defeated. Owens-Adair was encouraged, however, by the 41,000 Oregonians who voted that year in favor of the measure. Her human sterilization bill was again introduced into the legislature in 1917. This time it passed and was signed into law by Oregon's Governor Withycombe. A revised version of the bill was

introduced and passed in the 1919 legislative session, and both laws were included in the codification of Oregon laws in 1920.

With the success of her sterilization bill, Owens-Adair wrote: "I prophesy that our nation will awake, and arise, as one man, and one woman, and the cleansing work will begin. I believe it will not require more than one century to effectually close the doors of our penitentiaries, insane asylums, rescue homes, reform schools, and all like institutions, under whose burdens we are now groaning, mentally, physically, and financially. May God speed the time, is my prayer."⁴

Owens-Adair did not live to see if her prophesy was accurate; she died in 1926 of inflammation of the heart at age 86. In her will she provided funds to establish a eugenics institute at Warrenton. Because of subsequent misuse of the monies, the institute was never built.

However, Owens-Adair did live to see the success of her three major social reform campaigns. Oregon granted women the right to vote by an amendment to their state constitution in 1912. In 1919, Oregon ratified the Eighteenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution, enforcing prohibition. And, after the codification of her sterilization bill into the Oregon laws, Owens-Adair watched the formation of the Oregon State Board of Eugenics, created to enforce the the provisions of her sterilization law.

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IV. OWENS-ADAIR IN RELATION TO NINETEENTH CENTURY SOCIAL HISTORY

A. Women's Suffrage

As a spirited female social reformer, Owens-Adair found good company and good cause in the women's suffrage movement. Owens-Adair was an active "suffrage canvasser" in Oregon, speaking on behalf of the movement at community meetings and contributing to Oregon's suffrage publications. Owens-Adair had met and idolized one of the nationally known leaders of the cause, Susan Anthony, and kept up an acquaintance with Abigail Scott Duniway, Oregon's primary suffrage leader.

To evaluate the influence of the women's rights movement on Owens-Adair's work, a brief history of the struggle to gain the vote for women is appropriate. The women involved in that struggle believe the history of the suffrage movement was made by dedicated and determined women who ignored severe criticism and ridicule and continued to support their cause despite several legal setbacks. This is much the same picture Owens-Adair paints of her own struggle to gain eugenic legislation.

The organized fight for women's suffrage spanned more than seventy years. Although all women, including working-class, foreign-born, and Negro women, got the vote in 1919, historians of the suffrage movement have characterized its participants as white, native-born, middle-class women.

During the nineteenth century it was middle-class women who acquired some little education and had the leisure time to participate in activities outside the home. Their opportunities also made them painfully aware of the discrepancy between their social and economic status and their lack of political power. This gap was a strong force leading middle-class women to demand the vote.¹

The long and painful fight for women's suffrage has been characterized as a chapter in America's intellectual history. The suffragists were forced to fight not only age-old institutions, but the ideas that enforced those institutions. In speaking out against those ideas the suffragists developed a standard repertoire of arguments. These arguments, as espoused by members of the national suffrage association, came to represent "suffragism" to the American people.²

According to leaders of the suffrage movement, the institutions they rebelled against dated back to before the American revolution. The revolution, they said, overturned the idea of the divine right of kings to rule over mankind. However, the revolution had left untouched the idea of the divine right of man to rule over women. That idea had been handed down over the centuries without opposition: "Men and women believed it with equal sincerity, the church taught it, customs were based upon it, the law endorsed it, and the causes which created the belief had been so long lost in

obscurity that men claimed authority for it in the 'laws of God.' All opposition to the enfranchisement of women emanated from that theory."³

The suffragists believed that a country that rallied around the idea that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed could not selectively deny such consent to a large part of its citizenry.

The majority of American women certainly did not protest their denied access to the political system. The average woman of the early nineteenth century was portrayed as timid, self-distrustful, and untrained: "Taught that it was unwomanly to hold opinions upon serious subjects, that men most admired clinging weakness in women, and that woman's one worthy ambition was to secure men's admiration, it is no wonder that women made little effort to think for themselves."⁴

No wonder indeed, for the status of women at the time the move for women's suffrage began was quite dismal. Married women were considered their husband's property and her legal rights were so dependent on those of her husband that she was said to be "dead in law." The husband controlled his wife's property, collected and used her wages, selected her food and clothing and that of their children, and determined the education and religion of their children. The husband could will the children, including unborn children, to other guardians, and could physically punish his wife, within

prevailing limits of severity, if she offended him.

To a great degree men limited their wives' freedom of thought, speech, and action. Women were not encouraged to be independent in home or business affairs and "what women were unaccustomed to do the world believed them incapable of doing."⁵

At the start of the nineteenth century most educational opportunities were closed to women: no college in the world admitted females and no high schools were open to girls. Even the practice of religion was not fully open to women; with few exceptions, churches prohibited women from preaching, testifying, voting, and even praying and singing during services. In many churches women were seated on one side and men on the other so that the "men might commend themselves to God without interruption."⁶

Single women fared no better than their married sisters. Women of middle or upper class standing disgraced themselves and their family if they took a job. Therefore, an unmarried woman of such classes became a dependent in the home of her nearest male relative. Even though she may have owned property, and in that sense been somewhat independent, her status was not enhanced.

From such sad beginning the women's suffrage movement began. But it did not begin as a quest for the vote. Women were finally compelled to leave their seclusion and enter public affairs not to plead their own cause but to

join the anti-slavery and anti-liquor movements that gained strength between 1800 and 1850. What effect the women had on these movements during that time period is not clear but it is clear they were not welcomed by the male reformers.

In the 1830s a few women began to publically support various causes, notably abolition. But the anti-slavery forces did not welcome the women's participation. One woman abolitionist wrote, "We have given great offense on account of our womanhood, which seems to be as objectionable as our abolitionism."⁷ This reaction by male abolitionists indicated that women had to secure their own freedom of speech and action before they could effectively fight for the rights of others.

The first organized action taken to win the vote for women was the First Woman's Rights Convention held in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. A declaration passed by that convention listed several grievances: foremost was the denial of women's right to elective franchise; others included women's inferior status in economic, political, social, domestic, and religious matters. Also, a resolution was made to demand equal pay for women working alongside men.

This womens' rights convention set the stage for others that followed in nearby states. Though the press and the public remained hostile to the idea of suffrage, effective spokespersons for the cause emerged from these conventions, and the movement was organized on a national scale.

By 1868, the year the 14th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution was passed, the lines of battle were drawn. That amendment, ratified on July 28, 1868, was a blow to the women's rights movement. While that amendment guaranteed voting privileges to United States citizens, it defined a citizen as a taxpaying male over the age of 21.

The American Equal Rights Association, organized in 1866, declared that suffrage should be granted to all native and naturalized citizens, whether male or female. To that end they tried, but failed, to include the phrase "without distinction founded on sex," in the 14th Amendment.

Sentiment against women's suffrage received ample press coverage in the 1870s. Female supporters of the right to vote were described as having "hook-billed noses, crow's feet under sunken eyes, and a mellow tinting in the hair." Another report declared that normal women rule "the world by a glance of the eye," and therefore have no need for the vote.

In 1872 the Republican national platform cautiously supported the women's movement: "The Republican party, mindful of its obligations to the loyal women of America expresses gratification that wider avenues of employment have opened to women, and it further declares that her demands for additional rights should be treated with respectful consideration." This endorsement was the first from a national political party.

The goals of the suffragists were certainly not unanimously supported by the women of America. The same year the suffragists won the endorsement of the Republican party, women anti-suffragists began to petition Congress to protect them from enfranchisement. They argued that the Holy Scriptures taught them to fill a "higher sphere" quite apart from public life:

we find a full measure of cares, duties, responsibilities devolving upon us, and are therefore unwilling to bear other heavier burdens and those unsuited to our physical organization . . . that an extension of suffrage would be adverse to the interests of the working women of the country . . . and because these changes would introduce a fruitful element of discord into the existing marriage relation, which would tend to the infinite detriment of children and increase the already alarming prevalence of divorce throughout the land.⁹

The indifference of the majority of American women to their political inequality was one of the most formidable obstacles to the suffrage movement. But, as one of the leaders of the movement often repeated, the dulling of the desire for freedom through long centuries of suppression was the best proof of its desirability.¹⁰

In 1878 a resolution was introduced into Congress on behalf of the national suffrage association. Forty-two years later that resolution became the 19th Amendment and read:

The right of the citizens of the United States to vote shall not be abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.¹¹

During the four decades between the introduction of this resolution and its passage the Democratic and Republican parties, according to an officer of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, "made woman suffrage their football." She said the Congressmen rarely considered the issue of women's suffrage, but when they did it was on an emotional and never rational basis:

To read the speeches delivered by these Solons at the hearings is enough to make reason totter on its throne. It was not unusual to have the same man argue first that women should not be enfranchised because if given the vote they would spend all their time on politics, leaving home, husband, and children neglected; and second that they should not be enfranchised because they did not want the vote, would not use it and were not interested in politics.¹²

Ultimately, this political feet-dragging probably hurt the legislators more than it hurt the suffragists' spirit. After party endorsement of women's suffrage was finally won, one woman wrote:

when the final victory came women were alternately indignant that it had been so long in coming, and amazed that it had come at all. Many men expressed disappointment that women did not at once enter the party campaigns with the same zeal and consecration they had shown in the struggle for the vote. These men forgot that the dominant political parties blocked the normal progress of women suffrage for half a century. The women remembered.¹³

To swing public and congressional opinion in favor of women's suffrage, the suffragists began an enthusiastic campaign that included soap box speeches, whistle-stop speaking tours, rallies, parades, and appeals to the

legislators through private interviews and lobbying efforts. These activities received wide coverage in the general press as well as in the suffragists' own publications.

The accounts written by suffragists of their efforts indicate a rather undauntable spirit in support of their cause, even in the face of verbal insult or physical abuse. The efforts and the success of these campaigners, most of whom had had no training in political methods, was extraordinary.

Without radios or effective "talking pictures" to help popularize their cause, the suffragists took to the streets and made a personal appeal to the voters. Knowing that the enfranchised men would not attend women's suffrage meetings, the ladies tried to reach the male voters through corner lectures, street meetings, and even by following men into their places of recreation. One suffragist remembered:

In the days of trailing skirts and picture hats to see a woman mount a soap box on a street corner, or stand on the back seat of an automobile, and begin to orate, was so startling that men could not help but stop and listen. The street meetings were so effective that soon . . . women held their meetings on street corners or public squares, wherever traffic was heaviest, with gay banners and much literature. They haunted every place where men gathered. His clubs, his conventions, his amusement places, were never safe from the danger of a speech demanding votes for women. Vaudeville performances were staged by suffragists. They spoke between the acts in theatres.¹⁴

Another effective tactic was the parades staged in support of women's suffrage. The parades drew women

participants from all social classes, and by 1915 the parades were drawing more than 40,000 marchers. One of the most effective parades was thought to be the march held at the time of President Thomas Woodrow Wilson's (1856-1924) inaugural in 1913:

About 8,000 women were in line and tremendous crowds had turned out to watch the elaborate spectacle, with its floats, banners and beautiful costumes. Hoodlums were allowed by the police to break through the procession, slap, trip up, spit upon and insult the marching women. Some floats were pulled off, others were knocked down, and one of the most disgraceful scenes ever enacted on the streets of the capital shocked those who watched while the police stood idly by. Soldiers from Fort Meyer were called to restore order.¹⁵

The mistreatment of the marchers in the inaugural day parade actually helped the suffrage cause. A later Congressional investigation and subsequent dismissal of the chief of police generated enough publicity to stir new interest in the movement.

Continuing coverage of the suffragists' struggle was undoubtedly boosted by the National American Woman Suffrage Association, which operated its own press council. The council was charged with "creating news and thus increasing publicity, and of seeing that anti-suffrage articles and editorials were adequately answered."

Between 1890 and 1920, a number of states adopted constitutional amendments granting partial suffrage to women. In an executive session in 1916, the national suffrage

association drew up plans to encourage state legislatures to press for a congressional women's suffrage amendment. As part of that plan, fifteen members of the association were directed to move to Washington where they "served as an outpost of information and advice, keeping in close touch with our friends in the Congress and trying to enlist the support of political and other leaders. This committee formed the nucleus of our lobby . . . (which) came to be known as "the front door lobby," a name given us by one of the press gallery men because we never used backstairs methods."¹⁶

While interviewing legislators to seek support for women's suffrage, the suffragists were expected to follow strict guidelines. They were instructed not to stay too long, nag, threaten, talk where they could be overheard, draw out arguments against the suffrage amendment, or "do anything to close the door on the next advocate for suffrage."

According to the lobbyists, the task of interviewing legislators to gain their support of women's suffrage was a tedious and time consuming one, demanding patience, perserverance, and a sense of humor:

It includes interviews with members of Congress preceded by innumerable fruitless attempts to make appointments; hours spent walking the corridors of the House and Senate office buildings trying to run to earth some man not too busy or too indifferent to see you; sitting in his office listening patiently and with good humor to arguments which you have had dished up by

dozens of other Congressmen; to reasons which are unconvincing; to funny stories with no point; putting up with abuse and misunderstanding; hearing with long and boring reminiscences of female relatives who do not want the vote, or possibly do; trying to pin him down to a definite promise to vote for the amendment and leaving the office to go through all this again with the next man interviewed.¹⁸

The lobbyists' efforts, of course, were finally successful; the 19th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution was passed by Congress on June 4, 1919. After state ratification, the 19th Amendment was adopted on August 26, 1920.

Suffragists attributed the long and frustrating wait for the vote to the "biological foundation of male resistance to female aggrandisement" combined with the failure of politicians to recognize "the inescapable logic of woman suffrage in a land professing universal suffrage."¹⁹

With their ultimate victory came a sense of lasting sadness for the women suffragists, dismayed that their fight for an inalienable right had been so long and so vigorous. This sadness, in many cases, turned into resentment against the American political system:

American women who know the history of their country will always resent the fact that American men chose to enfranchise Negroes fresh from slavery before enfranchising American wives and mothers, and allowed hordes of European immigrants totally unfamiliar with the tradition and ideals of American government to be enfranchised in all States after naturalization, and in fifteen states without it, and be thus qualified to pass upon the question of the enfranchisement of American women.²⁰

Ten years after the meeting of the First Woman's Rights Convention of 1848, Owens-Adair took the first step toward her own emancipation by divorcing her husband. She was 18 years old and recovering from a bout with typhoid fever, and was caring for her sickly two-year-old son. Her father, proud of the fact that there had never been a divorce in his family, begged her not to leave her husband. But, by Owens-Adair's accounts, her husband was not an adequate provider and was physically abusive to her and their child. So, she opted for divorce, even though she felt "the stigma. . . would cling to me all my future life."

At that time, divorce was not a socially accepted remedy to a bad marriage, as illustrated in this exchange between Owens-Adair shortly after her separation and a neighbor named Mrs. Morrison. "Bethenia, why did you leave your husband?" the neighbor asked. "Because he whipped my baby unmercifully and struck and choked me--and I was never born to be struck by a mortal man!" "But did he commit adultery?" Mrs. Morrison asked. "No," was the reply. "Then my dear child," Mrs. Morrison said, "take my advice, and go back, and beg him on your knees to receive you,--for the scriptures forbid the separation of man and wife for any other cause than adultery."²¹

Owens-Adair, of course, did not take her neighbor's advice, and in the spring of 1859 won the custody of her child and the right to resume her maiden name by a court

decision. She wrote: "After the decree of the court was rendered giving me custody of my child, and my father's name, which I have never since discarded, and never will, I felt like a free woman."²²

So, in an era when most women were considered their husband's property with no legal rights of their own, Owens-Adair was able to detach herself, after a spirited courtroom argument, from her husband. Going against the societal role of the single woman, she set out to support herself and her child. Although she did not do the factory work that, during the industrial revolution, brought women away from their homes and into the workplace, Owens-Adair was forced, rather abruptly, to join the working world.

For a while she worked on her parents' farm, then, striking out on her own, she "sought work in all honorable directions, even accepting washing, which was one of the most profitable occupations considered 'proper' for women in those days."

However, Owens-Adair found her lack of education a considerable barrier. At the time of her divorce, Owens-Adair "could scarcely read or write" having received just a few lessons in her childhood from an itinerant school teacher. After her divorce, Owens-Adair attended primary school with her younger siblings in Roseburg and mastered the basics of spelling, writing, geography, and arithmetic.

After a move to Astoria to be near her sister, Owens-Adair grew tired of doing washing as a means of support, which brought in only \$1.00 to \$1.50 each week. She declared: "I am determined to get at least a common school education. I now know that I can support and educate myself and my boy, and I am resolved to do it: furthermore, I do not intend to do it over the washtub, either."²²

With this determination, she began teaching grammar school on the Clatsop Plains. Since the students were more advanced than she was in her schooling, she studied furiously each night to stay ahead of them. Of her students she wrote, "they never suspected my incompetency." By teaching and sewing for the local ladies, she eventually saved \$400 and with this small fortune bought a half-lot in Astoria and had a cottage built. A woman owning property was an unusual thing and her accomplishment "won the respect of all."

She later returned to Roseburg where she set up her own dressmaking and millinery shop, a venture that proved quite successful--and demanding. She wrote:

Work brought its own pleasure, and sweet rewards. Five a.m. never found me in bed, though often did I awake at two a.m. in my chair, with my work still in hand. But the young are soon rested, and as a change of work gives rest and health, I was blest with both. I had a time and place for everything, and have found adherence to this rule throughout my life to be one of the greatest aids to success in any pursuit.²³

At the time of her divorce and later in her life, Owens-Adair found herself "surrounded with difficulties

seemingly insurmountable." In response she "realized my position fully, and resolved to meet it bravely, and do my very best."

In early life, Owens-Adair showed many qualities typical of the women's suffrage supporters who were to become a very vocal and powerful force in social reform. Owens-Adair was willing to break social taboo by getting a divorce, was resourceful and aggressive enough to support herself and her child, and recognized the importance of education in achieving her goals. She came to believe there was no difference between men's and women's intellectual or physical abilities and, when she became interested in medicine, was appalled to find differences in educational and career opportunities.

Owens-Adair's ideas reflected the spirit of the national women's suffrage movement, and in fact, she was influential in giving the movement considerable force in Oregon. She arranged the first public suffrage speech in Oregon, helped start Oregon's first suffrage newspaper, and made several speeches promoting women's rights, including an address before the Oregon Woman Suffrage Association.

Owens-Adair was acquainted with Abigail Scott Duniway (1834-1915), the leader of the Oregon suffrage movement, and their lives were similar in several respects.²⁴ Both came to Oregon with the first wagon-train settlers, and both supported themselves and their children after their

husbands proved unreliable. Coincidentally, both ran millinery shops for a time. Owens-Adair and Duniway both travelled statewide in support of suffrage and penned many articles for Duniway's suffrage paper, The New Northwest. Owens-Adair's son also worked for The New Northwest while boarding with Anthony for a short time.

Just as Owens-Adair led the Oregon voters through five eugenic sterilization campaigns, Duniway personally led Oregon through five of its six suffrage campaigns, held in 1887, 1900, 1906, 1908, and 1910. One historian believes the Oregon voters--who participated in more suffrage campaigns than any other state--were hesitant to vote in favor of suffrage because of their antagonism toward Duniway's abrasive campaign techniques. Owens-Adair, whose eugenic legislation campaign tactics were based on her experiences in the suffrage fight, may have provoked a similar response from Oregon voters.²⁵

In the end, it is said that Duniway's "belief in her own powers and judgment eventually turned into unbridled vanity." Owens-Adair's memoirs show evidence of the same sort of vanity. But perhaps that never-faltering self-confidence was the key to the women's ultimate success in their suffrage and eugenics campaigns. Interestingly, both women outlived most of their compatriots; Duniway died at age 81 and Owens-Adair at 86.

Owens-Adair attributed her conversion to women's suffrage to a careful reading of The Revolution, one of the first national suffrage newspapers. That paper was edited and published by Susan Anthony (1820-1906), a leader of the national suffrage movement. Apparently Anthony had a profound effect on Owens-Adair, for she wrote: "I owe much of the success of my life to the brave words and deeds of this foster mother."²⁶

In her address before the Woman's Congress held in Portland in 1896, Owens-Adair recalled the difficulties of being a suffragette twenty-five years earlier, when she was a milliner in Roseburg:

Away back in those days when I was struggling, not only for an education, but for bread for myself and my child, it was not pleasant, nor was it profitable, to be called a "blue-stockings." It required more than common courage, as all pioneer suffragists can testify, to withstand the opposition, and endure the sarcastic smiles and distrust of the better classes, and the sneers and jeers, and even "rotten eggs" of the rabble.²⁷

By the time Owens-Adair mounted her eugenics campaign in 1905, then, she had already had experience dealing with a wary and sometimes hostile public. Certainly her formidable defense of eugenics was buttressed by her earlier struggles to be heard on the suffrage issue.

During her early suffrage days, Owens-Adair wrote, an "honorable" Senator made a "most remarkable speech" in Congress against an equal suffrage bill. "We don't want our wives and daughters to be mathematicians, philosophers,

or scientists," he said. "We don't love and honor them for what they know of such things, but rather for what they don't know. These things are not necessary for women. They are better off without such knowledge. Woman's place is the home, and it is her duty to love and care for her husband, and his children."²⁷ Clearly, Owens-Adair thought these sentiments to be hogwash.

At the 1896 Woman's Congress, Owens-Adair was hostess to both Susan Anthony and Abigail Duniway. At the Congress, Anthony and Owens-Adair reminisced about their first meeting on November 15, 1871. Owens-Adair was then a milliner and suffragist in Roseburg and Anthony had requested that Owens-Adair arrange for a lecture hall and drum up an audience to attend Anthony's suffrage speech.

After quite a lot of difficulty Owens-Adair was able to secure for the suffrage speech the largest church in Roseburg, "a little village of 500 souls and sixteen saloons." Although the owner of Roseburg's largest saloon offered a free supper and "anti-Anthony dance" the same night, the lecture was well attended and Owens-Adair was "gratified beyond all expression with our success. It gave me new courage and determination to adhere to my convictions."²⁸

Susan Anthony was also impressed with Owens-Adair after their Roseburg meeting. Anthony's reaction was characterized in this 1914 passage written by Abigail Duniway:

The autumn rains were in their glory in Portland before Miss Anthony finally left us, going by stage to Sacramento, and lecturing at stopover stations along the way. She informed me regularly of the incidents of her journey by letter, and I particularly recall her favorable mention of Dr. Barthenia Owens, of Roseburg (now Dr. Owens-Adair), who arranged a successful meeting for her at the Douglas County Court House and entertained her in her home. The Doctor is now a retired physician, and . . . is honored now by the medical profession, which formerly denounced and ridiculed all such women as "freaks."²⁹

Evidently the leaders of the national suffrage movement regarded Owens-Adair as an important contributor to the cause, and a fine example for all aspiring women.

In promoting the cause of women's suffrage, Owens-Adair often turned to the press. She had an easy command of the written word and was able to phrase her arguments quite convincingly. She took pen in hand to promote all of her several causes--women's suffrage, equal educational opportunities, temperance, prohibition, and finally, eugenics. The first articles she wrote appeared in The New Northwest, Oregon's suffrage paper, in support of the vote for women. In an article dated 1870, Owens-Adair summarized her argument: "All that we ask, all that we entreat, is that our cause shall be investigated, analyzed, sifted, and if it be not the true metal, of solid principle, let it burn, like dross. The right of suffrage is an inalienable right, withheld wrongfully from woman by her brother, man. No human being who will reasonably and conscientiously

investigate this principle will fail to become a convert to it Indeed . . . there is not another principle in the wide world that I so dearly cherish, for there is no other power that can be compared with the power of the ballot."³⁰ Like the first suffragists who realized they must win the vote for themselves before achieving other reforms, Owens-Adair realized her proposed societal changes would only be achieved through the power of the ballot.

A friend once described Owens-Adair as an unswervingly "loyal and powerful champion of her own sex." Indeed, she never seemed to miss an opportunity to promote the intellectual and physical development of women. In her speech before the Portland Woman's Congress, Owens-Adair emphasized that there was little difference in the potential of men and women:

Is there any difference between woman's work and men's work? Is there anything under the sun that muscle or mind can do that the new woman cannot accomplish? We have no fear that the "new woman" will not find a place in the poet's theme, as well as in his heart. She will not cease to be the "ministering angel," the very inspiration of life. Like the fine gold that comes from the furnace, she will come forth, clothed in all the beauty and strength of a pure womanhood, for she will have been cleansed of the dross of dependence, helplessness and prejudice of past ages. Indeed, up to the present time, what has man done that woman could not do, or has not done?³¹

Owens-Adair expressed here and on many other occasions the basis for her belief in her own abilities, and her determination to use those abilities to the fullest.

And Owens-Adair believed that other women were doing a credible job of fulfilling their abilities, even when it meant breaking into new behavior roles. In one of many speeches delivered to promote the cause of women's rights, Owens-Adair summarized the progress of women during the nineteenth century:

Less than half a century ago, there were but few ways in which women could earn a respectable living; and those few were hedged about with many obstacles; the question being the supposed greatly superior intelligence and ability of man over woman. College doors and universities were closed against her, but . . . recent years have changed those conditions, until now that question is no longer debatable. Experience has taught that girls do make efficient "bread-winners."

It was always held that woman was made for man, but whether or no man was made for woman was not conceded until the Anglo-Saxon woman proved herself as capable, as willing, and as intelligent as her brother. Then the question was solved to the satisfaction of all concerned.³²

But, as Owens-Adair remarked, these more reasoned attitudes toward the abilities of women only started to develop during her lifetime. When, in the early 1870s Owens-Adair decided to pursue her interest in medicine, she found many academic doors still closed to women. The nineteenth century did mark the first large-scale entry of women into the medical field, but that door was not an easy one to open.

B. Women in Medicine

Nineteenth century medicine was characterized by discontent among the medical practitioners. Dozens of medical sects, each with a particular healing philosophy, arose, including the homeopaths, eclectics, botanists, phrenologists, and water-cure men. These sects played a large role in the medical treatment of 19th century Americans.³³

These sects developed in opposition to the so-called "regular" or allopathic doctors. The fight between the regular and irregular sect physicians continued throughout the 19th century.

The regular doctors practiced "heroic" healing. This treatment included bleeding the patient until the pulse ceased or the patient fainted, blistering the patient, and purging the patient through administration of massive doses of calomel, a mercury-based laxative. Blood-letting was thought to reduce a vascular fullness that existed as illness began that blocked drug therapy. Purging with calomel was thought to modify secretions of the liver and reverse sluggishness.³⁴ The regulars formed their first national organization, the American Medical Association, in 1847.

The major medical sect, which reached its zenith by the mid-nineteenth century, was homeopathy. Part of its popularity was due to an avoidance of the extreme measures

of heroic practice. The homeopaths offered "pleasant water medicine instead of castor oil and calomel," a formula sure to be more popular than purging and blood-letting.³⁵

The homeopathic practice of administering highly diluted quantities of drugs drew severe criticism from the regulars, who found the tiny doses absurd. A supporter of homeopathic practice wrote in defense of that sect:

Common sense is no guide in such matters, as everybody knows who has the slightest knowledge of the history of science. "Common sense" said for a long time that the sun moved round the earth; but common sense was wrong. Therefore, we say allopathic doctors may not insist on "the demonstrable absurdity" of the homeopathic practice, for the simple reason that they cannot "demonstrate" it

But by the end of the nineteenth century, there had been a "gradual shift in the status of homeopathy, from the dignity of a system to the heresy of medical thought."³⁶ This change signalled the increasing effectiveness of regular medicine.³⁷

While American medicine was in a period of transition a century ago, other aspects of American society were undergoing change as well. For example, over the centuries women had traditionally been considered subordinate to men. With the industrial revolution, both men and women were attracted to the cities in search of jobs, and for the first time, women were employed outside the home.

Another transitional factor was the belief in the "perfectability of society" and the faith in "progress" that developed in the late 1700s. By the mid-nineteenth century the rational thinking of the enlightenment era had fused with more romantic notions to produce social reform movements of "evangelical enthusiasm." These reform movements included the temperance and anti-slavery campaigns, and the women's rights movement.³⁸

Equal educational opportunities and the right of women to enter the various professions were among the demands of women's rights campaigners. The feminists regarded the entry of women into medicine as a visible test case for their entire movement, therefore, they encouraged it at each opportunity.³⁹

A crusade waged for reform in personal hygiene also affected women's entry into medicine. The movement's leader, Sylvester Graham, now remembered for his Graham crackers, promoted sex hygiene and encouraged dietary improvements, dress reform, and physical excersises for the ladies. As a result of his lectures "Ladies Physiological Reform Societies" were established and the more courageous women lectured society members on anatomy and physiology.

As this practice became more common, there arose a need for medically trained women to teach sex and general hygiene training. Many of the women who first entered medicine did so to prepare for teaching such lessons.

This concern was related to a general demand by women to have female practitioners in obstetrics and gynecology. Women claimed that male obstetric practitioners were an offense to modesty.

Evidence shows that because of embarrassment, women often did not seek treatment from available male doctors for severe gynecological disorders. This early Victorian period, when many ladies who attended anatomy lectures were subject to frequent fainting spells, has been called the pinnacle of middle-class, Anglo-Saxon prudery.

The picture of women so weak in constitution and so filled with modesty that they fainted during anatomy lessons fits with the generally romanticized notion of women in the nineteenth century. Women were considered to be the weaker sex, both physically and mentally, and their weakness was thought to be innate rather than environmentally caused.

A well-regarded physician, writing in an obstetrics textbook in 1848, described women's character, saying that "the great administrative faculties" that make men great orators and legislators are not found in women. Rather, "she reigns in the heart Home is her place, except when, like the star of day, she deigns to issue forth to the world, to exhibit her beauty and her grace . . . and then she goes back to her home, like as the sun sinks in the west, and the memory of her presence is like a bright departed day."⁴⁰ This physician's conclusion says a great

deal about society's attitude toward women at the time:
 "She has a head almost too small for intellect but just big enough for love."

Physicians postulated biologic differences between women of different social classes that corresponded with the ladies' general health. Coincidentally, working women of the lower classes, who were not in a good position to pay for medical services, were thought to be innately healthy. On the other hand, women of the upper classes were considered to be chronically weak and in need of constant medical attention. This attitude toward upper-class females helped characterize them as unfit to become physicians themselves.⁴¹ And, physicians wrote that women trying to enter fields previously dominated by men were doing themselves irreparable physical damage due to the "deleterious irritation" of the outside world on their nervous systems.⁴²

Generally, nineteenth century physicians warned women not to force their intellect beyond its natural capacity. As one physician wrote in 1889:

Women beware! You are on the brink of destruction. You have hitherto been engaged only in crushing your waists; now you are attempting to cultivate your mind! You have been merely dancing all night in the foul air of the ball-room; now you are beginning to spend your mornings in study. . . . Beware! oh beware! science pronounces that the woman who studies is lost.⁴³

Despite such warnings, by the late 1840s women had

proven they could succeed in medical schools. The first medical school for women, the Woman's Medical College in Philadelphia, was founded in 1850. At about the same time, Elizabeth Blackwell became the first woman in this country to receive a regular medical degree, an honor she earned from the Geneva Medical College.⁴⁴

The mid-nineteenth century was the era of proprietary schools, which granted degrees after two terms of study and which were filled with low caliber students. The undistinguished state of medical education at the time probably encouraged the admission of women into these schools. In addition, medical sects including homeopathy and eclecticism were struggling for survival and more eager to accept women into the ranks. An eclectic college in New York admitted women in 1849 and other irregular schools accepted both men and women in the 1850s.

Women who chose to enter the medical profession were thought to be simply imitating men. Even in 1910 it was thought that women physicians could be recognized by their mannish dress, temperment, and character. In 1871, the president of the American Medical Association declared in an address before that group:

Certain women seek to rival men in manly sport . . . and the strong-minded ape them in all things, even in dress. In doing so, they may command a sort of admiration such as all monstrous productions inspire, especially when they tend towards a higher type than their own.⁴⁵

As medical historian Richard Shryock points out, "There is no telling just how much ridicule of this sort handicapped women physicians. They were at a disadvantage here, because in a profession where all the norms had been set by men some imitation was inevitable. The obstacles facing women, moreover, inspired a challenge only in those who were unusually resolute and determined."⁴⁶

One factor promoting the ridicule of and opposition toward medical women by male physicians may have been economic. In the last half of the nineteenth century, the medical profession was overstaffed and male physicians feared the doctoring ladies would steal away some of the profits, especially in obstetric cases.

Even after women had established the right to equal admission into medical school, other doors remained closed. For a time hospitals did not accept women as staff members. When they did, internships and residency appointments were denied. When those appointments were granted, the entrance of women into medical societies was denied.

Because women had gained acceptance both into orthodox and sectarian schools, the women remained divided and without collective power until 1915 when the Medical Women's National Association, now the American Medical Women's Association, was founded. In 1876 the American Medical Association accepted a woman delegate from Illinois but most national organizations kept women from their ranks

until after World War I.

Shryock concludes that the very factor that made women's entry into medicine possible also stirred up intense opposition to it. That factor was the association of medical women with the strong feminist movement in America. That association, he concludes, "explains both the pioneer character of women's medical movement here" and, in both men and women, the "intense opposition which it encountered."

On a more individual level, Owens-Adair received much the same sort of opposition and criticism for her desire to study medicine. Just as unusual courage had been necessary to support women's suffrage, Owens-Adair wrote,

it required a brave woman . . . to declare her intention to study medicine. I, myself, studied in secret for several years. To do so openly made a woman the subject of public ridicule, and she was regarded as deserving of severe public criticism. There was scarcely a newspaper in the land that did not delight in holding her up as a "strong-minded nuisance," a "mannish woman" and such-like detestable expressions. How often has it been said, "No modest, or refined woman would study medicine." The doors of all medical schools were closed against her; but slurs and opposition only strengthened her desires, and, with an irresistible will and determination, she rose up in her strength, and builded medical schools for herself.⁴⁷

In her medical endeavors, as well as her reform activities, Owens-Adair characterized herself as driven with great courage toward success, despite intense opposition to her activities.

Owens-Adair's interest in medicine began when she was

a milliner in Roseburg and spent many hours assisting ailing neighbors. Looking back on her entry into the medical field she wrote: "I had always had a fondness for nursing, and had developed such a special capacity in that direction by assisting my neighbors in illness, that I was more and more besieged by the entreaties of my friends and doctors, which were hard to refuse, to come to their aid in sickness, oftentimes to the detriment of business . . ."⁴⁸ But her well-intentioned efforts, though appreciated by her neighbors, were not highly regarded by local male physicians. Their scorn was apparently the factor that encouraged Owens-Adair to seek a formal medical education, as indicated by this incident from Owens-Adair's days in Roseburg:

One evening I was sent for by a friend with a very sick child. The old physician in my presence attempted to use an instrument for the relief of the little sufferer, and, in his long, bungling, and unsuccessful attempt he severely lacerated the tender flesh of the poor little girl. At last, he laid down the instrument to wipe his glasses. I picked it up, saying, "Let me try, Doctor," and passed it with perfect ease, bringing immediate relief to the tortured child. The mother, who was standing by in agony at the sight of her child's mutilation, threw her arms around my neck, and sobbed out her thanks. Not so the doctor! He did not appreciate or approve of my interference, and he showed his displeasure at the time most emphatically. This apparently unimportant incident really decided my future course.⁴⁹

Owens-Adair borrowed a set of medical books from a friendly physician in Roseburg and began to study the fundamentals of anatomy, keeping her actions secret from family and friends. Finally, she turned her millinery

business over to a sister, sent her son to live with Abigail Duniway, the suffragist editor of The New Northwest in Portland, and prepared to leave for medical school in Philadelphia. The reaction to her plans from family and acquaintances was not favorable:

I expected disapproval from my friends and relatives, but I was not prepared for the storm of opposition that followed. My family felt that they were disgraced, and even my own child was influenced and encouraged to think that I was doing him an irreparable injury, by my course. People sneered and laughed derisively. Most of my friends seemed to consider it their Christian duty to advise against, and endeavor to prevent me taking this "fatal" step.⁵⁰

Her friends seemed to think she was "stark crazy" to leave a good business and go off on a "wild goose chase" to medical school. They made it clear that while they would willingly seek her services as a milliner, they would never consider being treated by a woman doctor.

By the time she boarded the stage for Philadelphia, even Owens-Adair was having second thoughts about her actions:

Eleven o'clock p.m. arrived at last, and I found myself seated in the California overland stage, beginning my long journey across the continent. It was a dark and stormy night, and I was the only inside passenger. There was no one to divert my thoughts from myself, or prevent the full realization of the dreary and desolate sense that I was starting out into an untried world alone, with only my own unaided resources to carry me through. The full moment of what I had undertaken now rose before me, and all I had left behind tugged at my heart-strings. My crushed and overwrought soul cried out for sympathy, and forced me to give vent to my pent-up feelings in a flood of tears, while the stage floundered on through mud and slush, and the rain came down in torrents, as

if sympathizing Nature were weeping a fitting accompaniment to my lonely, sorrowful mood.

And now I had ample opportunity to reason and reflect. I remembered that every great trouble of my life had proved a blessing in disguise, and had brought me renewed strength and courage I had taken the decisive step, and I would never turn back.⁵¹

This was one of only a few incidences where Owens-Adair admitted to some fears and self-doubts.

Owens-Adair enrolled in the Philadelphia Eclectic School of Medicine and graduated in 1874. While in Philadelphia she attended lectures and clinics at Blockly Hospital, a common practice with medical students of the city. She would recall later the inhospitable treatment of the women medical students: "a little band of brave and earnest women were 'rotten-egged' at Blockly Hospital, in broad daylight, in the old, staid city of Philadelphia. And for what was this done? Their crime was that they were trying to fit themselves for the practice of medicine to alleviate pain and suffering, and thereby earn for themselves honorable self-support."⁵²

Owens-Adair's reception was no more cordial on her return to Roseburg as a new graduate of the Eclectic School of Medicine. The Roseburg doctor who had been so annoyed at Owens-Adair's "impudence" at the bedside of that sick little girl arranged what he thought would be a humiliating experience for the new doctor. He and five of Roseburg's leading physicians invited Owens-Adair to attend the autopsy

of a destitute male patient. To the male doctors' amusement, she accepted. Once present, she was informed that the autopsy was to be performed on the man's genitals and that she was to do the surgery herself. Her acceptance of the challenge caused quite a stir among the Roseburg residents:

The news of what was going on had spread to every house in town, and the excitement was at fever-heat.

When I had at last finished the dissection, the audience (not the doctors) gave me three cheers. As I passed out and down on my way home, the street was lined on both sides with men, women and children, all anxious to get a look at "the woman who dared," to see what sort of a strange, anomalous being she was. The women were shocked and scandalized! The men were disgusted, but amused, thinking it "such a good joke on the doctors."⁵³

Years later, secure in her established, conventional medical practice, Owens-Adair reflected on the Roseburg incident:

I wonder, as I look back now, that I was not tarred and feathered after that autopsy affair: I can assure you it was no laughing matter then to break through the customs, the prejudices and established rules of a new country, which is always a risky undertaking, especially if it is done by a woman, whose position is so sharply defined.⁵³

From Roseburg, Owens-Adair went to Portland where she set up her eclectic practice in a brick building on the east side of First Street, between Taylor and Yamhill. In her two-room suite, the doctor offered Portlanders "medicated vapor baths combined with electricity in treating rheumatism and chronic diseases." This new treatment

proved quite popular and in combination with her second specialty--the treatment of women's and children's afflictions, her practice was remunerative. However, she could only find one resident of Portland who was skilled in the operation of electrical batteries, so keeping the baths in running order proved to be a serious problem.

Her acceptance into the medical community of Portland was not immediate--she mentions "occasional rebuffs" and frequent slights" from her "brother M.D.'s." However, business became so lucrative that she sent her son to the Medical Department of the Willamette University in Salem, from which he graduated two years later, fulfilling her "life's ambition."

But her son's success alone proved to be an insufficient reward. Owens-Adair indicated a dissatisfaction with her career as an eclectic practitioner: "Time passed on. I was successful and prosperous, but not yet satisfied. Again, I was beginning to pine for more knowledge."⁵⁴ Meanwhile, the dean of the Eclectic Medical College was convicted of selling bogus degrees, and Owens-Adair became known as a "bath doctor" among the city's orthodox physicians. So, at the age of 38, Owens-Adair decided to return to a traditional medical school to get an orthodox, two-year medical degree. She set her sights on the prestigious Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia.

She arrived in Philadelphia armed with letters of recommendation from "U.S. Senators, Governors, Professors and Doctors," hoping they would guarantee her admission to the traditionally all-male school. In Philadelphia Owens-Adair visited Dr. Hannah Longshore, one of the first graduates of the Woman's Medical School of Philadelphia. Dr. Longshore described the admission situation at that time:

I have no faith that you can get into Jefferson College, (she told Owens-Adair) but I want to see you try it. I believe the time will come when the doors of every medical school in our land will be forced to open for women, as do the Eclectic and Homeopathic schools now. But the old schools, as you know, do not recognize them.

Owens-Adair plead her case to a Professor Gross, the "greatest professor" at Jefferson College. With some apparent sadness, he told her that the board of regents of Jefferson College "would simply be shocked, scandalized, and enraged at the mere mention of admitting a woman." He suggested Owens-Adair attend the Woman's Medical School of Philadelphia, but she felt a woman's college was considered "below par" among medical professionals in the western states. She added, "I must have a degree that is second to none." Professor Gross suggested the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, which at that time was already co-ed, and "second to none in America."⁵⁵

Owens-Adair did enroll at the University of Michigan and for the next two years followed a rigorous course of

study. Each day began with a cold bath at 4 a.m., rigorous excercises and study until breakfast at 7 a.m., then another sixteen hours of lectures, labs, and study. Summing up her stay at the University of Michigan, Owens-Adair wrote:

Between lectures, clinics, laboratory work, Quizzes, examinations, two good sermons on Sunday, and a church social now and then, the time was fully and pleasantly occupied. The constant change brought rest, and acted as a safety valve to our over-heated brains.⁵⁶

With competitive pride she recounted the time she bested her classmates by spending her vacation filling out a workbook on anatomy, "the bug-bear of medical students." Evidently her professor was impressed, as he told her:

You have done that which no other student in this University has ever done before, and more than I expected one to do, and you have done it while the others have been enjoying a vacation. I shall not forget this. It will be of the highest value to you in . . . the fixing of these all-important facts in your memory.⁵⁷

After receiving her orthodox M.D. degree from the University of Michigan in June 1880, Owens-Adair journeyed to Chicago where she was engaged in hospital and clinical work. After a post-graduate course at the University of Michigan, she sailed for Eugope, where she did not hesitate to use her credentials to gain entry to medical institutions. "In all the large cities," she wrote, "we visited the hospitals, and saw many of the world's greatest surgeons operate. My letters with state seals always secured us open doors, and invitations to enter."

Those letters, from the president of the University of Michigan and U.S. senators and governors, were used a final time on her return to New York where she convinced a rather dubious customs collector not to charge a \$75 duty on medical instruments she had purchased in Paris.

Owens-Adair found a more cordial reception in Portland as a graduate of an accredited medical school than she had as a giver of medicated vapor baths. She wrote that shortly after her new offices were open for business, "My friends, and my enemies, as well--if they of the old slights and disapproval could so be called--came to pay their respects, and many to receive my professional services. . . ."58

During Owens-Adair's years as a medical student, and later in life, she was clearly a supporter of co-educational schooling and of women's right to a scientific education. In 1880, as a student at the University of Michigan, she wrote a letter to the editor of the school's "Daily News" rebutting an attack on the character of women medical students. Her description of prevailing attitudes indicates the difficulties women medical students must have encountered:

How fortunate it is for woman that prejudice and slander are not conclusive against her character. Whenever she steps forward and modestly claims to be heard in the advancing studies of science, she is quite apt to be rudely told that her influence in educational matters is pernicious, and her character about to be injured if she persists in her effort. And why? Because by this course she asserts in theory and principle that the world should accord her in practice. We believe woman should have a knowledge of the

science of medicine. She is the natural nurse and physician of the family, and is endowed with a desire to know more and more of those principles which are essential to the happiness and usefulness of her sex.

In her endeavors to become learned and useful in any science, especially the medical, she keenly feels how greatly this prejudice adds to the sacrifices she must make to attain the desired position. Still she pushes onward and upward, and by a life of rectitude and professional success convinces the multitude that she, though a woman, and because she is a woman, is doubly entitled to praise and honor.⁵⁹

Many years later, Owens-Adair would receive some of that same praise, not only for being the first woman doctor on the Pacific coast to receive an M.D. degree, but for being the "first woman of the Pacific states who had the moral courage to enter a class of students in a medical college where men and women studied and practiced medicine together."⁶⁰

Owens-Adair lived to see other women join her as western physicians and she lavished praise upon them in a speech delivered at a women's convention:

In asserting that woman is always ready for duty, and always yielding to its exactions, we believe we present her true character. Today the world beholds her, as she takes her stand upon the great field of science, while the flag of victory floats over her.

Among the foremost ranks of this goodly array we find our pioneer lady physicians, whose lives have been purified and beautified, broadened and enobled by the strenuous battle that was required to be fought and won in order that women as physicians might be considered even respectable. Today we honor and bless these noble mothers, while the world looks on with a smile that approves.⁶¹

C. Temperance and Prohibition

Another nineteenth century reform campaign, this one attracting to its ranks women suffragists and people of the medical profession, was the one against intemperant use of alcoholic beverages. Later, that movement supported prohibitive legislation regulating the sale and consumption of alcohol. On January 29, 1919 the temperance reformers were victorious: the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution forbade the manufacture, sale, transportation and import or export of intoxicating liquors for beverage purposes.

The "alcohol problem" was thought to have been present at least since the advent of formal civilization. As one author wrote, "Ancient man not only crazed drink but, speaking in the large, getting crazily drunken appeared to be his prime objective."⁶²

The modern temperance movement was started during the 1700s by medical doctors as a somewhat scientific campaign against alcoholism. Prior to this time there had been a traditional belief in the value of alcohol in treating disease, but as general health was distinguished from treatment of ailments, the temperance movement got underway. By 1820 the movement had been taken over by moral reformers and leaders of the clergy. They made temperance a social rather than scientific cause and with their emotionalism gave the movement a tenor alien to its original purpose.⁶³

The first major temperance organization, the American

Society for the Promotion of Temperance, was founded in 1826. By 1833 its membership had surpassed one million, with 6,000 chapters across the states. Another major organization, the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union, was founded in 1874. In 1879 it became the first organization to support formal lessons in temperance for the nation's school children; every state eventually passed legislation making such education compulsory.

The need for national temperance organizations was pointed out in an 1874 temperance treatise. The author wrote that at that time there was only a "vague recognition" of the importance of temperance by the American people:

there is a deplorable apathy and indifference among the mass of the people with reference to the whole matter. With a want of consideration, and perhaps a want of knowledge, they are, in great measure, ignorant of the gigantic proportions intemperance is assuming in the land, and the impending danger, in consequence, to all the dearest and best interests of humankind.⁶⁴

The author encouraged wider recognition of the liquor problem and promoted legislation to stop the flow of alcohol, before the intemperant foes of the government, living within America's borders, threatened the country's very freedom.⁶⁵

Arthur Newsholme, a principal medical officer of the Local Government Board of England and a lecturer on public health at Johns Hopkins University wrote in 1922 a treatise called Prohibition in America: And Its Relation to the Problem of Public Control of Personal Conduct.⁶⁶

In his work he concluded that the "National Prohibition in America is the result of a real national sentiment in its favour on the part of a majority of the population."⁶⁸ Newsholme named six factors that contributed to this prohibition sentiment.

The chief factor was what he called the "pertinacious propagandism" of the Anti-Saloon League in each state. The League, he wrote, while stopping "short of the militancy which in Britain was associated with the collateral movement for Female Suffrage, is said to have cowed many politicians into support of prohibition who would have preferred not to give this support. There is no peculiarity in this yielding of politicians to pressure. They are usually astute enough to appreciate on which side lies the balance of public opinion."⁶⁹

The degree of involvement of American women's rights supporters in the temperance movement varied between suffrage organizations. In fact, the subject caused considerable dispute among the suffrage leaders. While most suffragists privately favored temperance, they felt their public involvement in controversial temperance and prohibition activities would distract attention from their main purpose--to win the vote. It was the same line of reasoning that led the early suffragists to seek the vote before participating in anti-liquor and anti-slavery campaigns. In any case, the support of those vocal

suffragists who did join the temperance movement no doubt drew public attention toward the cause, whether the sentiment was in favor or against.

In 1874, one temperance supporter eloquently described women's interest in temperance:

For years and years, and weary, suffering years, multiplied into decades, have the women of America waited to see that traffic destroyed which annually sends sixty thousand of their sons, brothers, fathers, and husbands into the drunkard's grave. They have been impoverished, disgraced, tortured in mind and body, beaten, murdered. Under the impulse of maddening liquors the hands that were pledged before Heaven to provide for and protect them have withdrawn from them the means of life, or smitten them in the dust. Sons whom they have nursed upon their bosoms with tenderest love and countless prayers, have grown into beasts, of whom they are afraid, or have sunk into helpless and pitiful slavery. They have been compelled to cover their eyes with shame in the presence of fathers whom it would have been bliss for them to hold in honor. They have been compelled to bear children to men whose habits had unfitted them for parentage--children not only tainted by disease, but endowed with debased appetites. They have seen themselves and their precious families thrust into social degradation, and cut off forever from all desirable life by the vice of the men they loved. What the women of this country have suffered from drunkenness, no mind, however sympathetic, can measure, and no pen, however graphic, can describe.⁷⁰

It is clear that prose such as this could easily stir the hearts of women temperance reformers and inspire them to press for prohibition legislation.

Another factor that led to prohibition was a measure Owens-Adair supported, the compulsory education of elementary school children in the effects of alcohol abuse.

These educational programs, Newsholme wrote, "gradually formed a vast public opinion favourable to total abstinence."

Owens-Adair and Newsholme would have agreed on another point, that the nation's saloons contributed to dirty politics by harboring an "organized traffic" that "corrupts elections, debauches voters, debases many legislators and their officials." Theodore Roosevelt apparently held that view as well, having been quoted as saying "the American saloon has been one of the most mischievous elements in American social, political and industrial life."⁷¹ A desire to rid the nation of its saloons and thereby guarantee "clean" politics also lent support to prohibition, the author concluded.

Other factors included a supposed "increase in industrial efficiency secured by abstinence," and, during World War I, a desire to "safeguard American troops against the moral temptations to which alcoholic indulgence often forms the introduction." The southern states, Newsholme said, were motivated to adopt prohibition by the "negro problem and especially the desire . . . to save white women from negroes inflamed by drink."⁷²

A major factor in the enforcement of prohibition, one that had "much weight with the thoughtful public" was a declaration made by the American Medical Association in 1917. That resolution read:

Whereas, We believe that the use of alcohol as a beverage is detrimental to the human economy, and
Whereas, its use in therapeutics, as a tonic or a

stimulant or as a food has no scientific basis,
therefore be it

Resolved, That the American Medical Association
opposes the use of alcohol as a beverage, and
be it further

Resolved, That the use of alcohol as a thera-
peutic agent should be discouraged.⁷³

Newsholme also noted the "striking fact" that four out of five American physicians had "refrained from taking out permits to prescribe alcohol."⁷⁴

Owens-Adair first learned about the powers of alcohol in her childhood through the apparent misuse of the intoxicant by members of her family. She wrote that the "common curse of humanity," alcohol, "crushed" her early life and "robbed my home and childhood of every vestige of beauty and sunshine." She also believed that the misuse of alcohol kept her from obtaining an early education: alcohol, she wrote, "permitted me to grow up in ignorance of the contents of even the primary school books; and not until I had reached womanhood, and had earned money by the hardest manual labor, did I have the opportunity of learning to read and write."⁷⁵

In 1870, while a milliner in Roseburg, Owens-Adair's first articles written for publication were printed in local papers. Along with articles supporting women's suffrage, Owens-Adair launched a crusade in print for temperance and prohibition. In an 1870 letter to the editor of the Pantagraph, she called prohibition the next major political issue, and explained her interest in it:

"I, being a woman, and like most women having tasted the bitter fruits of intemperance, more keenly feel the necessity of securing a strict prohibitory liquor law enacted to protect our fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons, who have within themselves the power of self-protection against this fell destroyer."⁷⁶ In this statement Owens-Adair echoed the sentiments of most women involved with the temperance crusade.

While the women who had suffered from the intemperance of their loved ones did not have the power of the vote, Owens-Adair wrote that "they do wield a powerful influence." She hoped that influence would be strong enough to stop the "accursed traffic" of "alcoholized men" through Oregon's cities and strangle the "national curse" of inebriety. Owens-Adair joined the Women's Christian Temperance Union and over the next three decades continued to use the press and public speaking engagements to promote the temperance cause.

Owens-Adair viewed the WCTU as a "grand educational organization" whose ranks were filled with informed and concerned citizens, and trained and proficient field workers, all "willing to work for any measure that looks toward the restriction or abolition of alcohol, and all other sources of crime." She was proud to be associated with the WCTU, which, she said, along with other organizations including the Sons of Temperance, Woman Suffrage,

State Temperance Alliance, Young Men's Christian Association, and the National League was united behind the same goal: the "advancement and elevation of humanity."

In support of the WCTU, Owens-Adair lectured before church groups, the Grand Lodge of Good Templars, the junior members of the WCTU known as the "Bands of Hope," and in 1886, while serving as Oregon's WCTU state chairman of Heredity and Hygiene, the 5,000 members of the State Temperance Alliance. She felt her "very many essays and communications" written for the Oregonian and Prohibition Star reached a primary reading audience of 35,000 even before reprinting in smaller newspapers across the state.

Owens-Adair urged the people of Oregon to vote for temperance legislation, and in 1886, she supported the candidates of the Prohibition Party. She encouraged the work of Oregon's temperance children, and demanded compulsory classroom education for the nation's school children in the "evils of alcohol," tobacco and narcotics. She continued to emphasize the importance of women in bringing an end to intemperance, which she considered to be an inherited or acquired bad habit that could be overcome with determined effort. In 1893, Owens-Adair fulfilled a long-time dream by attending a national temperance convention, "the greatest WCTU convention in the world," but because of the sudden death of her adopted daughter, she left for home after only one day at the meeting.

After Owens-Adair received her medical education, her campaign against alcohol took on a more scientific flavor. She began to draw a connection between heredity and the "bad habit" of intemperance, and spoke of the medical effects of alcohol both in the drinker and in his offspring. She began to cite scientific authorities as being against the use of alcohol, and finally concluded that most inmates of state institutions owed their accommodations to their misuse of alcohol.

In an 1885 address before the WCTU, Owens-Adair discussed "habit in forming character" in an attempt to promote a "strong and healthy willpower" against degrading forces such as alcohol. She described habit as "the result of an internal, inherent principle that leads us to do easily, naturally, and often involuntarily, what we do often. Habit may be inherited or acquired. It may grow and develop through nurture and cultivation, until it becomes the controlling law and consuming power of our whole being."

Owens-Adair regarded habit as the "prime factor in temperance reform." And she believed the alcoholic habit could be transmitted, through heredity, from one generation to the next:

We inherit from our parents our features, our physical and mental vigor, and even much of our moral character, and often when one generation is skipped, these qualities will re-appear in the one following, or even later.

The vices of our forefathers, as well as their virtues, have subtracted from, or added to the strength of our brain and muscle. The evil tendencies of our nature constitute a part of our heirlooms from the past.⁷⁷

Owens-Adair's interest in the transmission, from one generation to the next, of alcohol-caused effects indicates an early interest in the workings of heredity--and interest she would later apply to her works on eugenics. It was in her early temperance crusades that she determined that alcohol was the most powerful force in the creation of harmful hereditary traits:

There is a marked tendency in nature to transmit all diseased conditions,--the actual disease not always being transmitted, but a pre-disposition, or tendency toward the actual disease. Alcohol is the most potent of all agents in establishing hereditary traits which prove destructive to both mind and body.

The keen, morbid desire for liquor which demands gratification at any cost, is known as "alcoholism," and is transmitted from the parent to the child, and thus thousands of persons are cursed with the drink craze, and such of these as do not fall by the wayside, are compelled to make it the great struggle of their lives to resist the cravings of this unappeasable monster.⁷⁸

Owens-Adair recommended total abstinence from alcohol as the "only safe policy," saying that by drinking a single glass of wine, "a man may awaken a hereditary and dormant taste for drink which can never afterward be assuaged, and that may eventually grow to proportions where it will be beyond his control."⁷⁹ While a taste for drink, once awakened, may cause "morbid qualities of a mild character"

in the parent, Owens-Adair believed the effect would be exaggerated in the offspring: "inebriety with its ordinary perversions in the parent may become idocy or insanity in the child, and moderate drinking in the father, creating an appetite which in him is controlled, may produce drunkenness in the son, or dipsomania in the son or grandson, which may be beyond all control."⁸⁰

Owens-Adair felt that her medical education and work as a practicing physician gave her unique authority on the subject of alcohol. "I think few persons have had a better opportunity to study both sides of the question than myself," she wrote. Along with her personal introduction to alcohol abuse by family members, Owens-Adair wrote that she had examined the "scientific" aspects of the problem as well: "my profession has given me every opportunity to study the 'other side'--the human side of this all-important question."

As for the medical effects of alcohol, Owens-Adair wrote that physicians recognized alcoholism as a "malignant disease" requiring "radical treatment"--in this case, removal of the cause, alcohol. Alcoholism, or as she called it, the "disease of intemperance," had attacked the entire nation:

Its poison is infused through our whole system, and is coursing in the veins of all classes of our people! It may almost be called a contagious disease, and when once contracted, it can be transmitted from generation to generation,

appearing in a thousand types, and forms.

No family in all our broad land is free from its baneful curse. We see it in the pinched and contracted features of the innocent babe. We hear it in the moans and cries of its disturbed slumbers. We find it exhibited in the ill-humors and vicious acts of the young and old. It comes to us in the form of chorea and paralysis. We meet it daily in the various forms of hysteria and other nervous diseases.⁸¹

Owens-Adair was not alone in her feelings toward the abuse of alcohol. A United States Supreme Court Justice was said to have called alcoholic drink the "most prolific source of insanity, pauperism, vice, and crime."⁸² A 1920 address on public health spelled out the dangers of alcohol:

Alcoholism is a potent enemy of the race. It is a great creator of avoidable poverty. It makes the bed ready for tuberculosis. It is a frequent excitant of exposure to the infection of venereal diseases; it swells the ranks of fatherless children, and of neglected infants; it helps to fill our prisons and our hospitals. Let it be admitted, if you like, that light wines and beers are pleasant, and in strict moderation with meals are beverages to which little or no harm can be traced; but heavier drinks and all non-medicinal spirit drinking are to be condemned; and the country which distinguishes itself by abolishing these drinks will, other things being equal, . . . inevitably attain quickly an industrial and economic superiority over all countries which continue to follow the older ways.⁸³

Owens-Adair described alcohol as a poisonous stimulant that causes constriction of the blood vessels and shriveling of the flesh in frogs, and which causes obstructions in blood flow and ultimately paralysis or apoplexy in humans. She thought that alcohol, once present in the human system,

had a particular affinity for brain and nervous tissue.

"We know that the brain substance of heavy drinkers becomes hardened and contracted," she wrote, "and we have it asserted, on good authority, that the brains of long-continued drunkards who have died from the effects of alcohol, were so saturated with the spirits that it ignited when touched with a lighted match."⁸⁴

The affinity of alcohol for the brain cells resulted in what Owens-Adair called "at least five" varieties of mental derangement, as well as criminal behavior and insanity. She felt that the whisky traffic furnished nine-tenths of the inmates of penitentiaries, jails, and insane asylums. "This is no wild assertion," she declared, "every lawyer and every doctor of eminence and ability knows that it is true."⁸⁵ She lamented that "could men, with one accord, consent to give up all excesses, and live temperately,-- which means a life of healthfulness and holiness,--what a glorious change would be wrought. What a diminution of disease, crime, and insanity. Though the reduction of misery and evil in this generation would be so great, that of the next would be vastly more."⁸⁶

In an 1885 newspaper article, Owens-Adair made a plea for prohibition legislation that contained some of the same sentiments she later expressed in campaigns for eugenic legislation:

I ask, should parents in their ignorance be allowed to poison the blood of their innocent and helpless offspring? Should men and women be allowed to contract disease, and vicious habits, and with them propagate, and bring forth mental and physical monstrocities with which to curse our land? Should our government have no will in these important matters? Must we forever be forced to build institutions with iron bars and grated doors to protect society? No sir! We believe the time has come when our people shall be made to realize and understand the importance of these great questions which involve the life and well-being of our nation.⁸⁷

Though the pleas for prohibition by Owens-Adair and her temperance colleagues were successful in 1919, their victory was short lived. On December 5, 1933, the twenty-first amendment to the U.S. Constitution repealed the eighteenth amendment, ending prohibition.

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³⁴Gert Brieger, "Health and Disease on the Western Frontier: A Bicentennial Appreciation," Western Journal of Medicine vol.125 (July 1976), p.28-35.

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³⁷Brieger, Medical American, p.87.

³⁸Richard Shryock, "Women in American Medicine," Journal of the American Medical Women's Association vol.5 (1950) p.371.

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⁴⁰C. D. Meigs, Females and Their Diseases (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1848), cited by Shryock, "Women in American Medicine," p.40

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⁴²John Haller, "Neurasthenia: The Medical Profession and the 'New Woman' of Late Nineteenth Century," New York State Journal of Medicine (Feb. 15, 1971) p.478.

⁴³R. Coleman, Women's Relations to the Higher Education and Professions, As Viewed From Physiological and Other Standpoints (Alabama, 1889), cited by John Haller, "Neurasthenia," p.479.

⁴⁴Shryock, Medicine and Society, p.147.

⁴⁵Shryock, "Women in American Medicine," p.374.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Owens-Adair, Life Experiences, p.411.

⁴⁸Ibid., p.79.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid., p.80.

⁵¹Ibid., p.82.

⁵²Ibid., p.411.

⁵³Ibid., p.84, 97.

⁵⁴Ibid., p.88.

⁵⁵Ibid., p.91.

⁵⁶Ibid., p.92.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid., p.97.

⁵⁹Ibid., p.370

⁶⁰Ibid., p.431.

⁶¹Ibid., p.373.

⁶²Marion Edward Stone, American Liquor Control (Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1943), p.36

⁶³Shryock, Medicine and Society, p.122.

⁶⁴L. Stebbins, Fifty Years of the Temperance Cause (Hartford, Conn.: J. P. Fitch, 1876), p.3.

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⁶⁶Arthur Newsholme, Prohibition in America: And Its Relation to the Problem of Public Control of Personal Conduct (London: P. S. King & Son, Ltd., 1922).

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⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Stebbins, Temperance Cause, p.299.

⁷¹Newsholme, Prohibition, p.27.

⁷²Ibid., p.29.

⁷³Ibid., p.28.

⁷⁴Ibid., p.35.

⁷⁵Owens-Adair, Life Experiences, p.438.

⁷⁶Ibid., p.364.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 427.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid., p.462.

⁸⁰Ibid., p.454.

⁸¹Ibid., p.422.

⁸²Newsholme, Prohibition, p.37.

⁸³Ibid., p.39.

⁸⁴Owens-Adair, Life Experiences, p.423.

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V. MEDICINE AND EUGENICS:
OWENS-ADAIR'S OREGON EUGENIC STERILIZATION CAMPAIGN

At the turn of the twentieth century, the so-called "scientific era" of medicine had begun, and the medical profession was becoming more prestigious and influential. Medical research at the time was aimed at controlling infectious diseases; tuberculosis and pneumonia were the nation's leading causes of death in 1900 and influenza and enteritis were major problems. Research and efforts to improve public and private hygiene were focused on environmental causes of disease, and bacteriology, toxicology, and parasitology became established fields.

Partly because of the emphasis on environmental causes of disease, research on human genetics was largely ignored by the medical profession. In addition, many genetic diseases were not recognized since at that time, the carrier often died from infection or environmental factors before the genetic disorder was expressed. This added to the popular view that hereditary illnesses were rare. Those physicians who did recognize the role of genetics in medical problems took a fatalistic attitude--that surgery in particular and modern medicine in general were incapable of helping patients with genetic diseases.¹

As a result, most physicians who did study human genetics did so as a hobby. Since human and clinical gene-

tics were not considered branches of medical science, the subjects were not covered in medical textbooks until 1940. Some American medical colleges included brief study of Mendel's laws as a part of anatomy and embryology curriculum. But until 1933, no American medical college offered required courses in genetics.²

The few physicians doing research in heredity deplored "the apparent apathy of medical men with regard to the problems of inheritance" and "the sluggishness of our clinics as far as efforts to apply the newer knowledge and techniques to the solution of the problems of health and disease in man."³

Other researchers were dismayed at how little the nation's medical students learned of heredity, and how little they added to their knowledge as practicing clinicians: "Medical students are fortunate if they pick up a rudimentary knowledge of Mendel's law during their premedical course. In the later grind of regular medical instruction they will probably have few opportunities to make good their deficiencies, even if they should appreciate the importance of so doing."⁴

The lack of knowledge and interest in genetics on the part of American physicians was particularly ironic because America was the world leader in genetic research at that time. American geneticists made important gains in the field prior to 1930 and some of that information was

available to the public in popular reading form.⁵

But many physicians were convinced that emphasis on heredity would make their therapeutic services unnecessary. One human geneticist wrote:

I think a problem that we should sometimes discuss is assuring the general public, physicians and educators that the mere fact of our establishing a genetic background for a condition does not eliminate the hope of therapy or training as a method of modifying that character. I run into it all the time. The lack of cooperation of many groups with geneticists is largely the fear that if we establish a genetic basis, physicians and educators are not going to be able to use therapy or education or psychology or some other means of improving attitudes, education, and disease.⁶

Clearly, then, physicians diagnosed and treated patients with little knowledge of genetic disorders. And yet, the physicians who became involved in the eugenics movement hastened to label a host of ailments as "hereditary." And they did so with nearly no understanding of the mechanisms that might have caused such medical problems.

Although physicians did not receive genetic training prior to 1933 and most did not consider research in human genetics important, many medical personnel were interested in the application of genetics through eugenics. Representatives of several medical societies attended the International Congress of Eugenics in 1912, and a segment of that meeting considered the relationship between medicine and eugenics. Six physicians served as vice presidents of the Congress and seven served on the

scientific board of directors of the Eugenics Records Office, and medical doctors served in other eugenic societies. Charles Davenport lectured before medical societies on eugenics and human genetics, and formed several subcommittees of the Eugenics Committee of the American Breeders' Association to investigate various medical conditions. However, this temporary link between medicine and eugenics did not stimulate physicians' interest in human heredity. Rather, it appeared that physicians were attracted to eugenics as a social movement, not as a science.⁷

By the time the Second International Congress of Eugenics was convened in 1921 the link between medicine and eugenics had broken. Eugenists criticized the physicians for ignoring the well-being of future generations by allowing the weak of the current generation to survive through medical therapy. Some eugenists suggested that physicians should not heal the sick but rather judge who was fit to reproduce. The attitude of the eugenists turned physicians away from eugenics, which reinforced the idea that medicine could not help cure hereditary disease.⁸

Like geneticists, physicians had a few brief ties with eugenics but did not, in the end, embrace the cause. Geneticists were concerned more with unveiling the mechanisms of heredity than with the application of hereditary

and evolutionary theory to man. They were concerned with the shallow research being conducted in human genetics that was passed off as science. In turn, physicians thought hereditary diseases rare and could not see a clinical use for genetics. They adopted a fatalism toward the problem of inherited disease. The attitudes of both geneticists and physicians kept eugenics from establishing a scientific basis.⁹

According to Owens-Adair, her interest in eugenics began in the late 1880s when she had occasion to tour a "pitiful and loathsome ward" in an Oregon state asylum with the institution's superintendent. At that time Owens-Adair told the superintendent that the "poor, miserable creatures" who were inmates there should be sterilized as their "only chance for their safety." The superintendent reacted with "perfect amazement" at Owens-Adair's opinions and told her not to make her shocking viewpoints public. She indicated then that she would begin her fight for sterilization when the time was right: "I hope the time will come when I will be permitted to use my pen and my voice in this direction for the purification and preservation of our nation."¹⁰

She got that chance after her retirement from active medical practice in 1905 when she took her crusade for eugenic reform to the press and later as she campaigned for passage of sterilization legislation. This 1908 entreaty to her Portland supporters indicates Owens-Adair's aware-

ness of the power of the press in bringing nationwide support to the eugenics movement:

Two years ago I called upon the Legislature through the columns of the Oregonian to enact a law to prevent propagation, through sterilization of criminals, idiots, insane and all that class of defectiveness. From the prominence given my communication by the Oregonian the subject was taken up by the Washington press and also by Eastern papers. I went to the Legislature and succeeded in getting a bill introduced in the House, which I consider a great step in advance, and now my co-workers, I ask your assistance. Give me your counsel, go with me to Salem. Use your pens and study the subject. The press will stand behind us. The newspapers are the great educators of the people. The pen is mightier than the sword. The great dailies, the weeklies and monthlies that are sent out by the tens of thousands are the creations of the best, deepest thoughts of great minds that have been made great by constant thought and application.

No doubt Owens-Adair had come by her high opinion of the press as a vehicle for social reform through her years of experience writing in support of suffrage and temperance. Many of Owens-Adair's supporters took her advice and penned articles and letters-to-the-editors of newspapers across the state, declaring their support of eugenic ideals. Owens-Adair was particularly impressed by an article written by a physician, whose ideas perfectly reflected Owens-Adair's own reasoning. He wrote:

I insist that I am entitled to certain inalienable rights of birth, due to me from that generation which preceded and brought me into existence. I am the innocent product of that part of human society; and upon them devolved the responsibility of giving me all possible advantages to wage the battle of life successfully. I am entitled to a sound body, untainted by ills

sinfully contracted by my progenitors. I am entitled to a clear intellect, undimmed by reason of alcoholic and toxic drug addiction on the part of those who incidentally or intentionally procreated my brain. I am entitled to natural tendencies toward that which is uplifting to the human race, unimpeded by degenerative habits wrongfully contracted by any one instrumental in my advent. I am entitled to parents who are not degrading to me by reason of being criminals hampering my progress toward high ideals by unmerited disgrace.¹¹

To achieve this birthright for every human being, Owens-Adair believed that restricting "procreation by the unfit" was the "only practical remedy." The method of restriction she proposed, of course, was sterilization of all those unfit to produce children. She believed sterilization was a justifiable "social remedy" because of the laws of heredity. She wrote that since the late 1880s she had believed "that the power of transmission from parent to child, is a law which holds good through all life and dates back from the beginning of time, 'Like begets like' from which there is no escaping."¹²

The laws of heredity that she once used to explain the transmission of defects caused by alcohol, Owens-Adair now applied to all defects--physical, mental, and social--in her discussions of eugenics. To underscore her premise that sterilization was justifiable by the science of heredity, Owens-Adair began her argument with a definition taken from a turn-of-the-century edition of Webster's dictionary: "Heredity--The transmission of the physical

and psychical qualities of parents to their offspring; the biological law by which living beings tend to repeat themselves in their descendants."

This concept of heredity was an integral part of her plan for sterilization of the unfit. Her major arguments for eugenic sterilization were based upon the four basic principles listed below:

1. That heredity plays a most important part in the transmission of feeble-mindedness, imbecility, idocy, epilepsy, insanity, and criminal tendencies.

2. That the increase of defectives and degenerates to be supported by normal people is an economic and social problem which demands solution.

3. That colonization of the unfit and feeble-minded cannot alone solve the problem.

4. That it is impossible to preclude all possibility of sexual intercourse among these classes.¹³

Owens-Adair declared that these four principles were not only true, but "generally accepted by thoughtful people as well as social workers and scientific investigators."

Indeed, Owens-Adair seemed to be reflecting the nationwide current of eugenic thought. In her writings she made reference to the work of several prominent eugenicists including Richard Dugdale, Henry Herbert Goddard, Charles Davenport, David Starr Jordan, Paul Popenoe, and Mrs. E. H. Harriman. But despite the apparent agreement of her eugenic ideals with those of the experts, a general acceptance of Owens-Adair's sterilization doctrines would seem to presuppose that her supporters had a working knowledge of the

mechanisms of heredity. However, Owens-Adair never treated the subject of heredity in other than a very superficial manner. Instead, she left the burden of proof of the validity of "heredity" to others:

I shall not attempt a discussion of the laws of heredity but shall assume an acceptance of them. That mental defects and criminal tendencies are transmissible has been forcibly established by scientific investigators. There is a great quantity of statistical evidence proving this fact. Studies have been made of the genealogies of many different families, good and bad, and the results given the world.¹⁴

It would appear, then, that Owens-Adair's supporters likely took her applications of heredity on faith. Since even the best educated physicians were nearly ignorant on the subject of heredity, it is unlikely that Owens-Adair's less educated supporters would have a greater understanding of the science. Any exposure to heredity they got beyond Owens-Adair's writings probably came from the popularized works written by the nation's leading eugenicists.

Prime examples of such widely read accounts were the ones Owens-Adair cited in support of the idea that undesirable qualities are inherited. They were the well known case histories of the Jukes family, compiled in 1874 by Richard Dugdale, and the Kallikak family, published in 1913 by Henry Herbert Goddard. From these studies, Owens-Adair concluded, "the trail of feeble-minded is inevitably transmissible."¹⁵

Without any documentation that went beyond pure

circumstantial evidence, Owens-Adair declared that based on these genealogies it was clear the "feeble-mindedness may in any generation turn into idocy, insanity or criminality" and that although a certain defect may not be present in every member of a family, each "carries the defect in his blood and may give a subnormal child even more defective than its defective ancestors."

It appears that Owens-Adair was no more discerning than other eugenists of her time and the large public sector that became convinced of the menace of the feeble-minded. Owens-Adair did include in her writings a criticism of the early genealogies. The critic, himself a physician, was quoted by Owens-Adair as finding fault with the Jukes family study. That study might justifiably have been criticized for its lack of objectivity or scientific authenticity. But, echoing the hereditarian sentiments of Owens-Adair and society at that time, the critic chastized Richard Dugdale for crediting much of the Jukes family traits to the environment rather than heredity:

It is a curious fact that Mr. Dugdale, the historian, attributed this remarkable history not to heredity alone, but also to the environment in which these people lived. He was not aware of the fact that environment does not as a rule affect heredity in any way.¹⁶

This writer contrasted the bad heredity of the Jukes with the family tree of Jonathan Edwards, "the most eminent"

theologian America has produced." Of the 1,400 descendants of Jonathan Edwards who were recorded, each was shown to be a "respectable, self-supporting citizen," including the apparent black sheep of the family, Aaron Burr. The Jukes and Edwards families were shown to be the "most wonderful contrast" on record, showing the "indelible, ineffaceable influence of the primary stress of heredity."¹⁷

To compliment the nationally known genealogies of the Jukes and Kallikak families, Owens-Adair gave a local example of the chain of feeble-mindedness, in a family of her own acquaintance:

In the early days in the West I knew what was then called "a simple-minded" man who married a normal girl of fourteen. They had a normal child, a girl. That girl married a normal man and had eight children, all more or less defective, except one girl who appeared to be normal. She married a normal man. They had one child far more feeble-minded than its great grandfather. That child is a ward of the state. The eugenicists have¹⁸ definitely established theories bearing this out.

Perhaps to hide the fact that her sampling of only one family certainly was not adequate to support the conclusions Owens-Adair was making, she added this clever afterthought: "I give this specific instance as I think it may be more impressive than general statements of the principle involved. There are many other cases just as convincing as this one."¹⁹ If there were, Owens-Adair failed to mention them.

Owens-Adair supported the national organization that promoted the importance of heredity in the manifestation of defective traits, the American Eugenics Association. She also lent her support to the work of the Eugenics Records Office at Cold Spring Harbor, the institution that collected the genealogies so influential in the wave of hereditarian thought. In her writings on human sterilization, Owens-Adair acknowledged the admirable goals of the Eugenics Records Office, which were "To promote researches in eugenics that shall be of utility to the human race; The study of the origin of, and best methods of restricting, the strains that produce the defective and delinquent classes of communities; and To publish the result of these researches." Owens-Adair seemed willing to leave research in eugenics to the experts at Cold Spring Harbor and limited her efforts to promoting their findings and conclusions--that the unfit classes of humanity should be sterilized.

Owens-Adair seemed to admire greatly Mrs. E. H. Harriman, wife of a wealthy railroad magnate and benefactress of the Eugenics Record Office. Owens-Adair called Harriman one of the "leading apostles" of American eugenics. Owens-Adair praised Harriman's action in 1915, when, in a much publicized speech, Harriman asked "What is the matter with the American people? 15,000,000 must be sterilized!" Harriman then set aside funds to do just that. Her financial contributions to the sterilization campaign were augmented

by those of John D. Rockefeller (1839-1937) and Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919).

Owens-Adair reprinted press accounts of the "gigantic eugenic enterprise" led by Harriman and supported by a number of scientists involved in the "great Eugenic Association." As she named them, those scientists included:

Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone, scientist and philanthropist, chairman; Dr. William Welch, pathologist of Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, vice chairman; Dr. L. F. Barker of Johns Hopkins, and president of the National Commission for Mental Hygiene; Dr. T. H. Morgan, zoologist of New York; Irving Fisher, professor of political economy at Yale, and Dr. E. E. Southard, the famous pathologist of Boston. The secretary of the board and resident director is Dr. Chas. B. Davenport, the New York biologist. H. H. Laughlin is superintendent and Prof. Howard J. Banker, noted botanist of Depauw University, has been installed as scientific expert.²⁰

Owens-Adair's eugenic work on the west coast seemed to her just a logical extension of east coast work being done by some of the nation's leading scientists.

As they launched their sterilization campaign in 1915, the members of the eugenics society determined that the sterilization of 92,400 Americans was necessary that year. They predicted that by 1980, 415,000 Americans would be sterilized annually. "When that time arrive," the press accounts read, "there will have developed, the committee believes, a practically perfect manhood and womanhood."²¹ The achievement of perfection, a lofty goal worthy of some admiration, if only for the enormity of the task, was

nevertheless a hopeless cause. For the way in which the committee proposed to achieve perfection went way beyond the bounds of scientific reason.

For Harriman, the woman whose money made possible the start of this sterilization campaign, Owens-Adair had nothing but high praise. She admired Harriman's boldness in openly stating her beliefs although they shocked and surprised many of her listeners. But Owens-Adair believed Harriman's rash statements on sterilization were well founded and that the American people would eventually come around and endorse Harriman's policies:

the people of today are thinking. And when the people think, they will act. And when they act, it will be for the preservation of the Nation!

I firmly believe that within ten years we will have a National law governing the reproduction of our future generations.²²

The work of the national eugenists indicated to Owens-Adair that "the perpetuation of the nation depends upon the cutting off of the propagation of the unfit." The point that Owens-Adair wanted to bring home to her Oregon readers was that "sterilization is the most humane remedy ever discovered for stopping that propagation. Sterilization, she wrote, "protects the unborn child, the degenerate, and the public at large. The subnormal will receive more freedom and benefit than from any other known plan."²³ Rather than viewing compulsory sterilization as the ultimate infringement on individual rights, Owens-Adair considered

it a painless, even kind way to end the massive suffering caused by genetic defects.

To show the specific need for sterilization in Oregon, Owens-Adair included in her writings the results of two surveys of the feeble-minded in that state. The first set of statistics was compiled in 1916 by Glenn R. Johnson, a Reed College professor. Johnson defined "feeble-mindedness" as a "term that has been used to designate all degrees of mental defectiveness, from the one who is merely dull and unable to learn fast to the one who is a gelatinous mass that simply lives and eats." He referred to 1913 World Almanac figures that indicated there were 20,755 institutionalized feeble-minded people in this country. According to Johnson, Henry Goddard had estimated that there were then between 150,000 and 300,000 mentally defective people in the country receiving no care. Despite these impressive national figures, Johnson estimated that there were only 1,820 defectives in Oregon's population. "Oregon is yet young," Johnson wrote. "It has few old settled communities. Consequently, there are probably fewer feeble-minded people here in proportion to the population than there are in the Atlantic states. But, when Oregon grows older we will have to face the same condition that the older states are now facing." To combat feeble-mindedness in Oregon, Johnson recommended "proper marriage laws, segregation of defectives, sterilization, negative eugenics," and most

important, a collection of the "facts." To compile the facts on the number of feeble-minded in Oregon, Johnson asked that "anyone who reads this article and knows of any feeble-minded person or defective in the State of Oregon who is not in some institution purposively used for the feeble-minded, to communicate the facts to me."²⁴ Apparently those statistics were recorded without proof of the "feeble-mindedness" of the individuals involved.

Only five years later, another survey conducted by the U. S. Public Health Service at the request of the Oregon State Legislature, showed that there were 65,243 feeble-minded persons in Oregon, according to Owens-Adair's interpretation of the survey's results. She concluded that "the birth control of this great army of subnormal and degenerates is the greatest question of the age, for it means life or death for our nation."

Another account of this same survey dropped the estimated number of "mental defective, delinquents or dependents" in Oregon to 29,847. But even this reduced figure meant that "nearly 4 per cent of Oregon's population is subnormal. Counting the insane and mental defective only, of which we have 7686, this gives us a ratio of almost 10 per 1000 of population."²⁶

Owens-Adair used this 1920 "Oregon Survey of Social Liabilities" to make a strong argument for the economics of sterilization. Evidently she felt this was her most power-

ful argument in support of sterilization legislation in Oregon; while she pointed out that "the reduction of taxes is not the highest aim in this matter," she admitted it was "the appeal that will bring the earliest response."²⁷

Taking full advantage of the appeal of economic arguments, Owens-Adair predicted that the more than 65,000 Oregonians of "undergrade" were destined to become "a public charge at the expense of the taxpayers." Appealing to the frugal characteristics of her supporters she stated that in 1920, Oregon taxpayers contributed \$1 million to the maintenance of six state-supported institutions: the feeble-minded school, state insane asylum, Eastern Oregon insane asylum, industrial school for girls, boys' training school, and penitentiary. She also noted that the state legislature had allocated another \$1 million to finance building repairs, equipment, and purchase of additional lands. And yet, in spite of the funds allocated to maintain institutions for the "defective and degenerate," she wrote that the "number to be cared for grows faster than the accomodations." She concluded by asking her readers a rhetorical question: "Shall we ask the normal people of our state, in addition to supporting themselves, to carry the burden of maintaining a disproportionate and ever increasing number of defectives and degenerates?"²⁸ Admittedly, her most effective arguments concerned the financing of care for the feeble-minded.

The nation's leading advocate for making birth control

available to the general public, Margaret Sanger (1883-1966) was as impressed with Oregon's survey of mental defectives as Owens-Adair seemed to be. Sanger supported "negative eugenics," the control of propagation of the unfit. She did not, however, support "positive eugenics," which encouraged the nation's "fit" classes to reproduce at a high rate. Sanger had high praise for Oregon's 1922 survey:

The Mental Survey of the State of Oregon, recently published by the United States Health Service, sets an excellent example and should be followed by every state in the Union and every civilized country as well. It is greatly to the credit of the Western State that it is one of the first officially to recognize the primary importance of this problem and to realize the facts, no matter how fatal to self-satisfaction, must be faced.

Sanger wrote that the survey indicated only a small proportion of the nation's "mental defectives and morons" were institutionalized. The rest, she said:

are widely scattered and their condition unknown or neglected. They are docile and submissive. They do not attract attention to themselves as do the criminal delinquents and the insane. Nevertheless, it is estimated that they number no less than 75,000 men, women, and children, out of a total population of 783,000, or about ten per cent. Oregon, it is thought, is no exception to other states. Yet under our present conditions, these people are actually encouraged to increase and multiply and replenish the earth.²⁸

Using the same argument Owens-Adair found so effective, Sanger noted that Oregon's survey pointed out the financial burden placed on the states by mental defectives. Sanger encouraged Oregon's legislators to devise a program to

reduce this loss and restore Oregon's defectives to "lives of industrial usefulness." She warned that mental defect could be found anywhere and hoped other states would follow Oregon's lead:

It will be interesting to see how many of our State Legislatures have the intelligence and the courage to follow in the footsteps of Oregon But we should make sure in all such surveys, that mental defect is not concealed even in such dignified bodies as state legislatures and among those leaders who are urging men and women to reckless and irresponsible procreation.²⁹

In this statement, Sagner made clear that she differed from the eugenists who encouraged breeding among the upper classes to combat the threatening "fertility of the feeble-minded."

Owens-Adair, however, felt that the "birth control" of the defective Oregonians was particularly important because of their "amazing fertility." She stated that the existing state institutions were not adequate for the large number of blind, deaf, and dumb people, paupers, criminals, and the insane and feeble-minded. The irony of the situation, as Owens-Adair saw it, was that while taxpayers supported the institutions to house the "unfortunates," no effort was made to "get at the cause and stop propagation of their kind."³⁰

To promote legislation to stop this propagation, Owens-Adair constructed an elaborate argument in favor of sterilization legislation. As her opening point, she declared any method of eliminating reproduction of defectives beside

sterilization was "ineffectual." Her reasoning was related to her hereditarian outlook; feeble-mindedness was, she said, without a doubt "congenital, organic, and incurable, as well as transmissible." And, since "degeneracy is the result of something utterly lacking in the mental or moral make-up of an individual," it was "not something to be cured by prayer, by any method of medical treatment, system of education, by segregation, or by giving them wholesome and normal environs." By this reasoning, Owens-Adair concluded that sterilization of degenerates was the only method known "by which the river of life may be purified."³¹

In preparation for her argument supporting eugenic sterilization legislation, Owens-Adair described the sterilization operations available at the time: vasectomy, salpingectomy, and castration. She described vasectomy as a simple "office operation" that did not inconvenience the subject or keep him from returning to work immediately. The operation, she wrote, would cause neither mental nor nervous disturbances, and in some cases, might even have a "salutary effect" on the subject.

She did mention that some criticisms had been levelled against vasectomy--that with the "danger of child bearing" removed, the subject might become more licentious. Owens-Adair acknowledged the validity of this objection, but discounted it: "The irresponsible class of people coming

within the purview of a sterilization law are not deterred from sexual indulgence by any fear of the consequences of their acts. Besides their acts are not of first importance. It is their unborn children that alarm us."³²

Owens-Adair characterized salpingectomy, or tubal ligation, as almost as easy and certainly as effective as vasectomy. However, she admitted that castration of sexual perverts and habitual criminals was a more complicated issue, both legally and morally. But she still supported castration as a eugenical measure: "I do not think . . . that castration, even if it were thought of as a punishment, is a punishment disproportionate to the crimes of rapists and sodomists. It is not to be used as a punishment but to save society and to save the degenerates from themselves."³³

Owens-Adair seemed to believe that any method, short of death, of controlling reproduction of degenerates, was acceptable regardless of the consequences: "My doctrine is that we must stop the birth of the potential degenerates and defectives, no difference whose personal rights may be invaded, to rid society of the ever increasing burden, and the ever increasing danger of destruction."³⁴

After relating that prison officials had noticed a "wonderful improvement wrought in bad men after castration," Owens-Adair stated there was no need to obtain the consent of sexual perverts or rapists before castration, because

the public should not "worship the organs of sex to such an extent that we foster and maintain by taxation a small hell for these people in state prisons." Owens-Adair also mentioned the objection made by "some authorities" to castration--that it caused severe mental and nervous disturbance in the subject. But, again, she discounted the importance of this argument: "even if there is a somewhat serious disturbance, the end gained is surely worth the risk. That there is a change in the eunuch is not important when the organs of reproduction made him a brute and a degenerate."³⁵

In addressing the propriety of using sterilization as a social remedy, Owens-Adair named four basic categories of constitutional objections to sterilization made by the courts and the "most brilliant exponents of the legal profession." These lawmen said that if sterilization were used as a punishment it would be considered cruel, inhuman, or unusual punishment. If sterilization measures were limited to people confined to state institutions, it would be considered a class action and would deny equal protection under the law. If the person to be sterilized were not given an opportunity for a hearing and if defense were not provided, it would constitute violation of the constitution, which guarantees that no one be denied life, liberty, or property without due process of law. Finally, state-sponsored sterilization legislation was thought to violate the sections of the federal constitution that guarantee that no ex-post-facto

law shall be passed and that no state shall pass a bill of attainder.

Owens-Adair found these objections invalid. In answer to the charge that sterilization of wards of the state constituted class action, Owens-Adair responded: "Legislation affecting persons under public restraint and not those outside would seem to be a reasonable distinction and based upon a natural principle of public policy, and, therefore, should be sustained as a reasonable exercise of the police power."³⁶

As for sterilization interfering with life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, Owens-Adair wrote: "The person who has been sterilized is just as capable of the pursuit of happiness as the many happy and useful normal people who do not have children. Or those who have been sterilized as a medical necessity."³⁷

Owens-Adair wrote that the objection most often mentioned by lawyers was that sterilization constitutes an invasion of personal rights. To counter this, Owens-Adair pointed out that "for the protection of the state against the birth of undesirable children the legislatures of many states prohibit the marriage of white persons and negroes; they have also prohibited the marriage of epileptics under the age of forty-five."³⁸ The courts also upheld the restriction of working hours for women because as "healthy

mothers are essential to vigorous offspring, the physical well-being of a woman is an object of public interest," and laws regulating marriage between cousins, "which have for their foundation the prevention of undesirable children."³⁹ Therefore, since personal rights had already been legally invaded for other purposes, Owens-Adair felt an extension of this invasion for eugenic reasons would not be objectionable.

Owens-Adair seemed a bit frustrated that legislators would approve some restrictive laws such as the ones just mentioned, but disapprove of sterilization legislation. She explained the apparent contradiction: "The legal brethren are sometimes a little hazy as to whether the so-called violation of the constitution is a deprivation of life or liberty but they usually succeed in talking themselves into a compromise between the two with 'property' thrown in for good measure."⁴⁰

Owens-Adair made some recommendations regarding the due process of law question. She stated that the people to be sterilized would have their right to due process fully protected by delegating that authority to the Board of Health, Board of Eugenics, or another "competent board." Objections to delegating such authority to boards and commissions started, she wrote, "with the false assumption that the members of these boards will be irresponsible, ignorant, or incompetent, if not positively brutal and vicious." But she reminded her readers that in all cases where life-

and-death decisions are made by juries, the administration of all laws is left to "mere men."

On the subject of appeal, Owens-Adair recommended a full hearing:

it is advisable to grant the subject the right of a hearing before the board passing on him, and to carefully safeguard his rights by providing for an appeal to the courts of the state, where he may have an opportunity to have his day in court, to face his accusers, and have a jury trial.

There must also be provision for the next of kin, guardians, etc., to act for those prevented from making such objections and appeal because of physical disability, as in the case of idiots or insane persons.

If the subject does not have funds the state should appoint counsel.⁴¹

Because she recommended these legislative proceedings, Owens-Adair argued that the bill of attainder argument against sterilization would never be valid. On the ex-post-facto argument she quoted a decision explaining why sterilization legislation in Iowa was not considered ex-post-facto legislation: "He (the subject) is not being subjected to the operation for that which was done prior to the enactment of the statute, but because he voluntarily brings himself within a class covered by the statute."⁴²

In these and several "miscellaneous objections" to sterilization considered and rebutted by Owens-Adair she seems to take a dim view of her opposition. She does not often concede that these protesters may have had some valid reservations toward her sterilization proposals.

Another objection to sterilization that Owens-Adair countered was the one saying that sterilization of individuals will not eradicate degeneracy and crime completely. To this she replied, "Surely it is not to be cast aside for this reason if it is a step in the right direction." In discussing the objection that there was no proof that transmission of heredity was inevitable, Owens-Adair drew a distinction between the inheritance of traits causing statutory criminality and those traits causing crimes involving morality:

One of the arguments I have often heard against the inevitability of the transmission of a taint of degeneracy and the fact that like begets like, is that the colonies (notably Australia) which have been settled by criminals, have become states of good, law-abiding people. This is, of course, no argument at all against the functioning of the laws of heredity, for these outlaw colonists were undoubtedly very largely guilty of statutory crimes, involving, perhaps, absolutely no degree of moral turpitude.⁴³

Owens-Adair noted that lawyers had developed a "habit" of arguing that sterilization will not stop crime. The lawyers, she said, often cited the case of King Henry VIII who hung 72,000 people for vagrancy but did not succeed in stamping out crime. Owens-Adair argued that Henry VIII was "unjust, malicious, and a degenerate himself." But, she wrote, "if Henry VIII had sterilized 72,000 idiots and congenital criminals, it would have been a case in point and a story with a different ending."

Owens-Adair quoted a writer named Charles Boston, who, in an article titled "Protest Against Sterilization," published in the Journal of Crime and Criminology, wrote that if a legislature were able to constitutionally sterilize the criminal and the insane, it would soon do the same to other classes of people. In reply, Owens-Adair wrote:

The fear of this cautious lawyer is that the legislature might wish to expand and include still other classes in such a statute. Is this risk not taken in all legislation? He also finds fault with the law, because, forsooth, a man might be convicted of rape by false testimony and emasculated! Do we not take this risk in all other law making--hanging, for instance?⁴⁴

Boston raised the objection that some state legislatures did not consider the role of the environment in causing undesirable traits in offspring. Owens-Adair replied that although environmental effects may not be mentioned specifically in legislation, they are implied. Further, she admitted that "all crime and defect are not hereditary. There are, of course, spontaneous cases caused by brutal or vicious environment." But, she concluded, "Surely a legal mind comprehends that environment can never change the mental capacities of a feeble-minded person or idiot. Their's is not a latent mentality but an absent mentality."⁴⁵

Concluding her discussion of the legality of sterilization, Owens-Adair emphasized that all persons "who are potential parents of degenerate or socially inadequate offspring" should be subject to sterilization laws, whether

or not those people are confined in state institutions. To relieve society of the "menace and burden of degeneracy" she said the citizenry "must depend upon the general police power to regulate the individual to promote the general welfare of society." She continued that "For the betterment of the body social and for the tranquility of the community we invade personal rights in a thousand ways. Surely it is within the police power of the state to regulate the lives of the irresponsible for the good of the whole." Owens-Adair ended her argument for sterilization legislation with a quote from Herbert Spencer: "To be a good animal is the first requisite to success in life, and to be a nation of good animals is the first condition to national prosperity."⁴⁶

By 1917, Owens-Adair's arguments for eugenic sterilization legislation were successful. An act which became Chapter 279 of the 1917 General Laws of Oregon was passed by the state legislature. That act was designed

To prevent the procreation of feeble minded, insane, epileptic, habitual criminals, moral degenerates and sexual perverts, who may be inmates of institutions maintained by public expense, by authorizing and providing for the sterilization of persons with inferior hereditary potentialities.⁴⁷

To carry out the provisions of this act, an Oregon State Board of Eugenics was established. The purpose of sterilizations conducted under authority of this act was:

for the betterment of the physical, mental, neural, or psychic condition of the inmate, or to protect society from the menace of

procreation by said inmate, and not in any manner as a punitive measure; and no person shall be emasculated under the authority of this Act except that such operation shall be found to be necessary to improve the physical, mental, neural or psychic condition of the inmate.⁴⁸

In 1919 the provisions of the 1917 act were modified to preclude the possibility of the legislation being class action against Oregon's institutionalized citizens. A major change in the legislation expanded the number of individuals who might be sterilized from "male and female inmates of any of the institutions herein" in 1917, to "all persons within the state of Oregon procreation by whom would produce children with an inherited tendency to feeble-mindedness, insanity, epilepsy, criminality or degeneracy." Both the 1917 and 1919 statutes were codified in the Oregon Laws of 1920.⁴⁹ With the successful passage and codification of her sterilization bill, Owens-Adair saw the fulfillment of more than a decade of hard work and determination.⁵⁰

The sterilization legislation Owens-Adair had sponsored was again modified in 1923 to provide appeal procedures against decisions made by the Board of Eugenics. The new legislation required the board to obtain a court order to enforce sterilizations if protests were filed against the board's recommendations. Between 1917 and 1923, the Board of Eugenics had examined 314 people and ordered 214 of them sterilized.⁵¹ The law was once again amended in 1935 requiring that all people sterilized under provisions of

the act for reasons of sexual perversion be so recorded on official court record.

Between the adoption of Owens-Adair's statute in 1917 and May 1975, a total of 1,713 women and 935 men had been sterilized under the auspices of the Oregon State Board of Eugenics.⁵² In 1967, legislative revision changed the organization's name to the State Board of Social Protection, and altered its composition. A continuing problem with lack of funds and conflict between board policy and Oregon laws led to a disbanding of the board on Aug. 29, 1975. A communication on that date from board secretary Vesta Wiseman informed other members that the board would no longer hold hearings. She did remind board members that sterilization could be encouraged on a voluntary basis. That option was left open by the Attorney General's opinion number 6510 written in June 1968:

the intent of the legislature (is) that sterilization is not against public policy and is entirely permissible provided that the provisions of the statute are complied with. The statute makes no distinction as to sex, age or the capacity of a person to give consent. Consequently, there appears to be no reason why a person who is mentally retarded or mentally ill could not request sterilization. Obviously, since persons of such mental capacity may or may not be of sufficient capacity to give an informed consent, any physician performing the operation should obtain the proper informed consent from the guardian or parent.⁵³

In its 68 years of active operation the Oregon State Board of Social Protection, formed through the campaign efforts of Owens-Adair, sterilized a total of 2,648 men

and women in the name of eugenics.

Chapter V References

¹Kenneth Ludmerer, Genetics and the American Society: A Historical Appraisal (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), p.66.

²Ibid., p.64.

³Lewellys Barker, "Heredity in the Clinic," American Journal of the Medical Sciences, vol. 173 (1927) p.597, cited by Ludmerer, Genetics, p.64.

⁴Samuel Holmes, "A German Text Translated," Journal of Heredity, vol.22 (1931) p.356, cited by Ludmerer, Genetics, p.65.

⁵Ludmerer, Genetics, p.66.

⁶Laurence Snyder, "Problems Confronting Human Geneticists: Discussion," American Journal of Human Genetics, vol. 6 (1954) p.109, cited by Ludmerer, Genetics, p.67.

⁷Ludmerer, Genetics, p.70.

⁸Ibid., p.71.

⁹Ibid., p.73.

¹⁰Bethenia Angelina Owens-Adair, Human Sterilization: Its Social and Legislative Aspects (1922) p.180.

¹¹Ibid., p.177.

¹²Bethenia Angelina Owens-Adair, The Eugenic Marriage Law: The Situation in Oregon (Salem, Or.: 1922), p. 9.

¹³Owens-Adair, Human Sterilization, p.13.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵For comparison of the Jukes and Kallikak family studies see Ludmerer, Genetics, p.35; also, Haller, Eugenics, chapters two and seven.

¹⁶Owens-Adair, Human Sterilization, p.139.

¹⁷Ibid., p.142.

¹⁸Ibid., p.15.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., p.143.

²¹Ibid., p.144.

²²Ibid., p.57.

²³Ibid., p.55.

²⁴Ibid., p.208.

²⁵Ibid., p.249.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Bethenia Angelina Owens-Adair, The Eugenic Marriage Law: The Situation in Oregon (Salem, Or.:Owens-Adair, 1922), p.3.

²⁸Margaret Sanger, The Pivot of Civilization (New York: Brentano's Publishers, 1922), p.95.

²⁹Ibid., p.96.

³⁰Owens-Adair, Human Sterilization, p.17.

³¹Ibid., p.19.

³²Ibid., p.20.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., p.22

³⁶Ibid., p.28

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid., p.30.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid., p.31.

⁴⁴Ibid., p.32.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid., p.33.

⁴⁷Ben Olcott, ed., State of Oregon General Laws: Adopted by the Twenty-ninth Regular Session of the Legislative Assembly, Jan. 8 - Feb. 19, 1917 (Salem, Or.: State Printing Department, 1917), p.518.

⁴⁸Ibid., p.519.

⁴⁹Conrad Olson, ed., Oregon Laws, Volume II (San Francisco: The Bancroft-Whitney Company, 1920), p.1486.

⁵⁰Rodney Banks, Owens-Adair's grandnephew, was a twelve-year-old page in the Oregon Senate when Owens-Adair introduced her first human sterilization bill. He remembers Owens-Adair as a very business-like woman with "flamboyant grey hair" and "nothing bashful about her." Banks said Owens-Adair was an excellent public speaker and argued on the senate floor very forcefully against considerable skepticism from the senators. His father, William Banks (child of Owens-Adair's sister), was an Oregon senator who, on occasion, spoke in the senate chambers in Owens-Adair's defense. But, Owens-Adair finally won the legislators' approval "more or less singlehandedly." Banks said of Owens-Adair, "once she had her mind made up, there was no stopping her." Interview with Rodney Banks, Surf Pines, Oregon, 10 August 1977.

⁵¹Jack Smolensky, A History of Public Health in Oregon (Eugene: The University of Oregon, June 1957), p.291.

⁵²Oregon State Board of Eugenics, Minutes, Vol. I, Jan. 28, 1921 - Jan. 1, 1927 (Portland: Oregon State Department of Human Resources).

VI. CONCLUSION

The life of Bethenia Angelina Owens-Adair was a microcosm of the major nineteenth century reform movements. In logical sequence, she lent her support to suffrage, temperance, and eugenics, and crusaded along the way in favor of equal educational and career opportunities for women.

Her success, both in social reform and in her personal life, necessitated substantial path breaking of her own. Parting from traditional female roles, Owens-Adair faced continual criticism. Her determination to succeed despite hardships characterized her life and distinguished her efforts in the suffrage and temperance campaigns.

The tactics Owens-Adair used were not different than those employed by other campaigners: articles for the press, speeches, and personal appeals. But Owens-Adair was perhaps more effective than the typical reformer because of her easy command of the written word and well-honed oratorical style. Most important, she seemed to harbor no fears or reservations about making her beliefs known, with frequency and with vigor.

In her suffrage work, Owens-Adair gained a conviction of the power of women as social reformers. In her temperance work, she urged those women to stop the flow

of bad heredity caused by abuse of alcohol by the nation's men and boys. As her medical work brought her into contact more and more with society's unfortunates, and as she read about heredity in the works of the nation's leading eugenicists, it wasn't long before Owens-Adair was blaming all physical, mental, and social defects on the workings of bad heredity. Her knowledge of newly developed sterilization techniques made the solution to the problem of the degeneration of the human race all too obvious: stop the flow of bad heredity.

The experience gained in the suffrage and temperance campaigns turned out to be time well spent as Owens-Adair sought support for her eugenic legislation proposals. By this time she knew just how to turn a phrase to get wide coverage in the press. And, her fiery oratories convinced many in her listening audiences of the worth of her proposals. And, in the eugenic campaign, her determination was put to the test in repeated appeals to individual legislators and to gathered assemblies at the state capitol. Her determination and her persuasiveness were ultimately successful.

But, for all her success in achieving her campaign goals, her eugenic proposals were no better documented or justified than others of that time period. Although her medical education did set her apart from many eugenic reformers, Owens-Adair did not use that training to critically evaluate her proposals or those of other eugenicists. That is not to say the illusion of science was not present in

her arguments. She often said that her proposals were dictated by the well-known principles of trait inheritance. Certainly the fact that she was a respected physician led her supporters to believe her proposed legislation was, in fact, justified by the latest scientific discoveries.

However, while claiming that heredity was solely responsible for feeble-mindedness, imbecility, idocy, epilepsy, insanity, criminal tendencies and a wide variety of defects, Owens-Adair never explained how heredity could cause such complex problems. The implication was that the experts--the eugenists at Cold Spring Harbor--had already proven the influence of heredity beyond a doubt in their wide-reaching genealogies. Owens-Adair probably believed the work of those eugenists to be of the highest scientific calibre; she praised the "thousands of scientific men and women in the field devoting their earnest and faithful lives to the great work of elevating and purifying the race."

Although Owens-Adair no doubt believed her own eugenic proposals were firmly grounded in science, as developed by the national eugenists, she fits Ludmerer's characterization of physicians attracted to eugenics as a social movement rather than a scientific reform program. Her eugenic proposals clearly reflected the ideas of the nation's leading eugenists, and, unfortunately, she simply assumed those proposals were justified by the genetic knowledge

of the day. Had she herself been better grounded in the basics of genetics, perhaps she would have been more critical in her evaluation of the nation's eugenic programs.

But as it was, in launching Oregon's eugenic campaign, Owens-Adair promoted hereditarian explanations of the transmission of human defects, reflecting arguments made earlier by Charles Davenport and other nationally recognized eugenicists. Uncritical acceptance of the menace of the feeble-minded idea indicated a familiarity with Charles Goddard's works. The sterilization legislation she first proposed closely resembled Harry Laughlin's model sterilization law. Finally, the importance she placed on genealogies compiled at Cold Spring Harbor and her reluctance to discuss the workings of genetic inheritance indicated an ignorance or disregard for the mechanisms of heredity.

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