

論 文

# Sacagawea Leads a Women's Corps of Discovery: Oregon Suffragists, a World's Fair, and the Making of a Sacagawea Myth

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## Abstract

Donna J. Kessler has pointed out the inextricable links between the Sacagawea myth and the concept of Manifest Destiny. Yet because she fails to scrutinize Sacagawea's representation at the Portland World's Fair in 1905, she misses the ways suffragists further their cause by recreating Sacagawea into a nation's founding myth of "old" and "new" Manifest Destiny. Sacagawea not only enabled white women suffragists to reimagine their positions and roles in American patriarchal society, but this imaginary Sacagawea eventually led a group of diverse Oregonian women to unite under one cause: gaining suffrage.

Eva Emery Dye (1855-1947), an Oregonian woman writer, with particular interest in local history, led this movement to reconstruct Sacagawea. Dye completed her novel, *The Conquest*, in 1902. It was a fictional biography of Lewis and Clark that romanticized Sacagawea as an American Indian woman who helped American expansion to the Pacific frontier. Along with many of her contemporaries, Dye believed that the American West and the Pacific represented America's future. Dye's Sacagawea emphasized the importance of women to the past and future development of the United States. Members of women's clubs who read Dye's novel were fascinated by Sacagawea's indispensable role in the expedition, and they built a Sacagawea statue at the fairground of the 1905 World's Fair in Portland, Oregon.

The 1905 World's Fair, being a centennial celebration for Lewis and Clark's stay in Oregon, was a critical ground for suffragists' rhetorical construction of Sacagawea. At the fairground, the memory of

Lewis and Clark, leaders who Sacagawea accompanied in the expedition, reassured anxious white Americans that their heroic past was in fact a beginning to a re-energized future with further commercial and territorial expansion. Lewis and Clark had not only opened the Western frontier, but had opened the gates to the Pacific as well. In such a setting, Sacagawea was celebrated as a key to the success of Lewis and Clark, facilitating white male colonial expedition. Moreover, this imagined Sacagawea became a key for the Oregon women's suffrage movement, as women explored their positions in the political frontier. Through Sacagawea, they demonstrated women's heroism in supporting the nation's past and future progress. Sacagawea, therefore, helped not only Lewis and Clark across the western "wilderness," she navigated white suffragists to claim a place in the nation's Manifest Destiny and in contemporary politics. This essay, by illustrating this founding ground of the Sacagawea myth, delineates this myth as it complicated gender politics at the turn of the twentieth century.

## I. Introduction

Sacagawea, a Shoshone American Indian woman and "guide" for the Lewis and Clark expedition, may be one of the most famous women in American history. There are many lakes and mountains named after her, and she is commemorated in statues outnumbering those of any other women on the North American continent.<sup>1</sup> In 2000, her figure was engraved on a dollar coin, making her stand on par with American presidents who also are featured on American coins.

Despite her popularity, we know little about her. The common narrative tells that Sacagawea was a Shoshone woman, and was perhaps born in the late 1780s. When she was roughly twelve or thirteen, she was taken captive by Hidatsa Indians, and was later purchased by a French-Sioux fur trader named Toussaint Charbonneau who made her his wife. As Charbonneau's wife, she accompanied the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804-1806. Just before joining the expedition, she became a mother and traveled with her newborn child until her husband was dispatched from the party on August 18, 1806. Yet nobody knows her real name or precisely where and when she died.<sup>2</sup> Oral traditions

among Shoshones, Comanches and Hidatsas whom the expedition members encountered give us conflicting views. The only written primary sources were journals and letters kept by the expedition members but they also give very little information unless her daily activities intersected with theirs.<sup>3</sup> Even then they saw her only as an Indian “squaw” married to their interpreter Charbonneau.

Rather than attempting to find the “real” Sacagawea, many scholars studied how her story was mythologized over the course of American history.<sup>4</sup> Donna J. Kessler, for example, has pointed out the Sacagawea myth’s inextricable association with Manifest Destiny—an idea that justified the nation’s westward expansion. She argues that in the Progressive era, some white women transformed Sacagawea from a “savage squaw” to an “Indian princess, the royal guide, the essential helper” to the white man’s conquest.<sup>5</sup> Through mythologizing Sacagawea, Kessler claims, these Progressive-era women explored their position and roles in American society.<sup>6</sup>

Eva Emery Dye, an Oregonian woman writer and suffragist, was one of the first writers who “discovered” and made Sacagawea legendary.<sup>7</sup> Kessler admits that Dye’s mythical Sacagawea became “a focal point for western women’s groups.”<sup>8</sup> However, by not scrutinizing Sacagawea’s representation at the 1905 World’s Fair in Portland, Kessler fails to see how Sacagawea became a rhetorical tool for white women suffragists to claim their own place in nation’s founding myth.<sup>9</sup> This essay thus revisits Dye’s interpretation of Sacagawea from her book, *The Conquest* (1902), and the representations of Sacagawea by the Sacajawea Statue Association, an organization formed by women of Pacific Northwest to build a statue at the fairground. It argues that Dye’s Sacagawea not only enabled women to navigate their own positions in American society, but also enabled them to publicly claim their presence and contributions to America’s past and future progress. Dye carefully crafted her Sacagawea not to threaten the white male-supremacist narrative of Manifest Destiny, but it certainly complicated gender politics. Dye’s novel eventually led a group of women in the states of the Pacific Northwest to form a women’s only organization to build a Sacagawea statue. Through Sacagawea, these women attempted to rewrite American frontier history and their future with their hope to visualize women’s presence in U.S. politics. As I will illustrate, women in Western states constructed and manipulated the Sacagawea myth to reimagine what it means

to be an American woman in white male-supremacist, imperial America at the turn of the twentieth century.

## II. Dominant Story of American Frontier: Representation of Lewis and Clark and American Indians at 1905 Portland World's Fair

Fully uncovering how white women constructed a Sacagawea myth requires first an understanding of how her associates, Lewis and Clark, became legendary. At the turn of the twentieth century, they came to be spotlighted as Americans began to see the frontier as a mythical landscape critical for American national identity.<sup>10</sup> As the 1890 census demonstrated, the intensified westward expansion during post-Civil war period came to an end. A dynamic shift in racial patterns in American population occurred during post-Civil war era and a vexing question of the class disparity brought up during the economic slump after the panic of 1893 added perplexing issues for anxious white Americans.<sup>11</sup> These events raised a wide range of *fin de siècle* debates about American society, and Americans saw a renewed hope for their future in Lewis and Clark as they were the pioneers to explore the vast land of the Louisiana Territory. Lewis and Clark became legendary because their image seemed to comprehend both visions of “old” and “new” Manifest Destiny—people’s nostalgia about the “old” West and the new visions for the further expansion beyond the Pacific. The 1905 World’s Fair in Portland Oregon greatly contributed in making Lewis and Clark an icon of the nation’s future racial and economic progress.

In 1895, a local merchant named Dan McAllen proposed the Lewis and Clark Centennial and American Pacific Exposition and Oriental Fair of 1905. He hoped that holding the fair would boost Portland’s economy, which was still recovering from the 1893 economic depression.<sup>12</sup> In 1900, Joel M. Long of the Portland Board of Trade formed a committee to discuss the fair, and McAllen’s hope came to realization. The Oregon Historical Society suggested the Lewis and Clark expedition as a theme, because 1905 marked the centennial of Lewis and Clark’s stay in Oregon, and as Binger Hermann mentioned, their expedition was “among the greatest events in the territorial and industrial progress of our country.”<sup>13</sup> A world’s fair commemorating the Lewis and Clark centennial was a great chance to promote the Northwest region as a gateway for commercial expansion across the Pacific and it also was expected to confirm for visitors “the

moral correctness of America's imperial design."<sup>14</sup> Portland elites surely used Lewis and Clark to promote Portland's regional importance in the past and future American history.

Hermann was not the only one who noted the significance of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Adolphus W. Greely, for example, glorified Lewis and Clark as "the heroic deeds in public service," posing this expedition as a pivotal moment in Western history, "accomplished with a success unparalleled in the world of modern adventure and exploration."<sup>15</sup> Olin Dunbar Wheeler, a director of advertising for the Northern Pacific Railway, saw the expedition as a potential icon to attract passengers to the Northern Pacific Railroad, because its railroad "almost literally followed the Lewis and Clark trail."<sup>16</sup> Noting that "the Lewis and Clark expedition was the precursor of the railway which, in the last half-century, has revolutionized and transformed the West and the Northwest," Wheeler emphasized their importance as making possible "the present active expansion of our Oriental commerce."<sup>17</sup>

To the fair's organizers and visitors, Lewis and Clark were brave men of achievement who were also an icon for America's revitalized progress. At the entrance gate of the exposition, the visitors would read the banner written "Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way," providing the certified development of the future white Anglo-American empire standing at the virtual doorway to Asia. The official seal best describes such status that Lewis and Clark held at the first World's Fair in the Northwest region. In the seal, Lewis and Clark are guided toward the shore of the Pacific Ocean by so-called "Progress" or "Columbia," a goddess figure in white dress throwing the Star-Spangled Banner over her shoulders. Triumphant facing the Orient where the sun set beyond the Pacific Ocean, Lewis and Clark seemingly fulfilled the people's commercial and racial desire to stretch American influence to Asia.<sup>18</sup> With the Philippines, Guam and Wake Island, which the United States obtained in the post-war settlement of the Spanish-American War in 1898, it seemed that Asia was not too far away to reach.<sup>19</sup>

The stone sculptures displayed elsewhere at the fairground had similar connotations as Lewis and Clark. A statue of four cowboys joyfully raising their guns in the air was placed at the center of the fairground, and a statue of a cowboy lying on the ground under his horse with a nostalgic look on his face all provided energetic imagery of the frontiersman overcoming the hardships and

struggles. As Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, for example, which constantly displayed frontiersman, cowboys and cowgirls, and American Indians in their popular travelling performances throughout the United States and in Europe, these stone images generated people's romanticism over their frontier days and suggested the energetic past would inspire their future progress.<sup>20</sup>

American Indians were also romanticized in this context. The turn of the twentieth century was when mainstream Americans believed that American Indians would eventually "vanish" in face of the more powerful white civilization. The only paths left for American Indians were thus seen as either extinction or assimilation to the mainstream society. For example, the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890, for mainstream Americans, symbolized the end of American Indian resistance, and thus the gradual extinction of "primitive" Indians as they were in their old frontier days. Additionally, with the endorsement of the Dawes Act of 1887, it was assumed American Indians would gradually be assimilated into mainstream society through land ownership and working on individual farms. Boarding schools, such as Carlisle Indian Industrial School, Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, aimed to eliminate American Indian identity by educating Indian children into a white American way of life.<sup>21</sup> The stone sculptures at the fairground reflected these dual images about American Indians. Solon H. Borglum's work *Buffalo Dance*, for example, captured three melancholic Indian figures participating in the Sioux Indian's Buffalo Dance. Portraying two with headdresses and one leaping on the ground wearing a buffalo hide, Borglum seemed to generate people's nostalgia about their old frontier days. In contrast, American Indians in the process of assimilation were shown in his work entitled *First Steps to Civilization*. While on one side, a savage-like Indian with a buffalo skin crouched in exhaustion, and on the other, an American Indian man confidently stood holding a book in his one hand and pointing forward by his other hand. Wearing a mantle manufactured by white civilization on his shoulder, this portrayal of the assimilated or "civilized" Indian was obviously a celebratory mark for the progress that white civilization brought for American Indians.

The fair was a great showcase for white American achievement a hundred years after Lewis and Clark commanded the expedition to the West and reached the Oregon coast. It set white men at the center of the story, elevating Lewis and Clark to a status of legend. As heroes to ease *fin-de-siècle* anxieties, they

were glorified in books on the history of the West, through advertisement, and through Portland's extravaganza. These two men reassured anxious white Americans that their heroic past was in fact a prologue to a re-energized future.

Along with Solon H. Belgium's sculptures, in the fairground, there was a statue of an American Indian woman with a baby on her back, pointing her hand to the Pacific as if indicating the way. In stark contrast with the masculine display of white American development in the years since the expedition had taken place, this bronze statue of an American Indian woman implied neither assimilation nor melancholy Indians nearing extinction. The statue depicted Sacagawea. The turn of the twentieth century also formed the background for mythologizing Sacagawea.<sup>22</sup> In this very period when America started to mythologize their bygone westward legacy, some white women envisioned their version of frontier history through the story of Sacagawea.

### III. Sacagawea Leads a Women's Corps of Discovery

The Sacagawea myth was first originated from Eva Emery Dye's fascinations with the history of the West. Dye was born in 1855, grew up in Prophetstown, Illinois, and at the age of nineteen moved to Ohio for her college education. Later in 1890 she settled in Oregon City with her husband and children. In Oregon, she found "beautiful historical material lying around like nuggets."<sup>23</sup> As part of the first generation of women who were educated at college, she studied Roman and Greek literature at Oberlin College and completed her bachelor's and master's degrees. Her enthusiasm for classical literature made her interested in researching the legendary figures of the West.

Not surprisingly, Dye's style of narrating the history of the West resembled her contemporaries like Frederick Jackson Turner, who, for example, highly praised individual men as they encountered and conquered the wilderness. Her first novel, *McLoughlin and Old Oregon* (1900), was about the legacy of Dr. John McLoughlin, an early settler of the Oregon Country and a prominent trader of Hudson's Bay Company. Like her first novel, her second novel entitled *The Conquest: The True Story of Lewis and Clark* (1902) also recounts the legacy of two patriotic leaders of a frontier expedition. It told the story of the white man's conquest of hostile western Indians, a story comparable to European legends such as Romans conquering Greeks, or Normans conquering Anglo-

Saxons. She praised these heroes as a unique part of America's nation-building, calling her story "the Iliad of the West" and herself "their Homer."<sup>24</sup> Like the organizers of the Portland's World's Fair, Dye celebrated America's renewed embrace of expansionism: "Over the route where Lewis and Clark toiled slowly a hundred years ago, lo! in three days the traveler sits beside the sunset....The frontiersman? He is building Nome City under the Arctic: he is hewing the forests of the Philippines."<sup>25</sup>

*The Conquest* was thus basically a story of the white male heroes' interaction and conflict with American Indians, and the inevitability of white men gradually conquering the "savages."<sup>26</sup> In three volumes, she covered the lives of Lewis and Clark, beginning from the birth of Lewis to the death of Clark, and devoted an entire volume to illustrate their expedition. Yet at the same time, as a woman who is aware of elevating women's status in her contemporary society, Dye differed from Turner in the way of understanding the significance of women in the frontier.<sup>27</sup> In *The Conquest*, she made her Sacagawea intertwined in the unique legend of white male heroes in the West. She did not deny the heroic role of these men. However, by bringing Sacagawea into the narrative, Dye assured her readers that it was, in fact, women who gave critical assistance for the success of these male heroes. Without Sacagawea's help, Lewis and Clark might have failed in their mission.

Such framework of her understanding about the history of the West came from her political conviction. In addition to her literary work, Dye was an active participant in activities at the Willamette Valley Chautauqua Association (WVCA).<sup>28</sup> Dye, as a secretary at WVCA, invited notable speakers from all over the county, including suffragist speakers like Abigail Scott Duniway and Anna Howard Shaw. Dye also became a campaign coordinator of Clackamas County in the Oregon Equal Suffrage Association. Her participation in such activities not only deepened her enthusiasm for engaging in organizing national history, but also made her keenly aware of the importance of women's suffrage.

Reflecting the dominant narrative of the frontier, Dye's portrayed American Indian men in two distinctive ways. One was a hostile and masculine Indian who "refus[ed] to be enslaved" and "[stood] out the most perfect picture of primeval man....[w]ith inherent nobility, courage to the border of destruction, patriotism to the death." She depicted them as "savage" Indians that her readers would expect, making them yell "Ugh! ugh! ugh!"<sup>29</sup> Although she showed

sympathy toward these masculine Indians, her entire story was devoted to justify and honor the conquest by white civilization. For Dye, these hostile Indians were destined to vanish. On the other hand, Dye portrayed the friendly Indians who assisted the white man's conquest of the "wilderness" as naïve, childlike, and "noble" Indians. Showing such distinctions, Dye believed these "noble" Indians "could be salvaged by the dominant culture," while her masculine-like savages were "unredeemable" and they were doomed to disappear.<sup>30</sup> Since "[c]ivilization and savagery could not occupy the same territory," Dye stressed the inevitability of conquest for American Indians: the Indians must disappear or be assimilated to the white culture.<sup>31</sup> Describing her Indians as such, Dye shared the similar romanticism that her contemporaries projected over American Indians. For the front cover of *The Conquest*, her publisher submitted an illustration showing an Indian chief in feather headdress. A distant look on his face seemed to generate the popular nostalgia for people's bygone frontier experiences that permeated the early twentieth century.<sup>32</sup>

In such a white male-centric story, Sacagawea appears as a key figure which cannot be categorized by either of the two distinctions Dye made for American Indian males. Dye described her as being "noble" in the sense that she helped men in the expedition, and a woman whom Dye could only evaluate in the context of her service to the white male heroes. True to the expedition's original journals, Sacagawea appeared in the story only briefly when her activities intersected with those of Dye's heroes. Yet, despite such a limited description, Dye romanticized Sacagawea as "modest princess of Shoshones," a Cinderella of the West. When she first appeared in the text, she was "only a slave," who "had been brought to the land of Dakotas and sold to Charbonneau."<sup>33</sup> However, she was later discovered to be "a Princess," who came "home now to her Mountain Kingdom."<sup>34</sup> Dye "exoticized" Sacagawea as an "Indian princess" describing that "her hair was neatly braided, her nose was fine and straight, and her skin was pure copper like the statue in some old Florentine gallery."<sup>35</sup> Unlike the "savage" or "noble" Indians Lewis and Clark encountered, Sacagawea was beautified according to the Dye's standard of white womanhood. With her knowledge of the ideal womanhood at the turn of the twentieth century, Dye's Sacagawea mirrored the ideal pioneer woman.

Studying the journals of Lewis and Clark, Dye first constructed Sacagawea

as a Shoshone “Indian princess” who “save[d] or g[a]ve aid to white men” helping them succeed in their mission to discover the way to the Pacific.<sup>36</sup> She was a mediator and guide who recognized the landscape and the culture of her people. She was also an interpreter. Additionally, the presence of Sacagawea and her baby in the party was essential in creating friendly relationships with American Indians. Dye romanticized Sacagawea, for instance, when Lewis and Clark encountered Flathead Indians: “[t]he women crowded around Sacajawea and untied her baby from its elkskin cradle. They fed it and gave it little garments. That baby was an open sesame touching the hearts of all. Sacajawea, riding on her horse to Columbia, found friends with every tribe. Others might pay; she never. The Indian mother-heart opened to Sacajawea. Her very presence was an assurance of pacific intention.”<sup>37</sup>

In Dye’s hands, Sacagawea also became an ideal figure of true pioneer womanhood. In stark contrast with her cowardly husband, Charbonneau, Dye’s Sacagawea was a brave young mother who survived life-threatening danger. Dye retold an event from the journal, when one day their boat sank because of Charbonneau. Dye’s Sacagawea “managed to catch and preserve most of the light articles that were floating overboard,” and saved herself and her baby too, while her husband was crying and unable to do anything but pray to god.<sup>38</sup> By depicting Sacagawea’s courage, Dye glorified Sacagawea as a tough and strong mother.

Moreover, to emphasize Sacagawea’s independence, Dye invented a fictional story of Sacagawea going to see Pacific coast whales with the expedition party against her husband’s will. When Charbonneau forbid her to go and see the whales, Sacagawea went over his head and spoke directly with Lewis and Clark instead. Dye illustrated that Sacagawea’s “determination had become aroused and she took the rostrum, so to speak.”<sup>39</sup> After talking with Lewis and Clark, telling how well she contributed to the expedition and that she wanted to see “da Beeg Water” and “dis monstrous fish,” Sacagawea succeeded in gaining Lewis’s permission to go, with Lewis saying: “Of course you can go. Go and be getting ready and, [...] if Charbonneau wants to go too, he will have to carry the baby.”<sup>40</sup> Therefore, with Lewis’s permission, Sacagawea could escape her husband’s control. However, it was only because of Lewis and Clark’s permission that Sacagawea could make her husband accept her wishes. Dye carefully crafted a Sacagawea who would not ultimately threaten white patriarchy.

Although Dye admitted that it was Sacagawea's Indianness that enabled Sacagawea's service as a translator and guide to the expedition, she seems to put more emphasis on the importance of Sacagawea's gender.<sup>41</sup> In Dye's narrative, Sacagawea seems to become less Indian as the expedition party goes further West. As an "Indian princess," Dye's Sacagawea unsurprisingly showed a great interest in adapting to Euro-American civilization. Despite the historical fact that Sacagawea was "purchased" by Charbonneau, Dye's Sacagawea appreciated her good fortune being married to a white man. When Sacagawea had a reunion with an Indian girl, "[they] talked and talked of the wonderful fortune that had come to Sacajawea, the wife of a white man."<sup>42</sup> When the expedition party came through the Indian lodge where plenty of "semi-civilized products" were left by the European sailors, she "was [naturally] interested in domestic utensils, wooden bowls, spoons of horn, skewers and spits for roasting meat, and beautifully woven water-tight baskets."<sup>43</sup> As the expedition party goes further, Dye's Sacagawea became "civilized," and showed her interests in European domestic products.

Always hard-working, supporting her husband while raising a child, and expressing her opinions freely, Sacagawea was considered as "a new sort of mortal on this Pacific Coast."<sup>44</sup> Dye enthusiastically ended the story by imagining that "[s]ome day upon the Bozeman Pass, Sacajawea's statue will stand beside that of Clark. Some day, where the rivers part, her laurels will vie with those of Lewis. Across North America a Shoshone Indian Princess touched hands with Jefferson, opening her country."<sup>45</sup> This imagery of a Sacagawea statue standing on par with a leader of the expedition inspired many Oregonian women who wanted to be recognized for their contribution to the nation's westward expansion.

Dye's Sacagawea thus attracted many readers, and because of its popularity, Dye's publisher issued three printings of *The Conquest* by January 1903.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, in 1903, *The Conquest* was read among women of the Oregon History Committee, an offspring organization of the women's club movement.<sup>47</sup> Participants to this committee were deeply fascinated by the contributions Sacagawea made in their frontier history, and they formed an independent organization to raise money to build a Sacagawea statue for the upcoming World's Fair in Portland. The Sacajawea Statue Association was thus organized on April 18<sup>th</sup> of 1903 with Eva Emery Dye as the chairperson, and Sarah Evans

acting as secretary. It was this Association that greatly contributed to mythologizing of Sacagawea through retracing and advertising the significance of Sacagawea's role as the only woman in the expedition.

The Sacajawea Statue Association, during almost two years of their activity, glorified this American Indian woman as an indispensable part of the unique legend of Lewis and Clark. They created "thousands of booklets telling the story of Sacajawea," made memorabilia such as Sacajawea buttons and spoons and sent them out to "the prominent men and women throughout the United States."<sup>48</sup> In order to distribute "hundreds of Sacajawea booklets and small Lewis and Clark folders advertising the fair," they even travelled as far as the east coast.

In order to promote their cause, they illustrated Sacagawea as a model of pioneer womanhood who endured "the hardships and suffering" as "a first pioneer mother" to travel to the West.<sup>49</sup> The advertisement booklet celebrated Sacagawea crossing "the Rocky mountains and carry[ing] her baby into the Oregon country," administering to "the necessities of others" while "enduring hardships and sufferings," without receiving "pecuniary compensation for her services."<sup>50</sup> The Sacajawea Statue Association thus created Sacagawea a mirror image to white women who had a similar pioneer experience in the past.<sup>51</sup> United under an icon of Sacagawea, they succeeded in raising seven thousand dollars to build the statue. Alice Cooper, a woman sculptor from Denver, was selected to design the statue. She came up with the posture of Sacagawea with her baby on her back, stretching her right arm forward to point the way, with her chin up, confidently looking ahead. They at last unveiled the statue of Sacagawea at the heart of the fairground of the Lewis and Clark centennial on June 30, 1905.

This image of Sacagawea publicized by the Sacajawea Statue Association became the key to transform the direction of the Oregon women's suffrage movement started by Abigail Scott Duniway.<sup>52</sup> Inspired by the suffragist Susan B. Anthony, Duniway participated in national suffrage conventions, and launched a pro-suffrage newspaper in 1871. Through her newspaper entitled *The New Northwest*, she hoped to "elevate all humanity; to make the world better, purer and happier; to make woman, who is by nature and association the best friend of man, his political equal, that thereby both may receive the equal benefit of the laws by which both are equally governed."<sup>53</sup> Duniway hoped

women's voting rights would eventually lead to their social equality. In order to achieve these goals, Duniway, as president, organized the Oregon Equal Suffrage Association in 1873.

The path for the suffrage was a difficult one. While the equal-suffrage amendment successfully passed through the legislature several times, Oregon voters repeatedly rejected the cause by a narrow margin.<sup>54</sup> As Duniway indicated in her newspaper, woman suffrage in Oregon faced difficulties because a large majority of Oregon males still believed "woman is as little fitted for political as man is for domestic life," and thus only a minority of women wanted their voting rights.<sup>55</sup> Although the leaders in the state federation and in the Woman's Club supported suffrage as early as the late 1890s, their members were less interested in suffrage than were the leaders.<sup>56</sup>

Despite such disinterest even within the members of Woman's Club to support suffrage, the efforts to build the statue of Sacagawea, casting her as a symbol of ideal womanhood, was a turning point for the Oregon women's suffrage movement. Having emerged from the women's club movement, the Sacajawea Statue Association was similarly a women-only organization that enabled Oregonian women to work together for a single cause—raising funds for erecting the statue. Through advertising the significance of Sacagawea's role in the expedition, the board members of the association were able to arouse support and unleash the initiative and vigor of women for woman suffrage that had been missing before. Sacagawea in fact changed the dynamic of the suffrage movement from Abigail Duniway's cause to one widely supported by large numbers of women. As Sheri Bartlett Browne has noted, new coalitions among women made by the Sacajawea Statue Association, for example, eventually brought Oregonian women's victory on suffrage in 1912.<sup>57</sup>

The new image of Sacagawea perfectly matched the people's efforts to preserve the glorious memory in the frontier. The story of Sacagawea made some Oregonian women return to memories of their pioneer womanhood and helped arouse concerns about women's status in the present. Their Sacagawea was appreciated as a familiar figure who contributed in the nation-building of the United States. Her myth was not only popularized through the fund-raising activity of the Sacajawea Statue Association, but also became the stimulant for women to gather and actively participate in the women's suffrage movement.

To succeed in building the statue, it was essential to gain the support of

men organizing the Lewis and Clark centennial celebration. For this, Sacagawea's race helped. Rather than simply symbolizing a white American woman, presenting an American Indian woman whose race already implied her marginalized status was probably more acceptable for men within the context of a patriarchal hierarchy that always marginalized women. Furthermore, some patriotic organizations that supported the building of the statue, such as the Improved Order of Red Men and the Degree of Pocahontas were organizations that "exoticized" the American Indians.<sup>58</sup> These facts indicate that it would have been difficult to raise the money if Sacagawea was not the model for the statue.

The unveiling day of the Sacajawea statue was scheduled for June 30th of 1905 at the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition. "Women's Day," being the last day of the convention of the National Woman Suffrage Association held in Portland; Dye and notable suffragists from the East coast spoke on the fairground to honor Sacagawea's contributions and to urge voters to advocate for women's suffrage. In her opening address, Susan B. Anthony depicted Sacagawea as "an unsung heroine of western history," and asserted the recognition of Sacagawea's assistance was in fact the beginning of the public recognition for women's equal rights through suffrage.<sup>59</sup> Anna Howard Shaw, the president of the association, also asserted the need for suffrage by using the rhetoric of "Vanishing Indians," giving a speech as if she was speaking to Sacagawea: "Sacajawea...Your tribe is fast disappearing from the land of your fathers."<sup>60</sup> Shaw then confirmed that Sacagawea's legacy will continue on with women's effort to gain their suffrage by continuing: "May we, the daughters of an alien race who slew your people and usurped your country, learn the lessons of calm endurance, of patient persistence and unfaltering courage exemplified in your life, in our efforts to lead men through the pass of justice, which leads over the mountains of prejudice and conservatism, to the broad land of the perfect freedom of a true republic."<sup>61</sup>

Both Anthony and Shaw imaginatively linked the people's westward movement inspired by Lewis and Clark to the movement for woman suffrage.<sup>62</sup> Echoing the depiction of Columbia in the Centennial's official seal, they claimed that Sacagawea's significance was "a pilot," a point emphasized by Dye, who made the dedication address on July 6. There, Dye noted the presence of women leading important events in history, such as queen "Isabella outfit[ting] Columbus," Pocahontas "sa[ving] the Virginia colonists from massacre and

starvation,” and at last, she remarked Sacagawea who “guid[ed] Lewis and Clark through the devious mountain ways to the western ocean.” Dye also celebrated the sacrifice Sacagawea made for the nation by saying: “she pointed the way to Asia, unlocking the Gates of the Mountains, and giving up the key to her country. But what Sacajawea did, many Indian women did, in succession, becoming the wives of trappers and traders, revealing secrets of their country and giving over its trade and resources to the whites, opening the way to a higher civilization.”<sup>63</sup> Depicting Sacagawea as a “pilot” leading the nation’s “new” Manifest Destiny to Asia beyond the Pacific Ocean, Dye stressed the significance of women’s presence in the nation’s frontier history, and also suggested their continuous importance in the nation’s progress. Dye continued to praise Sacagawea as a woman who “led them all, the dark eyed princess of the native race, the child of Asia [who] beckoned the white man on, toward her ancient home in the Orient.”<sup>64</sup> For Dye and other women in Oregon, this statue of Sacagawea represented the ideal role of true white womanhood, who contributed to the nation building of the United States, and promised the nation’s further expansion by pointing further West. This suffragist rhetoric at the fairground gave the audience an impression of women’s further potential contributions to the nation’s expansion, but only if they obtained equal rights with men.

Members of the Sacajawea Statue Association and white woman suffragists at the fairground honored Dye’s imaginary Sacagawea as a heroine. These women rhetorically constructed Sacagawea as a figure who brought together nostalgia for the nation’s westward frontier expansion and the emergence of a “new” Manifest Destiny. While most American Indians did not have citizenship until 1924, ironically, Sacagawea, whose image as an “Indian princess” and a representative of “true pioneer womanhood,” was constructed and exploited by women suffragists in Oregon to help obtain their own suffrage in 1912.<sup>65</sup> Through Sacagawea, they claimed a place for themselves in the memory of the male frontier as well as in the contemporary political world.

#### IV. Conclusion

The mythmaking story of Sacagawea did not end in Portland, Oregon. Suffragists in other western states also promoted Sacagawea’s significance as

part of their campaigns prior to and during World War I.<sup>66</sup> Women in Bismarck, North Dakota, for example, tried building another statue, while Grace Raymond Hebard, a historian and political scientist at the University of Wyoming, researched Sacagawea based on the journals of Lewis and Clark and oral testimonies of American Indians. Hebard also put her effort into building another statue in Fort Washakie, Wyoming, which she claimed was Sacagawea's burial place. In so doing, she triggered a longstanding controversy over the date and place of Sacagawea's death.<sup>67</sup> In the process of promoting and justifying her claim, Hebard further perpetuated Sacagawea's image as "intelligent, cheerful, resourceful, tireless, faithful" woman to "pilot" the expedition.<sup>68</sup> Some women of western states, in short, continued to celebrate Sacagawea's "heroic" assistance to Euro-American colonialism.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Sacagawea emerged as a national legend narrating a female version of Manifest Destiny. It first began with Dye's fascination over frontier history, and was honored by the members of the Sacajawea Statue Association. At last, her heroism led white women suffragists to assert their contributions to American progress and demand the vote. Although they had to wait until 1912 to gain the vote, Oregonian suffragists used Sacagawea to re-confirm their desire, and to unite women under one cause. Despite the fact that their Sacagawea was highly distorted to fit their own political needs, Sacagawea led Dye and other suffragists in a women's Corps of Discovery, helping them navigate their political frontier in the West.

#### Notes

- 1 Andrew Gulliford, "On the Tourist Trail," in *Lewis & Clark: Legacies, Memories and New Perspectives*, eds. Kris Fresonke and Mark David Spence (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 245.
- 2 The spelling and pronunciation of her name remain controversial. Both Lewis and Clark used variety of spelling to refer her as Sah cag ah we ah, Sa-kah-gar-wea, Sar kah gah We a, Sah-cah-gar-weah and so on. Clark even nicknamed her "Janey." Historians who research Sacagawea have used many spellings and pronunciations such as Sacajawea, Sakajawea, Sacagawea, Sakakawea, Tsakakawea, Sacajowa, Saykijawee, and Saca tzah we yaa. In various American Indian oral stories, she has also been called Porivo (Chief Woman), Wadze Wipe (Lost Woman), Bo-i-naiv (Grass Woman). Among such, Irving W. Anderson indicates that the use of Sacagawea or Sacajawea is possibly more appropriate. Sacagawea or Sakakawea in Hidatsa language

- means "Bird Woman" from "*tsakaka* (bird) and *wiis* (woman)." Sacagawea's Shoshone name, Sacajawea however means "Boat Launcher" from "*sac* (boat or canoe) and *jaw-e* (to throw, cast, or launch)." I am aware of such precarious nature of defining her in one specific spelling and pronunciation. In this study, however, I will use Sacagawea because it is the most dominantly used spelling today. To refer to Sacajawea Statue Association and Dye's depiction of Sacagawea, I will accordingly use the spelling of Sacajawea. For more detailed analysis of the ongoing controversy about her name, place of birth and death, see Irving W. Anderson, "Probing the Riddle of the Bird Woman," *The Magazine of Montana Western History* 23, no. 4 (October 1973): 2-17; Irving W. Anderson, "Sacajawea, Sacagawea, Sakakawea?," *South Dakota History* 8, no. 4 (Fall 1978): 303-311; Irving W. Anderson, "The Sacagawea Mystique: Her Age, Name, Role and Final Destiny," *Columbia Magazine* 13, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 3-7, <http://columbia.washingtonhistory.org/anthology/explorersbysea/sacagaweaMystique.aspx> (18 September 2013); Virginia Scharff, *Twenty Thousand Roads: Women, Movement and the West* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 12-33; Sally McBeth, "Memory, History, and Contested Pasts: Re-imaging Sacagawea/Sacajawea," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 27, no. 1 (2003): 1-32; Thomas Slaughter, *Exploring Lewis and Clark* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 86-113.
- 3 Slaughter, *Exploring Lewis and Clark*, 86.
- 4 Ronald W. Taber, "Sacagawea and the Suffragettes: An Interpretation of a Myth," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (January 1967): 7-13; Donna J. Kessler, *The Making of Sacagawea: Euro-American Legend* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1996); James V. Fenelon and Mary Louise Defender-Wilson, "Voyage of Domination, 'Purchase' as Conquest, Sakakawea for Savagery: Distorted Icons from Misrepresentation of the Lewis and Clark Expedition," *Wacazo Sa Review* 19, no.1 (Spring 2004): 85-104; Michael Heffernan and Carol Medicot, "A Feminine Atlas? Sacagawea, the Suffragettes and the Commemorative Landscape in the American West, 1904-1910," *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 9, no. 2 (July 2010): 109-131; Joanna Brooks, "Sacajawea, Meet Cogewea: A Red Progressive Revision of Frontier Romance" in *Lewis & Clark*, eds. Fresonke and Spence, 184-197.
- 5 Kessler, *The Making of Sacagawea*, 97.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 172.
- 7 Taber, "Sacagawea and the Suffragettes," 7; Heffernan and Medicot, "A Feminine Atlas?," 112. Heffernan and Medicot noted that Nicholas Biddle, with the assistance of William Clark, published the classic account of Lewis and Clark in 1814 based on the expedition journals but rarely mentioned Sacagawea's presence in the expedition. In 1893, Elliot Coues, in his four-volume study on Lewis and Clark made "some celebratory remarks" about Sacagawea's role in the expedition. However, Sacagawea was never described as a heroine of the expedition until Eva Emery Dye published *The Conquest* in 1902.
- 8 Kessler, *The Making of Sacagawea*, 90.
- 9 Although I argue that the Sacagawea myth served a significant part for women's suffrage movement in Oregon, it does not mean that I neglect Kessler's point that suffragists' interpretations of Sacagawea were relatively few among many other non-suffragists' construction of Sacagawea during and beyond this period of American history. As I illustrate throughout this essay, I acknowledge inseparable connection of the Sacagawea myth with the nation's founding myth of Manifest Destiny, and Dye's Sacagawea was in fact an integral part of it. Yet by scrutinizing Dye's Sacagawea and later manipulation of its myth by Sacajawea Statue Association and suffragists, it is apparent that how well Sacagawea myth embodied women's intention to be a part of a national myth, and also their desire to be a part of national politics.

- 10 Frederick Jackson Turner and Theodore Roosevelt were the ones who foresaw this transition of the frontier becoming mythical place rather than actual, geographic landscape of the West. Turner romanticized frontier farmer's experience in the wilderness living harmoniously in the nature with other settlers. Roosevelt glorified vigorous masculine hunters who eventually overcame hostile environment of the West. Heffernan and Medlicot, "A Feminine Atlas?," 110. For more discussion about this frontier as an ideology, see Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: the Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973); Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: the Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization* (New York, NY: Atheneum, 1985); Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: the Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization* (New York, NY: Atheneum, 1992); Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: the Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1987).
- 11 Post-Civil War America faced the need of accepting former slaves as Americans, giving them suffrage. Also, rapid industrialization and territorial expansion brought a great influx of immigrants from Asia, and those from Eastern and Southern Europe. While white Anglo-Saxon Americans accepted such immigrants as a cheap labor force, the number of immigrants from Northern and Western Europe, on the other hand, were decreasing and so was the birthrate of white Anglo-Saxon descendants. This fact made them aware as if they were gradually going on a "race suicide." The great economic depression that began with the panic of 1893 made them realized about widening class disparity among Americans. A series of strikes like the Haymarket Affair in 1886 and the Homestead Strike in 1892 created serious impacts across the nation, confirming that American dream of success—that every American has equal opportunity—does not apply for everyone.
- 12 Carl Abbott, *The Great Extravaganza: Portland and the Lewis and Clark Exposition* (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1981), 13.
- 13 Hon. Binger Herman, "The Centennial Anniversary of the Exploration of Lewis and Clark, and an Industrial Exposition at Portland City, Oregon, in 1905" (Speech, the House of Representatives of the United States, Friday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1904), 2.
- 14 Robert W. Rydell, John E. Fidler, and Kimberly D. Pelle, *Fair America: World's Fairs in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 57.
- 15 General A. W. Greely, *Men of Achievement: Explorers and Travellers* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), 159-160.
- 16 Olin D. Wheeler, "On the Trail of Lewis and Clark," *Wonderland* (St. Paul, MN: Northern Pacific Railway, 1900): 12.
- 17 Olin D. Wheeler, *The Trail of Lewis and Clark, 1804-1904*, vol. 2 (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), 384; Stephen Dow Beckam, Doug Erickson, Jeremy Skinner, and Paul Merchant, *The Literature of The Lewis and Clark Expedition: A Bibliography and Essays* (Portland, OR: Lewis & Clark College, 2003), 212.
- 18 John Spencer, "We are not dealing entirely with the past: Americans remember Lewis & Clark," in *Lewis & Clark*, eds. Fresonke and Spence, 167.
- 19 Willbur R. Jacobs ed., *The Historical World of Frederick Jackson Turner with Selection from His Correspondence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), 154-155.
- 20 George W. Chilcoat and Joan M. Gasperak, "Young Adult Literature: The Dime Novel or How to Vitalize American Literature Classes," *The English Journal*, 73, no. 3 (March 1984): 100; Joy S. Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West, Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2000), 7.

- 21 For more detailed information for the boarding school education, see Kevin Slivka, "Art, Craft, and Assimilation: Curriculum for Native Students during the Boarding School Era," *Studies in Art Education* 52, no. 3 (Spring 2011): 226-227.
- 22 It is noteworthy that it was not the first statue of Sacagawea built in the fairground of the World's Fair. The Sacagawea statue built in Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904 is supposedly the first statue dedicated for Sacagawea. Kessler, *The Making of Sacagawea*, 90; Heffernan and Medlicot, "A Feminine Atlas?," 114-115.
- 23 Sheri Bartlett Browne, *Eva Emery Dye: Romance with the West* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2004), 15.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 57; Eva Emery Dye, *The Conquest: The True Story of Lewis and Clark* (Chicago, IL: A.C. McClurg & Company, 1902), Foreword.
- 25 Dye, *The Conquest*, 442-443.
- 26 Browne, *Eva Emery Dye*, 80; Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1996), 3.
- 27 Eva Emery Dye met Frederick Jackson Turner in March 1901 when she traveled to east, and she later notes that Turner captured her mind. Although we cannot know if Dye was familiar with Turner's address given in the Chicago Columbian World Fair of 1892, it is clear that she shared the common notion with Turner that the frontier made the United States exceptional in contrast to Europe.; Browne, *Eva Emery Dye*, 80.
- 28 Chautauqua was a gathering of people first organized in 1874 in upper New York State to provide Christian morality and inspiration for the people, and had expanded all over the country to provide people opportunities to study a wide variety of fields such as "American and world history, literature, politics, archaeology, economics, and even ornithology," while also providing cultural entertainments such as "baseball games, musical performances." Willamette Valley Chautauqua Association (WVCA) was organized in 1894, and Dye indulged in searching for and hiring the speakers to their annual meetings as a secretary while her husband served as vice-president and president.; *Ibid.*, 67, 70.
- 29 Dye, *The Conquest*, 442.
- 30 Browne, *Eva Emery Dye*, 87.
- 31 Dye, *The Conquest*, 3.
- 32 Browne, *Eva Emery Dye*, 87.
- 33 Dye, *The Conquest*, 197.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 228.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 290.
- 36 Rayna Green, "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture," *The Massachusetts Review* 16 (1975), 703.
- 37 Dye, *The Conquest*, 232.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 213.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 250.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 250.
- 41 Browne, *Eva Emery Dye*, 110.
- 42 Dye, *The Conquest*, 227.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 252.
- 44 *Ibid.*
- 45 *Ibid.*, 290.
- 46 Kessler, *The Making of Sacagawea*, 85; Laura E. Donaldson, "Red Woman, White Dreams:

- Searching for Sacagawea,” *Feminist Studies* 32, no.3 (Fall 2006): 525; Cindy Koenig Richards, “Inventing Sacagawea: Public Women and the Transformative Potential of Epideictic Rhetoric,” *Western Journal of Communication* 73, no.1 (2009): 6.
- 47 The women’s club movement was originally a movement for women who were interested in self-improvement to form groups to learn art, history and literature in public and discuss social issues. For more detailed information about the movement, for example, see Karen J. Blair, *Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York, NY: Holmes & Meier, 1980).
- 48 Sarah Evans to Commissioners of Lewis and Clark Centennial, 10 December 1903, Eva Emery Dye Papers, Mss 1089, Oregon Historical Society Research Library (OHS), Portland, OR, Box 9, File 13.
- 49 Sacajawea Statue Association, “Ten Reasons Why The Women of the Northwest Should Erect A Statue to Sacajawea,” in *Sacajawea Statue Association: Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, Utah, Colorado* (Portland, OR: Mann & Beach Printers, 190[?]), 2.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Browne, *Eva Emery Dye*, 102.
- 53 Ibid., 103.; *New Northwest*, 26 May 1871, quoted in G. Thomas Edwards, *Sowing Good Seeds: The Northwest Suffrage Campaigns of Susan B. Anthony* (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1990), 12.
- 54 Taber, “Sacagawea and the Suffragettes,” 7-8.
- 55 Edwards, *Sowing Good Seeds*, 207.
- 56 In addition to hostility among male voters, suffragists suffered internal conflict among their leaders. For example, Abigail Scott Duniway’s unwillingness to incorporate with the temperance movement distanced the Oregon Equal Suffrage Association from the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Moreover, Duniway’s passive “still hunt” method to lobby political groups or politicians without conducting parades or events in public caused discrepancy among local members who sought more effective approaches to win men’s votes. White American women who were involved in the suffrage movement were in fact a group of women with many, diverse opinions. Sacagawea, however, seemed to help unite these diverse opinions. Browne, *Eva Emery Dye*, 102, 115-125; Tiffany Lewis, “Winning Woman Suffrage in the Masculine West: Abigail Scott Duniway’s Frontier Myth,” *Western Journal of Communication* 75, no. 2 (2011): 142.
- 57 Browne, *Eva Emery Dye*, 100.
- 58 Sarah Evans to Commissioners of Lewis and Clark Centennial, Eva Emery Dye Papers, Mss 1089, OHS, Box 9, File 13.
- 59 Brooks, “Sacajawea, Meet Cogewa,” 185.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Ibid.; Edwards, *Sowing Good Seeds*, 229.
- 62 Brooks, “Sacajawea, Meet Cogewa,” 185.
- 63 Eva Emery Dye’s dedication on Sacagawea Day, 30 June 1905, Eva Emery Dye Papers, Mss 1089, OHS, Box 10 File 7.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Later American Indians also used Sacagawea to navigate their own status and roles in American society. The prominent Indian activist Charles Eastman, for instance, in a letter to Grace Raymond Hebard in 1925 honored Sacagawea as a “Ben-Hur’ of the Indian” who “defeated

Fates," generating romantic sympathy for American Indians, while also expressing his own understanding about frontier history. Charles Eastman to Grace R. Hebard, March 2, 1925, Grace Raymond Hebard Papers, The American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY, Box 54, Folder 7. For an example of an American Indian woman interpreting Sacagawea, see Brooks, "Sacajawea, Meet Cogewea," 184-197.

66 Heffernan and Medlicot, "Feminine Atlas?," 122.

67 The controversy over the whereabouts of Sacagawea after the expedition even led the commissioner of Bureau of Indian Affairs to send an Indian investigator to find out the "reality" of Sacagawea as a historical figure in 1924.

68 Taber, "Sacagawea and Suffragettes," 11.

