

Missouri Hanna - Washington's "Mother of Journalism"

Along the bluff of Sunset Avenue in Edmonds lived a bold woman named Missouri Hanna. She was an important grassroots organizer for the right of women to vote. She made a significant contribution in 1904, right from her new publishing office in little Edmonds. She was a journalist who owned her own newspaper.

After she met her husband at college in Arkansas, they first came west to Spokane. Sadly, he drowned, and a few years later their 19-year-old son died. Adding to her anguish, her youngest daughter was head-injured from a bicycle fall.

Yet Hanna overcame such adversity, sold the properties, and was told that the fresh sea air of Edmonds would strengthen her daughter's health.

Also known as Mrs. M.T.B. Hanna, she bought five acres right on the bluff. A nearby street is named after her: Hanna Park. Within a few years, Edmonds grew from a village to a little city. Streets and sidewalks were created and cars arrived. Kerosene lamps were replaced by electric lighting, while the telegraph was supplanted by a telephone switchboard.

Mrs. Hanna realized that growing Edmonds needed a better newspaper. Missouri made a bold decision to buy the equipment to publish a good newspaper. Within a year of arriving, Hanna became the first woman newspaper publisher in our state in 1905.

She expanded the *Edmonds Review* to include local to international news. She became known as the state's "Mother of Journalism". For five years she published a weekly, six-page newspaper, vowing to stay politically independent and maintain civility - be respectful to all.

Hanna advised to *"...always find some good in each and, if we cannot, we shall hesitate, look over the beautiful Sound to the snow-covered Olympics and glorious sunset – and use our best judgment."*



Mrs. M. T. B. Hanna
Editor

Hanna then began publishing the first West Coast suffrage newsletter, called *Votes for Women*. She had witnessed injustice firsthand — she could buy and sell land, start a business, and pay taxes, but she could not vote in local and state elections.

With her own funds, she gathered news from suffrage clubs all over the state, wrote articulate editorials and found pertinent political cartoons.

Some husbands worried that their wives would shirk their household duties if they joined the suffrage cause. Hanna's convincing newsletters explained that women could do both.

It is believed that her suffrage newsletter circulated in every state, and the timing was perfect in 1909. The Alaska-Yukon Pacific Exposition brought many suffragists on trains to help promote. Some proclaimed, "If Wyoming, Colorado, Utah and Idaho could honor their women, why not nearby Washington?"



Posters and yellow suffrage banners were seen on steamships, parade floats, street cars and at county fairs. The women chose to work with unions - being tactful and peaceful. The powerful alcohol industry was an opponent of women's suffrage, believing that women were more likely to vote for prohibition. Others worried that giving women the right to vote or be a jury member "would lead to dire consequences for family and society".



Hanna worked tirelessly with other suffragists to convince male voters otherwise. The outgoing Spokane woman, May Arkwright Hutton, who was lucky to find silver when she was digging in an Idaho mine, also used her power of words and new wealth to support the cause.

Another Washington leader was Emma Smith DeVoe from Tacoma, who helped revitalize the campaign with her own good-natured style. She could

charm the socks off the public. She was an entertainer and she reminded men to vote for the issues, not the candidate and party — like the League of Women Voters do today.

The women persevered and more men became enlightened. In 1910, by a 64% majority, our state's electorate granted women the right to vote. Being an early state, it was a key event — triggering a rush of campaigns which soon helped California and Oregon attain suffrage.



Hanna's reaction? "And yet when one thinks of it, it does seem strange that there should have to be any struggle or fight for all which is so palpably right."

It still took nearly a decade to make changes at the federal level. After the work of many courageous women, from Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, and Lucy Stone to later suffragists like Carrie Chapman Catt and Alice Paul, the 19th Amendment of the Constitution was ratified in 1920. "[Ain't I a Woman](#)" (link to her speech).

It is now 100 years later. The year 2020 marks the celebration of our Suffrage Centennial.

Missouri Hanna stayed active in politics, until she died at age 69 in Edmonds. Survived by her remaining daughter, Florence Hamilton, Mrs. Hanna is buried at Lake View Cemetery in Seattle.

A new historical interpretive panel will be erected in October, 2019 to honor Missouri Hanna's accomplishments. May we honor all who want to build a better democracy for generations to come.

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Additional grant activities:

Donations & readings of suffrage books to 3rd graders in Snohomish County, a public forum - June 12, 2020 and a children's scavenger hunt in Edmonds- June 26th, 2020 — to honor the Suffrage Centennial Year -2020.

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