Oregon Trail Histories

Richard C. Hanes, editor

Cultural Resource Series No. 9
As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interest of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.
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FOREWORD

The emigrant experience in the 19th century often brought together people from various walks of life and places of origin. This compilation of histories concerning the Oregon Trail has the same result. Three persons with deep personal interests in the westward migration of the mid-1800s have contributed to this volume. Robert G. Day, Sr., has had a long term involvement in public affairs within the State of Illinois and writes from the vantage of one section of the country that contributed a large portion of those early emigrants to Oregon country in the 1840s and 1850s. Champ Vaughan is a direct descendent of two pioneers that traveled the Oregon Trail in the 1840s and settled in the Willamette Valley. He is currently restoring a grand house built by those early pioneers over a century ago. Jim Tompkins also has ancestral ties to early settlement in western Oregon and has become a key contributor to Oregon Trail educational activities in the greater Portland metropolitan area.

The articles are arranged somewhat in a chronological order in this volume. The Peoria Party, though small, consisted of the first individuals taking an overland route from the United States for the primary purpose of establishing a new home in the Pacific Northwest. They experienced the route in 1839-40 while it was still being used predominantly by Native Americans and fur trapping parties. The story of their adventures and determination is captivating. William Hatchette Vaughan was part of the Great Migration of 1843 when approximately 1,000 persons for the first time took wagons all the way from the United States to western Oregon. His future wife, Susan Officer, survived the extreme hardships of the Meeks Party of 1845. The Vaughans were the first non-Indian settlers of the Molalla area of the Willamette Valley, establishing a donation land claim there. The third contribution provides a very handy compilation and synthesis of Oregon Trail information, including the political, economic and social ramifications of this major event in United States history. It should be useful to readers for a number of purposes.

The Bureau of Land Management is pleased to provide these articles as a concluding contribution toward the 1993 Oregon Trail Sesquicentennial celebration. Thanks to Virginia Hokkanen who provided considerable assistance in preparation of this document.

Richard C. Hanes
Series Editor
About the Authors

Robert G. Day, Sr.

Day was Mayor of Peoria 1961-65 and former State Representative in the Illinois General Assembly. Long interested in Western lore, he became intrigued with the story of the Peoria Party which has previously received far less attention in Illinois historical accounts than those of the Pacific Northwest. Thus began a period of lengthy research by Day into the history of the group making use of both written accounts familiar in the Northwest and adding information from sources available in the Midwest.

Champ Clark Vaughan

Vaughan, recently retired as the Chief, Branch of Lands and Minerals Operations, Oregon State Office, Bureau of Land Management, after a 31-year career with the Federal Government. He serves as an advisor to the Oregon Geographic Names Board and has a special interest in historical geography and Oregon history. William Hatchette Vaughan (Uncle Billy) is Champ's great grandfather.

Jim Tompkins

Tompkins is a junior high school teacher at West Orient School. In 1990 he was named Oregon History Teacher of the Year by the Daughters of the American Revolution. He also teaches classes about the Oregon Trail for teachers for Portland State University Extended Studies and various community colleges. He is an active member of the Oregon California Trails Association. One can usually find him spending his summers on the Oregon Trail, especially the Barlow Road, guiding tours or teaching classes.
THE PEORIA PARTY

By

Robert G. Day, Sr.
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Route of the Peoria Party, 1839, and landmarks along the way
(Shortest Route shown by dashed line)
INTRODUCTION

The exploration of North America for 300 years following the arrival of Columbus was to a large extent aimed at discovering the "Northwest passage", an all water route leading from the Atlantic to the Pacific. As late as 1803 President Thomas Jefferson sent a letter to his explorer Meriwether Lewis, who was then proceeding down the Ohio River on the first leg of his journey to the Pacific, in which he defined the purpose of his mission as follows:

"The object of your mission is single; the direct water communication from sea to sea formed by the bed of the Missouri and perhaps the Oregon."

The English also were active in searching for the Northwest passage in southern Canada and their explorers Drake, Cook and Vancouver had searched the west coast for the entrance of the passage leading eastward.

After Lewis and Clark failed to find a passage, John Jacob Astor became convinced the land in the Northwest, even without an east to west all water route, could be a source of wealth based on the fur trapping business. He sent his men west to found the fur trading post for his Pacific Fur Co. at Astoria where the Columbia enters the ocean. Farther north Alexander Mackenzie and David Thompson of the Canadian Northwest Co., also engaged in the fur trapping business, realized the possibilities of that business even in the absence of the all-water east to west route. When the pressure of economic competition from the Canadian company plus the threat of armed intervention by the British began to be felt, Astor considered it advisable to sell out to the Northwest Co. and a few years later that Company was merged into The Hudson's Bay Co.

The Americans' claim to the Northwest included everything north of the California border to 50 degrees north latitude which would include the south portion of British Columbia. Their claim was based on the acquisition of the Spanish rights by the Treaty of Florida. The English claim was based on the early discoveries of their explorers plus the occupation of the area by The Hudson's Bay Co. Neither contender considered the area sufficiently valuable to engage in war over it and in the treaty following the War of 1812 the two contenders agreed the area was only good for fur trapping and that both parties should have the right to use it for that purpose for a period of ten years. Fortunately for both sides neither had been successful in discovering an all water east to west route to fight over and since there were very few fur trappers in such a large uninhabited area there was no cause for conflict.

But the United States' population was growing at an unheard of rate. In 1790 there were 3.9 million people and practically all were east of the Alleghenys. Fifty years later in 1840 there were 17 million people and they were spreading westward as far as the Mississippi.
In the early 1830's American missionaries from New England such as Jason and Daniel Lee, Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and Henry and Eliza Spaulding went to the Oregon area to establish missions. They were not opposed by the fur trapping interests because the two activities were not competitive. In fact, the missions became important customers of The Hudson's Bay Co. headquarters at Fort Vancouver, located on the Columbia River across from what is now Portland. The Hudson's Bay Co. establishment at Ft. Vancouver was supplied by ships from England which sailed up the Columbia River from the Pacific and was the only source of goods and wares available to maintain the missions. When the mission farming operations became established the excess produce was sold to The Hudson’s Bay Company.

It wasn’t until the Americans began to look westward for a place to acquire free land and a place to settle and till the soil that friction between the settlers and the British influence arose. But why Oregon? Why not the lush valleys and mild climate of California? Americans had a claim to Oregon and it was populated only by native Indians. Americans had no basis for a claim to California which was part of Mexico and anyone who went there to settle could not expect to succeed unless they were willing (as John Sutter from Switzerland did) to become a citizen of Mexico.

That is why in the ensuing years the route became known as The Oregon Trail and it was those who made the long journey over that trail that resulted in the acquisition of the Northwest for the United States.

This is the story of the first group of settlers who led the way for the thousands who would follow to Oregon. That group was known as The Peoria Party.
Rev. Jason Lee
(Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society #8342)
The Main Street Presbyterian Church, circa. 1838
Peoria, Illinois
Chapter I

REVEREND JASON LEE VISITS PEORIA

On September 30, 1838, the Rev. Jason Lee, a missionary from the Oregon area, arrived in Peoria, Illinois on his way to New York. Rev. Lee and his nephew, Daniel, had gone to Oregon from Boston in 1834 to establish a mission in the valley of the Willamette River to christianize the native Indians. He left his mission in Oregon on March 26, 1838 on a return trip to New England and traveled down the Missouri River to the Mississippi and St. Louis by canoe. From there he traveled overland and arrived in Peoria on September 30, accompanied by five Indians, three Nez Perce and two Flatheads. On a Sunday afternoon in October Rev. Lee spoke at the Presbyterian Church on Main Street describing the work of his mission, the climate and terrain of Oregon's Willamette Valley, and the opportunities offered by the Oregon frontier. He also mentioned that The Hudson's Bay Co., which was owned by the English, maintained a fort and trading post in the Oregon area and to a great extent controlled the economic life of those at his mission because it was the only source of supplies, clothing, and food. He encouraged those in attendance to join his mission and settle in the Oregon territory before the English gained complete control of the region.

Among those in Rev. Lee's audience on that October Sunday afternoon in 1838 was a young lawyer named Thomas Jefferson Farnham, a native of Vermont, who had come to the Peoria area to practice law two years earlier. Farnham was convinced it was essential for Americans to emigrate to Oregon and occupy the area as permanent settlers to counteract the growing influence of the English who were expanding the operations of their Hudson's Bay Co. in the Pacific Northwest.

When Rev. Lee departed for New York he left behind one of the Flathead Indians known as Indian Tom, who had become ill and remained in Peoria to recuperate. While he was in Peoria Indian Tom, who had adopted the name Thomas Adams, was a frequent visitor at the wagon shop where young Joseph Holman worked. As a cooper Holman became convinced from Indian Tom's glowing accounts of his native land and the abundance of salmon in the Columbia River that there was a great opportunity for a barrel maker to build containers to ship salmon back east. Other young men of Peoria, interested in seeking their fortunes on the frontier, were influenced by Rev. Lee's account of the Oregon territory and became convinced that Oregon was the land of opportunity. A meeting of those interested in Oregon was held on March 28, 1839 in the room of Mr. Justice Butler, at which time Thomas Jefferson Farnham addressed the group and proposed the formation of a joint stock company for the purpose of traveling to Oregon to establish a settlement of Americans. At that meeting twelve men agreed to join forces and form a company for the purpose of permanently settling in Oregon. While most of those in the company were motivated by the desire to acquire a personal fortune in the form of productive farm land, Farnham's purpose was to encourage Americans to settle in the area as a means of claiming it for the United States. He later
wrote a book titled "Travels in the Great Northwest Prairies, the Anahauc and Rocky Mountains and the Oregon Territory." The book’s introduction consisted of a twelve page treatise supporting the U.S. claim to the area. The principal basis of the claim was the U.S. acquisition of the Spanish claims going back to the year 1532 when the Spanish navy explored the northwest coast in an attempt to find a northern route between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. Farnham’s brief listed numerous other 16th century Spanish expeditions claiming the land for Spain and the subsequent cessation of that land to the U.S. by Spain in the Treaty of Florida in 1819. A company was formed and Farnham was chosen its leader. Following a brief ceremony at the Courthouse Square on May 1, 1839, the group bade farewell to friends and relatives and began the long journey to what one of its members referred to as "The Promised Land." The accounts of the departure differ as to whether there were 12 or 15 men in the group. According to the May 4, 1839 issue of the Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazette there were twelve young men who called themselves "The Oregon Dragoons." As the group proceeded westward, those with whom they came in contact referred to them as "The Peoria Party." Later when they split into two separate factions both were referred to as "The Peoria Party" and this is the name used by most accounts on the early history of Oregon. The report of their departure in the Peoria Register states their destination was the Columbia River and upon arrival the party would take possession of "the most eligible points and make settlements." The claims were to be held in common by the company until they were recognized by the United States government. If any member were to leave the group his interest was to be forfeited. Each man provided the following:

- A good riding horse $75.00
- A rifle, carrying ball from 13 to 15 lbs. 15.00
- Brace of pistols 10.00
- Hunting knife 1.00
- 8-1/2 lbs of powder with lead in proportion 5.00
- 2 woolen blankets 5.00
- A pack pony to be purchased on the frontier 25.00
- Contingency fund 25.00

Mrs. Eliza Farnham, the wife of the leader, made a flag for the company bearing the motto "Oregon or the Grave." Their route was to take them westward through Farmington, Macomb and Quincy where they were to cross the Mississippi and then to Independence, Missouri where they would acquire the additional supplies and equipment necessary for the trip.

The next word from the group was in the form of a letter dated June 1, 1839 from Farnham to a Mr. Davis. The letter was sent from Elm Grove, Shawnee
territory, about 20 miles west of the west boundary of Missouri. In that letter Farnham lists the members of the Company as Auren Garret, T.J. Pickett, Quincy A. Jordan, Charles Yeats, J.J. Wood, Chauncy Wood, James L. Fash, Robert Moore, R.L. Kilbourne, T. Smith, J.L. Moore of Quincy, Robert Shortess of Jackson County Missouri, John Pritchard of Independence and Thomas J. Farnham. However it appears that he overlooked three members, Obediah Oakley, Joseph Holman, and Amos Cook, which would make a total of 17 all of whom were in the original party except J.L. Moore of Quincy and Shortess and Pritchard from Missouri. An indication there was some incompatibility appears in Farnham's letter following the list of members when he adds, "and, except one, of whom it would not be expected I should speak pro or con, they are most excellent men for such an expedition as ours."

Robert Shortess, who wrote a detailed account of his experience, lists the members of the party as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>BORN</th>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>AGE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robert Moore</td>
<td>Penn</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>About 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.J. Farnham</td>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>&quot; 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Smith</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Lottery Broker</td>
<td>&quot; 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Yates</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Butcher</td>
<td>&quot; 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O.A. Oakley</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Butcher</td>
<td>&quot; 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Trask (Fash)</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>Butcher</td>
<td>&quot; 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis Fletcher</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Butcher</td>
<td>&quot; 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.L. Kilbourne</td>
<td>Penn</td>
<td>Restaurant Keeper</td>
<td>&quot; 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph Holman</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Mfg. Fanning Mill</td>
<td>&quot; 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amos Cook</td>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>&quot; 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chauncey Wood</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>&quot; 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Owen Garrett</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thomas Pickett</td>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
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<td>Joseph Wood</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Saddler</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. Quinn Jordan</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Saddler</td>
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<tr>
<td>(John L.) Moore</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Shortess</td>
<td>Penn</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>&quot; 36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pritchel</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>&quot; 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Blair</td>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>Millwright</td>
<td>&quot; 50</td>
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The oldest member was Robert Moore, age 56, and the only other member over 36 was W. Blair, age 50.

Shortess lists Sidney Smith of New York whose occupation was lottery broker and this is evidently the same man referred to in Farnham's letter as T. Smith. The Shortess reference to him as Sidney Smith was correct because Smith later wrote an account using that name. As the expedition proceeded across the western prairies, Smith became a controversial member and, according to Farnham's account, was one of the causes of the
dissension which led to dissolution of the Company.

It is not surprising that none of the party was shown as born in Peoria. In fact most of them had lived there less than two years. In 1839 Peoria was little more than a frontier village. The first permanent white settler in Peoria, Josiah Fulton, arrived in 1819 only twenty years before the Peoria party was formed. In the early 1830s Peoria consisted of 21 log cabins and seven frame houses, but the town grew rapidly and by 1834 there were four churches, a flour mill and regular steamboat service to St. Louis.\textsuperscript{10}

Farnham's June 1st letter to Mr. Davis mentions they had 21 days of rain since leaving Peoria a month earlier and "a wet camp and increased and perplexing duties upon the shoulders of the commanding officer" was not conducive to letter writing. He described their route from Peoria to Farmington, Macomb and Quincy, where they crossed the Mississippi River on May 9th. They crossed the Missouri River at Lexington and reached Independence, Missouri on May 21st. The letter stated they remained at Independence until May 29 before proceeding westward along the Santa Fe Trail where they joined some Santa Fe traders with whom they intended to travel as far as the Arkansas River. There they were to meet Aude Sublette who was to send a company of his trappers with them to the forks of the Columbia River. Farnham closed his letter by stating "my own health and the health of all the company is good and the motto, 'Oregon or the Grave' is still waiving o'er our tent and deeply written upon our hearts."

Although no mention is made in Farnham's June 1st letter, some members of the party were becoming disheartened with the hardship and danger of frontier life. Within a week three members would leave the company and return to Peoria. Three weeks later misfortune would strike one of the members and bring to a head the dissension and personality conflicts which were developing.
Chapter II

TRAGEDY STRIKES

When the Peoria Party arrived at Independence, Missouri the wagon and wagon harness were sold and additional pack horses and mules were purchased as well as provisions and trinkets and cloth for barter with the Indians.

They were advised to follow the Santa Fe trail almost due west to Bent’s Fort, located in what is now southeastern Colorado, at which time they would strike north and west to Brown’s Hole in the northwest corner of Colorado. Although wagons could follow the Santa Fe Trail as far as Bent’s Fort, the remainder of their journey was not suitable for wagons and it would be another four years before the first wagon would go from Brown’s Hole to Oregon.

On May 29, they started west in the rain. By this time the Peoria Party consisted of seventeen members mounted on horseback, and seven pack mules, three of which were owned in common by the company. On the morning of May 30th they discovered two of their horses had pulled their stakes from the wet ground during the night and were missing. It was thought the horses had returned to Independence and one member of the party rode back to get them. He returned to the group the next day with the two runaways. During the night of June 1st the same two horses again broke loose and two members were sent back to Independence for them. Later in the morning on the same day it appeared their provisions would not last until they reached the buffalo grazing grounds so two other members were sent back to Independence for more provisions. They rejoined the group the following day with 200 pounds of flour. The party waited another two days for the men to return with the runaway horses. On June 6th they traveled through another rain storm and later in the day one of the members shot a large snapping turtle which they stopped to cook. That night the rain was so heavy it poured in under the tent. The rain continued until noon the next day and on June 7 they camped for the night on the banks of the Osage River about one hundred miles west of Independence where they met a party of seven wagons returning to Independence. The next morning three members, Orin Garrett, Thomas Picket and J.L. Moore of Quincy; left the Oregon Dragoons and joined the east bound wagon train to return to the comforts of civilization. On the night of June 8 they were in Indian territory and for the first time set up guards during the night. The diary written by Sidney Smith states he was on guard duty the night of June 11 and the watch word was "Columbia."

On June 12th the heat was so intense the group had to dismount from their worn out horses and lead them on foot. The unbearable heat was followed by severe thunder and lightning. That night they met a large wagon train headed for Santa Fe and camped with them.

The Smith and Oakley accounts for June 8-13 mention that each day two or three
members would be designated as hunters to ride ahead of the main group for the purpose of hunting game. During this period, although game such as elk and antelope were seen, the hunters were not successful in killing any until June 15 when Smith shot and killed an antelope, the first meat they had eaten in two days. The Oakley and Smith accounts both refer to violent electrical storms which plagued the group at that time. On June 13 they met Charles Bent of Bent’s Fort whose wagon train consisted of 30 men and 10 wagons. They were also driving 200 head of sheep enroute to Santa Fe. On June 14 the advance hunting party was the first to reach the Little Arkansas River, which was so swollen they were not able to cross. The men had fishing lines and soon caught 12 catfish and proceeded to build a fire and roast one on the spot. Later that afternoon the hunting party met three members of the Bent caravan who had been sent back by Mr. Bent to recover some mules and horses which had escaped. They had not been successful in recovering the horses and had not eaten for three days. The Oregon Dragoon hunters gave them one of their catfish which they immediately cooked and ate.

They forded the Little Arkansas on June 15 near the site of present day McPherson, Kansas. The following night they captured the 37 mules and horses which had been lost by the Bent wagon train. They had assured Mr. Bent they would return them to his fort if they found them and herded them along with their own horses and mules until they reached Bent’s Fort. On June 18 Jordan and Fletcher, who had the best horses, came upon seven buffalo bulls and after chasing one 2-1/2 miles succeeded in bringing it down. According to the Oakley account the bull weighed 900 pounds and produced 300 pounds of meat after it was dressed. This was the first buffalo meat they had eaten and, Oakley states, it was the best meat any of them had ever eaten. This meat was "jerked" and provided the party with meat for the next 5 to 6 days.

Smith’s account of June 18 states there were about 1,000 Indians camped near them that evening. Some of the Indians of the Caw tribe came to their camp that evening and wanted to trade with them, including one who wanted to sell his squaw.

The hunters who had shot the buffalo on June 18 were miles ahead of the main party and had been separated from it for six days. It was not until the next day, June 19, that they returned with the buffalo meat and remainder of the catfish. The evening of the 19th they overtook a Santa Fe wagon train and all camped together at Pawnee Fork, near present day Larned, Kansas.

Both companies traveled together on June 20 and the Peoria hunters killed another buffalo. While they were dressing the animal, some Caw Indians came upon them and purchased some articles, including a butcher knife, which had been originally purchased in Independence for 25 cents but which now sold for $1.50. The price of the other articles sold was in proportion.

On June 21 an incident occurred which presented a serious problem for the entire party. Sidney Smith’s diary simply states "I was shot the ball entering the point of the
7th rib and was taken out at the root of the 4 falls rib after cutting of the tips of the same.” Farnham’s account mentions he was away from the camp at the time the accident occurred; that there had been petty bickering between two of the most quarrelsome of the company; and that the injury occurred while they were breaking camp in the morning when a dispute arose between said members as to their relative moral honesty in something that had occurred in the past. Words ran high and abusive as the two argued inside the tent. When those on the outside loosened the ropes to strike the tent, the younger of the two men (Smith), filled with wrath at his opponent, demonstrated his strong feelings on the subject by grasping his rifle by the muzzle as he jerked it from his baggage. The hammer caught on the baggage and discharged the gun into his side.

Oakley’s account is similar and states that while Smith was packing his belongings inside the tent he pulled his gun toward him; the hammer caught on his saddle and he was shot in the side.

The Shortess’ account written several years later, states he was absent at the time, having gone in search of some mules but that eye-witnesses advised him a wordy war broke out between two men while packing in the morning and one of them seized his rifle by the muzzle and pulled it toward him with a jerk. The hammer was tangled with his saddle and the gun discharged; the bullet glancing off a button on his trousers, fracturing his rib and stopping inside his skin near the back.

Dr. Walworth was traveling with the Santa Fe party which had left the camp area earlier and according to the Oakley account he, Oakley, had caught Smith as he fell and then hastened to get Dr. Walworth, who by that time was five miles ahead. He and the surgeon returned with a wagon and Dr. Walworth removed the bullet and dressed the wound. They then made a bed in the wagon for Smith. The disaster delayed their departure until noon and they traveled until midnight hoping to rejoin the Santa Fe party. Oakley mentions their progress was impeded by great herds of buffalo, which were as thick as sheep in the field and sometimes would not move until the travelers were within 10 feet of them. They finally overtook the Santa Fe party the next morning. Farnham drove the wagon carrying Smith who was exhausted by pain and fatigue.

Farnham mentions that in the afternoon of June 22 the high chief of the Caw Indians visited them. The chief examined Smith’s wound, poured water into the bullet hole and after noticing it came out the bullet hole in his back assured them the bullet had not entered the chest cavity. The chief evidently prescribed a salve for the wound because Farnham’s journal of June 23 states the chief’s salve kept the wound soft and prevented inflammation.

Oakley states that on June 22 they traveled through buffalo herds for 15 miles; the landscape was black with buffalo in every direction and they numbered in the hundreds of thousands. On the night of June 22 the party was battered by another rain and thunderstorm with wind so strong it broke their tent pole. The storm continued the
next day and their clothing and gear were soaking wet. Buffalo were as numerous as they were the previous day and Farnham estimated the herd covered 1350 square miles during the three day period they traveled through it. On June 25 and 26 they followed the course of the Arkansas River and during this time Smith, who was being transported in the wagon, was very weak and in great pain. On June 24, 25 and 26 Oakley mentions there was rain and wind each night.

Farnham’s account states he drove the wagon and cared for Smith from the time of his injury through June 24th at which time he left him with his excellent lieutenant (presumably Oakley) and returned to his main company for the purpose of guiding them to the crossing of the Arkansas River.

On June 27, they crossed the Arkansas nineteen miles west of present day Dodge City and waited for the Santa Fe party and the wagon in which Smith was being carried. While waiting for the Santa Fe party to meet them at the Arkansas, at which point the Santa Fe party would turn south to Santa Fe and the Oregon Dragoons would go northwest toward Bent’s Fort, Quincy Jordan, Chauncey Wood, and John Pritchard decided to leave the expedition and return to their homes via Santa Fe by accompanying the Santa Fe party. Oakley gives their reason for leaving as "dissatisfaction arising from disagreement with the rest of the party." One member of the Santa Fe party, William Blair, decided to cast his lot with the Peoria Party and joined the Dragoons.
Chapter III

THE MUTINY

Farnham refers to a "mutiny" in the ranks which occurred June 27 and states that while the party was waiting for the Santa Fe group at "the crossing," which was the place where both parties would cross the Arkansas River and then separate each going their own way, "certain individuals of my company who had wanted to leave Smith to perish in the camp at the time he was shot, now wanted to turn him over to the Santa Fe group." Smith was still being transported in the wagon which belonged to the Santa Fe party and the wagon would have to be returned to them at the time the two groups separated. Apparently the progress of the Peoria Party was hampered by caring for the injured man. Reading between the lines of the various accounts, Smith was not a respected or popular person with the group. Farnham states a majority of the company was in favor of requesting the Santa Fe group to take Smith with them to Santa Fe. The route of the Oregon Dragoons would take them through an area of unfriendly Indians and it was felt that the delay caused by the care required for the injured man could jeopardize the safety of the entire group. Farnham asked the Santa Fe group to take Smith with them but his request was denied for the reason that Smith would be at a serious disadvantage in Santa Fe because he could not speak the language. The Santa Fe members also told Farnham that Smith was a member of his group and was entitled to the protection of his own comrades. When Farnham reported this to the "mutineers" they suggested that Smith be left in the wagon and that they secretly take off through the mountains knowing the Santa Fe group would not abandon him. In Farnham's opinion, had this been done, Smith would not have been abandoned by the Santa Fe group but would have been taken care of until he recovered. But he and others felt such an act of ingratitude toward those who had been kind enough to provide a doctor and a wagon to care for Smith would be unjustified. C. Wood, Jordan, Oakley, J. Wood, Blair and Farnham all felt that "however unworthy Smith might be" they were bound by their original agreement to protect each other and they could neither abandon him to the wolves nor leave him to the members of the Santa Fe party against their wishes.

Some of the men made a litter which could be pulled by two mules on which Smith could be transported. Farnham then went to the trader's camp about five miles away to get Smith who was in the wagon. In the early evening he and Smith started to return to their own camp but darkness overtook them and Farnham lost his way and they had to camp overnight before returning to the group the next morning. The wagon was then returned to the trader's camp. When they attempted to put Smith on the makeshift litter it was apparent it could not satisfactorily carry the injured man. The camp had been struck and the so-called mutineers were mounted and ready to travel. They did not want to delay their departure because they were in the vicinity of unfriendly "Cumanche" Indians. The Santa Fe party had left and was ten miles away on the other side of the river. Two men, Chauncey Wood and John Pritchard, who had sided with Farnham in deciding to assume responsibility for Smith, had gone with the Santa Fe group planning
to return to Peoria. Farnham and others then got the gentlest mule in the party, carefully eased Smith into the saddle, and were underway about eleven o'clock in the morning. Farnham states that one of the principal mutineers, "a hard faced villain of no honest memory among the traders upon the Platte," assumed to guide and command the party. When this version of the incident is read in the light of the Shortess account it is apparent the "hard faced villain" who assumed command was Shortess. Farnham states said person's "malice towards Smith was of the bitterest character" and "with a grin upon his long and withered physiognomy, that shadowed out the fiendish delight of a heart long incapable of better emotions, he drove at a rate which none but a man in health could have long endured." According to Farnham his motives were easily understood. If he and those who were to look after Smith fell behind, Shortess would be rid of the injured man "whose presence seemed to be a living evidence of his murderous intentions, thwarted and cast back blistering upon his already sufficiently foul character." Farnham's account states that if Smith and those who were caring for him were destroyed by the "Cumanche" Indians "who were prowling around our way" the "blackness of his heart might be hidden, awhile at least, from the world." He further charges the rapid pace and extreme heat were very hard on the injured man; that he fainted once and nearly fell from the saddle "all to the delight of the self constituted leader who belabored his own horse unmercifully" and quoted Richard's soliloquy with a satisfaction and emphasis, which seemed to say, "the winter of his discontent had passed away, as well as that of his ancient prototype in villainy." During the day some of the men had killed a buffalo and a fine steak and a night's rest cheered Smith for a long ride the following day. On the 28th they traveled twenty-five miles under a burning sun and Smith with a high fever and three broken ribs (Farnham's account) required the greatest attention from his friends. In referring to Smith, Farnham states, "Base though he was in everything that makes a man estimable and valuable to himself and others, Smith was really an object of pity and the most assiduous care." "Everything indeed that his friends (no not his friends, for he was incapacitated to attach either the good or the bad to his person, but those who commiserated his condition), could do, was done to make him comfortable." Farnham has words of praise for Blair, who had left the Santa Fe group and joined them, and wrote that regardless how tired Blair might be at the end of a day's ride he would look after Smith, dress his wounds, and sleep near him at night to be of assistance when needed.

In his journal entry for June 30, Farnham continues to heap abuse on Shortess. "This morning the miscreant who acted as leader exchanged horses, that he might render it more difficult for Smith to keep in company." During the day's march said miscreant continued to quote Shakespeare which caused Farnham to comment, "If there be ears of him about the ugly world, to hear his name bandied by boobies, and his immortal verse mangled by barbarians in civilized clothing, those ears stood erect, and his dust crawled with indignation, as this savage in nature and practice discharged from his polluted mouth the inspirations of his genius."

Under the date of July 1 Farnham refers to a quarrel among the mutineers in
camp that evening. The subject of the quarrel was one he had heard many times before and was that of the moral merits of the members of the company, each man citing evidence to prove himself a great and pure man. But Farnham states their "distinguished leader, who claimed to be the only one in the group who had ever seen the plains and mountains, also stole a horse and rifle from his employers, opened and plundered a 'cache' of goods, and ran back to the states with well-founded pretensions to an honest character." The following day while preparing and jerking some meat, "our man of the stolen rifle recounted some of the exploits of his past life and stated that he had entertained serious intentions of killing some of the men who had left the party."

Three days later on July 5 the Dragoons reached Bent's Fort, also known as Fort William. Here the company disbanded, the common property was divided among the members, and each man was left to his own resources. Bent's Fort was located in what is now southeastern Colorado about seven miles east of present day La Junta, Colorado. It was owned by the three Bent brothers who were engaged in trading primarily between the mountain men and the populace of the Santa Fe area.

Because of the serious accusations in the Farnham account concerning the problem caring for Smith following the separation of the Peoria Party from the Santa Fe trading group, it behooves us to examine the accounts of other members of the party. Farnham compiled his journal while en route and carried it in a knapsack across his shoulder. Until the time of his injury, Smith also made notes en route. The other accounts were written later. In Oakley's case, his account was written after he returned to Peoria in the fall of 1839. The Shortess account was written several years after he had become established in Oregon although he, Fletcher, Cook, Holman and Kilbourne did write a letter dated September 30, 1840 which was published in the Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer on June 25, 1841 giving their version of the matter contrary to the accounts of Farnham and Oakley.

Oakley states that when it became necessary to return the wagon to the Santa Fe party and attempt to carry Smith on the makeshift litter it was Shortess and one other member who suggested they leave Smith behind to perish. There were thirteen members in the party at the time and all but five voted in favor of Shortess' "diabolical suggestion" and "one of them carried his inhumanity so far as to refuse Smith a drink of water from his canteen." The five members who refused to abandon Smith agreed to carry him forward at all hazards. This disagreement culminated in the decision to disband the company and divide the property when they reached Bent's Fort. Oakley states they were greeted with pleasure when they arrived at Bent's Fort and those in charge were pleased with the return of the lost horses and mules which they brought with them. The return of the horses was especially appreciated because two or three days prior to their arrival a group of "Cumanche" Indians had come upon some members of the fort, killed one of the guards and stole 37 horses. The slain man was a Spaniard, one of 18 men garrisoned at the fort, and was killed by three Comanche arrows. The man in charge of the fort gave the Peoria Party two mules and 200 pounds of flour to show his
appreciation for the return of his horses and mules. Oakley states that Farnham, Smith, Wood, Blair and he decided to travel no farther with Shortess and Moore because they considered them "persons in whom no confidence could be placed."

Shortess wrote his account some time after reaching Oregon and states that before arriving at the crossing of the Arkansas River, (which according to Farnham’s account would have been June 26), Farnham "in consequence of intemperance and neglect of duty, had entirely lost all influence or authority, and every one did what was right in his eyes." At that time Farnham was accused of incompetency and waste of funds placed in his hands and resigned as leader. He narrowly escaped expulsion along with two others "who had become obnoxious to the party," but they were permitted to stay with the company until they reached Bent’s Fort. Shortess states they spent a day trying to devise a litter for Smith but were not successful and then placed him on the gentlest mule and detailed three men to attend him "toiling slowly under a burning sun over sandy plains." They remained at Bent’s Fort about a week, divided the property held in common, and three men were voted out, Farnham, Smith, and Oakley. Blair and Joseph Wood chose to go with them and they left under the guidance of Kelly, the trapper, following the north bank of the Arkansas River. Shortess and seven others followed the same river about sixty miles north to the South Platte and reached "the spot where the City of Denver now stands." They then traveled down the South Platte to St. Vrain’s Fort.

After Oakley returned to Peoria his account of his experiences with the Peoria Party must have appeared in The National Intelligencer of November 23, 1839 because that publication is referred to in a letter dated September 3, 1840 from "Wallamet" Oregon signed by Shortess, Fletcher, Holman, Cook and Kilbourne. A copy of this letter was published in the Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer of June 23, 1841 under the title "News From The Peoria Oregonians." The purpose of the letter from Shortess et. al. was to correct some of the alleged misstatements in the Oakley account. The letter states almost every part of the Oakley statement concerning Smith’s accident was untrue. Shortess asserted that Oakley did not catch Smith in the act of falling at the time the gun was discharged because Oakley was not in the tent at the time, nor did Smith fall; Oakley was not the person who went for the surgeon, Dr. Waldo, whom Oakley improperly called Wadsworth, and the doctor did not come back to the scene in his wagon; he came back on horseback, and the wagon was brought back by C. Wood, the person who went for the doctor. The Shortess letter contends the Oakley account of the dispute at the crossing when Farnham lost command was incorrect; that Farnham did not throw up his command "in consequence of the mutinous spirit of part of the company, growing out of the deplorable condition of Smith." He lost his command because of his utter want of qualifications for the command and his (Farnham’s) conduct would have caused him to be deprived of his command some time previous if Mr. Shortess would have accepted it. At the crossing Shortess was chosen as leader and, he states, "having reduced matters to something like order, the company proceeded more harmoniously than they had hitherto done, to the extreme mortification of Farnham and one or two others." The letter goes on to state "Smith had as good attendance as
circumstances of the company would admit, Blair and Farnham being appointed to attend exclusively to him, and the story of his being neglected or any propositions being made to leave him to perish in the prairie, is a base calumny." Furthermore the "spirit of disaffection" which caused the breakup of the party at Bent's Fort was caused by the "low intriguing disposition of Farnham, Oakley, and Smith and resulted in their expulsion from the company." The letter states the clue to Oakley's slanders is shown by his ignorance of the geography of the country in referring to the Green River as a branch of the Columbia when it is in fact a branch of the Colorado. Oakley's statement, that after leaving Bent's Fort they found the Shortess party on the south fork of the Platte and all their horses had been stolen by the Indians was untrue. The Shortess letter states only four out of fourteen horses had been stolen and the Shortess group was not held up because of the loss of horses but because they were waiting for a guide.

Smith's account understandably makes no mention of the dispute at the crossings and later at Bent's Fort.

Holman's account of the expedition given in an interview in 1878 makes no reference to the dispute nor does Cook's brief reminiscences. No account was written by Fletcher, Kilbourne, Moore or Blair. However, for what it is worth, it must be noted that Holman, Cook, Fletcher and Kilbourne signed the letter of September 3, 1840 which was probably written by Shortess.

The conflicting reports of Farnham and Oakley on one side and Shortess and those who joined in his letter, on the other, are such that it will never be known exactly what occurred at The Crossings on July 28, 1839 and on the ensuing days at Bent's Fort. It appears that two strong personalities, those of Farnham and Shortess, contributed to the dispute. The hardships of traveling for days in rain and stormy weather; the scarcity of food at times; and the ever present fear of Indian attack would tend to exacerbate any dissatisfaction in the ranks of men experiencing for the first time the hardships and discomfort of frontier travel. Farnham, who was the organizer and chosen leader in Peoria, was not an experienced frontiersman and undoubtedly his lack of experience became known as the group proceeded farther from civilization into Indian territory. They could rely on the ability of the leaders of the Santa Fe group until the time came to part company at The Crossings. At that point they realized they were in hostile Indian Country and undoubtedly in the back of the minds of the members was a feeling of insecurity and apprehension caused by the departure of the Santa Fe wagon train. They all realized the injured Smith would impede their progress. The fact that he apparently was an unpopular member of the group did not help matters. Farnham's characterization of Smith is extremely unfavorable and if we can judge from Farnham's description of Shortess's attitude toward Smith, Shortess thought less of him than Farnham. We know nothing of Farnham's character or personality other than from his journal and Shortess's criticism of his leadership ability. However, it must have been a serious blow to his pride when the group voted him out as leader and chose Shortess to lead them when they left The Crossings. After this occurred, Shortess's letter states, Blair and Farnham were
appointed to attend Smith. Farnham’s complaints about the speed which Shortess traveled is understandable. He was unhappy in being deprived of his command and detailed to look after Smith and had difficulty keeping up with the main group in an area of hostile Indians.

It is interesting to note that Farnham’s invectives against Shortess includes condemnation of his habit of quoting Shakespeare’s soliloquy from Richard III and he states that Shakespeare’s immortal verse was discharged from the polluted mouth of Shortess. One wonders why Shortess would be quoting Shakespeare as they rode over the sandy plains in the suffocating heat. Perhaps it was to relieve his mind of the monotony and discomfort of their journey. Farnham’s criticism and belittling of said quotations by Shortess is but one example of the incompatibility of these two personalities.

Because of the Indian menace, Shortess may have felt his responsibility for the entire party necessitated proceeding to Bent’s Fort as quickly as possible. The extreme heat on the sandy plains over which they traveled must have been uncomfortable to all members but Shortess cannot be blamed for those conditions. Shortess was the only member who had frontier experience and it may be that he was more aware of the importance of reaching Bent’s Fort as quickly as possible than was Farnham and the others. The vote of the members to change the leadership from Farnham to Shortess was either a mutiny or a justifiable rebellion depending on whose version is read.
Chapter IV

THE PEORIA PARTY DIVIDES INTO TWO GROUPS

When the Dragoons reached Bent’s Fort they divided into two groups. Four members, Oakley, Joseph Wood, Blair and Smith chose to stay with Farnham and seven members, Holman, Fletcher, Cook, Kilbourne, Moore, Yates and Trask (Fash) stayed with Shortess. Farnham, Oakley, Joseph Wood, Smith and Blair, led by a trapper named Kelly, left Bent’s Fort on July 12 and crossed the Colorado front range, then proceeded north through the Colorado parks between the mountains. They stopped at Fort El Pueblo five miles up the Arkansas from Bent’s Fort and purchased a supply of dog meat from Indians at the fort before continuing northward with Fort Davy Crockett in Brown’s Hole as their destination. This route took them east of Pike’s Peak near present day Colorado Springs thence through South Park and on August 1 they crossed the Colorado River near present day Kremmling. The next day they cooked the last of their meat for their noon meal and while they were eating three men came to their camp. The three visitors led by a Capt. Craig joined them for dinner. One of the men greeted Smith with, "How do you do Mr. Carroll?" Whereupon Smith called him aside and spoke to him privately and thereafter the visitors referred to him as Smith. Later the same day they met trappers Burns and Ward accompanied by an Indian woman who joined them for their evening meal of nettles and sweetbriers which was the only food available. During the next two days the three traveled with them through the Yampa River Valley toward Steamboat Springs. On the third day they stopped to hunt and killed an elk, several ducks, and caught some trout and one of the trappers killed two beavers. Prior to that they had been without food for three days and because of the scarcity of game it was necessary to ration their food for the next eight days it would take them to reach Fort Davy Crockett. The trappers also mentioned they had been attacked by Indians near Browns Hole. Smith traded his horse for two of those owned by the trappers. They covered 80 miles in the next four days and succeeded in killing two bear cubs just as their supply of meat was running out. Three days later they reached the Little Bear River (now the Yampa River). They crossed the Little Snake River on August 11 in hot sultry weather and traveled over terrain consisting of sand and rocks until 10 o’clock that night in search of water but found none until the morning of August 12. They reached Fort Davy Crockett on the Green River in the northwest corner of Colorado the following day.

Fort Davy Crockett was a trading center for early fur trappers and could accommodate thirty men and their families within its protecting walls. Around the outside of the fort were teepees and lodges which provided winter quarters for the Snake Indians.

Oakley states they purchased enough meat from the Indians at the Fort to provide two meals and when that was gone the only other meat available was dog meat which they purchased from the Indians at the exorbitant rate of $15 per dog. The Indians
apparently raised dogs as a source of meat.

They planned to leave Fort Davy Crockett on August 17 for Fort Hall on the Snake River which was about 300 miles away in what is now eastern Idaho. Mr. St. Clair, one of the owners of Fort Davy Crockett, advised them they would not be able to proceed any farther than Fort Hall because of winter weather and if they stayed at Fort Hall during the winter months they would be compelled to eat their horses because there was no game to be had in the vicinity at that time of the year. Oakley, after considering these facts, realized they could not reach Oregon until spring, and admitted the outlook was gloomy. They were packed and ready to leave Fort Davy Crockett when they noticed a party of travelers coming from the west headed toward the fort. They decided to wait for them before leaving and when they arrived, learned they were a party of five persons led by Paul Richardson who had come from Fort Hall and were returning to the midwest. Richardson told them he had lived in Oregon for two years and had little good to report concerning the quality of the soil for farming and informed them Oregon had droughts seven months of the year and incessant rain the other five months. He also stated the Indians and the few white men there had ague and bilious fever the year around and the inhabitants were plagued by mosquitos. His description of the Oregon area was so discouraging that Oakley and Wood decided to join the Richardson party and return to their homeland in Illinois. They shook hands with Farnham, Smith and Blair, who planned to go to Fort Hall and spend the winter there before going on to Oregon in the spring. Oakley, Wood and the Richardson group headed east following the Platte River and met Shortess and those traveling with him at Fort St. Vrain where they had been for 42 days. Two months after they had left Bent’s Fort, Oakley and Wood returned to that Fort and stayed for two days to rest and get provisions. They then traveled along the Arkansas River back to Missouri and at Westport, near the present day boundary between Missouri and Kansas, Oakley and Wood parted company.

Wood stayed in Westport and Oakley went to Fort Osage on the Missouri River where he boarded a steamboat and five days later arrived in St. Louis. He then traveled by boat back to Peoria arriving on November 3rd.
Chapter V

FARNHAM AND SMITH TRAVEL SEPARATELY TO THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY

Farnham's two faithful companions, Obediah Oakley and Joseph Wood, were packed and ready to accompany him to Fort Hall when Richardson's discouraging account of the perils of traveling between Fort Davy Crockett and Oregon and his unfavorable report on the climate and farming prospects in Oregon convinced them to return to the midwest. Their departure was a sad occasion for Farnham who described this unhappy event as follows:

"It was painful therefore to part with them at a time when their services were most needed. Alone in the heart of the Rocky Mountains, a traveller through the range of the Blackfeet war parties, in bad health, no men save poor old Blair, and the worse than useless vagabond Smith, alias Carroll, to aid me in resisting these savages: I felt alone."

Farnham considered spending the winter at Fort Davy Crockett but realized that if he did it would not be possible for him to return to the States until the next year. This is the first mention on his part that he did not intend to become a permanent settler in Oregon. He decided to proceed to Oregon realizing his journey would be difficult if not impossible during the winter months.

He, Smith, Blair, and an Indian guide named Jim left Fort Davy Crockett on August 19 for the three hundred mile trip to Fort Hall. Their provisions consisted of a quantity of bulberry which were abundant in the valley of Brown's Hole, a dog which had been butchered, and two pounds of buffalo meat. The next day the Indian guide killed an antelope which weighed about forty pounds and with this preferred meat they discarded the dog meat.

On August 22 the guide was first to notice a lone horseman coming their way which they assumed was a hostile Indian scout. As the stranger came closer, Jim, the Indian guide, galloped out from their hiding place in the underbrush and greeted the stranger warmly. The stranger was the famous mountain man, Joseph L. Meek, who was returning to Brown's Hole to meet his Indian wife at Fort Davy Crockett. Meek mentioned he had lost a white horse the previous day and asked them to look for it and if they found it to return it to Fort Hall. They found Meek's horse on the 29th and took it with them to the fort. They arrived at Fort Hall the latter part of August and were greeted by a Mr. Walker, the Hudson's Bay Co. agent in charge of the fort, and were served a flagon of old Jamaica, wheaten bread, newly churned butter and buffalo tongues.

They exchanged their tired horses for fresh ones and obtained provisions of dried buffalo meat, sugar, cocoa, tea and corn meal. With another guide, Farnham, Smith and Blair left on September 4th for Fort Walla Walla. Their guide was a competent member of the Flathead tribe and had been employed for many years by the Hudson's Bay Company. They arrived at Fort Boisais some fifty miles from present day Boise, Idaho, about the middle of September. Fort Boisais was owned and operated by the Hudson's Bay Company and did a thriving fur trading
business with the Indians.  

Eighteen days later on the afternoon of September 22 they met a "Skyuse" Indian who was traveling with his wife and two sons to the Dr. Whitman mission on the north bank of the Walla Walla River near the present city of the same name. Farnham's account states that when he learned the Indian family was going to Dr. Whitman's mission he "determined to leave the cavalcade and accompany him there."

Farnham makes no further reference to his separation from Smith and Blair other than to state he left the "cavalcade." He and his Indian companions arrived at Dr. Whitman's mission on September 23. Farnham spent several days with Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and then went from the Whitman mission down the Walla Walla River and the Columbia River to the mission at The Dalles arriving there on October 5. He traveled down the Columbia with Daniel Lee, the nephew of Jason Lee, and stopped at the principal Hudson's Bay Station at Fort Vancouver where he met Dr. John McLoughlin and other officials of that company. Fort Vancouver was the headquarters of the Hudson's Bay Company in the northwest and was located on the north bank of the Columbia River opposite present day Portland. Farnham's account is complimentary to the officials of the Hudson's Bay Company during the time of his stay at the fort. When he left Fort Vancouver he proceeded southward up the Willamette Valley as far as the Jason Lee mission near present day Salem and spent approximately one month in the valley. While he was there several Americans complained to him about the lack of protection and interest on the part of the U.S. government in the area. They advised him they were at the mercy of Hudson's Bay Company for supplies, which, with its vast resources was driving out the American fur traders. The Hudson's Bay Company had even begun to force its law on the settlers and was making arrests for debts and crimes and in some cases sending violators to jails in Canada. The Americans asked Farnham to carry a petition back to Washington requesting the Federal government to extend its protection to their interests. He agreed to take their petition with him and to see that it was presented to Congress.

Farnham originally planned to spend the winter in Oregon and return to the States with traders employed by the American Fur Company. When he learned he could not depend on the representatives of that company for his return he went to the Hudson's Bay post at Fort Vancouver where he was advised one of their ships would be going to the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) and would then come back to California. He arranged for passage on that ship, and after a perilous journey down the Columbia to Astoria on the coast, boarded ship on December 4, 1839 and sailed for the Sandwich Islands.

Farnham left the "cavalcade" consisting of Smith and Blair on September 22. According to an Oregon Journal article Blair and Smith arrived at the Whitman mission a few days later. Blair, who was a millwright, decided to spend the winter at the Whitman mission and was employed in constructing a mill. He proceeded to the Willamette Valley in Oregon the following spring.

Smith's journal states "we" arrived at Fort Walla Walla on September 23. Fort Walla
Walla was on the Columbia River at the site of present day Wallula, Washington. It was there that he and Blair separated and Blair went east to the Whitman mission. Smith's journal states on September 24th he attempted to get passage on a Columbia river boat at Fort Walla Walla which was taking a load of beaver pelts to Fort Vancouver. The boat was loaded and carried 18 men, women and children and he was unable to obtain passage. Smith stayed at the Hudson's Bay Fort Walla Walla post until September 26. The Hudson's Bay representative in charge, V.C. Pembrone, not only was a "fine sociable and agreeable gentleman" but also provided him with books to read. On September 26 Smith started out with an Indian guide to finish his journey. He traveled by land down the Columbia River valley and met many Indians along the way with their horses loaded with salmon. He reports that on September 29 he had plenty of fresh salmon which he purchased at a cheap price of one load powder and ball for a small salmon and two loads for a large salmon. The Indians were very friendly. He reached the mission at The Dalles on September 30 and stayed at the house of Rev. Perkins, who, with his wife were friendly and hospitable. Smith described the country through which he traveled between Fort Walla Walla and Rev. Perkins' Mission at The Dalles as "one continued desert over precipices sand hills, Rocks and Banks of Drifted Sand." On October 1st and 2nd he helped raise a house at the mission which was the first frame house he had seen in the Oregon territory. He described it as 20 by 30 feet and 1-1/2 stories high. Still at the mission on Sunday October 6 he attended "Devine Services" both in English and Indian and reported the Indians were attentive and some were well dressed and added, "they are all thieves from the oldest to the youngest their is not an honest hair in their heads." Smith left the mission at The Dalles on October 7 and recorded nothing more until October 11 when he continued his journey to the "Promised Land through the valley of the Shadow of Death" and that day traveled fifteen miles and camped on the bank of the Columbia River. He traveled with an Indian guide over rough land in view of Mount St. Helen, Mt. Hood and Mt. Adams. On October 13 his sunset view of Mt. Hood was one of the most splendid sights that "I ever saw in my life." On October 16 he camped on the Clackamas prairie near Sandy River and the following day reached the Clackamas River. On October 18 he traveled twenty miles and stayed at the cabin of an old Frenchman named O.B. Shaw. His journal ends on Saturday October 19, 1840 when he arrived at the home of Thomas J. Hubbards. The final entry in his journal dated November 15 describes a beautiful rainbow which he had seen in bright moon light.
Chapter VI

SHORTESS TRAVELS ALONE

When Shortess and his seven followers separated from Farnham and his four followers at Bent's Fort on July 11, they traveled north along the east side of the Colorado front range to the South Platte River at a point near present Denver. They followed the South Platte downstream to Fort St. Vrain south of present day Greeley, which was owned and operated as a partnership between Charles Bent and Ceran St. Vrain. Shortess and his group waited there for six weeks for another party to arrive which they intended to join for the purpose of traveling to Brown's Hole.¹ While waiting for the arrival of the other party four of them went on a buffalo hunt to obtain a supply of meat. The second morning of the hunt they met two Sioux Indians, who were exhausted from traveling on foot, returning from a battle against the Pawnees and Omahas. The Indians stayed with them that day and night and left the next morning. The following morning when the Shortess party awakened seven of their horses were missing.

While the Shortess group was waiting at Fort St. Vrain for the arrival of the other westward bound party, two members decided to leave the group. James L. Fash (a.k.a. Trask) returned to Peoria and Charles Yates went to New Mexico. Robert Moore decided to spend the winter at Fort St. Vrain and wait for spring before resuming his journey.

It was September before the other party arrived and Shortess and the remaining four members traveled with them via the Cache La Poudre River to the Laramie River and crossed the continental divide to the Little Snake River; thence, by way of the Yampa River, to the Green River into Brown's Hole.

At Fort Crockett in Brown's Hole they met Dr. Robert Newell and Joseph L. Meek, both famous trappers and mountain men. Newell and Meek were going to Fort Hall to market their furs and advised the Peoria Party it would be impossible for them to reach Oregon that winter. Holman, Fletcher, Cook and Kilbourne decided to spend the winter in Brown's Hole at Fort Crockett. They built a cabin and settled in until spring. Shortess accompanied Newell and Meek to Fort Hall near present day Pocatello, Idaho a distance of some 300 miles. The Shortess account does not give the date of their departure from Fort Crockett but it must have been during the last week in September or early October. They waited until the snow melted in the lower elevations before leaving and then followed the Green River and Henry's Fork to Black's Fork to the area where Fort Bridger was later built. From there they followed the Bear River northwesterly across the southwest corner of Wyoming to Soda Springs in eastern Idaho; thence north to the Snake River, and arrived at Fort Hall eleven days after leaving Fort Crockett. Fort Hall located in Idaho near present day Pocatello was owned by the Hudson's Bay Company and Shortess speaks highly of Frank Ermatinger, the Englishman

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in charge of the fort. After a few days rest, having sold their furs and purchased their supplies, Newell and Meek left to return to Fort Crockett for the winter. Shortess reports that he was left exposed to the much abused Hudson's Bay Company but none of the personnel attempted to take advantage of his situation and instead treated him hospitably. Mr. Ermatinger was especially helpful in assisting him on his journey. Ermatinger had furs he wanted to send out and turned them over to a Canadian, named Sylvertry, and Shortess and two natives to take them 500 miles to Fort Walla Walla. After traveling about 18 miles they were caught in a snow storm and took shelter in a grove of trees until the following morning. The next day the sky was clear and they resumed their journey only to encounter a second storm which was so severe the two Indians deserted them and turned back.

Shortess continued with Sylvertry and fourteen pack horses in cold weather through barren desolate country following the Snake River valley. They completed the 300 mile journey between Fort Hall and Fort Boise in about two weeks time where they rested for one day and then continued over bare, frozen ground through the Blue Mountains of northern Oregon. For two days they plodded through snow from one to three feet deep with horses so weak from hunger they could hardly make their way through snow drifts. There was no conversation between the two travelers because Sylvertry spoke French only and Shortess English.

They finally reached mild climate when they arrived at the valley of the Umatilla River where the weather was spring-like and there was an abundance of green grass for the horses. Ten days after leaving Fort Boise they arrived at Fort Nez Perce, also known as Fort Walla Walla, on the south bank of the Columbia near the present town of Wallula, Washington.

At Fort Walla Walla Shortess was advised it was too late in the season (sometime during the month of November) to attempt to cross the Cascade Mountains. He then went to the Whitman mission at Waiilatpu six miles west of present Walla Walla, Washington where he spent the remainder of the winter. Shortess stayed at the mission until March 12, 1840 when he departed and traveled alone until he met an Indian chief with whom he traveled to the Deschutes River. At a point near the place where the Deschutes enters the Columbia the weather was so cold and stormy he spent the next day at the Indian village of his traveling companion. When the weather cleared he was escorted by the chief and four of his people to the mission at The Dalles about fifteen miles down the Columbia River. The mission at The Dalles was operated by Rev. Perkins and Rev. Daniel Lee, who was the nephew of Jason Lee, the missionary who had given the lecture in Peoria in September of 1838 which resulted in the formation of the Peoria Party. Shortess worked at the mission farm at The Dalles for two weeks and then accompanied Ben Wright, a Texan, and a Mr. Dutton who had purchased some horses from the Indians to sell in the Willamette Valley. They crossed the Cascade mountains in deep snow and ultimately arrived at Fort Vancouver on the north bank of the Columbia near present day Vancouver, Washington. After resting for two days they
crossed the Columbia to the south bank where they discharged the Indian guides, and traveled to the Pudding River. They followed that river to its confluence with the Willamette eight miles above present Oregon City and then went south along the Willamette to the Methodist Mission founded by Rev. Jason Lee on the east bank of the Willamette ten miles northwest of present Salem, Oregon. Shortess arrived at the Mission on Saturday April 18, 1840. On Monday he went to work for a Mr. O'Neil where he continued until the end of June and then worked for the mission. He did farm work and was paid $1.00 per day and board. There were six other men in the area who were former employees of the American Fur Company, one was an American and the other five French Canadians all of whom were well established farmers. Shortess remained to become a part of the settlement in the vicinity of the mission.
Chapter VII

HOLMAN, FLETCHER, COOK AND KILBOURNE ARRIVE IN OREGON

Four of those who left Bent’s Fort with Shortess on July 11, at the time the Peoria Party split up, remained at Fort Crockett in Brown’s Hole for the winter. Their names were Joseph Holman, Francis Fletcher, Amos Cook and Ralph Kilbourne and they followed the advice of Joe Meek and Robert Newell concerning the danger of attempting to travel through the mountains in the winter.\(^1\) After building a log cabin with a huge fireplace, they set out on a hunting trip, acquired a supply of meat and spent the winter months in the comfort of their cabin. Holman made saddle trees and gun stocks for the Snake Indians, who paid him well in beaver skins, the currency of the area. In the early spring, accompanied by Dr. Robert Newell, a trapper and mountain man, who was returning to his home in Oregon, they left Fort Davy Crockett and started for Fort Hall. Holman, writing his account many years later, recorded the starting date in March, however Newell, who kept a "Memorandum," states it was on February 7. The company encountered deep snow along the way that made progress almost impossible. It was an exhausting experience and at one time they went for four days without meat and were forced to devour Dr. Newell’s dog. Their horses were their security against starvation. Ultimately they reached an Indian camp where they purchased two dogs for a piece of scarlet cloth. There was no grass for the horses which survived on young cotton wood trees along the creek bottoms. Three days before reaching Fort Hall (near Pocatello, Idaho) they killed a lone buffalo which provided food until they reached the fort. At Fort Hall they traded three furs for dried salmon and corn and remained there for three weeks waiting for a company enroute to Fort Walla Walla with a load of furs.

When they left Fort Hall in early May the weather was much improved and they had a pleasant journey to Fort Walla Walla. From there they traveled down the north side of the Columbia, crossed to the south side at The Dalles, and proceeded down the Columbia to Fort Vancouver arriving the same day as the ship Lausanne which had been chartered by Rev. Jason Lee and had come from New England with 40 missionaries and supplies for the mission. Dr. McLoughlin, the Chief Factor of the Hudson’s Bay Company at Fort Vancouver, was astonished to see them and could hardly believe they had come on such a journey for the sole purpose of becoming residents of Oregon. He provided them with a meal and sent them down to his dairy for "something dainty" to eat after their rough diet in the wilderness. They traded their furs for new clothing at the fort. Beaver skins had a par value but coins were discounted 20%.

Robert Moore, the other member with the Shortess group at the time they left Bent’s Fort, stayed at Fort St. Vrain on the South Platte in northeastern Colorado and took up winter quarters there.\(^2\) He continued on to Oregon in the spring of 1840 according to Bancroft’s History of Oregon.\(^3\)

Thus, of the 19 members who made up the Peoria Party nine completed the
journey to Oregon. Those members were:

- T.J. Farnham
- Sidney Smith
- William Blair
- Robert Shortess
- Joseph Holman
- Francis Fletcher
- Ralph L. Kilbourne
- Amos Cook
- Robert Moore

Of the fifteen original members who left from Peoria seven reached Oregon. Shortess had joined the group at Independence and William Blair left the Santa Fe party, and joined at the crossing of the Arkansas River.

The first ones to leave the group were Owen Garrette and Thomas Pickett, both original Peoria members, and John L. Moore who had joined the Peoria Party at Quincy. These three joined an eastbound wagon train at 110 Mile Creek on June 7 and returned to their homes.

The second group to leave was Chauncey Wood of Peoria and J. Quinn Jordan, and Pritchell who joined at Independence. These three left on June 27 at the point where the Santa Fe trail crossed the Arkansas River, and joined another group headed for New Mexico.

Charles Yates and James L. Fash left the Shortess group at Fort St. Vrain. James L. Fash returned to Peoria and Charles Yates went to New Mexico. Obediah A. Oakley and Joseph Wood went as far as Fort Crockett in northwestern Colorado and on August 17 left with the Richardson party to return to the midwest.

Although Thomas J. Farnham was the first of the party to reach Oregon he did not stay long and left by steamer for the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii Islands). He later returned to California and traveled through Mexico (which at that time included Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas) to New Orleans and up the Mississippi and Illinois rivers to central Illinois where he arrived in the fall of 1840.

The men of the Peoria Party who spent a year of their lives beating their way through the frontier wilderness, plodding through snow drifts, sleeping in the rain, thirsting on the parched plains and at times surviving on dog meat, willingly made the sacrifices necessary to reach their goal. With the exception of Robert Moore, age 56, and William Blair, age 50, the others were 35 or under at the time they left Peoria. Amos Cook at age 25 was the youngest of those who completed the journey. Shortess was 36, Farnham and Smith were 35 and Fletcher, Kilbourne and Holman were 30.
They were still young men when they reached Oregon and, as might be expected of men of their caliber, played an important role in the development of the country they had struggled so hard to reach.

Their initial leader, Thomas Jefferson Farnham, urged them to settle in the Oregon territory in order to counteract the increasing influence of the Hudson’s Bay Company and the British Empire. Although Farnham himself did not settle in Oregon, the importance of his influence in encouraging others to become settlers cannot be overlooked.
Chapter VIII

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

While Farnham was visiting the Jason Lee mission in the Willamette Valley several American citizens, who were not connected with the mission, complained to him about the lack of protection by the U.S. Government. They pointed out their dependence on the British Hudson’s Bay Company for the purchase of clothing, household goods and supplies. The English parliament had enacted a law in 1837 which extended the civil laws of Canada over British subjects in Oregon and had appointed a justice of the peace for criminal matters and civil suits involving up to 300 pounds. Those guilty of criminal violations could be imprisoned in stockades of the Hudson’s Bay Company or sent to Canadian jails.1 Farnham advised the settlers to petition the U.S. government with their grievances. A petition, which was probably drafted by Farnham, was signed by sixty-two settlers urging the United States Government to extend its protection to the Oregon territory which was described as one of the most favored portions of the globe.2 Farnham’s enthusiasm for the Oregon country had waned by the time he reached the Sandwich Islands and in early January of 1840 he wrote that everything in Oregon had been much overrated except the seat of the Methodist mission.3 However, he took the settlers’ petition with him and sent it to Washington when he reached the Sandwich Islands. The document was presented to Congress but no action was taken. Prior to that, in 1838 when the Rev. Jason Lee returned to the East coast he carried with him a similar petition citing the dominant influence of Hudson’s Bay Company and the need for U.S. government protection. This earlier petition had also been presented to Congress but no action was taken.4

Farnham sailed from Oregon to the Sandwich Islands on a Hudson’s Bay Company vessel. Shortess concludes his account of Farnham’s stay in Oregon with the statement: "He returned to Vancouver, but, instead of raising the American flag and turning The Hudson’s Bay Company out of doors, he accepted the gift of a suit of clothes and a passage to the Sandwich Islands, and took a final leave of Oregon."5

On February 7, 1841, at Champoeg, the principal settlement in the Willamette Valley, an informal meeting was held to discuss the formation of a government.6 Rev. Jason Lee presided at the meeting and recommended the selection of a committee to draft a constitution but little else was done until the death of Ewing Young on February 15, 1841. The legal problem caused by the death of Ewing Young was one of the factors which brought about the realization of the need for an organized government. He was one of the oldest and more well to do settlers and after his funeral services on February 17, a meeting was held to determine what should be done with his estate. He left no will and had no known heirs. Dr. J. Babcock, a missionary, was chosen a Supreme Judge with probate powers in order to administer the Young estate. At this meeting a seven member committee was selected to draft a constitution and laws for the government of the region south of the Columbia River. It was suggested that the settlers north of the
Columbia who were not connected with Hudson’s Bay Company be admitted to the protection of the proposed government upon application. The meeting adjourned to the following day, Rev. David Leslie presided and Sidney Smith, a member of the Peoria Party, was chosen as one of the secretaries. A Committee of Organization was appointed consisting of nine members made up of the chairman, Father Blanchet, a Catholic priest, (who presumably was in sympathy with the aspirations of Hudson’s Bay Company), Methodist missionaries, three French Canadians, Robert Moore, a member of the Peoria Party, and William Johnson, a former Englishman, who was an independent settler. Officers were appointed, including Robert Moore, as a Justice of the Peace. It was decided, that until laws could be enacted, the laws of the State of New York would be the law of the land although there was no copy of those laws in the area. Another meeting of the Committee on Organization was scheduled for June 1, 1841 to be held at St. Paul’s Church at which time the Committee on Organization was to make its report. However the Committee on Organization did not present a report at the June 1st meeting because the Chairman, Rev. Blanchett did not consider such a meeting timely. Commodore Charles Wilkes of the U.S. Navy had been sent to the territory by the U.S. government to make a report on conditions in the territory and it was deemed advisable that the Committee of Organization consult with Commodore Wilkes and Dr. John McLoughlin, of Hudson’s Bay Company, to obtain their views concerning the formation of the government.

When the Committee on Organization met with Commodore Wilkes and Dr. McLoughlin, those two gentlemen spoke in opposition to the formation of a government and recommended that no action be taken because the matter was being considered by the U.S. Congress which would have the final decision. The Committee on Organization, having been convinced by Wilkes and McLoughlin that no further action should be taken at the time, did not make a report at the scheduled date in October and nothing more was done for two years.

The decrease in interest in the formation of a government was caused by several factors. The emergency created by the death of Ewing Young and the administration of his estate had been taken care of by the appointment of the Probate Judge. The population was still very small. In 1840 there were only 200 people, exclusive of natives, in the area which was 500 miles square, equal to the New England and Middle Atlantic States. Furthermore not all members of the population had the same interest as the American settlers. Clarke states the 200 consisted of the following:

- 36 American men - 25 of whom had native wives
- 13 Methodist ministers
- 6 Congregational and Presbyterian ministers
- 3 Catholic priests
- 13 Lay members of the Protestant missions
- 33 Women
- 32 Children
Of the total there were 137 Americans and 63 French Canadians. The primary concern of the missionaries was not the acquisition of land or even claiming the area for the United States, it was that of converting the natives to Christianity. The missionaries like all others who lived in the area depended on Hudson’s Bay Company for the goods and merchandise necessary for day to day living. Hudson’s Bay Company was an English company operating in a land claimed by the British government and did not favor the establishment of a government controlled by Americans.

The 200 souls who lived in the area for the most part were poor people who could not afford the taxes necessary to maintain a formal government. Furthermore, there was not even a printing press with which to print any laws which might be passed. The only law book in the area happened to be a copy of the Iowa statutes.

But by 1842 the number of immigrants was increasing and in 1843 a thousand new settlers were on their way. Settlers were concerned about their titles to the land they were homesteading and they felt that, in encouraging them to immigrate, the government of the U.S. had assured them protection and secure land titles. They brought with them cattle and other livestock which were subject to destruction by wild animals. As stock raising was one of the settler’s main sources of income, they considered the formation of a government necessary to combat the wild animal menace. A mass meeting was called, ostensibly to devise a means of protecting their livestock.

The meeting held February 2, 1843 became known as the First Wolf Meeting (to combat the wolf menace) at which time a committee of six was appointed to call a general meeting of all the inhabitants. The second meeting known as the Second Wolf meeting, was held the first Monday in March at the home of Joseph Gervais, a French Canadian. Most of the French Canadians were dependent on Hudson’s Bay Company and could be counted on to support the position of that company on the subject of the formation of a government. However Joseph Gervais, Etienne Lucier, and F. X. Matthieu were French Canadians who were not dependent on Hudson’s Bay Company and were men of independence whose feelings were more in accordance with those of the Americans. It is this historic Second Wolf Meeting which is considered the initiation of self-government in Oregon.

By this time Dr. McLoughlin, Hudson’s Bay Company representative, began to realize the great influx of American settlers could control the establishment of a government. He, as well as others, spoke at a number of meetings and debates. Dr. Elijah White, a deputy Indian agent for the United States who received a governmental salary of $750 per year, assured the populace that a government need not be expensive because with his governmental salary he could afford to serve as their governor without pay.
Commemorative monument at Champoeg State Park, Oregon showing names of those voting for the Provisional Government on May 2, 1843. Over ten percent of those voting in favor were members of the Peoria Party (continued on following page).
ALLEN DAVY
JOSEPH HOLMAN
JOHN EDMUNDS
JOSEPH GALE
RUSSELL OSBORN
DAVID WESTON
WILLIAM JOHNSON
W. HAUXHURST
WILLIAM CANNON
M E D O R E M CRAWFORD
JOHN L. MORRISON
P. M. ARMSTRONG
CALVIN TIBBETTS
J. R. ROBB
SOLOMON H. SMITH
A. E. WILSON
F. X. MATTHIEU

ROBERT MOORE
W. P. DOUGHERTY
L. H. JUDSON
A. T. SMITH
J. C. BRIDGES
REV. GUSTAVUS HINES
REV. DAVID LESLIE
JOHN HOWARD
WILLIAM McCARTY
CHARLES MCKAY
REV. J. S. GRiffin
GEORGE GAY
GEORGE W. EBBERTS
REV. J. L. PARRISH
REV. HARVEY CLARK
CHAS. CAMPO
O. W. J. BAILEY
The principal opponents to the formation of the government were Hudson's Bay Company and the Methodist Mission. The Second Wolf meeting ostensibly was limited to finding a solution to the wolf menace in order to protect the livestock. However, when that matter was taken care of, W. H. Gray, a lay missionary and farmer who had resided in the area for 8 years, introduced the question of formation of a government. He cited the danger to the settlers of an Indian outbreak and urged those assembled to take steps to protect the lives of the humans as well as that of the livestock. A committee of 12 was appointed to recommend measures for civil and military protection. Robert Shortess and Sidney Smith of the Peoria Party were named to that committee. The committee met late in March and among those who took part in the deliberations was Robert Moore also of the Peoria Party.

A meeting was called for May 2, 1843 at Champoeg for the purpose of voting on the question of formation of a government. Almost every male inhabitant of Oregon was in attendance at that meeting. Those who supported the British position, including the French Canadians, were instructed by Hudson's Bay Company to vote "no" and did so on every proposition submitted. After much debate a motion was made by George Le Breton to "Divide and Count." This was seconded by W.H. Gray whereupon Joseph Meek shouted "All who favor the committee's report and organization follow me." The count was 52 in favor of forming the government and 50 opposed. It is interesting to note that there were 51 French Canadians at the meeting, many of whom were or had formerly been employed by Hudson's Bay Company and as a block voted "no" according to instructions from the Hudson's Bay Company. But two of them, Etienne Lucier and Francois Xavier Mattieu, crossed over and joined the Americans. There were 50 men, most of whom were Americans, on the prevailing side in favor of forming a Provisional government and by joining them Lucier and Mattieu accounted for the majority in favor of the motion. Of the 50 American settlers on the prevailing side eight were British subjects including Francis Fletcher and Joseph Holman of the Peoria Party. Other members of the Peoria Party in attendance were Amos Cook, Robert Moore, Robert Shortess and Sidney Smith all of whom voted on the prevailing side.

The first Provisional Government was formed July 5, 1843. Some of the French Canadians who voted "no" at Champoeg took part in the formation of the government and apparently they all supported the government when it was created. Later when the Territorial Government of Oregon was formed most, if not all of them, became citizens of the United States.
May 2, 1843 is a memorable date in the annals of Oregon history. It was on that date that former mountain man and bear slayer, Joseph L. Meek, shouted, "All who favor the committee's report and organization follow me!" This was after the motion had been made to "divide" on the issue of formation of a provisional government. Six former members of the Peoria Party joined with Meek in favor of forming the government. They were Amos Cook, Francis Fletcher, Joseph Holman, Robert Moore, Robert Shortess and Sidney Smith and their names appear on the memorial monument at Champoeg along with the names of the others who attended the historic meeting and voted in favor of the formation of the Provisional Government.

Some of the Peoria Party members took an active role in the formation of the government, others were there to cast their votes. Sidney Smith was chosen one of the secretaries of the meeting held on February 18, 1841 to consider the formation of the government. He was also elected one of three captains at the historic May 2nd meeting at Champoeg.

The third petition to Congress requesting protection for the settlers and intervention by the U.S. government was known as the Shortess petition. It was circulated by Robert Shortess and signed in March of 1843. The first name on the petition is that of Robert Shortess.

Shortess was named to the committee of 12 men to report on the need for civil and military protection at the Second Wolf meeting. The adoption of that committee report at Champoeg on May 2, 1843 created the Provisional Government. Following the May 2, 1843 meeting a Legislative committee of 9 members was appointed and Robert Shortess was named to that committee. Shortess, "a member of Farnham's Peoria Party, who came in 1840, was a man of considerable attainments, widely read, and then generally regarded as an American extremist." At the public meeting on July 5, 1843 to consider the Legislative committee's report, Robert Shortess made motions and took part in the debate. Oregon historian, S.A. Clarke had this to say concerning Shortess' influence, "Robert Shortess probably had more influence on the legislation of 1843 and for moulding the destinies of the infant colony than any other man."

Robert Moore of the Peoria Party not only voted for the formation of the government at the May 2, 1843 meeting but also was one of the leaders in establishing the Provisional Government. He served on the 9 member committee appointed at the February 18, 1841 meeting to organize the government; and was appointed a Justice of the Peace at that meeting. He was a member, with Shortess, of the Legislation Committee following the May 2 meeting at Champoeg. When the Legislative Committee met in the granary of the Methodist Mission at Willamette Falls, it elected Robert Moore
as its chairman. Robert Moore, as chairman of the first Legislative Committee, presented the report of the committee to the public meeting on July 5, 1843. That document has been called the Magna Carta of the Northwest and embodied the organic laws and Articles of Compact. Following the adoption of the Committee’s Report, Robert Moore was reelected to the office of Justice of the Peace.

The six members of the Peoria Party who stood with Joe Meek to be counted in establishing the Provisional Government also made their contribution in settling the boundary dispute and securing the area for the United States.
Chapter X

THE BOUNDARY QUESTION

The location of the northwest boundary between the U.S. and Canada was not a matter of high priority during the early days of the mountain men whose activity was wilderness trapping and some trading with the Indians. The trappers were not permanent settlers and simply roamed through the wilderness in search of fur bearing animals which they and the Indians traded or sold to the Hudson’s Bay Company or the American Fur Trading Co. at their respective forts or rendezvous. The boundary question was not of importance to them because they claimed no land and therefore had no land title problems.

The same was true of the missionaries, the next group to proceed to the area, whose purpose was to civilize and convert the native peoples of the region. The missions which they established, such as the Whitman mission in southeastern Washington near Walla Walla, the Daniel Lee Mission at The Dalles and Jason Lee’s mission in the Willamette Valley were permanent establishments and engaged in clearing the land for farming but only to provide food for those residing at the mission. There was plenty of free land for everyone and the activities of the missionaries did not conflict with those of the fur traders. The missionaries were governed by the church hierarchy and had no need for temporal government.

But those who looked to the future beyond the era of the fur trappers and missionaries realized there would come a time when a permanent solution to the boundary question would be necessary. One such person was Thomas Jefferson Farnham and his feelings were concurred in by the other members of the Peoria Party. Therefore, one of the main goals of the Party at the time it left the Courthouse square in Peoria was to settle and permanently occupy the Oregon area as a means of counteracting the growing influence of the Hudson’s Bay Company Co. and the English.

When later settlers arrived and began clearing the land, building homes, and grazing livestock, all accomplished by months and years of their own labor, they too realized the need for stability and protection for their land titles. In a few cases, such as that of Robert Moore, land was purchased from local Indian chiefs, but in most cases the settler’s only basis for title to land was the occupation and claiming of a certain tract or area.

As the number of settlers, including Americans, English, and French Canadian immigrants and those who were giving up the fur trapping business, increased there were disputes between them and criminal offenses committed and it became evident some form of organized government was necessary.

The Americans at first looked to the missionaries and Hudson’s Bay Company as
stabilizing influences, but as their numbers increased they realized there was nothing official about either of those authorities and they sought recognition of their land claims and protection from the United States government. However, there was a real question of which government had jurisdiction over the area. The U.S. claim was based on the treaty of 1819 with Spain at the time Florida was acquired and to some extent by the Louisiana Purchase. The English were not bound by either the Louisiana Purchase or the Spanish treaty. England based its claim on the early explorations of Drake, Cook and Vancouver as well as their occupancy by Hudson's Bay Co. Clearly there could be no final securing of land titles until the boundary line dispute was settled.

At the same time a similar dispute existed over the U.S.-Canadian boundary in Maine. Daniel Webster and other influential easterners were much more concerned with the Maine boundary dispute than they were the problems of a few settlers in remote Oregon.

In 1818 the United States in negotiations with England offered to establish the boundary at the 49th parallel or 49 degrees north latitude. This offer was rejected by England who considered that line too far north. The temporary solution in the 1818 treaty which gave both countries the right to occupy the area jointly as far north as the 49th parallel merely postponed a decision of the issue. In 1826 the joint occupation agreement terminated and the U.S. renewed its offer to settle the matter at the 49th parallel but the English again refused and the joint occupation agreement was extended another 10 years. Again in 1845 the American offer to establish the 49° line was turned down by England. If the English had agreed to the U.S. proposal most of the problems of the settlers in the Willamette Valley would have been resolved because the line would have been far to the north of their settlements and they would have been under the jurisdiction of the U.S.

In the autumn of 1843 the expedition known as the "thousand immigrants" reached the Willamette Valley. This influx gave the Americans by far the greatest proportion of the population.1 The settlers could no longer wait for the two nations to resolve the boundary dispute and by 1843 had established their Provisional Government which contained provisions for recognition of land titles based on occupancy.

On June 4, 1840 Senator Linn of Missouri presented what was referred to as the Farnham petition to Congress. This was the petition, signed by 67 American citizens, which Farnham took with him when he left Oregon for the Sandwich Islands and later sent to Washington. The petition which prayed that the Federal Government extend its protection to Oregon was read and laid on the table and no further action was taken by Congress.2

On January 8, 1841 Senator Linn of Missouri introduced a joint resolution to extend the U.S. laws over Oregon. This was referred to a committee but no action was taken. On December 19, 1842 Senator Linn sponsored a bill to extend the U.S. laws
over Oregon. The bill passed the Senate in 1843 but was not acted on in the House.

On April 3, 1843 the Missouri Reporter took up the cause and stated,

"From the many indications we have witnessed during this Spring, it is probable that Oregon will soon contain numerous settlements, whether the General Government does its duty or not. Let Dr. Linn's Oregon bill be passed, and the rifles of American pioneers will settle the north western boundary question to the honor of this nation."

In March of 1843 the Shortess petition was circulated in the Willamette Valley but some settlers refused to sign the petition because of the harsh language critical of Dr. McLoughlin of Hudson's Bay Company. Mr. Abernethy who kept a store at Oregon City and Rev. Jason Lee refused to sign for fear it might injure their relationship with Dr. McLoughlin. The petition, presented to Congress on February 7, 1844 by Mr. Atchison, was followed by a bill to establish U.S. jurisdiction which never came to a vote.

By this time the boundary question had become a national political issue and at the Democratic National Convention in 1844 James Knox Polk of Tennessee was nominated for the Presidency after advocating annexation of Texas and Oregon. He defeated two other candidates, one of whom was former President Martin Van Buren who opposed those annexations. Polk then campaigned against, and defeated, the Whig candidate, Henry Clay, on the slogan "Fifty four-forty or fight." This referred to his contention that the Oregon boundary should be at 54° 40' north latitude giving the United States much more land to the north than the existing arrangement at the 49th parallel. The 54° 40' line would have extended the north boundary of the U.S. west of the Rocky mountains well into present British Columbia. Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri succeeded Senator Linn as the principal advocate of providing the protection of the U.S. government for the Oregon settlers and worked closely with President Polk after his election to secure the area for the U.S.

Prior to 1843 the immigrants who traveled from Independence over the trail had to abandon their wagons at Ft. Hall because of the difficult terrain beyond that point. The immigration of 1,000 people to Oregon in 1843 included those who brought their wagons over the entire route for the first time. The report that immigrants had driven wagons the entire way was encouraging news for those in the midwest who were contemplating the journey.

The increasing number of settlers was not conducive to the fur trading industry. As the number of settlers increased there were the fewer wild animals to provide the pelts for Hudson's Bay Company to send to Europe. Dr. McLoughlin realized the fur trading business south of the Columbia River would soon come to an end and so advised his superiors. Furthermore, it was increasingly evident to the English that they could not
hope to compete with the Americans in a race to colonize the area.

On August 9, 1842 Daniel Webster and Lord Ashburton of England worked out an agreeable solution of the Maine boundary dispute. The only remaining matter in dispute between the two countries was the northwest boundary and both countries were anxious to arrive at some solution because of the increasing tension in the region.

Secretary of State James Buchanan on February 26, 1846 wrote to the U.S. representative in England,

"Meanwhile the tide of emmigration from the United States to Oregon would be constantly swelling, and the danger of collisions between the British subjects and American citizens in that territory would be constantly increasing. In my opinion, in order to secure a peaceful solution there must be a prompt settlement of the controversy. There never was a question in which delay will prove more dangerous."

Hudson's Bay Company became alarmed and Dr. McLoughlin requested and obtained a war vessel with mounted cannon which was stationed in the river near Fort Vancouver, and an additional guard was posted to protect the fort. There was a rumor that some of the more radical elements among the Americans were threatening to burn the fort. This condition along with the decreasing fur trade and the difficulties of navigation on the Columbia resulted in a decision to move Hudson's Bay headquarters to Vancouver Island.

On June 6, 1846 the Secretary of State received an offer of settlement from the English which was the same as the American proposal of the 49th parallel with some slight modifications. President Polk had stated that although he had campaigned on the slogan of "Fifty four forty or fight" he would submit to the Senate any proposal of settlement the British might offer. This was done and the Senate ratified the treaty on June 10, 1846 thus settling the dispute. The treaty provided that all British subjects would receive legal title to their land south of the 49th parallel and Hudson's Bay Company and British subjects were to be free to use the Columbia River for navigation purposes. The treaty established the present U.S. Canadian boundary and included the land north of the Columbia, now the present State of Washington, although there were probably less than 40 Americans, including children, north of the Columbia at that time.

Although President Polk had advocated a line much farther north and several senators including Senator Semple of Illinois voted against the treaty, Polk was able to gracefully back away from the extreme position he had taken during the campaign by submitting the proposal to the Senate. The settlement of the boundary dispute in 1846 was followed by an act of Congress in August of 1848 which created the Oregon Territory thus assuring the settlers their land titles would have the backing of the United
States government.  

The presence and influence of the American immigrants in Oregon was the deciding factor in the establishment of the Provisional Government and the settlement of the boundary dispute. This fact was recognized by the Illinois Register of October 13, 1843 which stated, "The truth is, however, that the real safe guard to the title of the United States to Oregon must be found in the citizens of this country who immigrated to her rich and beautiful territory." Further, it was stated, "The clear truth is that the Americans out colonized the British and took away from them the control of Oregon, but, be it said, not by injustice or oppression."  

The historic significance of the Peoria Party, the first to travel to the Pacific area for the purpose of becoming permanent residents, is recognized by Oregon historians. The accounts of the success of their journey across the plains and over the mountains were read with great interest by those who were entertaining similar ideas. T.J. Farnham's book, Travels in the Great Western Prairies, the Anahauc and Rocky Mountains, and in the Oregon Territory was published in Poughkeepsie, New York with a second edition published in England and was circulated throughout the country and abroad.  

Oakley's account titled "Expedition to Oregon", which appeared in the Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer, was reprinted in The National Intelligencer, The New York Spectator, and The Philadelphia Magazine. The letter signed by Shortess, Holman, Fletcher, Cook and Kilbourne correcting some of the alleged misstatements in the Oakley account was printed in The National Intelligencer. Those accounts proved it was possible to make the trip to Oregon and encouraged those who were to follow with ox-carts and wagons, traveling over what was soon to become known as The Oregon Trail.  

The arrival of the seven members of the Peoria Party in the Willamette Valley, their active participation in establishing the Provisional Government, and their influence in bringing about the successful resolution of the border dispute which secured the area of the states of Oregon, Washington and Idaho as part of the union was the culmination of the plan conceived at the meeting in Peoria on March 28, 1839 when the Peoria Party was organized.
Chapter XI

AFTERMATH

Historian interest in the members of the Peoria Party does not stop with the formation of the Provisional Government. The settlement of the boundary dispute and a brief account of their personal lives following those events is of interest. However, before setting out those brief biographies it may be of interest to review the information available on those members of the Party, who for various reasons never reached "the Promised Land."

When Robert Shortess wrote his memories of the trip, he was thoughtful enough to include a report on some of those who dropped out along the way. Thomas Pickett, Owen Garrett and John W. Moore left the group on June 7, 1839 at 110 Mile Creek approximately 100 miles west of Independence, and returned to the States with an east bound wagon train. Pickett became an editor of a paper either in Illinois or Iowa. Owen Garrett became a steamboat pilot and, according to Shortess, "married rich" and settled down for life. Drown's Peoria Directory for 1844 (the earliest city directory) lists Owen Garrett as pilot on The Dove. John W. Moore, according to Shortess, was caught riding a horse "without the owner's leave" and "was boarded at the expense of the state for so doing."

Chauncey Wood, J. Quinn Jordan and John Pritchard (or Pritchel) left the group at the crossing of the Arkansas River prior to reaching Bent's Fort following the so-called mutiny. They joined the wagon train headed for Santa Fe and all three later returned to Peoria. It is not known what became of Pritchard or Jordan. Chauncey C. Wood is listed in Drown's Peoria directory of 1844 as a deputy sheriff of Peoria County. His son Chauncey C. Wood was active in Peoria County politics and served as supervisor and assessor in Richwoods township. His grandson, Chauncey E. Wood, was coroner of Peoria County from 1946 until his death in 1959.

James Fash, also known as James Trask, made it as far as Fort St. Vrain with the Shortess faction and then returned to Peoria. He is not listed in the Drown's Directory, but it does list a Fash family in the butcher shop business. Charles Yates left the group at Ft. St. Vrain and presumably went to New Mexico.

Obediah Oakley left Farnham at Ft. Davy Crockett on August 17, 1839 and returned to the midwest with the Richardson party. He had come to Peoria in 1837 and maintained one of the "stalls" in the Peoria village market. In 1843 he married Lydia Ann Dewey in Peoria and they had two children. He is listed in Drown's 1844 Directory as a tanner and currier. He joined the California gold rush in 1849 as an employee of Robert Forsyth and arrived in San Francisco January 12, 1850. He died at Marysville, California May 31, 1850.
Let us now see what the future held for the nine members of the Party who completed the journey to Oregon. In the case of one there is no trace of what became of him and like so many others he simply disappeared on the vast frontier. There are however bits of evidence of what the future held in store for each of the other eight members who reached the "promised land."

WILLIAM BLAIR

William Blair, the second oldest member of the Peoria Party, was 50 years old when he joined the group at the time the Peoria Party left the Santa Fe trading group just prior to reaching Bent’s Fort. He was a native of Arkansas and Farnham spoke very highly of his care and concern for the injured Sidney Smith. Blair left Smith a few days after Farnham decided to go his own way and instead of going on to Oregon went to work at the Clearwater mission near present Lewiston, Idaho.

While Farnham was visiting the Whitmans at their mission he mentions that Mr. Ermatinger, Hudson’s Bay agent at Fort Hall, arrived at the Whitman Mission with Blair who had become quite lonely and discouraged. Farnham states it was his great pleasure "to make his (Blair's) merits known to the missionaries, who needed an artisan to construct a mill" and that Dr. Whitman then contracted with him for his services, and Blair was happy. Farnham then adds "I sincerely hope he may forever be so." The next spring Blair arrived in the Willamette Valley where he stayed for two or three years and then went to California. Nothing more is known of his life thereafter.

THOMAS JEFFERSON FARNHAM

Thomas Jefferson Farnham, who was leader of the group when it left Peoria, was born in Vermont and was a practicing lawyer in Tremont, Illinois and the owner of farmland near Groveland in Tazewell County. He met his wife Eliza Wood Burhans in Tremont and they were married July 12, 1836. They had three sons one of whom died in infancy and another at the age of 7 years. The other son, Charles Haight Farnham, was born in 1841 and lived to adulthood. Farnham’s health was not good and one of the reasons he chose western travel was to recuperate. He and Robert Moore were the only married members of the Peoria Party. In his account he refers to his poor health but the nature of his ailments is not mentioned. It was his wife, Eliza Burhans Farnham, who made the flag with the motto "Oregon or the Grave" which was the banner of the Peoria Party. There is some evidence she may have traveled with the group for the first two or three days before returning to Peoria. He was the first member of the Peoria Party to reach Oregon and the first to leave. Farnham sent the settlers’ petition requesting the U.S. government to take control of the area, to Washington from the Sandwich Islands, spent the winter there, and sailed for California in the spring.

Upon his arrival in California on April 18, 1840 he learned of the Graham Affair which involved some Americans who had been imprisoned by the Mexican authorities.

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It seems that in early April the Mexican Governor of California, Alvarado, was advised that a band of Americans with a few Englishmen, led by the American Isaac Graham, were planning a revolt to depose him. Graham and his cohorts were considered rude, uncouth, trouble makers and many were former sailors, illegally in California without passports, who had "jumped ship" after arriving in California. During the night of April 7 Graham and his cohorts were seized by Alvarado's men and were sent to prison in Monterey by ship in leg irons. Within the next few days some 150 other "undesirables" mostly Americans and other foreigners, were likewise seized and deported to prisons as far away as San Blas.

When Farnham arrived from Hawaii on the Don Quixote he undertook to act as the attorney for the alleged conspirators most of whom were ultimately released and remained in California. Complaints from the American ambassador, Larkin, to the governor resulted in the court martial of Alvarado's deputy who had led the forces which imprisoned the Americans, but he also was acquitted.

Farnham later wrote an account of the Graham Affair which Bancroft, the historian, described as partisan and containing many untruths. Shortly thereafter Farnham left California and traveled across Mexico to New Orleans, up the Mississippi River to St. Louis and then up the Illinois to Peoria where he arrived in 1840.

After his return to Illinois the Farnhams moved to Poughkeepsie, New York where Farnham wrote his book Travels In The Great Western Prairies, the Anahuac and Rocky Mountains and the Oregon Territory which was published in Poughkeepsie, New York in 1841 and in London in 1843. His book was widely read and is still considered a valuable source of descriptive material of early forts and the life styles of the missionaries, Indians and mountain men. After completing his book Farnham left his wife and two young sons in Poughkeepsie and went to San Francisco in 1846 where he engaged in the practice of law. According to handwritten notes made by David Proctor of Peoria, Illinois in an interview with Charles H. Farnham, the only surviving son of Thomas J. Farnham, his father constructed the first vessel made by a white man on the Pacific coast and operated the same between San Francisco and Sacramento during the gold rush. This enterprise cleared $70,000.00 which he deposited in the San Francisco bank of Runkel and Sherman (General John). He withdrew $20,000.00 to buy a farm and build a house at Santa Cruz and the balance was lost when the bank failed after Sherman had left the bank.

Farnham died in San Francisco on September 12, 1848 at the age of 44. When his wife Eliza who was then living in Boston, learned of his death she with her two young sons went to California by sailing ship by way of Cape Horn in 1849 to settle his estate. She lived on and cultivated the Santa Cruz farm for five years during which period her youngest son died. She later returned to New England with her older son, Charles H. Farnham, who was then about 13 years of age.
RALPH LEE KILBOURNE

The written accounts of some members of the Peoria Party refer to the incompatibility among members during their long trek to Oregon. Four members who traveled together the entire way seemed to have endured the discomfort and dangers of the trip without developing personal animosity toward each other. They were the four whom Shortess left at Fort Davy Crockett in Brown’s Hole in the fall of 1839. They chose to remain there for the winter and proceeded to Oregon the following spring. They were Joseph Holman, Francis Fletcher, Amos Cook, and Ralph L. Kilbourne.

Ralph L. Kilbourne was born in Lawrenceville, Pennsylvania on July 4, 1810, one of six children of Ina and Sally Ross Kilbourne. (The name is spelled Kilbourne in the accounts of the Peoria Party and for that reason he will be referred to with that spelling here, however it appears that in later years the family name was usually spelled Kilburn.) He had a younger sister Eliza Ann who married the Hon. Norman Purple who lived in Peoria, Illinois, which may be the reason Ralph came to Peoria in the year 1837. He was 30 years of age at the time he joined the Peoria Party and the Shortess account refers to his occupation as that of restaurant keeper. He joined the Shortess faction when the Party was dissolved at Bent’s Fort and spent the winter of 1839 with Holman, Cook and Fletcher at Fort Davy Crockett in Brown’s Hole. During the spring of 1840 those four traveled together to Oregon.

Kilbourne went to the Willamette River valley and in the late summer of 1840 he joined Joseph Gale and six other men in the construction of a sailing schooner which they named The Star of Oregon. Their reason for building the ship was to provide a means of getting to California because there were no young white women in Oregon to marry, and also to catch sea otters along the California coast. As the work progressed they had difficulty obtaining rigging and supplies from the Hudson’s Bay post at Fort Vancouver. One of the boat builders, a man named Wood, had come to Oregon earlier with Ewing Young. Dr. McLoughlin suspected at least some of the Young party were guilty of stealing horses in California and would have nothing to do with them. They attempted to obtain the rigging by inducing some French settlers to go to the Hudson’s Bay post pretending they needed the cordage for farm harness. However, McLoughlin learned of the subterfuge and refused to sell the rope. Later, Lieutenant Charles Wilkes of the United States Navy, in the area on an exploratory mission for the government, was able to convince McLoughlin that with the exception of one man who was no longer with the group, the others were men of good repute and with that assurance McLoughlin sold them the supplies and rigging they needed.

The ship was launched in the Willamette River in May of 1841 and Lt. Wilkes issued them the necessary sailing papers in the fall of 1841. However it was not until August 26 of 1842 that they commenced the journey down the Willamette to the Columbia. They then sailed down the Columbia for 80 miles to the Pacific. The Star of Oregon dropped anchor in Yerba Buena (San Francisco) harbor on September 17,
1842. Most of the other men returned to Oregon but Ralph Kilbourne remained in California and became a permanent settler in the Napa Valley.

California was Mexican territory at the time Kilbourne arrived and in 1843 he became a Mexican citizen. On December 21, 1845 he married Maria Pope at Calistoga in a ceremony performed by Captain John A. Sutter. In 1849 Kilbourne built a grist mill and a lumber mill in Napa for Edward Bale, a wealthy landowner, and as compensation was given three-fourths of a league of land (approximately 1400 acres). In the same year he was elected Alcalde (Mayor) of the Napa/Sonoma district and later was elected Treasurer of Napa County. He ultimately owned over 4000 acres of land and in partnership with another man imported fruit trees which became the basis of the Napa Valley orchards.

His older brother Wells Kilbourne and his family immigrated to California in 1852 and joined Ralph in a farming operation which included 6000 acres.

Ralph L. Kilbourne died at Rutherford, California on September 25, 1879 and left four children surviving. He is considered one of the important early pioneers of Napa County.

The remaining members of The Peoria Party took up residence in Oregon and played important roles in the establishment of the Provisional Government. They are included with those settlers whose possession of the land was the most influential factor in claiming the land south of the 49th parallel for the United States.

ROBERT SHORTESS

Probably the most colorful, and in many ways the most influential, member of that group was Robert Shortess.

W.H. Gray an Oregon Pioneer and historian wrote the following description of Robert Shortess:

"Robert Shortess possessed a combination of qualities such as should have formed one of the best and noblest of men; with a good memory, extensive reading, inflexible purpose, strong hate, affectionate and kind, sceptical and religious, honest and liberal to a fault, above medium height, light-brown hair, blue eyes, and thin and spare features. His whole life is a mystery, his combinations a riddle. He early entered with heart and soul into the situation and condition of the settlements, and stood for their rights in opposition to all the combined influences in the country. As a religious man he has not faith; as a skeptic he is severe on all alike. The country owes much to him for his labor and influence in combating slavery and shaping the organic policy of the settlements."

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Caroline Dobbs in her *Men of Champoeg* states Shortess was a native of Ohio, born in 1797. However, when Shortess lists the members of the Peoria Party in his account he states he was born in Pennsylvania and was 36 years old when he joined the Peoria Party in 1839 (which would indicate he was born in 1803). He was well educated and had been a school teacher before moving to Missouri where he engaged in farming before he joined the Peoria Party at Independence, Missouri. His difficulty in getting along with Farnham appears early in his account when he relates a conversation they had before leaving Independence. When Farnham told him it was the intention of the Oregon Dragoons to take possession of Oregon for the U.S. and drive out Hudson’s Bay Company, Shortess mentioned that Farnham’s force was limited to 19 men and that some were English and asked if they would fight against their countrymen. Farnham’s reply was “Oh yes, they will not turn traitors; if they do, by God we’ll shoot them.” Shortess then commented that this reply gave him a pretty good indication of Farnham’s character. He states there was dissension within the group by the time it reached Independence and in his opinion the company was disorganized. He apparently had done some previous traveling across the prairies and was not too impressed with the manner in which Farnham led the group. In any event he became the leader of the faction which brought about the ouster of Farnham as leader and the breakup of the party into two separate groups at Bent’s Fort.

After reaching Oregon, Shortess became one of the leaders of the movement to establish the provisional government in opposition to the influence of Hudson’s Bay Company. His is the first of sixty-five signatures on the second petition sent to Congress requesting the Federal government to recognize and protect the claims of the Americans which historians refer to as the Shortess Petition. Following the establishment of the Provisional Government he became County Judge of Clatsop County; was elected the first school clerk of District Four in Astoria and was active in politics, serving on the Committee on Legislation for the Provisional Government. He was a United States Indian sub-agent for several years and married a Nez Perce Indian woman who was the daughter of a Nez Perce Chief. They had one daughter, Adelaide, who attended The Young Ladies Boarding and Day School conducted by the Sisters of Notre Dame in Oregon City. In addition to her basic education, she studied piano, voice and painting. Her father taught her French and German and encouraged her to become well educated.

When the Oregon Institute was founded in 1842, Shortess contributed $100 to help finance it. Among the papers found after his death was one which stated: "This will certify that Robert Shortess is a proprietor of Multnomah Circulating Library and is entitled to all its rights and privileges from this day forward." This was signed by W.H. Gray, Librarian, Willamette Falls.

Shortess perfected a land claim under the Donation Land Act in the vicinity of Astoria and at one time owned valuable property within that city. It would appear that Shortess spent most of his life in Oregon in Clatsop County near the mouth of the Columbia River. This is the area of the city of Astoria, founded by the Astor Fur Co.
When Lt. Neil M. Howison was sent by the U.S. Navy to investigate the Columbia River area for the government his report in part reads as follows:

"A snug cove on the eastern side (referring to an isthmus known as Tongue point where the Columbia meets the ocean) affords secure landing for loaded boats, flats and rafts coming down the river, without the exposed navigation around the promontory. Mr. Shortess, an American, claims two miles along the river and a half mile back, including all this point, by virtue of the organic law of Oregon, and an hereditary title acquired through his Indian wife, who was born somewhere hereabouts."

In the year 1850 Shortess wrote to Governor Joseph Lane requesting the help of the territorial government to remedy the deplorable condition of the native Indians resulting from their abuse by unscrupulous white men. In his letter he referred to the suggestion that the Coastal Indians be sent to the interior with the Snake Indians. Shortess deplored this suggestion and the manner in which the Coastal Indians were treated. He closed his plea with:

"I have resided upwards of six years at the mouth of the Columbia River, and I consider them (the coastal Indians) a high minded race with more honesty, generosity and gratitude than are usually found among whites when uncontrolled by law or conventionality of society."

In 1870 Shortess sold most of his property and went to live with his daughter who was married and lived about 15 miles from Astoria. He spent the last years of his life there and died May 4, 1878. His body was brought down river in a row boat and buried in Astoria cemetery. S.A. Clarke in his Pioneer Days of Oregon History wrote:

"Robert Shortess probably had more influence on the legislation of 1843 and for moulding the destinies of the infant colony than any other man."

JOSEPH HOLMAN

Joseph Holman was born in England in 1815. He went to Canada when he was 19 to visit an older brother and two years later traveled to Peoria. He was working as a cooper and wagon maker in Peoria when he attended the meeting called by Farnham to organize the Peoria Party. One of the Flathead Indians, Indian Tom, whom Jason Lee brought with him when he stopped in Peoria on his way East, was ill and decided to stay in Peoria to recuperate. During his stay in Peoria he spent part of his time at the wagon-making shop where Holman worked. His glowing description of the Oregon area, and the abundance of salmon in the Columbia river, convinced Holman there was a great future there for a barrel maker to make containers for the shipment of salmon back east, and at the age of 24 joined the Peoria Party. His trade as a wood worker served him
well during the winter he spent in Brown’s Hole where he acquired many pelts from the Indians in exchange for the saddle trees which he made.

After reaching Oregon, Holman followed his trade as carpenter and cooper and also taught at the Methodist Indian school near Salem. He married Almira Phelps in 1841 and they lived on a farm near Salem. He was an original member of the First Methodist Church in Salem and subscribed $100 toward founding the Oregon Institute in 1842 and was a member of the Board of Trustees. The Oregon Institute later became Willamette University.

Holman became a naturalized American citizen on November 2, 1836 and perfected his claim to 640 acres of land in Marion County, Oregon under the Donation Land Act on July 18, 1853.

He enlisted in the Oregon Rangers in 1851 to protect against Indian depredations but was never called to service. He was one of the founders of Salem, Oregon and was a merchant there from 1849 to 1853. Holman engaged in sheep raising and was one of the first breeders of pure-bred sheep in the Northwest which led to his association with the Willamette Woolen Manufacturing Company, the first company to engage in the production of wool on the Pacific coast, and served as a director of that company from 1849-1853. In 1854 the Oregon legislature appointed Holman a commissioner for the Eugene, Oregon City and Portland Railroad, however that railroad was never built.

He promoted the raising of flax seed and the formation of the Pioneer Oil Works, which converted the seed to linseed oil. Holman built the Chemeketa Hotel and the Holman Block in Salem where the Oregon Legislature held its sessions from 1860-1874. He was superintendent of the State Capital, one of three commissioners of the penitentiary, and was one of the first Trustees of Willamette University. After the death of his first wife, Holman married Libbie Buss in 1875. He died five years later and is buried in the IOOF cemetery at Salem, Oregon.

FRANCIS FLETCHER

Francis Fletcher was born in Yorkshire, England on March 1, 1814. His family came to Canada in 1825 when he was 18 years old. Seven years later, in Peoria, he joined the Peoria Party. He and his companion, Amos Cook, were staunch friends during the trip west and continued their close relationship after reaching Oregon, where they took up adjoining land claims in Yamhill County. Later they decided one would work for wages to earn money while the other developed their claims. In 1842 Fletcher went to work at the Wheatland Mission while Cook developed the claims.

In 1843 Fletcher married Elizabeth Smith, who had come to Oregon the previous year with an immigrant party. They lived on the Fletcher claim until his death. In 1848 Fletcher enlisted as a private in the Cayuse War but never saw active service. Fletcher
Joseph Holman
(Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society #57284)
became a naturalized U.S. citizen on September 9, 1852.\textsuperscript{18}

Like Holman, he, too, was elected one of the first Trustees of Willamette University when its charter was granted in 1853. Fletcher and Cook, with their families, lived in the town of Lafayette and became leading citizens of the area. An interesting side light is found in the diary of Rev. George Gary in the Oregon \textit{Historical Quarterly} Vol. 24 which reads,

"Last night a little after midnight, Mrs. Fletcher gave birth to a fine boy in a tent on the ground; I suppose there was not time enough for her to be taken to her house about a mile and a half off; so the campground (evidently referring to the grounds of the mission where services were being held) became the place of the child’s nativity."

Fletcher died on October 7, 1871 and left his widow, six sons, and two daughters. He was well known for his fine character, frontier kindliness and generosity.\textsuperscript{19}

AMOS COOK

Amos Cook was born in Maine in 1816 and came to Peoria at the age of 22 in 1838. He attended the Rev. Jason Lee lecture in Peoria and became enthralled with the opportunities offered in Oregon. He was a member of the Peoria Party when they assembled before the door of the Peoria courthouse, and unfurled their banner inscribed "Oregon or the Grave." Before leaving they renewed their pledge never to desert each other and affirmed their intention to take possession of the Oregon area as U.S. citizens and permanent settlers. Amos Cook was the youngest member of the group and the last survivor.\textsuperscript{20} He and Fletcher were the first two settlers in Yamhill County and he was present at Champoeg to cast his vote for the Provisional Government. He was appointed constable at the mass meeting which followed the May 2, 1843 decision to form the government. He perfected his claim to 640 acres of land in Yamhill County under the Donation Land Act.

After establishing his claim he engaged in the mercantile business in the town of Lafayette and built some substantial buildings there. He was an enterprising citizen of the town, a man of great energy, honorable, thrifty and prosperous. He married Mary Francis Scott on August 16, 1853, who came to Oregon from Tazewell County, Illinois with her parents by ox team in 1852, and they had four daughters. He died at Lafayette on February 3, 1895 and his grave is in the Scott Cemetery near Forest Grove, Oregon.

SIDNEY SMITH

Sidney Smith, the most controversial member of the Peoria Party, was born in Amsterdam, New York in 1809 the son of Captain John Smith, who served in the Vermont Dragoons in the War of 1812. He was a grand nephew of Ethan Allen of
Revolutionary War fame. Smith worked in Syracuse, New York in a salt works for a time and then moved to Ohio where he studied medicine for three years before coming to Peoria in 1838. Mrs. J. F. Calbreath, a daughter of Sidney Smith, described him as a very handsome man, six feet in height, with dark hair and a dark beard. His eyes were large and gray in color. He had a strong frame, was very muscular and could catch the lower limb of a tree and chin himself when he was 60 years of age.

He kept a day by day account of the journey of the Peoria Party and although a poor speller and grammarian, his journal is nevertheless a valuable historical record and it is reprinted in Hafen's To The Rockies and Oregon.

He must have been present at the courthouse yard in Peoria in May 1839 when the group assembled to begin its journey and probably joined in the pledge that the members would not desert one another. This pledge was of special importance to him because at the time he was injured by negligently handling his rifle, according to Farnham, there were those who wanted to abandon him on the prairies. Reading between the lines of Farnham's account one gets the impression that Smith was one of the participants in the daily arguments and bickering. In an interview about 1903, Mrs. J. F. Calbreath, a daughter of Sidney Smith, stated there was discord between the members of the Peoria Party and on the day Smith was shot he and Farnham had quarreled but had later patched up their differences. The night of the quarrel a shot was heard in the camp and Smith came out of the tent wounded by a rifle ball. At first Smith thought Farnham had shot him and he was going to kill Farnham but the other men in the party convinced him there was no hole in the tent and therefore Farnham could not have shot him from the outside. Smith then realized he had been injured when his own gun had fallen over. This account by Smith's daughter, Mrs. Calbreath, some 64 years later differs from the other accounts by members of the party and her account is apparently based on her recollection of conversations with her father.

Farnham does not mention Shortess by name but there can be no doubt his disparaging remarks at the time of the so-called mutiny were directed toward Shortess. In the case of Smith, however, Farnham pulls no punches. When it was suggested that Smith be abandoned on the prairie, Farnham's comment was "however unworthy Smith might be, we could neither leave him to be eaten by the wolves, nor to the mercy of strangers." Later in describing Smith's agony in traveling by horseback with his injury, Farnham states, "Base though he was in everything that makes a man estimable and valuable to himself and others, Smith was really an object of pity . . ." When Farnham and his cohorts left Bent's Fort he stated his group consisted of three sound men and one "wounded and bad one." At the time Farnham's group met the three trappers in Colorado one of them addressed Smith as "Mr. Carrol" and Farnham relates that Smith then engaged the trapper in private conversation who thereafter referred to him as Smith. Smith in his account states he had been acquainted with the trapper in St. Louis. There is no further explanation why Smith had previously used a different name.
Sydney Smith
(Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society #5316)
nor is there any explanation concerning the time or purpose of his visit to St. Louis. Finally when Farnham left Fort Davy Crockett with Blair and Smith he referred to him as "the worse than useless vagabond Smith, alias Carroll." Farnham expressed his dismay when Oakley and Wood left him to return to Illinois but when Farnham left Smith in northern Idaho weeks later he made no reference to him but merely stated he left the "cavalcade."

Just what it was about Smith which caused Farnham to refer to him in such a derogatory manner one does not know from his journal. When Shortess in his account refers to those who settled in Oregon he states that Smith was living at the time and added "Of his moral qualities it is not necessary to speak, as he is well known." Smith’s nickname in the settlement was "Blubermouth" because of his habit of talking constantly.

When Smith reached Oregon, which he referred to as "the promised land," he was employed by the Methodist mission at The Dalles to help raise the frame for a building. Later while he was working at the Methodist Mission north of Salem he heard that Ewing Young needed help at his farm on the Chehalem River. Young, who was a well established livestock raiser, had become ill with stomach trouble and was irritable and difficult to work for. According to an interview with Smith's daughter many years later, Young swore at Smith but Smith "returned it with good measure" which won the respect of Young. Smith had studied medicine in Ohio before going to Peoria and he was able to treat Young’s ailments until the time of his death. When Young died in 1841 Smith purchased the Young claim to the Chehalem Valley and the cattle from his estate for between $200 and $300. When the meeting was held on February 18, 1841 following Young’s funeral to discuss the matter of administering the estate and the formation of a government, Smith was elected one of the Secretary’s of the meeting. He took an active part in the movement to form the Provisional Government and was chosen to one of the offices at the Champoeg meeting.

He married Mianda Bailey who had come to Oregon with a later immigrant party. The Bailey family had stayed with Smith while they were perfecting their claim to adjacent land. Smith went to the gold rush in California in 1849 but was forced to return to Oregon following an attack of scurvy. He brought $3,000 in gold with him when he returned from California. In 1846 Smith and his wife planted an acorn over the grave of Ewing Young in the Chehalem Valley near Newberg, Oregon, the only monument for Young’s grave. The oak tree which grew was still standing in 1931.

When the Donation Land Act was passed Smith claimed and received 640 acres which was the amount allowable under the Act, but it was only a small part of the tract he claimed as successor to Young’s squatters rights. In 1856 Smith moved to LaFayette in Yamhill County and engaged in the retail business for the next 10 years when he retired to his farm. He was in the minority with his fellow settlers when he took a strong stand in favor of the South during the Civil War.
As time went on he accumulated land and was a wealthy man owning one thousand two hundred eighty acres of land at the time of his death on September 18, 1880. He had five daughters and provided them with a good education. His wife Mianda lived to be almost 90 years of age and died in 1918.  

The Portrait and Biographical Record of the Willamette Valley by Chapman states:

"Sidney Smith was a man whose life was filled with kindly deeds, whose highest ambition was to help his fellow man and to assist in the establishment of the commonwealth, to which he gave the best years of his life. There was no man who figured in the early history of the state who did more for the immigrants than he did. A large hearted man of kindly nature, no one ever sought his aid and did not receive it."

ROBERT MOORE

Robert Moore, one of the Peoria Party men of Champoeg, was born in Franklin County, Pennsylvania, on October 2, 1781 and was fifty-nine years old and the oldest member of the Party when he reached Oregon. He had served as a soldier in the war of 1812 and later became a major in the Pennsylvania militia. He and his wife, the former Margaret Clark, and children moved to Missouri in 1822 where he was elected to the Missouri legislature in 1830. In 1835 he moved to Illinois and at the time the Peoria Party was formed he owned and operated an Illinois River ferry service in Peoria.

While in Peoria in 1835 he founded and platted the town of Osceola in Putnam (now Stark) County, Illinois in anticipation that immigrants coming from the East would settle there. The development of the town failed to materialize which may have been one of the reasons he joined the Peoria Party. The plat of the townsite of Osceola was vacated in 1845.

When Shortess and those who were traveling with him left Fort St. Vrain in northeastern Colorado in the fall of 1839, Moore remained at the fort and spent the winter there. He arrived in Oregon the following year but there is no record of his journey or who his traveling companions were.

Robert Moore, because of his experience in the Missouri legislature, was one of the few early Oregon settlers who had any government experience when he was called upon to assist in the formation of the Provisional Government.

When the settlers met after Ewing Young’s funeral service on February 18, 1841 he was chosen one of the members of the committee to draft a constitution and laws. Commodore Wilkes of the U.S. Navy and Dr. John McLoughlin advised against the formation of the government at a later meeting and the movement to create a government was abandoned; however, Moore was elected to the office of Justice of the Peace at that meeting. At the Second Wolf Meeting on February 22, 1843 he was elected to the
Legislative committee to draw up a code of laws. When the committee convened on May 10 Moore was chosen chairman of the meeting. The document which that committee drafted was the basis for the new government and has been referred to as the Magna Carta of the Northwest. It was presented to the people by Robert Moore at Champoeg on July 5 and was ratified. At that meeting Moore was re-elected Justice of the Peace.

When Moore lived in Missouri he was a good friend of his family physician, Dr. Lewis Linn, who later served in the U.S. Senate and became chief sponsor of legislation to require the U.S. to provide protection for Oregon settlers and to formally claim the Oregon region as U.S. territory.

Unlike most of the settlers who simply went upon the land and claimed it as their own, Moore actually purchased his land on the west bank of the Willamette River at the falls from Chief Wanaxha of the "Wallamut" Indians. Moore developed his land, which was opposite the town of Oregon City, into a city and in 1845 the Legislature, at Moore’s suggestion, named it Linn City in honor of Moore’s friend Senator Linn.35

Moore obtained a charter from the Provisional Government to operate a ferry between Linn City and Oregon City, built and operated flour and lumber mills and a warehouse on the bank of the river, and constructed a breakwater at the falls in the river so boats could unload cargo. He owned and operated two steamers on the river. Later he engaged in iron ore smelting.

In 1847 James Marshall Moore, a son of Robert Moore, arrived in Oregon and took the land claim next to his father’s along the river. He built and operated a lumber mill and a grist mill and owned a dry goods and grocery store in Linn City.

Linn City, like most of the other areas in the year 1848, suffered from the exodus of able-bodied men who rushed to the California gold fields. The gold seekers returned in the winter of 1849-50 well supplied with gold dust and brought with them the inflation which resulted from the discovery of gold and made it difficult for men like Moore to obtain employees for his business operations.

Robert Moore established a post office at Linn City on January 1, 1850 and on April 18, 1850 purchased The Spectator, the only newspaper in the area, which was published across the river in Oregon City. He, his daughter and granddaughter continued to publish this paper until 1855 which had a circulation of 500 to 600 and was first published bimonthly and later as a weekly in competition with the Portland Oregonian. The Spectator often contained favorable articles on the advantages and opportunities offered by Linn City.

In 1861, four years after Moore’s death, a fire destroyed the grist mill, warehouses, docks and even a river steamer tied to the docks at Linn City. This disaster
marked the beginning of the end to the development of the town.

Moore joined in signing a petition to Congress in 1850 opposing those who advocated confiscating the land of Dr. John McLoughlin of Hudson's Bay Fort Vancouver. After the creation of the Provisional Government he strongly favored recognizing the claims of the British subjects to the land south of the 49th parallel.

Moore was described as a dour, irascible, opinionated Scotsman and when his church changed from Presbyterian to Congregational he withdrew and organized his own Presbyterian church which met in his house. His wife Margaret never joined him in Oregon and died in St. Louis in 1848. In 1851 Moore married his second wife, Mrs. Jane Apperson, of Portland. Robert Moore died September 2, 1857.

The members of the Peoria Party who settled in Oregon were hardy individuals who survived the hardships and hazards of the long journey over harsh unfriendly country. They were men of ambition with the ability to earn a livelihood and provide for their families on the frontier.

When the need arose to establish a provisional government the men of the Peoria Party actively supported the cause, served on committees and attended public meetings to ratify the committee reports. They developed their homestead farms to the point where they could feed and cloth their families, built woolen mills, engaged in the mercantile business, built and operated steamers to ply the river, built and operated iron ore smelters and managed newspapers. They donated funds to build schools, churches, city buildings, and an institute of higher learning. Shortess not only personally taught his daughter French and German but found time to write the governor to advise him of the deplorable treatment of the native people by some white men.

When the boundary dispute was settled and the provisional government formed, Robert Moore was one of those who insisted on fair treatment for Dr. John McLoughlin, Hudson's Bay Company representative. He also insisted the newly formed government should aid the French Canadians and British subjects by recognizing their claims to the land they had developed, and advocated that Canadian and English subjects be given the right to become U.S. citizens.

The members of the Peoria Party who settled in Oregon are recognized by historians as the first organized group of pioneers to travel to the Northwest for the purpose of claiming and occupying that land as American citizens. They proved that it was feasible and worthwhile to make the overland trip across the plains and mountains for the purpose of settling that land and claiming it for the United States. They led the way for the thousands who would follow the Oregon Trail to the Northwest whose presence and occupation of that land encouraged the Congress to grant the area territorial status and later statehood.
The example set by the members of the Peoria Party, who joined with the men of Champoeg to form the basis of securing the claim of the United States to the Northwest, is that of the traditional pioneer traits of physical prowess, industry, and courage. Their insistence on fair treatment for their former antagonists set the stage for what has become the longest period of amicable coexistence along an international boundary.
Chapter I Endnotes

1. The Main Street Presbyterian Church was in the 400 block of Main Street where the Commerce Bank parking deck is now located.

2. Rev. Jason Lee is considered by historians one of the most influential persons in early Oregon history. When he returned to New England he was successful in raising additional money for his mission as well as recruiting more followers. With additional followers, supplies and equipment he returned to Oregon by ship in 1840 and continued his missionary work for several years.

In 1934 the Board of Home Missions and Church Extensions of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Philadelphia sponsored a centennial anniversary of Jason Lee's original journey from Boston to Oregon in 1834. The Centennial celebration included the "Jason Lee Special," a motorized covered wagon which traveled from Boston to Oregon over substantially the same course Lee had traveled on horseback 100 years earlier.

The Jason Lee Special came to Peoria from Chicago on June 12, 1934. Peoria was chosen as one of the cities on the itinerary because of the importance of Rev. Lee's speech in 1838 in encouraging the formation of the Peoria Party. Earnest East Papers - Peoria Public Library.

3. The Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer, Apr. 24, 1839.


5. Reprinted in Niles Register May 25, 1839.

6. The story of the Donner Party from Springfield, Illinois is much better known than the history of the Peoria Party because of the tragic mishap of the Donner Party when it became snowbound in the High Sierras near what is now known as Donner Pass. However, the Donner Party did not leave Springfield until 1846 some seven years after the departure of the Peoria Party.

7. Eliza Burhans Farnham had a career equally as illustrious as that of her husband. When she and her husband moved to Poughkeepsie, N.Y. in 1840 she became matron of the women's division of Sing Sing prison. She was the author of the book describing pioneer life in Central Illinois titled "Life in Prairie Land." After her husband died in California in 1849 she went to California and was a school teacher and later the matron of the female division of the Stockton, California Insane Asylum. In 1858 she addressed the National Woman's Rights Convention in New York. She also wrote "Women and Her Era," and "California Indoors and Out." She was active in promoting a petition to Congress to abolish slavery and was a volunteer nurse at Gettysburg in 1863. She died in New York City in 1864 at the age of 49.
An excellent biographical sketch of Eliza Farnham by Dr. John Hallwas appears in his introduction to the reprinting of *Life in Prairieland* by Eliza Farnham, University of Illinois Press, 1988.


Chapter II Endnotes

1. Oakley account in *Peoria Register and North Western Gazetteer* Nov. 8, 1839 reprinted in *To the Rockies and Oregon*, Hafen.

2. The group carried a large tent with a high center pole in which all of the members were able to sleep and be protected from the weather.

3. Sidney Smith’s account in diary form is reprinted in *To the Rockies and Oregon* by Hafen and Hafen who copied it from the original located at Pacific University, Forest Grove, Oregon.

4. *To the Rockies and Oregon*, by Hafen which was reprinted from Transactions of the Twenty-fourth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Associations for 1896.

5. Oakley journal, *To the Rockies and Oregon* by Hafen, p. 45.
Chapter III Endnotes

1. This reference is obviously to Shakespeare's "Richard III."

2. Neither Farnham's journal nor the accounts of the other members contain any specifics concerning Smith's personality or character to explain why Farnham and others referred to him in such derogatory terms.

3. LeRoy Hafen, the compiler of a collection of manuscripts of early travelers under the title To the Rockies and Oregon, states Denver was founded in 1858 and the Shortess account must have been written after that date.

4. Holman was interviewed in 1878 by S.A. Clarke at Salem, Oregon and the interview is printed in To the Rockies and Oregon by Hafen and Hafen.
Chapter IV Endnotes

1. Smith mentions in his journal that he was acquainted with one of the three trappers, a Charles A. Warfield of St. Louis.

2. "The Fort is a hollow square of one story log cabins, with roofs and floors of mud, constructed in the same manner as those of Fort William. Around these we found the conical skin lodges of the squaws of the white trappers, who were away on their 'fall hunt,' and also the lodges of a few Snake Indians, who had preceded their tribe to this, their winter haunt. Here also were the lodges of Mr. Robinson, a trader, who usually stations himself here to traffic with the Indians and white trappers. His skin lodge was his warehouse and buffalo robes were spread upon the ground and counter, on which he displayed his butcher knives, hatchets, powder, lead, fish-hooks, and whiskey. In exchange for these articles, he receives beaver skins from trappers, money from travelers, and horses from the Indians. Thus, as one would believe, Mr. Robinson drives a very snug little business. And indeed, when all the 'independent trappers' are driven by approaching winter into the delightful retreat, and the whole Snake village, two or three thousand strong, impelled by the same necessity, pitch their lodges around the Fort, and the dances and merry makings of a long winter are thoroughly commenced, there is no want for customers." The foregoing description by Farnham is taken from "John Jarvie of Brown's Park" by William L. Tennent, Bureau of Land Management Utah Cultural Resources Series No. 7.

3. Oakley described the dog meat "excellent, much better than our domestic beef, and next to buffalo." John Jarvie of Brown’s Park by William L. Tennent, Bureau of Land Management Utah Cultural Resources Services No. 7, p. 10.
1. **Travels in the Great Western Prairies, the Anahuac and Rocky Mountains and the Oregon Territory** - Farnham reprinted in *Early Western Travels* by Reuben G. Thwaites Vol. 28.

2. Joseph Meek later became a leading citizen of the Willamette Valley and was one of the leaders in establishing the Provisional Government of which he was the first sheriff. He was the messenger of the early settlers to Washington, D.C. to obtain the cooperation of the Federal government to provide protection for the American settlers. On his return he was appointed U.S. Marshall and served as guide to the group which escorted the first American governor of the Oregon Territory to Oregon.

3. The U.S. government later maintained a fort known as Fort Boise at the same site which became an important station on the Oregon Trail.


5. Malcom Clark, Jr., in *Eden Seekers*, p. 123, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1981 states that Farnham had been forced to trade his clothing for a horse and Dr. John McLoughlin, the Hudson’s Bay representative at Fort Vancouver, gave him a suit of clothes and even provided him with a formal suit so that he would not be out of place at dinner. Dr. McLoughlin also made the arrangements for Farnham’s passage on the Hudson’s Bay ship, *Nereide*, for his trip to the Sandwich Islands.


7. St. Pierre Pemborne was a native of Quebec, had fought in the War of 1812 and then went to work for The Hudson’s Bay Co. He earned a reputation of kindness toward American emigrants.

8. Sidney Smith Journal - *To The Rockies and Oregon* by Hafen.

9. Smith was poor speller and his sentence structure and grammar leave much to be desired however, his journal is valuable because it was written at the time and in many places is quite descriptive. It indicates that his recovery from his gunshot wound was successful because he makes no further reference to it.
Chapter VI Endnotes

1. Short account - reprinted in *To The Rockies and Oregon* by Hafen.

2. The mission was established in 1836 by Dr. and Mrs. Marcus Whitman who maintained it until they were massacred by Indians in 1847.
Chapter VII Endnotes

1. Most of the material concerning these four is taken from the accounts of Holman, Cook and Fletcher which are reprinted in *To The Rockies and Oregon* by Hafen.

2. Shortess account reprinted in *To The Rockies and Oregon* by Hafen.

Chapter VIII Endnotes

1. Early Western Travels, R.G. Thwaites.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.


5. To The Rockies and Oregon (Shortness Account), Hafen.


8. The report of the committee was adopted which called for the destruction of all wolves, bears, panthers and other wild animals known to be destructive to cattle, horses, sheep and hogs. Each member was assessed $5.00 to pay for bounties which ranged from $1.50 for a lynx to $5.00 for a panther. General History of Oregon, p. 328.


10. Francois Xavier Matthieu had escaped from Canada in 1838 because of his connection with the French rebellion of 1837. He had been staying with Lucier in 1842-3 and had often mentioned the tyranny of the British in Canada which had caused the rebellion.

Etienne Lucier is an excellent example of the independent strength of personal convictions of the pioneer personality. He had come to Oregon in 1812 as a trapper and worked for the Astor Fur Company which later was sold to the Northwest Co. He was with the Hudson’s Bay Company when it took over the Northwest Company in 1821 and continued in the employ of the Hudson’s Bay Company until 1827 when he became the first settler in the Willamette Valley. He was a close personal and business friend of Dr. McLoughlin who bought Lucier’s wheat, protected him, and sold him supplies at low cost. He held Dr. McLoughlin in high esteem and wished to do whatever he asked him. He knew that as a French Canadian he was expected to vote against the formation of a government and he know his priest expected him to do so. He deserves great credit for voting his conscience and casting his vote in favor of the government. Oregon Historical Quarterly, Vol. 13, p. 116.

Chapter IX Endnotes


2. Ibid., p. 332.


Chapter X Endnotes


7. The important problem of securing the settler’s land titles was partially solved by the laws formulated by the Legislative Committee of the Provisional Government which were ratified at the mass meeting at Champoeg July 5, 1843. Those laws provided that each settler was entitled to a square mile of land, i.e. 640 acres. Some changes were made in the land law by the newer settlers who arrived in 1843 and 1844 and succeeded in electing their own representatives to governmental offices.

After Oregon became a U.S. territory in August of 1848 an official survey was made establishing township and range lines which replaced the previous land descriptions based on metes and bounds references to geographical landmarks. The enactment of the Oregon Donation Land Act of 1850 recognized the grants made by the previous laws prior to December 1, 1850 and provided that new settlers after 1850 were to be entitled to 320 acres per claimant with an additional 320 acres to his wife in her own right.

Chapter XI Endnotes


2. Holman account in To The Rockies and Oregon, Hafen, p. 125.


4. Farnham’s book, Travels in the Great Western Prairies, The Anahuac and Rocky Mountains and The Oregon Territory was recently republished in 1983 under copyright by Pacific Northwest National Park and Forests Association which acquired it from Gale F. Fletchall, M.D. and Rodney R. McCallum. In the introduction to this republication, Rodney R. McCallum states that Farnham was hired by Horace Greeley and other eastern influences to make the trip and relate his experiences to those interested in moving West. The original publication of Farnham’s book was by Greeley and McElrath, Tribune Buildings in New York.


6. "The first work done was to find a stick sufficiently long and sound for her keel. This was found on Sauvie’s Island, i.e. Wapato Island, and cut down and found to be forty-eight feet and eight inches long; which was roughly hewed and transported to Swan Island, and there dressed to its proper dimensions, and put in place; and from that time the work went rapidly on, notwithstanding the opposition of the Hudson’s Bay Company, which had been anticipated - in fact, no piece of work ever met with more discouraging prospects. Even Felix [a ship’s carpenter] became discouraged and quit the work when it was a little over half completed. This was owing partly to the company not having the means to pay him for his work, and partly on account of scarcity of provisions." the foregoing description of the construction of The Star of Oregon was written by Joseph Gale in 1888 and was published in the Oregon Pioneer Transactions for 1891 and reprinted in The Mountain Men and Fur Traders by LeRoy Hafen, Arthur Clark, Co., Glendale, California 1969.

7. This is the same John Sutter who left his wife and five children in Switzerland and escaped to France in 1834 to avoid his creditors and the debtors prison. Two weeks after he arrived in France he notified his wife from Havre that he was going to America and would never return. When he arrived in the U.S. he made his way to St. Louis where he engaged unsuccessfully in the trading business between St. Louis and Santa Fe. He then went to Westport, Missouri (adjacent to present day Kansas City) where he was a financial failure in the retail business. Following that in April of 1838 he joined a caravan of the American Fur Company heading west. They stopped at the fur trader’s rendezvous in western Wyoming at the same time Rev. Jason Lee was there on his way
back east. From there he joined a westward bound group of fur trappers and missionaries led by Frank Ermatinger of the Hudson’s Bay post at Fort Hall. Sutter then went to the Methodist mission on the Willamette River via Fort Boise and The Dalles on the Columbia River. His destination was California and he arrived there in the summer of 1939 after first going to the Sandwich Islands and Sitka.

Sutter settled in the Sacramento River Valley, became a Mexican citizen, built a fort to protect northern California from marauding Indians and received in return land grants totaling 229 square miles from the Mexican governors. He used native help to pioneer the raising of livestock, grains and fruit. During a revolt in 1845 against the Mexican governor he raised a contingent of troops which he led in support of the governor. In the sporadic fighting which ensued he was captured, temporarily confined and then returned to his fort in northern California in April of 1845. However, he again became heavily in debt and, when gold was discovered on his land, his farming operation was overrun with gold seekers and squatters. Following the Mexican War, California became a U.S. Territory. Sutter in the years lost most of his land to swindlers and squatters whose claims were favored by the new laws. His creditors were continually pressing him for payment and forced the liquidation of his California interests. In 1865 he and his Swiss wife, who had joined him sixteen years after he had left Switzerland, left California for good and moved to Washington, D.C. He spent the next 15 years lobbying Congress for restitution of his financial losses over the loss of his California land. Although a Congressional Committee recommended a payment of $50,000.00 to him, the bill failed to pass.

Sutter died in Lititz, Pennsylvania on June 18, 1880.

History of Napa and Lake Counties, Slocum & Bowen.
History of Rancho Locoallomi in Napa County by John T. Beales.
The writer also acknowledges the receipt of information from Barbara S. Neelands and Mr. Channing Kilburn of Calistoga, California.


10. Yates, Fletcher, Holman, Joseph Wood, Jordan and J.L. Moore all were born in England and some if not all may have considered themselves English citizens.

11. Shortess account, To The Rockies and Oregon, Hafen, p. 97.


14. Indian Tom’s full name of Thomas Adams was given to him by Jason Lee and after he recuperated from his illness in Peoria he made his way to Boston where he rejoined the Jason Lee missionary group. He returned to Oregon on June 1, 1840 with the missionary group in the sailing ship Lausanne, via Cape Horn and was living in the Willamette Valley in 1878 when S. A. Clarke interviewed Holman.

15. Almira Phelps was a teacher at the Indian school at the Jason Lee mission and had come to Oregon with Rev. Jason Lee on the ship Lausanne when he returned from the East. That ship came into the Fort Vancouver port on the Columbia River the same day that Holman and his three companions arrived.


20. To The Rockies and Oregon, Hafen
   Men of Champoeg, Dobbs.
   The Oregonian, February 5, 1895.
   History of Oregon County, H.W. Scott.

21. To The Rockies and Oregon by Hafen and Men of Champoeg by Dobbs.

22. Interview of Fred Lockley appearing in History of the Willamette Valley edited by H.O. Lang, Himes and Lang, Portland, Oregon 1885.

23. Thwaites, Early Western Travels, Vol. 28, p. 98.


25. Ibid., p. 277.

26. To The Rockies and Oregon - Shortess account, Hafen, p. 118.


28. Ewing Young was in San Francisco 1834 when he met Hall Jackson Kelley who originally came from Boston with grandiose plans for colonizing the west and driving out Hudson’s Bay Company. Kelley convinced Young that Oregon was the land of the future and with a few followers they drove a herd of 100 horses and mules through northern California to Oregon. On the way a gang of horse thieves joined them. When their association with the horse thieves reached Oregon, McLoughlin of Hudson’s Bay Company assumed they were part of the gang of horse thieves and would have nothing
to do with them. Nevertheless Kelley was able to borrow seven pounds from McLoughlin and returned home on a Hudson's Bay ship.

29. In 1837 Young went back to California and returned to Oregon with 600 herd of cattle which formed the basis of the cattle industry in Oregon.

30. According to the aforesaid interview with Smith's daughter, Mrs. Calbreath, Young told Smith before he died that he had married a Mexican woman and had a son. After Young's estate had been liquidated and the Provisional Government was formed, the proceeds from his estate was used to build a jail at Oregon City and Dr. McLoughlin donated the lot on which the jail was built. In 1854 Joaquin Young, the son of Ewing by his Mexican wife, came to Oregon and claimed his father's estate. He stayed one night at Smith's home and Smith told him about his father's death and took him to the grave site. Joaquin Young sued the Provisional Government and the court ruled in his favor. Joaquin Young then sold his judgment claim to O.C. Pratt for a small amount and left. Later the Provisional legislature passed a bill stopping payment on the judgment and Pratt was left holding the bag. The law was later changed and Pratt collected approximately $5,000.00 on the judgment.


33. Ibid., Vol. 19, p. 342.


35. Although Linn City did not survive as a city there is Linn County in Oregon named after Senator Linn.
WILLIAM HATCHETTE VAUGHAN
(Uncle Billy)
1822-1906

Photograph taken circa 1901 (Courtesy of Champ Vaughan)
William Hatchette Vaughan may not have realized that joining the 1843 wagon train to Oregon would be the most significant decision of his life; however, he was well aware that an adventurous experience lay ahead.

William, who later earned the nickname "Uncle Billy," was born on January 17, 1822, in Rutherford County, Tennessee, to James Vaughan and Nancy Hatchette. The Vaughans were of Scotch-Irish ancestry and his parents were both from Virginia. William was the ninth oldest of his father's 16 children and most of the family moved during the fall of 1842 to Christian County, Missouri. A few years before leaving Tennessee, arrangements were made through an older brother and a Tennessee congressman for William to attend the West Point Military Academy. However, his father was very much opposed, and William's great aspiration was crushed. In retrospect, if William had attended West Point, he likely would have found himself engaged in the Civil War as a Confederate Army officer. As fate would have it, William was to receive another calling.

As he neared his twenty-first birthday in early 1843, William became obsessed with reports and publicity about the great land to the far west, the Oregon Country. As early as 1838, Missouri Senator Lewis Linn introduced legislation providing for extension of the United States Government to the Oregon Country and offering land for those who would emigrate. Senator Linn's bills, with a land grant provision, were an annual appearance in Congress, and when one of these bills passed the Senate in 1843, it was taken as a promise to reward immigration to Oregon with land. William was intrigued with the idea that American settlers were needed to secure the region as a new territory for the United States. The purported promise of receiving as much as 1,000 acres of free land in the fertile Willamette Valley was most attractive and too good an opportunity to ignore.

During early 1843, plans were being finalized for the first great migration to Oregon. By early May of 1843, William had made his decision and anxiously departed the family home to join the emigration gathering at "Spanish Encampment" near Independence, Missouri. There is little doubt that his father's negative reaction, regarding the West Point career opportunity, had influenced William's decision to travel west. No other members of his immediate family chose to go to Oregon, and it was the last time William would ever see his parents, brothers, and sisters. An offer came from Peter G. Stewart for William to join up with Stewart's family to be part of the first wagon train to go all the way through to Oregon. William would alternate with Stewart's two sons by driving ox teams over the 2,000-mile Oregon Trail to The Dalles on the Columbia River. Considerable resources were needed to afford the long trip, and even though they migrated to Oregon to better themselves, the large majority of the early emigrants were of substance and standing in the communities they left behind. The high
cost of securing the necessary outfit and provisions to migrate to Oregon barred a large number of people who might otherwise have answered the call to free land.6

The medical missionary, Dr. Marcus Whitman, had enthusiastically encouraged American settlement of the Oregon Country. In the Spring of 1843, he and his son were returning to Whitman's Wailatpu Mission after an urgent trip to the east coast and decided to travel with the history making wagon train. Dr. Whitman effectively served the wagon train as a physician and trail advisor.7

The Oregon company commenced its long six-month journey in the early morning of May 22, 1843, and as the covered wagons rolled across the Great Plains towards the majestic Rocky Mountains, William was about to experience a rude awakening to the dangers and challenges that lay ahead. Only four days out, they came to the Kansas River which was running swift and deep due to the spring runoff. In order for the wagon train to veer north to meet the Platte River, the Kansas River had to be crossed. John Gantt had just joined the wagon train as the pilot, and a decision was made to attempt a river crossing at a location just west of the present city of Topeka. Since the river was too deep for fording, a crude raft was constructed to ferry the wagons and most of the people across to the other side. The livestock had to swim across, and William volunteered to help keep the livestock moving in the cold river. Suddenly, William was immobilized by some painful cramps and began to struggle and disappear beneath the surface. James Nesmith came to his rescue and after considerable effort managed to get William's lifeless body to the shore with the help of Peter Stewart. In an attempt to revive him, a wooden keg was brought to the scene by a young man named Edward Lenox, and William was laid over the keg and rolled back and forth to remove the water from his lungs while Stewart and Lenox pumped his arms. At first there was no response, but he began to show signs of life and was finally revived. William refused to be discouraged by the near catastrophe, and after a day of rest, he was fully recovered and ready to press on.8 James Nesmith, who was primarily responsible for saving William's life that day, kept a diary of the 1843 emigration and would later serve Oregon both as a United States senator and as a member of the United States House of Representatives.

After the crossing of the Kansas River, Peter Burnett was selected to be the wagon train captain; however, due to a series of disagreements with some of the men, he resigned after only a few days and the wagon train was divided into two separate columns or companies, each with its own captain. William Martin would lead the "light column" which consisted of 72 wagons, and Jesse Applegate headed the "cow column" which had about 50 wagons and most of the livestock. The Stewart family and William traveled with the Martin company. In turn, those who selected California as their destination would follow the leadership of Joseph Chiles.9 After arriving in Oregon, Peter Burnett would remain only a few years and relocate to California where he would become that state's first governor in 1850.
During the Spring and Summer of 1843, significant events were occurring at the wagon train's destination which directly impacted that hardy band of Oregon Trail pioneers. At the historic Champoeg meeting on May 2, Willamette Valley settlers voted in favor of local rule and organized a provisional government. In July, the original constitution was approved agreeing to adopt the provisional laws and regulations until such time as the United States formally extended jurisdiction to the Oregon Country. A prime interest in establishing the provisional government was the promotion of the security of land claims. The constitution provided that qualified individuals, including new immigrants, were allowed to hold a land claim of no more than one square mile, or 640 acres. It is no disparagement to say that whatever other motives may have led Americans to Oregon, the most immediate was farmland, to be purchased by improvement and development, not cash. And it is a truism, of course, that there are no property values without government.¹⁰

As evidenced by the large number of emigrants that died from illness or accident along the route, the long journey to Oregon was extremely difficult and filled with hardships. Approximately 120 wagons and nearly 1,000 people began the trek westward; however, several wagons were abandoned at Fort Hall and the Chiles party eventually separated from the Oregon company and headed for California. The 1843 Oregon company was the first wagon train to pass beyond Fort Hall, and there was virtually no trail to follow which made the going even more difficult. Although Indians frequently stalked the travelers, the wagon train did not encounter any hostility. The sound of howling wolves was common at the night encampments. Near the end of the journey, food supplies were low and livestock was greatly depleted.¹¹

A number of unique events and unusual sights greeted William and his fellow travelers. Some of the more notable experiences included a buffalo stampede; several encounters with Indians; a close view of the Chimney Rock formation; and the passing visit of Lieutenant John Fremont with his party of U.S. Army Corps of Topographical Engineers who were conducting a survey expedition of the Oregon country. The Stewart family, with whom William had been traveling, celebrated a special event when Peter Stewart’s wife gave birth to an infant girl on July 1.¹²

"Our immigration of 1843 had a pilot engaged to pilot us through to Fort Hall, by the name of Captain Gant [John Gantt]; he was an old mountaineer. From Fort Hall on, Dr. Whitman did put up notices at the watering places on [the] Snake River to Fort Boise, and perhaps on to Grande Rhonde [Ronde], I would not say. These notices directed us the distance between the watering places. There were only a few notices, as we found water every few miles, probably 18 miles apart, but that was principally coming down [the] Snake River to Fort Boise."¹³

After leaving Farewell Bend on the Snake River, one of the most difficult segments of the entire trail was encountered in the hard pull up the Burnt River Canyon and across Virtue Flat in what is now Baker County, Oregon. In late September, the wagon train
passed by a rocky bluff known today as Flagstaff Hill which proved to be a memorable breakpoint for the weary travelers. They found a remarkable vista - a downward slope into the lush Powder River Valley bounded on the west by the heavily forested Blue Mountains. The view made quite an impression because no more than a scattering of trees in one place had been seen for several months. Further north, a very steep descent at Ladd Hill brought the wagon train into the Grande Ronde Valley which was consistently acclaimed by the pioneers as one of the most beautiful and inspiring valleys that the wagon train had encountered on the trail from Missouri. William was one of several volunteers that were assigned the task of cutting down trees to clear a wagon path through the dense Blue Mountain forest.

"They cut their own roads through the Blue Mountains, surmounting every obstacle that presented itself. They came by way of what was called the Meacham [Meacham] route. The way they scaled the steeps, forded the rivers and made their way over the new country, can never be fully appreciated by the uninitiated."

Before the 1843 wagon train arrived at its destination, there were fewer than 400 Euro-Americans in the entire Oregon Country. The migration of 1843 added some 875 people, including at least 268 men over the age of 16, and although it was numerically surpassed by later migrations, it was a decisive increment in Oregon's American settlement. Originally, William strongly favored driving the British, specifically the Hudson's Bay Company and its members, from the Oregon country; however, the generous provisions and treatment the weary travelers received from Dr. John McLoughlin at the end of the journey changed his mind.

Actually, the early Willamette Valley missionaries, trappers, and settlers did not see the 1843 wagon train arrive as a single unit. Prior to completion of the Barlow Road in 1846, it was not possible for the wagons to reach the Willamette Valley from The Dalles without rafting a hazardous river route to Oregon City, a distance of 114 miles. Most of the wagons were traded or abandoned at The Dalles, but some actually reached the Willamette Valley by river. When the wagon train arrived at The Dalles in mid-October, William and the Stewart family came down the Columbia River in canoes to Fort Vancouver, and Indians brought them up the Willamette River to Oregon City, the end of the Oregon Trail.

William arrived in Oregon City in early November, and he immediately went to work for the Hudson's Bay Company as a fence and barn builder. This gave him an opportunity to secure some provisions and livestock before locating and settling a land claim. Also, by delaying his departure into the wilderness until springtime, he would not have to face a cold, wet winter without adequate shelter in place.

"My first work after I arrived in Oregon City was clearing out Main Street from down about Pope's tinshop to the Abernathy [Abernethy Creek]. The bottom was
covered with brush and heavy fir trees and vine maple. There was just a few cabins at that time in Oregon City near the falls. Old man Walker, the old missionary, lived in one of them, and old man Brown lived in another one, and Gertman, who was a son-in-law of Brown, lived in another one, and they kept a kind of boarding house for us workers.

Abernathy [Abernethy] had a flouring mill and a sawmill on the island, at the falls, called Mission Hill. I helped get out the timbers for Dr. McLoughlin's sawmill, and I believe his flouring mill, too, together with a man by the name of Horn. Hiram Straight [Strait] and myself helped build a log cabin right where the courthouse now stands. Wood and Hunt were the contractors in having the cabin built. I saw the water when it was first turned on the wheel of the McLoughlin flouring mill."

During the winter of 1843-1844, William observed that the Tumwater Indians had a community of about 30 families located adjacent to Willamette Falls, principally on the west side of the Willamette River, whereas the Euro-Americans were generally concentrated on the east side of the river. A few miles to the north, the main village of the Clackamas Indian Tribe, including 25 warriors and their families, was on the right bank of the Clackamas River where the city of Gladstone now stands.

William had heard reports that some prime prairie land was located south of Oregon City near the Molalla River. In May of 1844, William hoisted his wagon up over the bluff at Oregon City and set out in search of a land claim. He traveled south from Oregon City along the Molalla Indian Trail until he reached the Molalla Prairie, a distinct topographic feature located southwesterly of the Molalla River generally between the present day communities of Molalla and Macksburg. Federal land surveys made in 1852, under the authority of the U.S. Surveyor General's Office, described the prairie as gently rolling with first rate clay loam soils and scattered fir, maple, oak, cedar, and some areas of dense undergrowth. For many years, the Indians had periodically burned the prairie to perpetuate the predominance of native grass vegetation which in turn enhanced the grazing and hunting attributes of the land. William had purposely sought out land that was best suited for farming and livestock grazing, generally flat and mostly clear of trees, and he found the perfect tract of land located about 16 miles south of Oregon City adjacent to the left bank of the Molalla River. William is recognized as the pioneer who brought the first wagon to the Molalla Prairie.

In keeping with the land claim provisions of the Provisional Government, he staked out a rectangular parcel of land containing approximately 640 acres. Not only was William Hatchette Vaughan the first permanent Euro-American settler in the Molalla Prairie, but he was also the first such settler in that entire portion of the Willamette Valley located generally south of Oregon City and east of the French Prairie. Although two other pioneers, William Russell and John Waggoner, had attempted settlement on nearby claims in November of 1843, they abandoned their claims after only a few weeks
when they were driven away by the Molalla Indians. With William’s encouragement, they eventually returned to reestablish the land claims during 1845. Waggoner’s land claim was later relinquished and acquired in 1848 by Thomas P. Jackson.27

In commencing the settlement of his land claim, William’s first priority was the construction of a log house, and in anticipation of trouble with the Molalla Indians, he reinforced the house for additional protection.28 Still a bachelor and with no other non Indian settlers within 15 miles, he was very lonely and apprehensive in his new surroundings.

"One dark evening, I went to the spring for some water. As I stooped down to bail some water, I felt something touch the back of my shoulder. Feeling great fear, I was certain that a Molalla Indian was behind me and about to do me in. I turned about and much to my relief I discovered only a low hanging limb of a tree."29

One of the main villages of the Molalla Indians was located three miles upstream on the right bank of the Molalla River in the area known today as Dickey Prairie which was named after John K. Dickey who settled at that location in 1846. In addition to the women, children, and old men, the village numbered about 16 warriors in 1844. According to William, the word "Molalla" was derived from the Indian words "moolock," meaning elk, and "olille," meaning berries. It was a great country for elk and berries.30

During his first year on the prairie, William frequently had trouble with the Molallas who used the area for hunting purposes. On one occasion, he was attacked by 16 warriors, but with his dauntless courage he successfully restrained them and made a miraculous escape.31 William immediately returned to his land claim and gradually, over a period of time, began a trusting friendship with many of the Molallas. As an expert hunter, builder, horseman, and farmer, William projected a fatherly image that the Molallas respected. They came to depend on him to mediate disagreements among tribal members, and his judgement and honesty were highly regarded. William became known as "Uncle Billy" to both the Euro-American settlers and the Molalla Indians, and the nickname became widely known.32

Uncle Billy had a reputation for coming to the rescue of those in need. When the 1847 wagon train crossed over the difficult Barlow Road in mid-October, great difficulty was experienced with the exhausted oxen and horses in the harsh conditions. Many of the animals collapsed and died near the summit of the Barlow Road, in the vicinity of Mt. Hood, stranding some of the wagons. Robert Caufield had set out on foot heading west along the Barlow Road in an attempt to find help. Upon hearing that the wagon train was in serious trouble, Uncle Billy and John K. Dickey brought a yoke of oxen more than 40 miles and by coincidence met Mr. Caufield coming from the opposite direction. (Mrs.) Jane Burnside Caufield, her mother-in-law, and her two young
CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF PERMANENT EURO-AMERICAN SETTLERS OF PROVISIONAL LAND CLAIMS IN THE VICINITY OF THE MOLALLA PRAIRIE, CLACKAMAS COUNTY, OREGON

[Claims settled prior to institution of the Oregon Territorial Government on March 3, 1849, and subsequently perfected under the Donation Land Claim Act]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Settler</th>
<th>Date Settled</th>
<th>(Willamette Meridian)</th>
<th>Total Acres</th>
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<tr>
<td>William H. Vaughan</td>
<td>* 1 Oct 1844</td>
<td>T4S, R2E, DC 44</td>
<td>633.44</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T5S, R2E, DC 47</td>
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<td>Harrison Wright</td>
<td>11 Apr 1845</td>
<td>T4S, R2E, DC 38</td>
<td>642.09</td>
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<td>James Officer</td>
<td>19 Feb 1846</td>
<td>T4S, R2E, DC 39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph T. Wingfield</td>
<td>10 Mar 1848</td>
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<td>John Klinger</td>
<td>8 Sep 1848</td>
<td>T4S, R1E, DC 46</td>
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<td>Mathias Sweigle</td>
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<td>T5S, R2E, DC 46</td>
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</tr>
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* William H. Vaughan actually settled his land claim during May of 1844; however, he was unable to produce a witness that could certify that his settlement commenced before October 1, 1844.

** With the death of Rachel Larkins' husband, William E. Larkins, on January 25, 1850, Mr. Larkins' portion of the land claim was cancelled and was acquired on January 26, 1853, by Horace L. Dibble and Julia Ann Dibble under the Donation Land Claim Act.

Source: Donation land claim records, Bureau of Land Management, and publications of the Genealogical Forum of Portland, Oregon, Inc.
Composite of cadastral survey plats showing the locations of donation land claims in the Molalla Prairie that were surveyed in the 1850's by the U.S. Surveyor General's Office [Townships 4 and 5 South, Ranges 1 and 2 East, Willamette Meridian, Oregon]. [Courtesy of the Bureau of Land Management]
children, were stranded in the Caufield wagon for a week and were rescued by Vaughan and Dickey who brought them safely to Oregon City, arriving on November 1.33

The Molalla Prairie land claims that were located adjacent to the Molalla River formed a row of six contiguous tracts beginning in the south with Uncle Billy's claim and continuing northwesterly with the claims of Thomas P. Jackson, William Russell, Harrison Wright, James Officer, and John Klinger.34 The Molalla Indian Trail, which ran from Oregon City to Salem, crossed through the middle of Harrison Wright's claim, and this strategic location resulted in the establishment of the first Molalla post office on April 9, 1850. Harrison Wright was the first postmaster and the post office was located in his home near what is now known as the community of Liberal. Wright also operated a supply store at the same site. The post office was discontinued August 25, 1851, and reestablished December 2, 1868. Eventually it was moved to the present community of Molalla.35 The stage coach, which carried mail and passengers, operated for several years between Oregon City and Molalla with an extended route to Wilhoit Springs. According to Uncle Billy, the stage coach was robbed at least two different times between Mulino and Liberal.36

On August 26, 1847, at a double wedding ceremony conducted by pioneer Baptist missionary, Reverend Henzekiah Johnson, Uncle Billy married Susan Mary Officer and John K. Dickey married Martha Ann Officer. Susan and Martha were the daughters of James and Evaline Officer.37 James was from Tennessee and his wife Evaline, whose maiden name was Cooley, was born in Kentucky. The Officers came to Oregon with the 1845 wagon train, via the infamous Meek cutoff through central Oregon, and during February of 1846 settled on a land claim located adjacent to Harrison Wright's claim on the Molalla Prairie. The Officers raised a family of eleven children, including Susan and Martha. Six of the children were born in Clay County, Missouri before the long journey to Oregon, and one was born on the Oregon trail in Wyoming.38

"Mr. Vaughan brought with him from his home in Tennessee a fine old Kentucky rifle, and with it, after his arrival in Oregon, he distinguished himself as an expert hunter, being known far and wide as the 'King of Hunters.' For many years he made himself useful in killing off the wolves and mountain lions that had made havoc among his stock and the stock of his neighbors. His hounds and his guns were his delight."39

Following the Whitman massacre in November of 1847, Uncle Billy volunteered and served for four months as a mounted rifleman under Captain Mazin in the Cayuse Indian war. He and his father-in-law, James Officer, were in the battle of Umatilla.40 It was during Uncle Billy's absence that a Molalla Indian named Crooked Finger led a band of warriors and engaged in some skirmishes with Euro-American settlers south of the Molalla Prairie and threatened the Molalla Prairie settlers. Crooked Finger was angered by the increasing numbers of Euro-American settlers who were coming into the area and claiming land that had been historically used by the Molallas. Most of the
Molallas peacefully coexisted with the earlier pioneers and did not believe Crooked Finger's warning that the tribe faced extinction. The uprising ended after the death of Crooked Finger in early 1848 at the hands of some local settlers.\textsuperscript{41} By 1856, the Molalla Tribe title to land ended by treaty and most of the Molallas were removed to the Grand Ronde Reservation near the Oregon coast. More than one hundred years later, Fred E. Yelkes, considered by some to be the last surviving full blooded Molalla Indian, died at Portland in 1958.\textsuperscript{42}

Oregon officially became a possession of the United States on June 15, 1846; however, the territorial government was not instituted until March 3, 1849. Provisional land claims were not confirmed by the Federal government in the Territorial Act of 1848. While the Act confirmed the laws of the provisional government, where not inconsistent with Federal law or the Constitution, the provisional government land legislation was annulled without making any arrangement to grant or sell public lands in Oregon. Oregon settlers were convinced that they had a legal right to their land, not only because of the provisional law, but because the lands, in their opinions, had been promised by Senate passage of the 1843 Linn bill and public men had encouraged Oregon migration. The results of the provisional government's land legislation were inconclusive. After Oregon's title passed to the United States, only the Federal government could dispose of public lands or confirm existing claims.\textsuperscript{43} It would be an understatement to say that Uncle Billy and other early settlers in the Willamette Valley were somewhat apprehensive at that point in time.

Finally, with the passage of the Donation Land Claim Act of September 27, 1850, the provisional land claims were indirectly confirmed. Briefly, the Act provided that each resident white or half-breed settler who was a citizen of the United States or who within a year declared his intention of becoming a citizen could receive 320 acres in his own name and, if married, another 320 acres in the name of his wife. Originally, the law was to expire in 1853 but the time was extended to December 1855 and provided for those settlers who arrived in Oregon after the 1850 Act to receive 160 acres plus 160 acres in the name of the spouse. The Act required four successive years' residence on the donation land claim before making application for certification; however, the 1853 amendment provided a purchase alternative for $1.25 per acre after two successive years of such residence.\textsuperscript{44} The Donation Land Claim Act, which applied only to the Oregon Territory, expired in 1855 and was eventually replaced with the national Homestead Act of 1862.

The requirements of the Donation Land Claim Act were clearly satisfied by Uncle Billy and the other early settlers of the Molalla Prairie, and they could now be assured of gaining fee title to their land claims as soon as the irregular shaped tracts were surveyed by the U.S. Surveyor General's Office. Finally, 17 years after Uncle Billy settled his land claim and 10 years after he filed his donation land claim certification, Uncle Billy received a patent from the federal government conveying title to his 633.44-acre donation land claim.\textsuperscript{45}
Among other early Molalla Prairie settlers to perfect their donation land claims were William Engle, Hugh Gordon, Mathias Sweigle, and Horace L. Dibble whose land claims formed the famous four corners of the current city of Molalla. The southwesterly boundary of Uncle Billy’s land claim is located about one mile northeast of Molalla’s four corners, and the land claim settled by Horace L. Dibble in 1853 was originally claimed by William E. Larkins who died in 1850. Built from 1856 to 1859 and restored by Ruth McBride Powers and the Molalla Area Historical Society, the Dibble house still stands on the site of the Dibble donation land claim.

Uncle Billy and his wife raised a family of eleven children beginning with Franklin White Vaughan who was born May 6, 1849. As a reflection of Uncle Billy’s southern heritage, some of his sons were named after southern statesmen and three of his daughters had middle names of southern states, Virginia, Tennessee, and Florida. Two of his sons were born during the civil war and were named Stonewall Jackson and Hardee Longstreet after famous Confederate Army generals. His youngest son, William Officer Vaughan, served as Clackamas County Judge in the 1930’s and later as circuit court bailiff for the same county.

"Billy Vaughn [Vaughan] was quite a large cattleman. He would take his cattle to the Pine Creek and Bear Creek country for summer pasture as there was lots of wild pasture at that time. He had a monstrous big plow made to break sod with. It cut some 30 inches or more. He used three or four yokes of oxen to pull it. He could plow out most all what you would call brush and fir stumps up to eight inches in diameter. Billy had quite large land holdings at times."

It was a familiar sight to see Uncle Billy passing through town with his trained hounds, Ahi and Pomp, heading for the mountains to hunt for deer. Without fail, he would return each time with a wagon load of venison.

Politically, Uncle Billy was a Democrat. Between 1868 and 1878, he was nominated three times for the Oregon State legislature. However, his party was in the minority, and he was defeated each time and once by only two votes.

"Though Mr. Vaughan was of a slave holding parentage, his first political affiliations were with the Henry Clay Whigs. However, when the slavery question got more sharply in politics, he forsook the whigs and the names bestowed upon his children speak eloquently of where the old man’s heart was. He has always been a democratic leader in this county, though he has never held office. He belongs to the old school and politicians, who have convictions, and his political motto is ‘Fidelity to friends; no quarters to enemies.’

To this day he will leave his gun and dogs and plow, and hire a hall and make a political speech if he thinks it will serve his party, and his speeches are well worth hearing too."
Both Uncle Billy and his wife were reared in the Baptist faith, and for ten years he served as clerk of the local church. He was also active in the Oregon Pioneer Association and attended many of the annual meetings through 1904. The Association was organized on October 18, 1873, and was incorporated into the Oregon Historical Society during 1898. By the 1880's, Uncle Billy's land holdings exceeded 1,000 acres after purchasing additional lands adjacent to or near his donation land claim, and he became one of the wealthy citizens of Clackamas County.

Uncle Billy had several substantial buildings on his farm, the most magnificent being the large house he had constructed between 1882 and 1885. Architecturally described as Greek Revival/Italianate, the house has two and one-half stories with two double fireplaces inside and a solid river rock foundation underneath. The construction of the house was personally supervised by Uncle Billy, and he maintained a daily journal to track construction progress and related business transactions. Uncle Billy set up a portable sawmill and most of the lumber was prepared using raw logs from his own land holdings. What materials he did secure from other sources were acquired entirely by barter. The "William Hatchette Vaughan house" is still structurally sound today and has been identified as one of the outstanding historical homes in the Molalla area. On May 27, 1993, it was formally listed in the National Register of Historic Places by the National Park Service.

Very special occasions called for family reunions, and two of the most significant reunions were Uncle Billy and Mrs. Vaughan's golden wedding anniversary in 1897 and Mrs. Vaughan's 70th birthday anniversary in 1903. The couple's 50 years of marriage were celebrated primarily as a family affair; however, in keeping with the generous hospitality of the Vaughans, many friends and neighbors joined the historic and social event at the Vaughan house. Uncle Billy barbecued some sheep and the more than 80 participants feasted on mutton and green corn. Honored guests included Mrs. Harrison Wright who witnessed the early wedding. Due in part to the somewhat rare occurrence of golden wedding anniversaries in those days, the event drew considerable public interest and was reported on the front page of the Sunday Oregonian. On the occasion of Mrs. Vaughan’s seventieth birthday anniversary, a remarkable photograph was taken of the family reunion showing Mr. and Mrs. Vaughan and all of their eleven children.

On February 11, 1906, Uncle Billy passed away at the age of 84. The Oregon City Enterprise and the Oregon City Courier editions of February 16, 1906, reported his passing as a major front page story. He was referred to as the "Sage of Molalla," a respected pioneer, and as one of the oldest and most prominent pioneers of the state.

"Funeral services were held at 11 o'clock Tuesday morning and were the widely attended of any funeral ever held at Molalla. Prominent pioneers and citizens from all parts of the country joined the population of the Molalla section to pay a last tribute of regard to the memory of the deceased...Internment was made at the
Reunion of the William Hatchette Vaughan family consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Vaughn and their eleven children. The photograph was taken on March 3, 1903, at the family home in Mollala Prairie on the occasion of the 70th birthday anniversary of Susan Mary Officer Vaughan (Mrs. Vaughan).

From, from left: William Officer, William Hatchette (Uncle Billy), Susan Florida, Susan Mary (Mrs. Vaughan), Cora Kuehn, and John Calhoun. Back, from left: Mary Tennessee, Isom Crandall, Franklin White, Viola Evaline, Stonewall Jackson, Hardee Longstreet, and (center) Nancy Virginia. (Courtesy of Champ Vaughan)
Photograph of the William Hatchette Vaughan house taken circa 1903. Built in the Molalla Prairie, Clackamas County, Oregon from 1882 to 1885. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1993. (Courtesy of Champ Vaughan)
Adams cemetery... All of the surviving eleven children together with the bereaved widow were present at the funeral."52

By remarkable coincidence, one of the pallbearers at the funeral was E. G. Caufield the youngest son of Mrs. Caufield who was rescued by Uncle Billy on the Barlow Road in 1847. E. G. Caufield became mayor of Oregon City.

By the time of Mrs. Vaughan's death on April 11, 1911, all of the Vaughan land holdings had been passed on to the children. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the nearly 7,000 donation land claims in the Willamette Valley had largely passed from the hands of the original owners or their descendants. One of the main reasons was the attraction of cattle ranching in eastern Oregon which drew the young men away from the "old homestead."53

Today, 140 acres of Uncle Billy's donation land claim, including the William Hatchette Vaughan House, remain in family ownership. Following the Oregon statehood centennial celebration of 1959, the Vaughan family received a parchment scroll from Governor Mark Hatfield at the 1960 Oregon State Fair. The scroll honored 108 acres of the original William Hatchette Vaughan donation land claim as a "Century Farm" in recognition of 100 years or more in continuous ownership of the same family.

"Mr. Vaughan brought with him from the sunny South home the warm-hearted friendship and the genial hospitality of the true Southern Gentleman. He is one of the most widely known and highly esteemed of that band of brave men and women who came to Oregon in 1843."54

Like the Molalla Indians before him, Uncle Billy has vanished from the Molalla Prairie but will never be forgotten.

# # #

2. Interview with William Hatchette Vaughan, conducted by Colonel R. A., Miller, attorney at law, Oregon City, Oregon [June 11, 1901]; dictation taken by Colonel Miller's stenographer, Miss Lazelle [a transcript is in the possession of the author]; Wilma Vaughan Chunn, "Genealogical Tree of the Vaughan Family," unpublished papers [Shelbyville, Tennessee, August 1969]. James Vaughan had 13 children all born in Tennessee to his wife Nancy Hatchette. James Vaughan remarried after the death of his first wife and had three children all born in Missouri to his second wife, Elizabeth Davis.


4. Jerry A. O'Callaghan, "The Disposition of the Public Domain in Oregon," Memorandum of the Chairman to the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, United States Senate [Transmitting a dissertation submitted to the Department of History and the Committee on Graduate Study of Stanford University], [Washington, D.C., November 1960], 3.

5. Interview with William Hatchette Vaughan.


12. Oregon Historical Quarterly 7, 334-357.

13. Interview with William Hatchette Vaughan.

14. Bureau of Land Management, "Proposed National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center at Flagstaff Hill," Decision Record and Environmental Assessment [December 1988], 2, 3; Oregon Historical Quarterly 7, 353; Baker Resource Area Headquarters, Bureau of Land Management, public information bulletin on the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center at Flagstaff Hill [1990]. Today, the Flagstaff Hill area remains a dramatic representation of the experiences of those early travelers. With seven miles of virtually undisturbed Oregon Trail wagon ruts still visible near Flagstaff Hill, the setting evokes much the same feeling experienced by tens of thousands of nineteenth century pioneers. The area has been a primary location for erecting Oregon Trail historical markers, the first being placed by Ezra Meeker in 1906. Most of the lands in the vicinity of Flagstaff Hill are public lands under the administration of the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. The Bureau of Land Management, in cooperation with Baker City, Baker County, the State of Oregon, historical groups, and local citizens, has constructed a full-scale National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center at Flagstaff Hill located adjacent to State Highway 86 approximately five miles east of Baker City.

15. Oregon Historical Quarterly 7, 353; Oregon Historical Quarterly 5, 64 [1904].


17. O'Callaghan, "The Disposition of the Public Domain in Oregon," Interview with William Hatchette Vaughan; Lenox, Overland to Oregon, 54, 55.
18. Oregon City Enterprise [February 16, 1906].


20. Interview with William Hatchette Vaughan.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.


27. Ibid; U.S. General Land Office [Donation land claim and tract book records, Oregon City Land Office], National Archives, Washington, D.C., and Bureau of Land Management, Oregon State Office, Portland; "Genealogical Material in Oregon: Provisional Land Claims Abstracted," Volumes I - VIII, 34, 253. William Hatchette Vaughan actually settled his land claim during May of 1844; however, for donation land claim certification purposes, October 1, 1844, was designated as the date of settlement.


30. Interview with William Hatchette Vaughan.


32. Oral statement of William Hatchette Vaughan [1876]; *Oregon City Enterprise* [February 16, 1906].


37. Interview with William Hatchette Vaughan; *Sunday Oregonian* [August 29, 1897].


40. Interview with William Hatchette Vaughan.

41. Chelson, "History of Molalla," 2, 6, 7.
42. Patricia R. Baars, booklet entitled "Near Neighbors - Cross-Cultural Friendships in Dickey Prairie and South Molalla" [Circa 1980], 9; Oregonian [September 23, 1958].


45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. Charles W. Hardy, "Early History of Molalla and Nearby Areas" [August 1967].


49. Sunday Oregonian [August 29, 1897].


51. Sunday Oregonian [August 29, 1897]

52. Oregon City Enterprise [February 16, 1906].


One hundred and fifty years ago the nation was on the verge of a major episode in its history. The massive movement of people going west on the Oregon Trail was about to begin. The stage had been set, the trail was blazed, the scouts and advance parties had been there. The support crew, the outfitters were in place. The times and conditions were ripening, giving reason and justification for a mass migration. All that was needed was the spark to set off the fuze.

These articles are designed to help the readers better understand all aspects of the Great American Migration - the Oregon Trail.
The Road To Oregon

Articles About
The Oregon Trail

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Did the Trail Start Here?

A renewed interest in the Oregon Trail is being prompted by the upcoming 150th year Sesquicentennial.

But where did the trail really start? The answer is difficult because there was no single Oregon Trail. For about forty or more years emigrants left the eastern half of this great country with every intention of going to the western half, even if they had no idea exactly where it was or how to get there.

Pioneers, and for at least the first few years the emigrants were truly so, came from farms and villages across the Old Northwest and Southwest Territories. They sold what was left of their real estate, packed their trunks and booked passage on a steamer bound for the Missouri River towns ranging from Independence to Council Bluffs.

The jumping-off spots, as they were called, were places to supply the bands of travelers with the items necessary to get the party to its destination - a wagon and team, additional clothing, food and camping items. Early farmers and miners found it necessary to carry with them the tools of their craft - plows, harnesses, picks, pans and shovels - but as the West became tamer it was no longer necessary to take with them what they could buy in Oregon City or Sacramento.

As the trails became more used another handy and necessary item became available in the Midwest. Guidebooks for emigrants could be purchased for a nominal fee, around 10¢. At first these were not all that reliable. Working on the memory of recent travelers some beacons or guideposts got mixed up.

As the Civil War arrived or Indian uprisings became common, men would hire themselves out as guides or scouts. Their accuracy was just as reliable as the guidebooks.

The initial jumping-off spot for emigrants to Oregon was Independence, Missouri. Its location on both the Missouri River and the Santa Fe Trail destined it for this status. When Oregon became a destination for Americans fleeing the economic hardships of the East in favor of free land and opportunity in the West, the facilities for outfitting for the trek were already in place at Independence.

Emigrants would camp for up to three weeks along the river banks where the steamers disgorged them, as they purchased animals for their teams, had a wagon made, trained their teams and purchased other supplies such as food and clothing. Then they met at Independence Court House Square where they hit the trail for Oregon.

The initial route of the westward overland trail was to follow the Santa Fe Trail into Kansas until they reached a small inconspicuous sign, probably the most understated in American history. It simply stated "Road to Oregon". It marked the beginning of an arduous four to six month, 2000 mile trek across plains, desert and mountains. One in ten would be left in graves along the trail. Families would be broken,
possessions lost or left behind at river crossings or at difficult mountain grades.

Overcrowding at the Wayne City landing for Independence, followed soon by a cholera epidemic, left emigrants looking for other jumping-off spots. Westport in modern Kansas City, Weston and St. Joseph - where the Pony Express started its brief but colorful existence - were further up the river in Missouri.

When the Mormons were chased out of Illinois and headed for the West under the leadership of Brigham Young, their Winter Quarters were on the west bank of the Missouri (pronounced Misery by some) just north of present day Omaha. The Saints set out for Utah the next spring following the north shore of the Platte River. For several hundred miles the Oregon Trail and Mormon Trail paralleled each other on opposite banks of the Platte River until the Oregon Trail was joined by the Mormon Trail.

Many emigrants in the 1850's and on used jumping-off spots in Nebraska and Iowa at such places as Plattsmouth, Nebraska City, Council Bluffs and Omaha in order to follow the north shore of the Platte River. Following the discovery of gold in California and other points, the emigrant trails to the West took on a different character. Covered farm wagons carrying entire families were replaced by handcarts, two wheelers or pack animals without wagons carrying temporary bachelors to the gold fields. All previous jumping-off spots were used.

Shops in Missouri, Iowa and Nebraska kept up with the changing times and displayed new items for the diversified clientele. Also new products were showing up, especially those made out of that new product - rubber. Emigrants wore India rubber boots, raincoats and life preservers and complained that their air mattresses had leaked during the night.

Wherever they jumped off from, they were headed west. And their journeys had just begun.

Didn't the Oregon Trail Go By Here?

Across the street from Barton Store in Clackamas County is a brown and white sign with a silhouette of a wagon train and the words "Route of the Oregon Trail." It is on the closest well maintained road to the actual route of the pioneer emigrants.

There are about 300 identical signs across the state of Oregon where modern tourists can parallel the route. There are two other nearly identical signs. One in Oregon City at Abernethy Green points to the "End of the Oregon Trail" and one in Independence, Missouri, (a gift of Oregon City) says "Beginning of the Oregon Trail."

Where did the Oregon Trail really go? The answer is not simple as there was no single route, just a destination: Oregon's Willamette Valley.

The route started on the banks of the Missouri River, originally at Independence, then
Westport, then Weston across from Fort Leavenworth. The first route followed the Santa Fe Trail into Kansas Territory. The Westport Road bypassed the Santa Fe Trail, went through Shawnee Mission in Kansas and caught up with the Oregon Trail at Lawrence. The Weston route caught up with the main trunk of the trail at the Big Blue River.

The first few days on the trail were times of trial and error, of sightseeing, of getting used to new conventions. Rules of the road had to be established and leaders elected. Up at dawn, on the road by seven. No swearing. A "nooning" for a cold meal. No alcohol except for medicinal purposes. Drive fifteen miles a day. Walk nearly all the way.

Deaths and graves would too soon become commonplace but some of the first ones showed more time and care. Susan Hale's newly-wed husband even walked back to Missouri to have a tombstone made, then carried it in a wheelbarrow back past Alcove Springs to give her a proper burial. Then he continued on.

Angling across northeastern Kansas and southeastern Nebraska the Oregon Trail is joined up by the road from St. Joseph and for several hundred miles the trail is punctuated by Pony Express stations. Hollenberg Station in Kansas is well preserved. Rock Creek Station in Nebraska was the sight of a shooting that brought Wild Bill Hickok fame.

The Platte River, running upside down, too thick to drink and too thin to plow, was picked up at Fort Kearny, the first of seven forts along the trail. Kearny and Laramie were U.S. Army. Bridger was an independent fur trading post. Hall, Boise and Vancouver were Hudson Bay Company trading posts (although Hall had been an American fur trading post). Fort Kearny had all the amenities and services of a prairie fort including nearby Dirty Woman Ranch.

The Oregon Trail would follow the south shore of the Platte River, crossing the South Platte at California Crossing, follow the North Platte and the Sweetwater all the way to South Pass. The Mormon and Great Platte River Road paralleled the Oregon Trail on the north side of the Platte River all the way from Fort Kearny to Fort Laramie. Emigrants on both sides could see the fantastic rock formations such as Courthouse and Jail Rocks, Chimney Rock, Scotts Bluff and Independence Rock, all on the Oregon Trail. Many of these and other rocks still bear the names of travelers scratched in them decades ago.

When the route was flat the wagons would fan out and the trail would be many wagons wide rather than eat each other's dust. Other places the trail is narrow and the rocks are rutted several feet deep from hundreds of wagons following single file.

At some places there were cutoffs or shortcuts where emigrants or later gold miners impatient to get to their destinations would bypass forts. Forts Bridger and Hall were both bypassed in this manner by the Sublette and Hudspeth Cutoffs. An alternate route crossing the Snake River at Three Island Crossing and going to the tree lined Boise...
River became the main stem, preferred to the arid Snake River route. For four years until an 1847 Indian massacre wiped it out the Whitman Mission was on the Oregon Trail.

For the first three years of the trail, the overland route ended at The Dalles and pioneers rafted their wagons or abandoned them for British bateaux to Fort Vancouver then on to Oregon City. From 1846 the Barlow Road around Mt. Hood became the preferred route for more than two thirds of all emigrants. Even the Barlow Road had some alternates as travelers found better routes or chanced fines by going around the toll gates.

Eventually all roads led to Oregon City, end of the Oregon Trail, last place to camp while looking for new farms or businesses and location of the land office for filing their claims.

**Oregon Trail Chronology 1841-1866**

For twenty five years the Overland Trails saw nearly 650,000 emigrants head for the farms and gold fields of the West. Oregon was the destination for about half, California for a third and the rest for Utah, Colorado and Montana. This was the Great American Migration. It lasted until the coming of the railroads.

1841 - The first emigrant party, the Bidwell-Bartleson party, brings 100 farmers to California and Oregon.

1842 - Dr. Elijah White's party of 200 is known for writing many of the guidebooks to be used by later emigrants. The journals of Medorem Crawford and Asa Lovejoy and the narratives of John C. Fremont contain useful information. The guidebook of Lansford Hastings contains fatal misinformation.

1843 - 1000 members outfit the first major migration. Jesse Applegate's tardy cow column forges a new route into Oregon. Oregon's Provisional Government is formed.

1844 - Four trains bring 2000 farmers, merchants, mechanics and lawyers to Oregon. One party each leaves Independence, Westport, St. Joseph and Bellevue near Council Bluffs.

1845 - 5000 Oregon bound emigrants leave Independence and Westport including the Barlow party which arrives late to The Dalles and leads directly to the creation of the Barlow Road.

1846 - A relatively light year, 1000 emigrants heading to California and Oregon, this is the year of the ill-fated Donner Party. The California bound emigrants become snowbound in the Sierras and resort to cannibalism. Barlow's Road and Applegate's Trail extend the Oregon Trail into the Willamette Valley.

1847 - A new destination as Brigham Young leads the Mormon Brigade to Utah. The 2000 on the trails this year include many non-Mormons.

1848 - A massive Mormon exodus swells the trails to 4000 pioneers. It's an off year for the Oregon Trail side as St. Joe and Council Bluffs replace
Independence as leading jumping off spots.

1849 - Gold is discovered in California the year before and 30,000 emigrants turn the trail into a superhighway. Overland companies come from the east coast and the Mississippi valley. A damp year introduces a new scourge to the trail - Asiatic Cholera.

1850 - There are more 49ers travelling the trail this year than in 1849. 55,000 emigrants make this the banner year on the trail. But cholera runs rampant, killing thousands.

1851 - Word of the cholera epidemic means only 10,000 brave the trail. Most emigrants start out for California but news of the Donation Land Act causes most to change their minds mid-trail and opt for Oregon.

1852, 1853 - The epidemic is nearly over and the gold rush revives as 50,000 and 20,000 people head west. Half leave from St. Joe and half from Omaha. Half head to California and half to Oregon. In four years nearly half of the Oregon land claimants leave the Missouri Valley.

1854 - Most of the 10,000 emigrants head for Oregon. Indian problems arise as an Army command is annihilated near Fort Laramie, starting a three year Indian war.

1855, 1856, 1857 - Indian wars do what cholera could not and keep emigration down to 5000 each year. Travel changes with the beginning of freighters leaving Leavenworth, Atchison and Westport. The largest freight company is the firm of Russell, Majors, and Waddell.

1858 - It's Pikes Peak or Bust as Colorado gold is discovered. Heavy freighting of military supplies gives an assurance of safety. 10,000 head west.

1859 - 30,000 travel the Road with no single objective in mind. Destinations include Colorado, Utah, California and Oregon. Stagecoaches hit the Oregon Trail with the Leavenworth and Pikes Peak Express carrying passengers and mail. Horace Greeley follows his own advice and goes west.

1860 - 15,000 people escape the threat of Civil War. Silver brings thousands to Nevada including Samuel Clemens. Russell, Majors and Waddell begin the Pony Express from St. Joe to Placerville, California. Pony Express stops dot the Oregon Trail every fifteen miles. Every other one is a stage stop. Sir Richard Burton, the English lecturer and Africa explorer goes to Salt Lake City to gather material.

1861, 1862, 1863 - The removal of troops to fight the Civil War drops emigration to 5000 each in '61 and '62 and 10,000 in '63 as gold is discovered in Montana. The Pony Express goes bankrupt as the Pacific Telegraph is completed. Pony Express owner Ben Holladay extends his stage company to Oregon.

1864, 1865, 1866 - Some of the heaviest traffic since the California Gold Rush as emigrants leave for Montana. 20,000 in '64 and 25,000 each in '65 and '66 travel the trails despite Sioux Indian uprisings at several points along the way.

The end of the trail comes in 1866 with the Union Pacific Railroad. With the wedding of the
rails in 1869 an emigrant could travel the route in less than two weeks.

Who Explored the Oregon Trail?

The Emigrants of the 1840's were not the first to use all or portions of the Oregon Trail. The colorful history of our country makes heroes out of explorers, mountain men, soldiers and scientists who opened up the west.

In 1540 the Spanish explorer Coronado ventured into Kansas. But the inland routes were the sole domain of native Americans until 1804 when Lewis and Clark skirted the edges on their epic journey of discovery to Oregon and return and Zeb Pike explored the "Great American Desert".

The Lewis and Clark Expedition had a direct influence on the economy of the West even before they had returned to St. Louis. Private John Colter left the expedition in 1806 on the way home to take up the fur trade business. For the next 20 years the likes of Manuel Lisa, Auguste and Pierre Chouteau, William Ashley, James Bridger, Kit Carson, Tom Fitzgerald and William Sublette roamed the West. These part romantic adventurers, part self-made entrepreneurs, part hermits were called mountain men. By 1829 Jedediah Smith knew more about the West than any other person.

The Americans became involved in the fur trade in 1810 when John Jacob Astor, at the insistence of his friend Thomas Jefferson, founded the Pacific Fur Company in New York. Astor sent William Price Hunt west in 1811. He followed the Lewis and Clark route as far as the Dakotas then went overland across Union Pass near Jackson Hole to where he founded Fort Hall. The overland route proved unsuitable and with much hardship the Hunt party arrived in Astoria in 1812.

Astor had sent the ship Tonquin to Astoria under Captain Thorn. The Indians of Vancouver Island reacted to his cruelty by attacking the ship and causing it to be blown up. The situation worsened such that by the spring of 1813, during the War of 1812, John George McTavish of the British Northwest Fur Company purchased Astoria. As the HMS Raccoon approached Astoria they were greeted by Americans happily waving a British flag. Fort Astoria became Fort George.

In the winter of 1812, before the British takeover, Robert Stuart of Astoria returned to St. Louis. He arrived on April 30, 1813, with six men, one of whom had gone insane. He was the first person to travel the route of the Oregon Trail, although in reverse. He discovered South Pass - the "great gate" for hundreds of thousands of emigrants to come.

At the same time that the Northwest Fur Company was losing its monopoly to the Hudson Bay Company and Fort George was transferring to Fort Vancouver, Peter Skene Ogden was being exiled to Oregon. The Canadian born son of a Revolutionary War
Loyalist, he gained the reputation of a hellion around Hudson Bay. He attempted to burn up a companion for the sport of it, assaulted an HBC official and led an entire outpost in a mutiny. For this he was sent to Fort Vancouver in 1830. By 1848 he knew more of the West than anyone other than Jed Smith and had settled the Cayuse War that was disrupting emigrant travel on the Oregon Trail.

Two explorers with a direct impact on the Oregon and California Trails were James Reddeford Walker and Captain Benjamin Louis Eulalie De Bonneville. Walker founded the town of Independence in Missouri in 1829, the same year John McLoughlin started what would become Oregon City. Walker met Captain Bonneville and they followed the then familiar Platte River route through South Pass to the Green River Rendezvous of 1833. Scientists followed parts of the Oregon Trail as early as 1818. Harvard botanist Thomas Nuttal traveled with mountain man Manuel Lisa collecting plants. John James Audubon collected specimens of quadrupeds. Frederick Paul Wilhelm, Duke of Wurttenberg collected birds and Indian artifacts. Sir William Drummond Stewart of Scotland traveled what was to become the Oregon Trail from 1833 to 1838. He correctly foresaw the end of the fur trade and the coming of the emigrants starting with the missionaries.

The exploration of the Oregon Trail route also included a military presence. The first was Stephen H. Long who was sent by secretary of War John C. Calhoun in 1819 to make a show of force along the Platte River and scare off British traders from the new American territory. John C Fremont, guided by Kit Carson, did about the same thing from Independence to Fort Vancouver to California starting in 1842. In 1841 Antarctic explorer Captain Charles Wilkes was sent on a spying mission to Oregon and San Francisco.

All of the knowledge of the explorers and traders was put together in 1834 when Nathaniel Wyeth and Jason Lee led the first people over the route of the Oregon Trail with the intention of settling in Oregon.

Jefferson's Envoys To The West

Early in the spring of 1789 Yankee traders John Kendrick and Robert Gray were laying off the coast of what was to be later named Vancouver Island at Nootka Sound. They were waiting to land and trade with the natives for Sea Otter skins. The British trader John Meares was also in Nootka Sound when a Spanish fleet arrived, captured Meares and took him off to Mexico. The Spanish purpose was to shut down British trade in Oregon. The Americans watched fascinated and unmolested. President Washington also watched in interest this "Sea Otter War" between Spain and Britain.

Gray proceeded back to Boston, becoming the first American to circumnavigate the
globe, August 9, 1790. A few short weeks later he was back on his ship, the Columbia Rediviva, headed for Oregon again. In May of 1792 he discovered the elusive river of the west which he named the Columbia after his ship. He barely beat British Captain Vancouver who had sailed past the river. Gray's discovery gave the U.S. a basis for claiming Oregon.

Thomas Jefferson at this time was Washington's Secretary of State. He already had to his credit authorship of the Declaration of Independence and the Ambassadorship to France. He was also a student of natural history and advocate of Western exploration.

In late 1783 Jefferson tried to get George Rogers Clark, Revolutionary War hero of the West, to lead an overland expedition. Clark declined. In Paris in 1786 Jefferson listened to a plan by John Ledyard to go overland across Siberia, cross to Alaska and dogsled to the Atlantic. Jefferson assisted Ledyard in obtaining passports but suspicious Russians stopped him in Siberia.

Jefferson excited French interest in America. Alexis Tocqueville studied America's transition from a confederacy to a constitutional democracy. Andre Michaux, a French botanist, planned to explore North America. In 1792 he approached the American Philosophical Society for donations to fund a trek across the United States to the Pacific. He received $128.25 including $25 from Washington and $12.50 each from Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton.

The amount was hardly enough but the venture never happened. Michaux became caught up in an attempt to take away Spanish lands in America. They even drew in George Rogers Clark. The project depended upon money owed France by the U.S. government and died when President Washington refused to cooperate.

Since 1796 Napoleon had been demanding Louisiana from Spain. By 1800 Spain was finally willing to give it up. The secret Treaty of Ildefonso, October 1, 1800, transferred Louisiana to France in return for assurances that they would maintain a buffer between the United States and Mexico. The Spanish agreed to continue to administer the territory from New Orleans.

In 1802 the Spanish Intendent of New Orleans administering Louisiana revoked the American's right of deposit because of smuggling. This right allowed them to off-load their barges into warehouses in New Orleans awaiting transfer to ocean-going vessels. James Monroe was sent to join Robert Livingston in Paris to attempt to purchase New Orleans and the Floridas for up to $10 million.

At the same time Jefferson was planning an exploration of Louisiana. Spain refused permission for an exploration across "their" lands so Jefferson asked his private secretary Meriwether Lewis to lead a secret expedition into Louisiana to study botany and navigation and to explore to the Pacific. On January 18, 1803, a secret request for funds for an expedition to subdue Indians and prevent French
infiltration was sent to Congress. A month later the request for $2500 passed as a "commercial venture." Lewis immediately started preparing by learning the rudiments of scientific observation and ordering supplies.

Then in March of 1803 Napoleon shocked Jefferson by offering all of Louisiana to America and at the same time breaking his promise of a buffer. The 909,000 square miles (43,000 more than the United States at that time) sold for $23,213,567.73 or 4¢ an acre.

Lewis was in Pittsburgh supplying his expedition with scientific instruments, trade goods, medicine, ammunition, a rapid fire gun, and a 22 oar keelboat when he heard of the Louisiana Purchase. In June 1803 Lewis offered joint command of the expedition to William Clark, younger brother of George Rogers Clark.

The rest is history. On May 14, 1804, Lewis and Clark left Camp Wood near St. Louis on a three year journey. They wintered at Fort Clatsop at the mouth of the Columbia River in 1805-06. Lewis and Clark provided a wealth of knowledge about the natural history of the plains, mountains, and rivers to be crossed by the Oregon Trail. They also cemented the U.S. claim to Oregon begun by Robert Gray in 1792.

Feeding the Fad For Furs

The development of the Oregon Country started with the demand for furs. Oregon fur trade started in 1778 by Captain Cook trading for sea otter.

The Spanish traded from California. The Russians traded the Pacific coast as the Russian-American Company. Americans, called Bostons by the natives, started trading in 1790. Up to 18,000 skins a year were taken from Oregon as part of a round the world circuit called the China Trade.

Then came the land-based fur trapper and trader known as mountain men. They were distinctively American in nature. Part romantic adventurer, part self-made entrepreneur, and part hermit, they would roam the mountains for years at a time collecting furs to trade.

The first two mountain men were members of Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery. Private John Colter left the expedition in 1806 as it was on its way back on the headwaters of the Missouri River. George Drouillard returned a year later for the life of furs. Both men worked for the Spaniard Manuel Lisa who was clandestinely trading American furs out of St. Louis. Colter discovered the geyser basins of "Colter's Hell" and Yellowstone and escaped naked from an Indian firing squad. Drouillard was killed in 1810 by Shawnees who cut off his head and disemboweled him.

At the same time millionaire John Jacob Astor was also entering the fur trade. He expanded his business empire to the Pacific coast in 1810 when he started the ill-fated Pacific Fur
Company. Astor’s plan was to send his ship Tonquin with trade goods around Cape Horn to the Columbia River to meet up with an overland party, load up with furs and head to China.

The overland party under Wilson Price Hunt left St. Louis March 1811, crossed Union Pass and headed up the Snake River where they found game scarce, split up, got lost, had to eat their own moccasins and drink their own waste fluids. Morale was poor.

The Tonquin under Lt. Jonathon Thorn, said to be mad by his crew, entered the Columbia River April, 1811 and set up Fort Astor, later to be called Astoria. Two months later while trading with the Salish on Vancouver Island Thorn’s cruelty angered the Indians who murdered all crewmen except one who managed to blow up the Tonquin and several hundred Salish Indians.

The Hunt Party arrived at Astoria in February, 1812 and trade started in May. It would only last a year. Trading houses were set up side by side with the British North West Company. Robert Stuart and six men left Astoria early in 1813 to return overland to St. Louis to inform his superiors of the sorry state of affairs in Oregon. Enroute he discovered South Pass which would be the funnel for so many covered wagons through the Rockies on the Oregon Trail.

In the spring of 1813 the NWC informed the Astorians of the ongoing War of 1812. Astoria was sold to the NWC without any reluctance. Some Astorians joined the NWC and others went independent.

The mountain men were now the only Americans trading furs in Oregon. Armed with Hawken rifles or pistols, knives, hatchets and a possible bag full of food, tobacco, tools, and bullets these buckskin clad fur trappers lived the life of the Indians with whom they worked so closely. They had Indian wives and in some cases white wives back in St. Louis as well.

They included Ewing Young, Joseph Walker, and Kit Carson. They were mentioned in passing in the diaries of Oregon Trail emigrants. Some such as Stephen and Joseph Meek, Old Bill Williams, Tom Fitzpatrick and William Robidoux even guided wagon trains to Oregon.

During the peak fur trapping years around 100,000 beaver pelts a year were being consumed for the production of men’s top hats. During the 1830’s the increasing use of silk saved the Beaver from extinction. The plains Buffalo then became the chief animal hunted for its skin.

The most successful mountain man was William Ashley, who in 1822 advertised in the St. Louis Gazette for men who wanted employment for up to three years. The ad was answered by Jedidiah Smith, Thomas Fitzpatrick, David Jackson, William Sublette, and Jim Bridger, who made up the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. Ashley earned $50,000 the first year and retired to politics after the second.

Ashley started the first Rocky Mountain Rendezvous in 1825. There were sixteen annual get-togethers. The site was
predetermined, usually along Wyoming's Green River. The first day was spent in drinking, gambling, ball playing and racing. From the second day on it was serious trading. Furs were sold for traps, guns, ammunition, knives, tobacco and liquor ($64 a gallon) all brought from St. Louis. The last rendezvous was in 1840.

The British In Oregon

Sitting on the banks of the Columbia River at Vancouver, Washington, on the 4th of July, one can sit back and enjoy one of the largest fireworks displays in the Pacific Northwest. It is ironic that the explosions are directly over the fort that for 24 years administered Oregon for Britain.

The North West Company started in Canada in 1779. The owners were called Montrealers and the traders were called Wintering Partners. A treaty in 1804 specified that any Canadian could trade in U.S. territory simply by complying with U.S. laws. NWC employees rushed into the Missouri Valley. American Indian agent Pierre Choteau objected that they were not complying with the law that allowed only one trader per tribe. Governor Wilkinson of Louisiana issued a proclamation in 1805 that barred foreign residents from his territory.

The NWC came to the Oregon Country in 1807 under mapmaker and astronomer David Thompson along with trappers Alexander Mackenzie and Simon Fraser. A small wooden stake and sign was placed at the confluence of the Snake and Columbia Rivers that stated "Know hereby that this country is claimed by Great Britain as part of its territories and that the N.W. Company of Merchants from Canada do hereby intend to erect a factory."

For two years the NWC trapped side by side with Astor's Pacific Fur Company. Both companies at that time were unsupplied from home. Some trading posts were adjacent.

When informed of the War of 1812 and confronted by a British warship in 1813 Donald McKenzie surrendered and sold Astoria to the NWC. Rebuffed by Astor McKenzie returned to Astoria, now called Fort George, in 1816 to work for the NWC.

The Hudson's Bay Company was originally chartered by King Charles II in 1670 and confined to British territory around Hudson's Bay. After the French defeat in the French and Indian War in 1763 the HBC spread throughout eastern Canada. Some trappers "extended" the HBC charter over the Rockies into Oregon.

As early as 1819 there were some Nor'westers eager to consolidate with the HBC. They realized that competition and practices of the NWC would be ruinous to animals they were trapping. Early in 1821 an agreement to unite with the HBC was reached and that summer an act of Parliament amended the HBC charter to allow absorption of the NWC.

The Hudson's Bay Company came to Oregon legally and in force. Governor Simpson
administered the vast territory from Alaska to California to the Rockies. The entire Columbia River watershed came under the sub-jurisdiction of Chief Factor John McLoughlin, a 6'4" white-haired trader from Eastern Canada. Fort George at the mouth of the Columbia was abandoned and Fort Vancouver was built in 1824-25 five miles from the confluence of the Columbia and its major tributary, the Willamette.

Peter Skene Ogden was assigned to Fort Vancouver as Chief Trader in 1825. McLoughlin immediately sent him to Montana to replace Alexander Ross in implementing a policy of excluding American free trappers. Most of Ogden's men deserted him in Montana and became mountain men themselves.

Ogden and McLoughlin were responsible for maintaining all of the forts along the Oregon Trail past Fort Bridger, which was maintained as a private enterprise by mountain man Jim Bridger. Fort Hall was originally built by Wyeth and later purchased by the HBC. Fort Walla Walla was a NWC fort. Forts Boise and Vancouver were built by the HBC. The rivalry hurt both companies.

British fur trapping in Oregon was on the decline from 1833. Trappers were retiring to farming in the French Prairie region of the Willamette Valley. The Puget Sound Agricultural Company was established near Fort Nisqually to encourage farming. John McLoughlin had claimed the area around Willamette Falls in 1828 for the HBC and purchased it for himself in 1845.

Throughout his career McLoughlin was beset with problems caused by Americans. Hall Jackson Kelley, Nathaniel Wyeth, Ewing Young, Jedediah Smith and Jason Lee were particular problems. Then his own Governor Simpson would constantly drop in on whirlwind inspection tours.

McLoughlin was under orders to discourage American settlement. When it became obvious that they could not be kept out, McLoughlin encouraged newly arriving immigrants to settle in the Willamette Valley. When settlers arrived destitute from their experiences he loaned them supplies. At his death thousands of dollars were still owed by American settlers.

Because he defied orders he was demoted and forced to retire by the British. Because he represented the British he had his lands confiscated by the Americans. He died in a home to which the title had been taken away. Posthumously his claims and citizenship were honored. Today he is considered the "Father of Oregon."

**Arrival of the First Missionaries**

The first Americans in the Oregon Territory were Protestant Missionaries sent by the Methodist-Episcopal, Presbyterian and Congregational churches. In
bringing the Word of God to the Indians they founded the first permanent schools in Oregon. They failed in their primary task of converting the Indians, but they were successful in providing a foundation for white settlement in Oregon in a critical time of transition and providing an influence of order in a wild and untamed land. They provided an incentive for emigrants to come to Oregon and expand the U.S. borders into British controlled territory.

Attention was drawn to Oregon in 1829 when the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions heard a report from their Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) mission about the abundance of unconverted Indians on the west coast. The ABCFM was a Boston based group of missionaries supported chiefly by the Congregational Church but also embraced the Presbyterians, Dutch Reformed, and Methodist-Episcopals. They began their Indian work with the Cherokees in 1816.

The ABCFM's only prior foreign experience was in Liberia (the American colony in Africa created to send home freed slaves) and Hawaii (an important stop on the China trade route). Captain Jonathon Green was dispatched from Oahu to explore the Oregon coast, which at that time extended from Alaska to California. In a two year journey he obtained the names of 34 tribes of Indians needing instruction. His report reached Boston in 1832.

At the same time, four Flathead Indians of the Nez Perce tribe in northern Idaho traveled 3000 miles to find General William Clark, the American leader who as a captain 25 years earlier with Meriwether Lewis had explored Oregon. They found Clark in St. Louis where they told him of the story they had heard from the fur trappers. They wanted to know about the "true mode of worshipping the Great Spirit." They wanted a copy of the "book of directions" on how to "conduct themselves in order to enjoy his favor" and how to "be received into the country where the Great Spirit resides and live forever with him".

A letter from these Indians was printed in the leading publication of the Methodist-Episcopal Church. This letter and Captain Green's report from Hawaii about the 34 heathen tribes of Oregon sparked the imagination of the people of the United States. Meetings were held to see what citizens could do. Committees were appointed to inquire into the situation.

Dr. Wilbur Fisk of Wesleyan University in Massachusetts asked the Methodist Mission Board and the ABCFM for the establishment of a mission among the Flatheads. $3000 was appropriated and Dr. Fisk's former pupil, the Rev. Jason Lee, was chosen to lead a caravan to Oregon. Lee joined the 1834 Nathaniel Wyeth expedition overland. He preached the first sermon west of the Rockies at Fort Hall on July 27th. It was a festive day with Indians and mountain men dressed in their colorful Sunday best. After the sermon there was a horse race and one man was killed. The next day Lee conducted the first Protestant funeral in Oregon.
When Lee reached Fort Vancouver he was told by John McLoughlin that a mission to the Flatheads would be too dangerous at that time. The good doctor was known for discouraging Americans north of the Columbia River. Lee chose to go to the Willamette Valley near French Prairie where he established his mission among the Calapooya Indians at Mission Bottom outside present day Salem. Men trained as missionaries very soon became woodsmen, carpenters, blacksmiths and husbandmen. Lee was heard to say, "men never worked harder or performed less". The first storm found a roofless house.

After the first floods of the season it became obvious that Lee had chosen the wrong location for a mission. He moved the mission to Chemeketa, now Salem. He started his Indian school without waiting for a building to be completed. That school, the Oregon Institute, was the first school and later as Willamette University, the first college, west of Missouri. In the first two years of operation there was not a single conversion among the Indians. Of the first 14 Indian children at the school seven died and five more ran away. Epidemics of smallpox, measles, diphtheria, and malaria hit the Indian population such that by 1842 all Willamette Valley Indians were gone. The purpose for missions in western Oregon left with the Indians.

In the next articles the Methodists will be joined by the Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Catholics, they will be reinforced and later recalled.

Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Catholics

The first American missionaries to Oregon were the Methodist-Episcopals supported by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in New England. They sponsored Jason Lee in 1834.

Two months after appointing Jason Lee as missionary the ABCFM sent Rev. Samuel Parker to Oregon to scout other locations for missions. Parker might have arrived in Oregon before Lee except that he traveled only as far as St. Louis and waited until 1835.

There he was joined by the Presbyterian lay physician Dr. Marcus Whitman. They attended a fur trappers' rendezvous in Wyoming from which Dr. Whitman returned to Boston carrying a plea from the Nez Perce Indians. Rev. Parker went ahead to the lands of the Cayuse, Walla Walla, and Nez Perce where he chose sites for missions at Waiilatpu in eastern Washington and Lapwai in Idaho. After visiting Fort Vancouver and Lee's mission, Parker then returned to Boston by ship via the Sandwich Islands.

The ABCFM had a policy of preferring married missionaries, so Dr. Whitman married Narcissa Prentiss who wanted to come to Oregon bad enough to marry someone she had never met. Whitman enlisted Rev. Henry
Harmon Spalding, just out of seminary, and his wife, and the Rev. William Gray. The Whitman party came overland in 1836. Mrs. Whitman and Mrs. Spalding were the first white women on the Oregon Trail. The Whitmans settled at Waiilatpu along the banks of the Walla Walla River and the Spaldings went to Lapwai on the Clearwater River.

Reinforcements were sent to each of the missions. Lee was reinforced in both 1836 and 1837 by ship. The first group included Lot Whitcomb, founder of Milwaukie and builder of the first steamship on the Willamette. Also that year were the first three white women in the valley. They came intended as wives for the missionaries and included Anna Maria Pittman, the first Mrs. Jason Lee. The second group included two more missionaries and two more future wives.

The increase in mission workers brought about the decision to expand the Methodist Mission to the Nisqually Plains (Tacoma), Wascopam (The Dalles), the Clatsop Plains (Astoria), and Willamette Falls (Oregon City - a small village begun by the HBC in 1829). The only reinforcement to the Whitman and Spalding missions was in 1838. That same year Jason Lee returned to the states to ask for additional help in the order of farmers and mechanics. He had left his young pregnant wife behind and while in Westport, Missouri, received word of the deaths of his wife and son during childbirth.

Lee carried with him a memorial from the Americans in Oregon to the U.S. government asking protection from the British. This simple petition marks the transition of Lee from missionary to colonizer. While in Boston he preached the need for American settlers in Oregon. Lee remarried and returned to Oregon in 1840 on the ship Lausanne with the "Great Reinforcement". The fifty people he brought with him included seven missionaries, some doctors and craftsmen, including the miller George Abernethy destined to be the first governor of Oregon. The Methodist mission population was now over ninety.

The Methodists organized a church in Oregon City in 1840 under Rev. Alvin Waller. The next year Rev. Waller would move on to Wascopam to relieve Rev. Daniel Lee, Jason's brother. The Oregon City congregation is the oldest continuous Protestant congregation in Oregon and second only to the St. Paul Catholic congregation in longevity.

The first Catholic missionaries came to Oregon from Montreal in late 1838 at the request of the Hudson Bay Company. The Rev. Father Francis Blanchet, later Archbishop of Oregon, and the Rev. Father Modeste Demers were both French Canadians as were most of their active or retired fur trapping parish.

A mission church was started at St. Paul on French Prairie just north of Lee's mission. Branch missions were opened at Cowlitz and Nisqually. The Rev. Father P.J. DeSmet came to the Flathead Indians of northern Idaho from St. Louis a year later. He built the beautiful church of the Sacred Heart near
Couer D'Alene as well as an Indian school.

The Catholic missions were reinforced by ship from Belgium in 1844, including six Sisters of Notre Dame who started a convent at French Prairie. A convent and girls orphanage started by the Sisters of the Holy Names on the Willamette River has become Marylhurst College. When Lee's Oregon Institute was suffering losses of students Blanchet offered to buy it and merge it with his boys school, but was refused. Father Blanchet’s boys school has become the University of Portland.

The End of the Missions

In the mid to late 1830’s missionaries came to Oregon representing the Catholic, Congregational, Presbyterian and Methodist-Episcopal Churches. Their primary mission was to convert the natives or serve the fur trappers. Their success came more in the line of promoting and serving the increasing number of emigrants. Jason Lee actively promoted emigration and Marcus Whitman was instrumental in the success of the first wagon train by leading them to his mission.

The Catholic Black Robes arrived first, followed by Methodists under Lee and the Presbyterians under Whitman and Spalding. These groups were reinforced in the late 1830’s and early 1840’s.

Several independent Congregational missionaries also came to Oregon. The Reverends J.S. Griffen and Asahel Munger and their wives were sent by the North Litchfield Congregational Association of Connecticut in 1839 because they were dissatisfied with the progress of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). The Lee's represented the Methodist faction and Whitman and Spalding had represented Presbyterianism.

Griffen and Munger came west with fur trappers and wintered with the Spaldings and Whitmans. The journey caused Munger to become mentally deranged so he was sent to work with the Methodist Mission. There he became obsessed with the belief that the Indians needed a miracle and impaled himself on a spike and died.

Griffen settled on the Tualatin Plains near Hillsboro where in 1842 he started the 1st Congregational Church of Oregon which later moved to Portland where it built its beautiful building. In 1840 Rev. Harvey Clark, also an independent Congregational missionary without support of the ABCFM, came across the Oregon Trail. His intentions were to labor among the Indians.

As very few Indians remained, he settled on a claim near Griffen in Forest Grove where he and Tabitha Brown, the "Mother of Oregon," established Tualatin Academy in 1848. Following the Whitman Massacre Henry Spalding taught there. In 1854 it became Pacific University, the second oldest college in Oregon. (Jason Lee's Oregon
Institute, now Willamette University, is the oldest.)

Not all of the missionaries were able to live out long productive lives in Oregon. In July of 1843 the ABCFM recalled Jason Lee to Boston to answer to his low number of converts. He was to be replaced by Rev. George Gary but left Oregon before this could take place. Lee died two years later in Boston still seeking vindication. The Methodist missions degenerated into gross commercialism and materialism. The Rev. Alvin Waller, while he was at the Willamette Falls Mission in Oregon City attempted to have John McLoughlin’s land claims voided. This attempt was carried to the extent of having the case presented to the U.S. Supreme Court by Jason Lee. Governor Abernethy took possession of an island in Willamette Falls from McLoughlin and renamed it Governor’s Island.

The ABCFM determined that the Whitman and Spalding missions were not self-supporting and ordered them closed in 1842. Mind you the missions received no assistance from the board. The missionaries were ordered home. Marcus Whitman left immediately for Boston to protest. He averaged 60 miles a day in a rare middle of the winter passage, despite not travelling on Sundays. For this he was censured by the board for leaving his post. He teamed up with Rev. Samuel Parker in New York and successfully persuaded the board not to close the missions. On his return to Oregon, Whitman traveled with a wagon train leaving Independence, Missouri, May 1843, serving as an invaluable guide. He took 800 people on the train to Oregon by way of the Whitman Mission.

The Whitman Mission came to a tragic end on November 29, 1847, when the mission was attacked by Cayuse Indians seeking revenge for a deadly measles epidemic. Fourteen whites were killed including Dr. and Mrs. Whitman. 53 women and children were taken captive including the Sager children who were living at the mission. The carnage was discovered by the Spaldings and the hostages were rescued by the Hudson Bay Company under Peter Skene Ogden.

All of the Missions except the churches at St. Paul and Oregon City are relegated to history. But their mark on Oregon lives on. In bringing the word of God to the Indians they founded the first schools in Oregon. They failed in their primary task of converting the Indians, but they were successful in providing a foundation for white settlement in Oregon in a critical time of transition and providing an influence of order in a wild and untamed land. They provided the incentive for emigrants to come to Oregon and expand the U.S. borders into British controlled territory.

**Jason Lee’s Mission to Oregon**

When the American settlers arrived in Oregon it was ironic that they were greeted by two Canadians: one a sympathetic
rival who was under orders to discourage them and the other probably the single person most responsible for establishing settlements for whites, organizing schools, and creating a government. The first was John McLoughlin, Chief Factor of the Hudson’s Bay Company. The second was Jason Lee, Methodist Missionary to Oregon.

Jason Lee was working near his birthplace in Ontario in 1833 when he was chosen to lead a mission effort to the Flathead Indians in Oregon. $3000 was appropriated for supplies by the Methodist Mission Board. A Farewell Meeting was followed by a tour of the eastern states presenting his missionary cause to the people.

Lee contracted with Nathaniel Wyeth to accompany him on his second trading expedition. The mission’s supplies were forwarded to Oregon on Wyeth’s brig *May Dacre*. The Wyeth-Lee Party went with the 1834 fur caravan of Captain William Sublette. The party also included naturalists J.K. Townsend and Thomas Nuttall.

They left Independence on April 28, 1834 and arrived at the annual rendezvous where they separated from Sublette Party. There was a layover along the Snake River where on Sunday July 27, 1834, the local mountain men, Indians, and missionaries heard the first Protestant sermon delivered in the Oregon Country. Wyeth stayed on to construct Fort Hall while the Lee Party went on to Fort Vancouver.

At Fort Vancouver, McLoughlin insisted it was too dangerous to be among the Flatheads and suggested the Willamette Valley. The HBC provided men, boats and provisions for the journey to Mission Bottom in the fall of 1834.

The site selected was among the melons and cucumbers of Astorian Joseph Gervais. They pitched tents until they started their unhewn log cabin to store their goods. They finished the cabin between Pacific storms. By spring they had 30 acres fenced and planted.

Two schools were opened in the spring of 1835. One was at Mission Bottom and another at Champoeg. There were fourteen Indian students the first year. seven died and five ran away. In 1836 there were twenty-five students and sixteen fell ill. In two years there was only one conversion. By 1842 almost all Indians in the Willamette Valley were dead of smallpox.

A letter to Dr. Fisk in March of 1836 complaining of no time for the business of religion resulted in two reinforcements. The first arrived by ship on May 28, 1837. Reinforcements included the first white women in Oregon, three unmarried. Elijah White would lead the 1842 migration to Oregon. Alanson Beers and W.H. Willson were in Oregon’s first government. Lot Whitcomb built the first steamboat in Oregon. The second reinforcement included Rev. David Leslie, Rev H.K.W. Perkins.

In 1837 Lee chose The Dalles as the site of his first branch mission. He placed his nephew Daniel Lee in charge. Wascopam, as the mission was called, was at first successful but backsliders outnumbered
converts. In 1847 Wascopam was deeded over to the nephew of Marcus Whitman.

In July of 1837 there was a triple wedding at Mission Bottom. Lee gave the sermon then married Anna Maria Pittman, Cyrus Shepard married Susan Downing, and Charles Roe of the HBC married the half-breed daughter of Thomas McKay.

Lee returned to New England in 1838 to carry a plea for more farmers and mechanics. At Westport, while enroute, he received news of the death of his wife and son in childbirth. Lee remained in New England for two years recruiting settlers for Oregon.

Lee married Lucy Thompson and returned on the ship Lausanne with fifty recruits. This was called the Great Reinforcement of 1840. Seven ministers, two doctors, four farmers, six mechanics, and four teachers. Upon their arrival the mission totalled forty adults and fifty children. Branch missions were started at Nisqually, Clatsop, Umpqua and Willamette Falls. Nisqually and Clatsop were both abandoned. A church was started at Willamette Falls (Oregon City) in 1842 and opened in 1844.

In 1841 Lee’s mission was moved from Mission Bottom to Mission Mill (Salem) and the Indian Manual Training School was moved to its present location at Chemeketa. The next year a school for the white population was started at Mission Mill. Originally called the Oregon Institute it is now Willamette University.

Lee was replaced in July 1843 by Rev. George Gary for not converting enough Indians to justify the vast expenditures. Lee was in Honolulu, heading home, when he learned of the change. He continued on without waiting for his replacement to arrive.

Lee spent the rest of his life seeking vindication. He died in Canada March 2, 1845. His body returned to Salem in 1906.

Waiilatpu and Lapwai

A day spent in the Palouse country includes a visit to the Whitman and Spalding Missions in Washington and Idaho. The living memorials there attest both the beneficial and treacherous sides of the Indians.

Soon after the Methodists sent Jason Lee to Oregon in 1833 the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions designated Rev. Samuel Parker to report on the needs of Indians and select sites for missions. They appointed lay physician Marcus Whitman to fill one of the missions.

Parker caught the 1835 fur caravans and arrived at Fort Vancouver in October. He visited Lee’s Mission, explored the region east of the Cascades and chose three sites for missions. Waiilatpu, Lapwai and Spokane were selected as mission sites. Parker then sailed back to New York by way of the Sandwich Islands missions.

The ABCFM had a policy of married missionaries so Whitman married Narcissa
Prentiss, who wanted very much to be a missionary. Seminary student Rev. Henry Spalding was recruited away from his intended mission among the Osage Indians.

The missionaries set off with the 1836 fur caravan. A cart brought along for Mrs. Spalding because she could not ride a horse became the first wheeled vehicle as far as Fort Boise. The wives became the first white women to journey overland to the Pacific. They were sent to Fort Vancouver while the men built Waiilatpu. They joined their husbands in December. The men went on to Lapwai to construct Spalding’s mission.

Whitman’s mission was among the warlike Cayuse while the Spaldings were among the better dispositioned Nez Perce. Spalding’s temper soon caused a non-cooperative spirit. Both missions tried to convince the Indians to use grist mills but could not convince them to become farmers. In 1838 a branch mission was opened at Spokane.

The difficulties of the missions were not understood by the American Board. Indians could not be rushed into conversion and the missionaries were repeatedly insulted. Calls for reinforcements in 1841 and 1842 met with a board decision to close Waiilatpu and Lapwai.

Immediately upon receiving the message to close the missions and transfer the Whitmans to Spokane a decision was made to send Marcus Whitman back to New York. He left carrying a petition from Spalding and others for reconsideration. He was accompanied on the winter journey by 1842 emigrant Asa Lovejoy. They traveled sixty miles a day for 150 days, resting on Sundays and often taking refuge from snowstorms. They went by way of Taos to skirt around warring Indians where Whitman joined up with a Santa Fe Trail caravan headed to St. Louis.

In New York Whitman met with Samuel Parker. In Boston he was censured by the ABCFM for abandoning his post. But the board decided to withdraw their order closing the missions.

On his 1843 return to the mission Whitman met up with a large group of emigrants at Independence. The Burnett-Nesmith-Applegate Party was preparing to leave for Oregon. Whitman agreed to travel with them. Captain John Gantt had been hired as a guide as far as Fort Hall. Whitman guided them from there on to his mission. From the mission the party of 800, the first to take wagons all the way to The Dalles, split up into smaller companies.

Waiilatpu became a regular stopping place on the Oregon Trail from 1843 to 1847. In 1844 the seven orphaned children of Henry and Mrs. Sager, who died on the plains, were entrusted to the care of the Whitmans. In 1845 the Whitmans became official guardians of the Sagers.

On November 29, 1847, the Whitman Mission was treacherously attacked by Cayuse Indians. Marcus Whitman was called to the door and tomahawked from behind. When Narcissa checked on the commotion she was also hit. Sixteen other men and older boys including two Sagers were killed. 53 women and
children were taken captive and subjected to "indescribable indignities."

The Spaldings were among the first to see the carnage. Peter Skene Ogden of the HBC ransomed the captives for $500 worth of trade goods a month later.

Measles was the main reason for the attack. There had been an epidemic among the Cayuse and rumor had it the Whitmans were trying to exterminate them. Also there was a custom that medicine men who could not cure would be killed.

The government in Oregon City sent troops to fight the Cayuse War. An Indian bragging of taking Mrs. Whitman's scalp was killed and five prisoners were taken back to Oregon City, tried and hung on June 3, 1850.

All ABCFM missions were closed in Oregon. The Oregon Trail was shortened bypassing the former mission. Fear of Indian attack along the trail increased.

Whatever mistakes the Whitmans made in ministering to the sick and needy are far overshadowed in history by their martyr status.

Who Were the First Emigrants On the Oregon Trail?

It is May of 1843. Hundreds of would-be emigrants are assembled in Independence, Missouri, ready to set off 2000 miles for Oregon. They are all suffering from an insanity rampant in America of the 1840's - Oregon Fever. It was not a sudden malady. It had been building since Lewis and Clark returned from Oregon in 1806.

Oregon got a reputation of a perfect climate, disease free, and the breadbasket of the West. Hopeful merchants like Nathaniel Wyeth, crackpot propagandists like Hall Jackson Kelley, and government agents like Lt. William Slacum had all written books on their opinions of Oregon. Fur traders had books written about their adventures out west.

The first person to follow the entire route of the Oregon Trail was Robert Stuart of Astoria in 1812-13. He did it in reverse going west to east. In the process he discovered South Pass.

In 1834 New England merchant Nathaniel Wyeth and Methodist-Episcopal Missionary Jason Lee left for the Willamette Valley. Wyeth had made a trip to Oregon in 1832 and on his overland return he had contracted with the rendezvous of 1833 to bring back supplies. He made good on his deal and at the same time guided Lee to his proposed mission. The Wyeth-Lee Party was the first group of settlers to follow the entire route of the Oregon Trail.

Lee preached the first Protestant sermon west of the Rocky Mountains at Fort Hall on July 27th. Following the sermon there was a horse race and one of their party was killed. The next day Lee conducted the first Protestant funeral west of the Rockies. The Wyeth-Lee Party was convinced by the Hudson Bay Company to leave their wagons at
Fort Hall and continue on to the Willamette Valley by pack animals.

A similar trek was completed in 1836 when Captain Benjamin Bonneville conducted Marcus Whitman and Henry Spaulding to their missions. They were likewise convinced to leave their wagons at Fort Hall. A significance of this party was the presence of the first white women to cross the Rocky Mountains. The Whitman Mission would play heavily in Oregon Trail history. From 1843 until the massacre of 1847 the trail went past the Whitman's front door.

Starting in 1841 Senator Lewis Linn of Missouri annually introduced a bill to Congress to extend U.S. laws to Oregon. The prospect of 640 free acres of prime Willamette Valley farmland as opposed to $200 for 160 acres in the states was very enticing.

A major milestone in American history occurred in the spring of 1841, farmers were heading west. The Western Emigration Society, 60 emigrants strong, left Missouri for the Pacific coast. Led by John Bidwell and Captain John Bartelson, their intention was to go to California. At Fort Hall where they intended to cut off to head south, half of their number decided to opt for Oregon.

The next year missionary Elijah White, newly appointed sub-Indian Agent to Oregon, led 112 emigrants to Oregon. Their wagons were cut down to two wheeled carts at Fort Hall. Missourian Philip Edwards, who wrote a pamphlet in 1843 to discourage emigration, was correct in his observation that no one had yet taken wagons all the way to Oregon.

Two events occurred in the winter of 1842-43 that greatly changed the status of wagons on the trail. The first was Marcus Whitman's dead-of-winter trip from Waiilatpu to New York to plead before the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions not to fire him as a missionary. This successful trip put him in Independence in May on his way back to Oregon. The other event was the Senate passage, 24-22, of Linn's Oregon Bill. Although it was eventually killed in the House it came close to passing and encouraged 875 people to head to Oregon that year.

Whitman met with the emigrants in Independence and promised to join up with them somewhere along the Platte River after conducting business in Westport and Shawnee Mission. With his encouragement the pioneers decided that there were enough of them to enable wagons to make it all the way to Oregon.

On May 22nd the party left Elm Grove, twelve miles out of Independence. After a shakedown of 100 miles to the Kansas River at modern Topeka they elected officers. John Gantt would guide them. The mule trains left first, afraid they would get stuck behind the slower oxen. 875 people in at least 120 wagons and over a thousand head of livestock left for Oregon. Over 700 people and the same number of livestock arrived in Oregon by way of the Whitman Mission. Thirty of their number under Joseph Chiles and Gantt left for California at the Malheur River.
The Great Migration to Oregon was underway.

Outfitting For The Trail

Two of the over 200 river steamboats that sank in the mid-nineteenth century mud of the Missouri River were excavated in 1988. One, the Bertrand, was brought to light from under the DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge near Omaha, 120 years after sinking. The other, the Arabia, was dug out of a corn field near Kansas City more than 130 years after sinking.

The Arabia was supplying the covered wagon trade of the Oregon Trail. Its cargo was brought up intact, preserved by the suffocating mud of the Missouri, right down to the mule tethered to the deck. The Bertrand was heading to Montana to outfit the gold rush. Salvage crews back in 1868 had removed its treasure of gold and mercury but left its picks, shovels, bottles, clothing, medicines, etc. for twentieth century treasure hunters.

Outfitting the western travelers was big business for the jumping off spots along the banks of the Missouri River from Independence to Omaha.

The Oregon farmers were generally poor families who had sold everything they owned (and the bank had not yet repossessed) and booked passage on the same steamboats that were bringing products for their supply. The early pioneers would be told they needed to purchase everything to sustain them along the trail for up to six months as well as farming and building supplies for when they arrived in Oregon, in other words everything they would need for the rest of their lives.

Later Oregon emigrants had easier decisions to make. They could carry more as the road was more developed and the trip took less time. They needed less as stores in Oregon City were now supplied with goods brought around the Horn by ship. They still needed food, gear, medicine and clothing for four months on the trail.

The first item needed was a wagon. Some brought their old farm wagon from home and others purchased one at the supply point. Dozens of blacksmiths were making wagons. The big sloped Conestoga wagons of the freight trade were too big for the Rocky Mountains. A smaller wagon with a 10 to 12 foot flat bed capable of carrying up to 2500 pounds was required. A canvas cover over 5 to 7 curved bows protected what was to be stored inside.

Next came the team. Horses were not satisfactory for pulling wagons across the plains. Forage was not good, insects a pest, and tepid waters left most draft horses ill. A team of 8 to 12 mules would be tough and durable and definitely faster but they were hard to control, given to mayhem in storms and reduced to skeletons by the hard pull.

The first choice of most emigrants was a team of 6 or 8 oxen, paired in yokes. The beasts
were the sure, patient, steady and obedient. They showed adaptability to prairie grasses. They were also inexpensive. They cost $50-65 a head. Whichever animal chosen required shoeing as hooves wore down. Teams heading to California, even oxen, required snowshoes as well.

It would be desirable to buy animals already broken in on prairie grasses, accustomed to yokes and trained to follow instructions. But this usually not being the case, a 2 to 3 week stay in Missouri was spent training animals and packing.

The success of a journey depended most on the choices of equipment and supplies for the trail. The best advice was to not overload the wagon.

Accessories and tools for emergency repairs were a must. This included rope, brake chains, a wagon jack, extra axles and tongues, wheel parts, a whip and nose twitcher, axes and saws, hammers and knives, and a shovel.

Most of the wagon space was reserved for food. The brisk air and hard work made even the most delicate appetites ravenous. Trading Post food would be expensive and hunting was time consuming. Hundreds of pounds of dried goods and cured meats were packed including flour, hardtack, bacon, rice, coffee (to make any water taste decent), sugar, dried beans and fruit. The family milk cow pulled behind and a noisy chicken box tied to the side of the wagon provided fresh milk, eggs and later fresh meat.

Cooking utensils such as a dutch oven, skillet, cutlery, pots and pans, a water barrel and churn were required. Bedding and tenting supplies were packed as the trip was to be one long campout. Each person packed their clothing. Weapons and tools for making bullets were essential, as were medical supplies.

Every emigrant insisted on some luxuries. Chamber pots, lanterns, mirrors, Bibles, school books, clocks and other furniture were crammed into the wagons. The trail was littered with items that became non-essential as wagons had to be lightened because animals weakened under the loads.

Prairie Schooners

The educational computer game "Oregon Trail" starts in Independence, Missouri, at Matt's General Store buying supplies for a trip to Oregon. Depending on your choice of roles as a banker, carpenter or farmer you have up to $800 to spend on supplies. Things are sometimes very simple for a 5th grader. Sometimes they are oversimplified.

First, very few bankers chose to go to Oregon. Those who did probably went by ship. It took longer but it was more luxurious. Second, buying supplies involved far more decisions.

The main wagon used for hauling freight in the east was the Pennsylvania-Dutch developed Conestoga wagon. It was boat shaped with angled ends and a floor that sloped to the center so barrels would naturally stay in the
bed rather than roll out. A watertight canvas cover was stretched over hoops. It was usually drawn by six draft horses with a driver on the left wheelhorse. It hauled up to five tons.

The lesson learned on the Santa Fe Trail was that bullwhackers or muleskinners were preferable to wagondrivers. Conestogas were used with up to 24 oxen for heavier freight, or Missouri mules. Sometimes a second wagon or "backaction" was hitched up as a trailer. The immense distances and scarcity of water precluded the use of horses as draft animals.

The lesson of the Oregon Trail was that the Conestoga was too big. The huge wagon killed even the sturdiest of oxen before the trail was two-thirds complete. A smaller, lighter, half-sized version of the Conestoga was developed and dubbed the prairie schooner. Measuring four feet wide and ten to twelve feet long the sturdy little wagons were pulled by four to six oxen or six to ten mules. Manufactured by the Studebaker brothers or any of a dozen other wagonmakers, in good repair a wagon would be almost as secure as a house.

With its tongue and neck yoke attached, its length doubled to about 23 feet. It stood ten feet high. Its track was over 5 feet. It weighed about 1300 pounds empty. The box, or bed, was made of hardwoods to best resist shrinking in the dry plains air. The box was from two to three feet deep and constructed in such a manner that it could be used as a boat, with caulking. The side boards were beveled outwards to keep out river water.

The box sat on two sets of wheels of different sizes. The rear wheels were 50 inches in diameter and the smaller front steering wheels were 44 inches in diameter. The hardwood wheels had an iron tire around the edge and a hub that screwed into an iron skein axle. Later wagons had a wooden brake block contoured to the rear wheels was controlled by a lever near the front, right side of the driver's seat.

Hardwood bows, usually five, soaked until pliable and bent to a curve then dried, held up the heavy brown wagon sheets. Made of cotton homespun drilling, the sheets were doubled over to make them watertight. They were never painted as this would cause them to break. The cover was well tied down and overlapped in back as to prevent leaking of rain or dust.

A jockey box attached to one end or side carried extra iron bolts, linch pins, skeins and paint bands for the axles, seasoned hickory wedges, chisels, saw, knife, assorted nails, tacks, hoop iron, a punch for making holes in the hoop iron, augers, a jack and assorted light tools.

The rarely used driver's seat had the only springs found on the wagon, one leaf on either side. There was also a foot rest. Also attached to the wagon would be water barrels, a butter churn (usually in use on the trail with butter available in the evening), a shovel and ax, a feed trough, and a chicken coop.

Most of the time spent at the jumping off spot was used training a team. Oxen were best three to five years old, well set and
compactly built, not too heavy but usually around a ton. Milk cows were useful in helping feed the family. Mules were inferior in strength and not as easily managed but were faster. Mules required two to three sets of shoes each. Oxen also were shod.

It took up to three weeks to teach the green teams simple commands such as giddup, gee and haw. And crossing the first stream or double teaming up the first hill was a learning experience for man as well as beast.

A 5th grader wins the "Oregon Trail" game by arriving in Oregon City with people left alive. Sometimes on the real Oregon Trail "winning" was keeping the wagon intact and the animals alive.

The Queen City of the Trails

Located on the south bank of the Missouri River, near the western edge of the state of Missouri, lies the Kansas City suburb of Independence. Few towns its size can claim such a rich history.

The Missouri and Osage Indians claimed the area. The Spanish and French claimed the area. It became American territory in 1803 when Jefferson purchased Louisiana. Lewis and Clark stopped here in 1804 and picked plums, raspberries and wild apples.

William Clark returned late in 1808 and established Fort Osage. George Sibley became the first factor of the fur trading post and Indian agent. Indians would gather outside his window to hear his 15 year old bride play the piano. The Sibley's also entertained such notable visitors as John James Audubon, Archduke Maximilian of Austria, Daniel Boone, Sacajawea, the Chouteau brothers and in 1819 the first steamboat on the Missouri, the Western Engineer.

Due to increasing population Missouri became a separate territory in 1812. By 1820 there were enough settlers to warrant statehood but because of Missouri's stance in favor of slavery it took the Missouri Compromise of 1821 to attain it. The growing communities in the west were grouped together into Jackson County, named in honor of the 1812 war hero Andrew Jackson. The community of Independence was named county seat over neighboring Westport and Kansas City.

Independence had grown up around the house being used for court sessions. In 1827 the town was platted and a slave-built log courthouse was constructed. The courthouse was used as a pig pen in the evenings and became flea infested. The judge would bring sheep into the courtroom before a session to clear out the fleas. A permanent solution to the flea problem came in 1829 with the construction of a new brick courthouse in the town square. The City of Independence was incorporated in 1849, four years after Oregon City.

Growth in western Missouri increased rapidly because of trade with Santa Fe.
Before 1821 trade with the Mexican outpost was illegal. When Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821 trade became legal and encouraged. William Becknell led the first legal trading expedition and became known as the "Father of the Santa Fe Trail."

Originally cloth and tools to trade in Santa Fe for furs, salt and Mexican silver were obtained in St. Louis and hauled overland in Conestoga wagons, but soon traders were paying $6 to steamboat to Independence and wagon from there. Probably the most famous wagon boy on the Santa Fe Trail was Kit Carson.

A brief but lasting chapter in Independence history began in 1831 when Joseph Smith moved his Latter Day Saints to this city. They prospered on their large farms, started the first local newspaper and their own schools. Townspeople were afraid the Saints would take over and disliked their anti-slavery views. A mob wrecked the newspaper and tarred and feathered the printers. The Saints departed rapidly for nearby Clay County. But they were still a problem so the governor ordered them out of the state. They moved to Illinois to start Nauvoo.

The outfitters for the Santa Fe Trail made Independence a natural jumping-off spot for the Oregon Trail. There was a riverboat landing at Wayne City and a railroad up to Independence. The mules that pulled the cars up from the river rode the same cars back down. Robert Weston, blacksmith and wagonmaker and later mayor, specialized in wagons for the Oregon Trail. Although he insisted a "Weston Wagon Never Wears Out" few survived the trip to Oregon. Hiram Young, a slave who had purchased his own freedom by making ax handles and ox yokes, made covered wagons.

From 1841 to 1849 wagon trains headed to Oregon and California left from Independence Town Square and followed the Santa Fe Trail into Kansas. But sandbars at the landing and a cholera epidemic in 1849 prompted emigrants to bypass Independence for Westport. They saved 18 miles of the trail and a river crossing.

During the Civil War two battles were fought in Independence. At one time all Southern sympathizers were ordered into town and their farms were burned. The Union lost and regained the town.

Famous residents of Independence included Jim Bridger - hunter, trapper, trader and guide; William Quantrill - leader of a Confederate band of raiders during the Civil War; Frank and Jesse James - outlaws, bank and train robbers, and local heroes; and Harry S Truman - Jackson County judge, U.S. Senator, Vice President under Franklin Roosevelt, and President responsible for shortening World War II with the Atomic Bomb.

Back in the 1840's it was predicted that the three westernmost cities would merge into the great city of Centropolis. Today Westport is part of Kansas City and Independence is its largest suburb.
Freighters, Stagecoaches and Lone Riders

Along the Missouri River between Kansas City and Omaha are several small towns and cities vital to the history of the West.

In 1825 trapper Joseph Robidoux started a trading post at Blacksnake Hills overlooking Kansas. Five years later between Blacksnake and Westport Landing the Army built Fort Leavenworth in Indian Territory to impress the Indians. It was off-limits to emigrants and traders. Across the river an ex-Dragoon began the town of Weston in 1837 as a tobacco market and later a whiskey distillery.

John Bidwell heard his first tales of California in Weston. Despite this the sleepy little communities remained just that during the early years of the Oregon Trail. Independence was equipped to outfit for the trail and garnered nearly all of the traffic.

Blacksnake Hills was platted and renamed in 1843. It was legally St. Joseph but commonly called St. Joe. It had three stores and a hotel. Then with cholera in Independence and the discovery of gold in California the population of St. Joe doubled.

By 1850 there were 3000 inhabitants living in brick homes and 10,000 emigrants in "Gambling Hells" described as men, mules, and tents. Roads were built from Leavenworth and St. Joe to the Oregon Trail. Weston had as many as eight boats docked at a time and was "as good a starting place as any."

In the 1850's, during the peak of the emigration to Oregon and California, St. Joe and Council Bluffs were the first choice as jumping-off spots. Two extra days by steamer past Independence saved two weeks by ox team. By the late 1850's lower steamboat fares to Omaha caused emigrants to by-pass the middle towns, leaving them to find new ventures.

William Russell was an entrepreneur who spent five years on the edge of bankruptcy. In partnership with Alexander Majors and William Waddell he operated freight wagons on the Santa Fe Trail. With John Jones he operated the Pikes Peak Express stagecoach line from Leavenworth to Denver. Then in 1857 came a big break, an Army contract to haul 4.5 million pounds of supplies to Utah as Col. Albert Sidney Johnston took over as governor from Brigham Young. It took 41 wagon trains to move the supplies.

Tis Pikes Peak Express consolidated with the Central Overland California in 1859 offering service from Sacramento to St. Joe and Independence. The same year Russell bought out the Mormon mail contract from Salt Lake City to Independence. Competition from the Butterfield Overland Mail Co. caused the C.O.C.P.P.Ex.Co.‘s initials to stand for the Clean Out of Cash and Poor Pay Express Company.

Then came the venture that would put Russell permanently into both bankruptcy and the history books. In a meeting with Frederick Bee, who had strung telegraph wires from San Francisco to Sacramento, and
California Senator Gwin late in 1859, the decision was made to start the Pony Express. The "Pony" began operation on April 3, 1860. It connected the telegraph stations at St. Joe and Sacramento, making it possible to send a message from New York to San Francisco in only ten days. The General Office was the Patee House Hotel in St. Joe. The stables in St. Joe and many of the station houses were financed by Ben Holladay.

The total cost was $100,000. They purchased 500 Kentucky-bred horses and California mustangs of superior stamina for $175 each, up to $150 more than the normal cost of horses. They hired 80 riders, "young skinny fellows, unmarried" for $50 a month plus board. They maintained 157 Pony Express Stations. 95 of the stations were new and 62 were existing stage stops. There was a station every 10-15 miles, an hour apart at top speed, utilizing the stagecoach stops which were 25 miles apart. Mail left St. Joe and Sacramento once a week, later twice, and cost $5 per half ounce, later down to $1.

Each rider carried a leather mochila with four flaps. Riders rode three to six mounts from 45 to 90 miles between home stations and return. The goal was to deliver a letter in ten days. The fastest was Lincoln's Inaugural Address which took seven days and seventeen hours. The "Pony" followed the Oregon Trail from Kansas through Wyoming. Emigrants cheered riders as they passed.

Russell, Majors, and Waddell filed for bankruptcy in 1861. Financier Ben Holladay took over management and closed the "Pony" down. Holladay expanded the stage and freight lines. As the transcontinental railroad stepped its way west he kept closing stations. In 1869 he sold his lines to Wells, Fargo and Co. and moved to Oregon where he went into the railroad building business with the Willamette Falls Portage Railroad at Oregon City and later the Oregon and California Railroad from Portland to Sacramento.

The Nebraska Connection

Omaha, Nebraska, a city of over half a million people, did not even exist until 1854 but its environs date back to the early fur trade and figure prominently in the development of the Oregon Trail and related overland trails and their ultimate demise.

The name Nebraska comes from the Indian name for the muddy Platte River. The name Platte was given by the French fur trapping Mallet brothers in the 1750's. When they came there were 40,000 Indians already there. In the western Platte valley were the semi-nomadic Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Potawatomies. Along the eastern Platte and Missouri Rivers were the farming tribes of the Oto, Omaha, Ponca, and Pawnees living in their permanent earth lodges.

Lewis and Clark stopped on July 30, 1804, to meet with the Oto and Missouri Indians at Council
Bluff. The area was also visited by the exploring parties of Pike, Hunt, and Long between 1806 and 1819.

Manuel Lisa built a post at Council Bluff (Nebraska) in 1812. In 1819 the U.S. Army built Cantonment Missouri at Council Bluff. The next year it was made permanent and renamed Fort Atkinson. It was the first fort in Indian Territory and was built to discourage British fur trapping in Louisiana.

The area that currently takes the name Council Bluffs in Iowa was first settled in 1837 when Dragoons from Fort Leavenworth erected a blockhouse to protect the Potawatomie Indians. The next year Father Pierre DeSmet received permission to establish an Indian mission and turn the blockhouse into a chapel. The mission closed three years later due to Sioux attacks and alcoholism among the Potawatomies.

In 1846 the advance guard of the Mormons leaving Nauvoo, Illinois, arrived in Council Bluffs, then called Miller's Hollow. The Mormons were anxious to get beyond the reach of the Gentiles following the murder of Joseph Smith, even if it meant ignoring the law against settling in Indian Territory. Brigham Young crossed the Missouri and erected the first of the log cabins that would become the Mormon Winter Quarters at present day Florence in north Omaha. In 1847 Winter Quarters became the base for the coming migration to Salt Lake.

In 1848, on the heels of eviction from Indian Territory, Young led 2500 Saints and 1000 wagons to the new Zion. The remainder of the believers, mostly poor without outfits, were ferried downstream to Miller's Hollow. There they established the city of Kanesville which was maintained as a temporary station on the Mormon migration route by three Apostles Orson Hyde, George Smith and Ezra Taft Benson.

Due to the California Gold Rush in 1849, the Mormon Trail became the Council Bluffs Road. From 1849 to 1853 over 15,000 Mormons used the road along with more than 65,000 argonauts headed for California.

Three ferries crossed the Missouri for from $1.50 to $10.00 a wagon. The most heavily used was the Upper or Mormon Ferry. The Middle Ferry was at Kanesville and the Lower Ferry at Bellevue. The roads leading from these ferries stayed along the north side of the Platte. Crossings further south at Plattsmouth and Nebraska City followed the south side of the Platte and joined the Oregon Trail at Fort Kearny.

The final Mormon migration of 1853 saw the last 3000 Saints leave and Kanesville abandoned. The empty houses were appropriated by Gentiles. The town was renamed Council Bluffs although the name did not die easily.

In 1854 the Kansas-Nebraska Act passed Congress with national implications of "popular sovereignty." Lands reserved for Indians were opened to whites for settlement. An emigrant reported a little town across from Council Bluffs with a trading post and a few Pawnee Indians. Omaha was born.

Lands opened to whites coupled with the Homestead Act of
1863 allowing 160 free acres to settlers led directly to Nebraska statehood on March 1, 1867.

In 1859 Grenville Dodge, later a General in the Civil War, met with Abraham Lincoln. Dodge was a railroad surveyor living in Council Bluffs and Lincoln was in town on business. Dodge recommended the Platte River Road as route for the transcontinental railroad. In 1862 Lincoln signed the Pacific Railroad Act designating that route. Dodge was named chief engineer of the Union Pacific.

Construction began in 1864 at Omaha. By 1867 the railroad was completed across Nebraska. On May 10, 1869, the golden spike was driven at Promontory Point, Utah. Dodge returned to Council Bluffs to build his retirement home.

Rail passengers from the East stayed at the depot-hotel in Council Bluffs then ferried across to Omaha to begin the western trip. Omaha represents the final jumping-off spot for the Oregon Trail as well as the beginning of the railroad that ended the need for covered wagon travel.

**Life On The Oregon Trail**

About 650,000 people left the eastern half of the United States for the West during the 1840’s, 1850’s and 1860’s by way of the overland trails collectively known as the Oregon Trail. Fully a third of them were headed for the farms of Oregon’s Willamette Valley. Life on the Oregon Trail for these farmer emigrants was one of toil and peril.

For the most part the Oregon Trail was traveled by covered wagons. The Independence style was 11 feet long, 4 feet wide, and 2 feet deep with 5 foot bows of hardwood. With only one set of springs under the rarely used driver’s seat, nearly all walked. They walked with their cattle and sheep herds. But the covered wagons shared the trail. They shared it with stagecoaches, freight wagons, mail wagons, fur trade caravans, U.S. Army troops and supply trains, dispatch and Pony Express riders, pack horses and mules, Mormon handcarts and even herds of horses coming from California.

Some of the less common trail vehicles included horse drawn carriages for the affluent and buggies of the 1849 Pioneer Line. Oddities included the 1859 Wind Wagon powered by sails to Pikes Peak, a steam wagon fiasco out of Nebraska City, and William Kiel’s funeral cortege from Missouri to Oregon, complete with hearse, for his departed son Willie.

Emigrants banded together into parties or companies for mutual assistance or protection. Parties mostly consisted of relatives or persons from the same hometown traveling together. In some cases they formed joint stock companies. Examples of these include the Boston and Newton Joint Stock Association, Iron City
Telegraph Company, Wild Rovers, and the Peoria Pioneers.

Organization was required of all wagon trains to insure success. The more successful groups had a written constitution, code, resolution or bylaws. Almost all had officers and regulations. The rules included camping and marching regulations, restrictions on gambling and liquors. There were penalties for infractions, social security for the sick or bereaved and disposition of shares of the deceased.

A typical day started before dawn with breakfast of coffee, bacon and dry bread. The bedding was secured and wagon repacked. By seven the party was under way. At noon they stopped for a cold meal of coffee, cold beans, bacon or buffalo prepared that morning. Then back on the trail. Around five, after traveling an average of fifteen miles they circled the wagons for the evening. The men secured the animals and made repairs while women cooked a hot meal of tea and boiled rice with dried beef or codfish. Evening activities included schooling the children, singing and dancing, and stories around the campfire.

Laundry was usually reserved for special days when the wagon train stopped for a few hours or a day. Some trains insisted on stopping every Sunday. Others reserved only Sunday morning for religious activities.

Marriages and births were always special occasions. Weddings were common either at the jumping off spots or by the time the party got to the Platte River or Fort Laramie for those romances that bloomed along the trail. A conspiracy against the privacy of newly-weds by older-weds was called "shivaree". Birth rates shot up during the 60's. Every train had expectant mothers. Their newborns were named for natural features, events, or important days. There is one story of an orphaned baby who was passed from breast to breast to be fed.

Perils along the trail caused many would-be emigrants to turn back. Weather related perils included thunderstorms, hail as large as golf balls, lightning, tornados and wind. If dust or mud didn't slow the wagons, stampedes, either of domestic animals or buffalo, would.

Nearly one in ten who set off on the trail did not survive. The two biggest causes of death were disease and accidents. The disease with the worst reputation was Asiatic Cholera, a rapidly fatal disease related to fever. It was worst in 1850. Reportedly it came from the Orient by way of New Orleans and St. Louis. It was heaviest among adults originating from Missouri. It was prevalent on the plains, found only between Independence and Fort Laramie.

Accidents were caused by negligence, guns, animals and the weather. Shootings were common. Usually one shot oneself. Shootings, drownings, being crushed by wagon wheels and injuries from handling domestic animals were the big four accidental killers on the trail. Deaths by sharp instruments, falling objects, rattlesnakes, buffalo hunts, hail and lightning combined to less than any one of the big four.

Medicine kits to treat disease or accidents included
"physicing" pills, castor oil, rum or whiskey, peppermint essence, quinine for malaria, hartshorn for snakebite, citric acid for scurvy, opium, laudanum, morphine, calomel and tincture of camphor.

It's a wonder as many people made it who did.

Oregon Trail Mileposts: Independence to Scotts Bluff

Three days travel out of Independence, the fresh, green Oregon Trail pioneers came upon a landmass rising from the flat grassland around it. Blue Mound seemed strangely out of place. Eager emigrants climbed it to get an observation of the trail ahead. Could they have seen all of the mileposts ahead? Leaders urging the parties to move on allowed them only a quick glance.

As the wagon trains crossed Kansas and Nebraska, the mileposts were obstacles in the form of rivers that had to be crossed: the Blue, Wakarusa, Kansas, Vermillion, Big Blue and Little Blue. High banks and high water during May were problems. Some rivers could be forded, but for rivers deeper than four feet a pair of canoes would be lashed together, wagons rolled on crossways and the resulting ferry poled across. Some smaller creeks had toll bridges.

Dotting the trail from Missouri to Oregon are numerous springs with names of explorers such, descriptive names such as Cold or Cottonwood, or names showing pioneer determination such as Faith or Charity. Alcove Springs is a twelve foot fall of water that provided much needed nourishment for man and beast. The Donner Party carved the words Alcove Springs in eight inch letters on a nearby rock that can still be read today. Two days away at Fremont Springs can be seen similar graffiti containing the names of 1842 scouts John C. Fremont and Kit Carson.

Later emigrants could see Pony Express stations and stagecoach stops about every fifteen miles from Hollenberg’s Ranch House to Fort Bridger. The first one, Hollenberg’s, was built in 1857 and is the only one left today unaltered. Rock Creek Station in Nebraska was the sight of the 1861 shootout involving David McCandles and James Butler Hickok which gave Hickok his "Wild Bill" reputation.

Where the Oregon Trail meets the Platte River was the first of many forts built to protect plains emigrants. Fort Kearny had a Post Office which gave emigrants an opportunity to send home letters.

The Platte River in June was mostly shallow, stagnated pools with mud flats, sandbars, muddy water and a three foot deep main bed that meandered from bank to bank. It was too wide to be bridged and too shallow to be ferried. Crossing the Platte from the northern Council Bluffs (Mormon) Road to the southern Oregon Trail required a two hour trek between willow poles set to mark stable sandbars and to avoid quicksand.

The Oregon Trail had to eventually cross the Platte River to
gain access to the North Platte River. This was done at California Crossing, named for the gold rush emigrants of 1849. Before then it was known as Brule Crossing. The Pony Express used another crossing twenty miles upstream and also called it California Crossing, so the Oregon Trail crossing became the Old or Lower California Crossing. "We blocked up some 10 inches, doubled teams, drove and waded, and in about three hours we got over." (John Spencer, June 16, 1852) "The sand breaks under the wagon wheels and it jars worse than if it was passing over the roughest kind of frozen ground. Compelled to put two teams to each wagon. If the wagon is permitted to stand for one minute they bury down in the sand. There was a Frenchman there who acted as pilot - his charge was a tin of sugar and coffee." (James Pritchard, May 26, 1849)

Once across the South Platte there was a steep grade as the trail climbed up California Hill to a high plateau. Deep ruts are still visible today. Then it was back down Windlass Hill. It seemed impossible to go down safely. All available men and women held on to ropes to slow the drop. At the bottom was Ash Hollow on the North Platte River. The sylvan glade and cool springs was an oasis for the weary adventurers who had just lowered wagons downhill by rope. Esther Belle Hanna (June 5, 1852) described the great profusion of wild roses in full bloom.

Along the banks of the North Platte River is a profusion of massive sandstone features rising majestically from the plains. The first, Courthouse and Jail Rocks, could be seen for forty miles or three days away. Next came Chimney Rock. For two days before arriving its solitary finger looked like "an old ruin, then a very sharp cone, more the shape of a chimney than anything else." (A.J. McCall, June 13, 1849) Scotts Bluff was named for fur trapper Hiram Scott who was abandoned for dead sixty miles away and crawled to this spot to die. The story is retold in many emigrant diaries, having heard it at the local trading posts.

Oregon Trail Mileposts:
Fort Laramie to Fort Bridger

Several fur trading posts were passed by Oregon Trail emigrants beyond Scotts Bluff. The oldest, dating back to 1834, was William Sublette’s post at LaRemay’s River, later called Fort Laramie.

Traveling beyond Fort Laramie, Oregon Trail pioneers crossed a number of rivers flowing out of what the emigrants called the Black Hills, today called the Laramie Mountains. There were crossings of the Laramie River, Horse, Cottonwood, LaBonte, Box Elder, and Deer Creeks, the North Platte itself and nine crossings of the Sweetwater. Many of these crossings were ferries or bridges. Most of the streams were clear flowing water up to 100 yards wide with banks littered with driftwood.

Emigrant diaries mention several landmarks beyon
Laramie. One was Register Cliff, a soft sandstone message board. One interesting section of the cliff is that of the Unthank family. Above the others is written A.H. Unthank, 1850. (Alva wrote his name one week short of his death from cholera.) Below it is O.N. Unthank, 1869. (Alva’s nephew.) Below them is O.B. Unthank, 1931. (Alva’s great-grandson.)

Farther up the trail are the spectacular Guernsey, Wyoming, ruts. The Oregon Trail at this point had to go over the soft sandstone and the wagon wheels left a depression five feet deep. Nearby is the Joel Hembree Grave. The six year old boy with the Applegate company was killed July 18, 1843, when he fell under a wagon. This oldest marked grave on the trail was seen by all who followed.

The abundance of grass next to Independence Rock made it a definite stopping point. The goal was to arrive here by the 4th of July or hit snow in the Oregon mountains. The granite mass resembling a large turtle covers about five acres. It is the most noted landmark west of Fort Laramie. Emigrants found many fur trapper’s names already drawn on the rock and added their own names. Axle grease made of pine tar and hog fat was used to paint some names, still visible in sheltered areas. Some emigrants carved their names, dates or initials. The Mormons had men who would inscribe names for up to five dollars each. In 1860 Sir Richard Burton calculated between forty and fifty thousand names.

Within sight of Independence Rock is Devils Gate, where the Sweetwater River goes through a crack in the granite. The trail went around the feature but emigrants would stop and climb to the top to peer over the edge. Eighteen year old Caroline Todd fell to her death doing just that.

The next milepost was Ice Slough, a shallow basin at the 6000 foot level just before South Pass. Ponds and springs here were covered with turf. Ice from the previous winter was insulated under the turf and still remained there during the hot summer months. The surface water was alkali, but the ice was clear and good. “We dug down in the earth about 12 inches, and found chinks of ice. We carried it along till about noon, and made some lemonade for dinner. It relished first rate.” (George Belshaw, July 4, 1853.)

South Pass marks the halfway point of the Oregon Trail. This is the most symbolic landmark on the trail. Here the emigrants crossed the Continental Divide and crossed the eastern boundary of Oregon Territory. Before 1849, emigrants had just left the United States. “Today we set foot in Oregon Territory, the land of promise.” (Theodore Talbot, August 22, 1843.) Expecting a narrow alpine pass, emigrants were surprised by the flat broad plain twenty miles wide with a gradual approach. The descent was steeper. About 3 miles farther on the trail is Pacific Springs, a marshy prairie and bogs made by springs, the first water encountered flowing toward the Pacific Ocean.

Most river crossings in Wyoming were difficult due to the considerable amount of snowmelt
in July and August. The emigrants always came during high water and had to cross submerged gravel bars. A course altered by even a few feet meant disaster for people, wagons and livestock. Later emigrants were met at the Green River by a ferry.

Fort Bridger was a palisaded trading post and blacksmith shop established in 1842 by Jim Bridger and Louis Vasquez to capitalize on the overland trade and need for blacksmithing services. Worn out animals could be exchanged for fresher ones.

Sublette's Cutoff was a fifty mile trek across desolate hostile land that saved 46 miles. The waterless land was the worst encountered. Not popular until 1849 and the rushing gold seekers, it necessitated a decision whether to save time or animals. Some emigrants chose to travel by night, breaking camp at 2 AM, using boys walking ahead with lantern headlights. The wagons traveled side by side to avoid each other's dust, up to a mile across.

Oregon Trail Mileposts: Fort Hall to Oregon City

Heading northwest towards the Snake River the Oregon Trail emigrants passed through a new type of landscape, lava lands, dotted by an otherworldly landscape of cones and craters, springs, geysers and waterfalls. Steamboat Springs was a three foot geyser that emitted a high-pitched whistle. Steamboat was the principal feature of a group of mineral springs called Soda Springs. Formed by mineral deposits, some of the springs were hot, others warm or cold. Some were white in color, others grey, buff or red. Some tasted like soda water, others like metal or beer. One minister proclaimed that "Hell is not more than a mile from this place."

Now traveling in territory worked by the early American and British fur trappers of Oregon, the emigrants now reached forts older than the trail. Fort Hall was established by Nathaniel Wyeth in 1834 and sold to the Hudson's Bay Company. After Oregon became a United States Territory in 1849, the HBC departed and the post served the emigrant trade exclusively. Emigrants here tasted Pacific salmon for the first time.

The Snake River flows through the bottom of a chasm that in some places is only 20 feet wide. The rumble of American Falls, Shoshone Falls, and Twin Falls could be heard for miles. At Thousand Springs a series of streams burst out from under the lava rimrock into the Snake River. Since these falls were on the other side of the river, this milepost was only of interest to the pioneers.

The Snake River briefly escaped out of its high walls at Three Island Crossing, allowing parched wagon trains a chance to cross to the north side and travel to the lush, green Boise River Valley. The river was six to eight feet deep but its clarity was deceptive, making it appear shallower. Combined with its swift current, this was the most treacherous crossing encountered.
on the entire trail. Guidebooks detailed how to use two of the three islands to avoid mishaps. Still wagons capsized and men and animals drowned. Many emigrants chose an alternate route staying on the dry south bank of the Snake rather than making the deadly crossing.

"First we drive over a part of the river 100 yards wide to an island, then over another branch 75 yards wide to a second island; then we tied a string of wagons together by a chain. We carried as many as 15 wagons at one time. The water was 10 inches up the wagons' beds in the deeper places. It was about 9000 yards across."

(William Newby, September 11, 1843)

After Fort Boise and after 1859, the Oregon Trail was in the State of Oregon. Beyond Farewell Bend the emigrants next milepost was the Blue Mountains. This heavily timbered expanse was steep. Emigrants were astonished by the 200 foot tall conifers. From the crest could be seen the great volcanoes of the Cascades. Even in late August and September the nights were cold, reminders that the mountains ahead were even higher.

For five years the trail went past the Whitman Mission. The mission provided food, medical attention and blacksmithing services. It was bypassed entirely after the November 29, 1847, massacre of the Whitmans. At Fort Walla Walla needy emigrants could travel to Fort Vancouver in HBC boats.

Tributaries of the Columbia River were crossed between the Blues and the Cascades. The Umatilla River was crossed at Echo where emigrants saw the first frame house since they left Missouri. The John Day River had a swift current and a bed of round stones. The Deschutes River was a difficult ford until a ferry was established.

The Dalles was the terminus of overland traffic for the first four years of the trail until the Barlow Road was opened. Emigrants taking the Columbia River from The Dalles to Oregon City stopped over at Fort Vancouver. The HBC trading post and regional headquarters under Chief Factor John McLoughlin was established in 1825. For many emigrants it was here, for the first time since Missouri, that they ate at a table or slept in a house.

The end of the Oregon Trail was Oregon City, 1932 miles from Independence. Those arriving by river landed near Governor Abernethy's house and proceeded to Abernethy Green. The Barlow Road travelers entered Abernethy Green from the east. Here was the final campground.

"I cannot realize that I am in a measure at my journey's end, with peace and plenty all around."

(Esther Hanna, 1852.)

"I now took off my blanket dress and put on my spick and span new dress and corded bonnet which I had carried safely on my saddle."

(Sarah Cummins, 1845.)

"Friday, October 27. Arrived at Oregon City at the falls of the Willamette. Saturday, October 28. Went to work."

(James Nesmith, 1843.)
Trading Posts and Forts
Along the Oregon Trail

An 1849 emigrant, A.J. McCall, recalled in his diary passing a "number of long, low buildings constructed principally of adobe, or sun dried bricks, with nearly flat roofs of brick." Where the Oregon Trail meets the Platte River was the first fort built to protect plains emigrants, Fort Kearny. No matter what year emigrants traveled the Oregon Trail they saw forts along the way. Some were fur trading posts and others were military bases.

In 1845 Stephen W. Kearny had a council with 1200 Sioux Indians resulting in a treaty calling for safe passage for Oregon Trail wagons. An act creating forts along the Oregon Route in 1846 led to the creation of Fort Childs. The site was purchased from the Pawnees for $2000 in trade goods. Fort Childs was renamed Fort Kearny by dragoons transferring from the original Fort Kearny at the mouth of the Platte River.

Fort Kearny had a Post Office establishment, which gave emigrants the opportunity to send back letters. The adjacent "hell-hole" communities of Dobytown and Dirty Woman Ranch were the type that clung to the fringes of any military reservation.

Several fur trading posts were passed by Oregon Trail emigrants near where trails led to the various rendezvous. Fort John was an American Fur Company post on the trail near Scotts Bluff. It replaced an earlier Robidoux Trading Post. Two competing fur trading posts were Fort Bernard and Fort Platte.

The oldest fur trading post was Fort William, dating back to 1834 when William Sublette established a post at LaRemay's (Laramie) River. He undercut the Rocky Mountain Fur Company and captured the Indian trade. The structure was typical of the era with a rectangular stockade of cottonwood logs and elevated blockhouses on two corners and over the main door.

Fort William was sold to Lucien Fontenelle and renamed Fort Lucien. Fort Laramie was built of adobe a few yards away and the adjacent wooden fort was dismantled for firewood. Some of the beams of existing Fort Laramie's Bachelor Officers Quarters, Old Bedlam, were from Fort William.

Mounted riflemen, sent from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Laramie in 1849, found their route wrought with confusion as cholera hit the emigrants rushing to seek California gold. Modern Fort Laramie was a U.S. Army post from 1849 to 1890 with up to 180 buildings.

Eight other forts or camps were constructed by the U.S. Army in addition to Forts Kearny and Laramie. Most were only used briefly. Fort Grattan was a defense point at Ash Hollow following the nearby Battle of Blue Water. Fort McPherson, popularly known as Fort Cottonwood, was at the confluence of the North and South Platte to protect emigrants from Indians. Camp Mitchell was established just outside of Scotts Bluff's Mitchell Pass. Fort Fetterman was built where the Bozeman Trail split off from the
Oregon Trail just past Fort Laramie. Camp Connor was started at Soda Springs. Cantonment Loring protected emigrants and Idaho miners near Fort Hall. U.S. Army Fort Boise was the base of operations for General Crook against the Snake River Indians and for General Howard against the Nez Perce and Bannocks.

Fort Bridger was a palisaded trading post and blacksmith shop established in 1842 by Jim Bridger and Louis Vasquez to capitalize on the overland trade and need for blacksmithing services. Worn out animals could be exchanged for newer ones. When it became obvious most Oregon and California bound emigrants were shortcutting the fort, it was sold to the Mormons. The army built their own Fort Bridger using a stone wall of the original.

Fort Hall was a stockaded trading post established by Nathaniel Wyeth in 1834 on the east bank of the Snake River. He sold it to the Hudson's Bay Company. After Oregon became a United States Territory, the HBC departed and the post served the emigrant trade exclusively. A new Fort Hall was later built by the army nearby.

The HBC operated other forts in what used to be their territory. Located at the mouths of the Owyhee and Boise Rivers into the Snake was Fort Boise. Those traveling by the Whitman Mission went past Fort Walla Walla. Needy emigrants could travel to Fort Vancouver in company boats from here.

Emigrants taking the Columbia River from the Dalles to Oregon City stopped over at Fort Vancouver. The HBC trading post and regional headquarters under Chief Factor John McLoughlin was established in 1824. For many emigrants it was here, for the first time since Missouri, that they ate at a table or slept in a house.

The United States Army
Along the Oregon Trail

In 1845 Stephen Watts Kearny led five Cavalry companies on a sweep of the plains. He passed the huge Stephen Meek Wagon Train. His force of 250 dragoons was overwhelmed by the 3000 emigrants in their 460 wagons. Near Fort Laramie he met in council with 1200 Sioux Indians and arranged safe passage for Oregon Trail wagons.

An act creating forts along the Oregon Route in 1846 led to the creation of Fort Childs by the Oregon Battalion. The site was purchased from the Pawnees for $2000 in trade goods. Fort Childs was renamed Fort Kearny by dragoons transferring from the original Fort Kearny at the mouth of the Platte River. The adjacent "hell-hole" communities of Dobytown and Dirty Woman Ranch were the type that clung to the fringes of any military reservation.

Created by Congress in 1846, a regiment of mounted riflemen was sent from Fort Leavenworth in 1849. Built over the remains of Forts William and John, modern Fort Laramie was a
U.S. Army post until 1890 and had up to 180 buildings.

Just before arriving at Fort Laramie, emigrants passed the site of Grattan Massacre. On August 19, 1854, 2nd Lt. John Grattan and 28 soldiers attempted to arrest several Sioux Indians for eating a stray Mormon cow. The arresting party killed a Sioux chief before being all killed themselves. This began many years of intermittent hostility along the Oregon Trail.

Ten forts or camps were constructed by the U.S. Army. Fort Grattan was a defense point and supply depot established in 1855, for a few months, at Ash Hollow following the nearby Battle of Blue Water. Fort McPherson, popularly known as Fort Cottonwood, was completed in 1863 at the confluence of the North and South Platte. The victims of the Grattan Massacre were reburied here. Camp Mitchell was just outside of Scotts Bluff’s Mitchell Pass from 1864 to 1867. Fort Fetterman was built in 1867 where the Bozeman Trail split off from the Oregon Trail.

Fort Bridger, an 1842 trading post, was sold to the Mormons in 1853. Fort Bridger was burned to the ground in 1857 to prevent its capture by the U.S. Army. The army built their own Fort Bridger using a stone wall of the original.

Old Fort Hall was abandoned in 1856. The Army built new Fort Hall in 1870 to control the Indians. Cantonment Loring, in operation 1849-50, and Camp Connor, started by Irish immigrant General Patrick Connor at Soda Springs, were both located in the Fort Hall area.

U.S. Army Fort Boise was opened in 1863 by Oregon volunteers to protect the emigrants and Idaho gold miners. It was the base for General Crook against the Snake River Indians from 1866 to 1868 and for General Howard against the Nez Perce and Bannocks in 1878. It is now a V.A. Hospital in downtown Boise, Idaho.

The Dalles was the terminus of overland traffic for the first four years of the trail. Camp Drum, opened in 1850 and renamed Fort Dalles in 1853 was maintained by mounted riflemen. It became a quartermaster depot, abandoned in 1867 and was sold in 1877. Its buildings are still present among the elegant old houses of the Dalles.

Pre-Civil War posts were hit by budget cuts. Planned bastions on the plains became ordinary fortifications. The German and Irish immigrants, who made up half of the recruits, earned one-fifth as much as civilians doing the same work. But it was pointed out the $11 a Private earned a month was in addition to food, housing, clothing and medical attention. Recruits were taught how to ride, shoot, and fight and were given a basic education. Still many pony soldiers deserted to follow the gold rush, taking their horses and guns with them.

Meager salaries and a limit of 800 pounds of personal effects discouraged most soldiers from bringing their families west. In addition only officers got rooms to themselves. Many enlisted personnel slept in tents. The only women officially allowed by the Army were laundresses, one for every 25 men. Despite the lack of
physical attractiveness, nearly all laundresses ended up married.

During the Civil War, volunteers replaced regulars at the forts. It was their job to pacify the Indians until the regulars returned. Some volunteers were very aggressive. John Chivington, of the Colorado militia, was a former Methodist minister who led the slaughter of defenseless Cheyenne at Sand Creek.

Following the Civil War the U.S. Cavalry returned to the plains. The standardized wool uniform was dark blue on top with light blue pants and a civilian hat replacing the usually lost Army issue. Their weapons included a .45 caliber carbine, a saber, and a .45 caliber Colt revolver.

Hardships On the Oregon Trail

In December of 1847 Loren Hastings was walking the stump filled muddy streets of Portland, Oregon, when he chanced upon a friend he had known back in Illinois. Hastings had made the trip on the Oregon Trail unscathed. His friend had lost his wife. His summary is eloquent. "I look back upon the long, dangerous and precarious emigrant road with a degree of romance and pleasure; but to others it is the graveyard of their friends."

The first hardship was encountered before they even left home. Leaving friends and family behind was difficult. Henry Garrison described his uncle's parting from Iowa. "When Grandmother learned the next morning that they were then on their way, she kneeled down and prayed that God would guard and protect them on their perilous journey." She would never see them again.

Leaving behind keepsakes, heirlooms or wedding gifts was painful for many. Many articles too precious to leave behind were later abandoned along the trail. Hard stretches of the trail were littered with piles of "leeverites" - items they had to 'leave 'er right here."

The tiring pace of the trail, fifteen miles a day, often on foot, got to many an emigrant. Elizabeth Markham went insane along the trail. Along the Snake River she announced that she was not proceeding any farther. Her husband took the wagons and kids and left her. When she returned, she set ablaze one of their wagons.

The weather was a major hardship. The intense heat of the deserts caused wood to shrink. Iron tires would roll right off. Wheels had to be soaked in rivers at night. The dust was two to three inches deep and as fine as flour. Axle grease would be rubbed on split, bleeding lips. Ox shoes fell off and hooves split, to be cured with hot tar.

Tales of incidents involving Indians far over shadowed actual incidents. A few massacres were highly publicized. The Ward Train was attacked and Shoshones tortured and murdered nineteen. One boy escaped with an arrow in his side. Relations were not helped by emigrants who shot Indians for target practice.
Deaths along the trail, especially among young children and mothers in childbirth were the most heart-rending of hardships. The prime killer along the trail was accidents. "Mr. Harvey's young little boy Richard 8 years old went to git in the waggon and fell from the tung. The wheals run over him and mashed his head and killed him stone dead he never moved." (Absolom Harden, 1847.)

Starvation killed many. "Counted 150 dead oxen. It is difficult to find a camping ground destitute of carcasses." (J.G. Bruff, 1849.) "Looked starvation in the face. I have seen men on passing an animal that has starved to death on the plains, stop and cut out a steak, roast and eat it and call it delicious." (Clark Thompson, 1850.)

Patty Reed, eight year old member of the Reed/Donner Party of 1846-47 retold how her Mother "took the ox hide we had used for a roof and boiled it for us to eat." Stranded by an early snowfall in the Sierras, 35 members of the party died. Many of the 47 survivors ate their own dead.

Most feared of all hardships was disease. Asiatic cholera was known as the "unseen destroyer." Cholera crept silently, caused by unclean conditions. People camped amid garbage left by previous parties. People in good spirits in the morning could be agonizing by noon and dead by evening. Symptoms started with a stomach ache that grew to intense pain within minutes. Then came diarrhea and vomiting. Within hours the skin was wrinkling and turning blue. Death occurred within hours or the victim recovered.

1849 was the worst year for cholera and almost all deaths occurred before Independence Rock. One of my relatives, Martha Freel, came to Oregon in 1852. A letter in my possession was sent home to an aunt in Iowa from Ash Hollow. "First of all I would mention the sickness we have had and I am sorry to say the deaths. First of all Francis Freel died June 4, 1852, and Maria Freel followed the 6th, next came Polly Casner who died the 9th and LaFayette Freel soon followed, he died the 10th, Elizabeth Freel, wife of Amos (and Martha's mother) died the 11th, and her baby died the 17th. You see we have lost 7 persons in a few short days, all died of Cholera." (George Kiser, June 23, 1852.)

About one of every ten emigrants along the Oregon Trail died before reaching their goal. Over a 25 year span up to 65,000 deaths occurred along the route. 5000 died in 1852 alone. The Oregon Trail is this nation's longest graveyard.

**Disrupting the Natives**

White emigrants are often credited with disrupting the natives, creating total changes in lifestyle, and causing wars. The truth is native lifestyles were disrupted by other Indians long before whites ever saw the plains, wars were caused by government policies older than the Oregon
Trail, and most contact on the trail was peaceable.

Plains Indians were in a constant battle over homelands as migrating Indians shoved aside previous occupants. In 1824 the Bureau of Indian Affairs was established as a part of the War Department. During the Jackson presidency a policy of Indian removal was implemented and Indians were relocated to the Plains. As missionaries were moving to Oregon, the Cherokee Nation was following their Trail of Tears to Indian Territory.

Into this state of flux came the covered wagons headed for Oregon and California. They distrusted and misunderstood the Indians. They sought revenge for any transgression. Minor skirmishes were labeled massacres.

The first group of Indians encountered by emigrants headed west were the "civilized" tribes, the Fox, Sauk, Shawnee and Potawatomi, of the lower Missouri Valley. They readily assumed the language and customs of the whites. Passing the 1839 Methodist Shawnee Mission School, just over the Missouri state line in Indian Territory from Westport, marked the edge of civilization.

Surrounding the "civilized" Indians were two groups of friendlies. One group included the Oto, Missouri and Winnebago tribes. The other included the Omaha, Quapaw, Osage, Kansa (or Kaw), and Ponca Indians.

Upon reaching the Platte River Valley emigrants came into contact with the original Plains Indians, the Pawnee. The four main tribes, Grand, Noisy, Wolf, and Republican River, were mainly farmers. Wars with the Sioux, reduced their number, estimated by Lewis and Clark to be around 10,000. Then the cholera epidemic of 1849 killed half of those remaining. In 1848 they sold land along the Platte River to the U.S. Army to build Fort Kearny. The Pawnee rarely fought with whites. The Union Pacific even hired them as guards against the Sioux.

The next group encountered were the Arapaho and Cheyenne. The Arapaho were religiously opposed to war. Closely associated with the Cheyenne they were known for their friendliness and desire to trade. The Cheyenne were originally corn farmers from Minnesota but were forced to become buffalo hunting nomads by the raiding Sioux. In 1840 the Arapaho and Cheyenne aligned with the Sioux, Kiowa and Comanche against white settlement and the Pawnee, Shoshone and Utes. They were guests of the Sioux when they fought Custer.

The Indians causing the most change on the Plains were those who called themselves Dakota (Lakota or Nakota). The Chippewa called them Naudewisiousx, the "snake" or "enemy". The French trappers shortened the name to Sioux. They had migrated to Nebraska and Wyoming by way of Manitoba and the Dakotas. There were fourteen main Sioux tribes including the Oglala, Brule, Teton, Santee, Blackfoot, Hunkpapa, Miniconjou, and Two Kettle.

Some Sioux farmed corn and augmented this with buffalo, game and fish. Others were
entirely nomadic, moving entire villages. They were pushed by settlers and responded with hostility. On August 9, 1854, along the Oregon Trail near Fort Laramie, the Grattan Massacre began a 36 year Sioux War against the United States Army.

A highly respected leader of the Sioux during this war was Chief Red Cloud. In 1866 he demanded the abandonment of two forts along the Bozeman Trail. He was defeated after an attack on Fort Laramie.

Chief Crazy Horse attacked along the Oregon Trail in the Fetterman Massacre and Wagon Box Fight. He led the Sioux when Colonel Custer and the 7th Cavalry attacked on June 25, 1876, along the Little Big Horn. Custer's troops were wiped out. The world first heard of the massacre on July 4, 1876, the day the United States of America was celebrating its 100th birthday.

The final battle of the Sioux Indian War was at Wounded Knee on December 29, 1890. Younger braves had been dancing the Ghost Dance, a religion that preached invincibility. Indian Agents demanded the Sioux be rounded up and moved to Pine Ridge Reservation. 350 Miniconjou Sioux were surrounded by 500 soldiers of the 7th U.S. Cavalry, the same unit embarrassed at Little Big Horn. The 120 men were turning over their weapons when a rifle went off. The soldiers started shooting at everyone, including women and children. They even used cannon. 300 Sioux were killed. 31 soldiers died in the cross fire.

Congress awarded several Medals of Honor to soldiers at Wounded Knee. In 1973 several Indians seized the village of Wounded Knee to publicize the plight of American Indians. Congress was asked to pay compensation to descendants and build a memorial to the fallen Indians. The Indians got a statement of "deep regret" the battle had taken place.

**Continued Disruption of the Natives**

Archaeological digs around the Dalles Dam construction found evidence of native Americans 25,000 to 30,000 years ago. The Chinookan tribal members who left their remains for science were an offshoot of the original Mongoloids that wandered over the Siberian-Alaskan landbridge some 20,000 years earlier. Despite the fact native Americans were not from the Indies, the name Columbus gave them was used exclusively by covered wagon pioneers.

The Oregon Trail, with its long ribbon of white covered prairie schooners, is often credited with disrupting the routines of the natives, creating total changes in lifestyle, and causing wars that ultimately led to a string of broken treaties and their removal to reservations. The truth is native lifestyles were disrupted by other Indians, such as the Sioux, long before whites ever saw the plains. Wars were caused by government actions, such as Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal policy,
long before the Oregon Trail. Although there was a few incidents of revenge enacted against emigrants, most contact on the trail was peaceable and profitable.

White emigrants had contact with ten distinct groups of Indians. East of the Rockies they met, traded with, bought passage on ferries operated by or fought with the "civilized" Shawnee, friendly Missouri, Omaha, Pawnee, and unfriendly Sioux. Ahead remain the Shoshone, Nez Perce, Cayuse, and Chinook.

After crossing the Rockies emigrants on the Oregon Trail encountered Indians they called the Snake River Indians. These were the intermarried Shoshone and Bannocks. Related tribes encountered along the California Trail included the Paiute and Ute Indians. The Shoshone were friendly to whites. Credit goes to Lewis and Clark for reuniting a Shoshone chief with his sister, their interpreter and guide, Sacajawea. The Shoshone assisted mountain men and Mormons alike. Chief Washakie was a friend of Jim Bridger who boasted he never killed a white person and helped whites with safe passage.

The same could not be said for the Bannocks. The Massacre Rocks Incident and Ward Massacre are blamed on the Bannocks. The 1878 Bannock War was caused by a decrease in buffalo and loss of hunting land. It started with the arrest of two drunken Indians who shot at teamsters along the trail and ended when Chief Buffalo Horn was killed, possibly by his own tribe.

Farther down the Snake River the emigrants encountered the Nez Perce, French for pierced noses. Their contact with whites was entirely positive from Lewis and Clark to the fur trappers and the missionaries until gold was discovered on their land. It was then determined they would be better off on a reservation. Young Chief Joseph had promised his father he would never give up the Wallowa Valley.

When Joseph refused to accept a reservation in 1877 the Nez Perce War began. Joseph continually outwitted and embarrassed the Army. Joseph then decided to take his people to Canada. Slowed down by women, children, and all of their possessions, they still kept ahead of the cavalry. They were captured only one day away from the border north of Yellowstone when the Army commander telegraphed ahead to another unit to cut them off. Joseph's surrender include the words, "I am tired of fighting. The little children are freezing to death. I am tired. My heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever."

From the crest of the Blue Mountains to the crest of the Cascades the emigrants met the Cayuse, Walla Walla, Umatilla, Tenino and Tygh Indians. Closely associated but not as friendly as the Nez Perce, they tolerated Oregon Trail traffic for the first few years. But a measles epidemic at the Whitman Mission led to the killing of the Whitmans by Cayuse in 1847 and the ensuing Cayuse War. The Cayuse were defeated by a volunteer army quickly organized by the American
Provisional Government and the British Hudson’s Bay Company. The Cayuse merged with the Nez Perce in 1851. In 1855 the Teninos, Wascos, Paiute, Tygh and Klickitats merged into the new Warm Springs tribe. They held on to their traditional fishing rights along the Columbia River. Covered wagons looked down from the high cliffs to see Indians fishing for salmon at Celilo Falls.

There were estimated to be over 5000 Chinook Indians in the Willamette Valley. Some of these Chinookans were almost extinct when Lewis and Clark visited. Nearly all 800 Multnomahs were killed by an epidemic caused by a single trading ship. The Methodist missionaries unwittingly brought with them measles and smallpox which nearly finished off the remainder. By 1910 the Calapooyas and Multnomahs were nearly extinct and there were fewer than 50 of the other Clackamas, Santiam, and Yamel (Yam Hill) Indians. They had been sent to the Grande Ronde Reservation. For some the Oregon Trail was a greater disruption than others.

The Road to Sudden Wealth

At Cave Springs, on the Santa Fe Trail just outside of Independence, is a large map with little lights for various trails. The lights for the Santa Fe Trail go from Independence to Santa Fe. The California Trail lights go from Independence to Sacramento. The lights for the Oregon Trail start at Fort Hall and end at Oregon City.

None is correct. The Santa Fe Trail starts farther east at Franklin. The Oregon Trail starts farther west at Gardner, Kansas. For most historians the California Trail started at Fort Hall.

The California Trail is not to be confused with the trail to California. There is a difference. Each emigrant, prospector or farmer, had his own trail to California. It started at their old home and ended at their new one. Along the way they followed a well used (and later, often shortcutted) trail commonly known as the California Trail.

The California Trail is as old as the Oregon Trail. The 1841 Bidwell-Bartleson Party got as far as Fort Hall when half of the party decided to start their farms in California. Most early emigrants were headed to Oregon, hence the popular name Oregon Trail for the entire route. Some Oregon pioneers took off on the California Trail and then cut back north to enter Oregon from the south on the Applegate Trail.

Things were fine for the Reed-Donner Party of 1846 when they discovered Alcove Springs and carved its name for all to see. Matters turned as they were slowed by the loss of animals in the Great Salt Desert, trapped by snow at Donner Pass and resorted to ultimate measures to feed themselves.

Johann Sutter was a Swiss immigrant who owned a rancho on the American River at Sacramento. The construction of his sawmill, 48 miles east, was under the direction of James
Marshall from New Jersey by way of Oregon. On January 24, 1848, while inspecting a ditch, Marshall discovered flecks of gold.

Sutter and Marshall decided to keep the discovery a secret until the mill was finished. But workmen were finding more gold daily. The news smoldered for about six months then leaped into a wild blaze. The rush was on, first from within California, then from Oregon and Utah. By Christmas the rest of the world knew.

Argonauts had several routes to the gold fields. One was by ship around South America. A faster route was by packet ship to Central America, by mule train across the isthmus, then on to San Francisco. Many from the East or gulf coasts found these routes desirable.

Prospective gold miners from the heartland of America or those without boat fare went overland. They outfitted with a horse, maybe a small wagon, and rushed along the path of the covered wagons. Early argonauts, the true 49ers, took the Oregon Trail to Fort Hall.

A modern anecdote tells of wagon trains reaching Fort Hall and finding a sign marking the division of the trails. Those who could read the sign went to Oregon. Another anecdote says when the parties reached the sign they formed committees to discuss alternatives. Those who were able to reach consensus went to California. Californians probably tell both jokes the other way around.

The main trunk of the California Trail cut off in Idaho near the City of Rocks, angled southwest to the Humboldt River near Elko, Nevada, and followed the river past Winnemucca to its demise in Humboldt Lake. Crossing Humboldt and Carson Sinks, they picked up the Truckee River, passed where Reno is today and crested the Sierras at Donner Pass. This put them in the Bear River basin, which empties into the Feather and Sacramento Rivers.

Always in a hurry, gold seekers took many cutoffs. Many bypassed Fort Bridger by using Sublette's Cutoff to Wyoming's Bear River. Some took Hudspeth's Cutoff straight from the Bear River to the California Trail, bypassing Fort Hall. Lansford Hastings recommended taking the Mormon Trail from Fort Bridger to Salt Lake City, circling south of the lake, crossing the Great Salt Desert and joining the California Trail near Elko. This cutoff proved to be a deadly decision for many. Some gold rushers lessened the hardship by going north around the lake.

A popular cutoff that became the main branch of the trail was the Carson Pass Trail which left the Donner Pass route at Carson Sink, picked up the Carson River, passed Carson City, crossed the Sierras south of Lake Tahoe and went through the gold fields of Placerville to the American River and Sutter's Fort.

To some the California Trail was the road to sudden wealth and prosperity. To many more it was only a road to eventual bust. Within a few years it was being used in reverse for the long trip home.
The Road to Deseret

The lands of the Great Basin, around the valley of the Great Salt Lake, where once roamed the Ute Indians, were dry and unfruitful until the coming of the Mormons. With patient toil, and the introduction of irrigation, the desert bloomed. They called it Deseret.

The Mormon Church began during an emotional and religious era. Eighteen year old Joseph Smith was visited by the Angel Moroni, told of the location of a set of golden plates and set about translating them. This Book of Mormon included a history of American Indians, portrayed as being descendants of the Hebrews.

Officially begun in 1830 as the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, the new sect caused considerable polarization. The Saints were persuasive and able to win many new disciples. Gentiles not of the faith were loud with skepticism, criticism and ridicule.

The great westward migration of the Mormons began in 1831 when Smith envisioned Kirtland, Ohio, as a place to organize an isolated commune. Within two years they were in Independence, Missouri. The locals were not tolerant of the Mormon’s communalism or abolitionist views. They were again forced to move, first to Far West, Missouri, then in 1839 to Commerce, Illinois, renamed Nauvoo.

The sect attracted a large number of immigrants from eastern states and Europe, mostly women. Unlike other frontier settlements, there were plenty of women to share. The practice of polygamy was mere gossip until 1843 when Smith publicly advocated the practice.

Although the Mormons did not hold a political majority in Illinois, they did hold the balance of power. The Illinois legislature gave Nauvoo a liberal charter, allowing unrestricted police and complete control of the courts.

There was a sharp division among the community over polygamy. There was an attack against Smith in a Mormon newspaper. He surrendered himself to a Carthage sheriff for protection. On June 27, 1844, a mob broke into the jail and killed him.

Upon the death of Smith, church elders returned immediately from missionary journeys around the world to elect new leadership. Brigham Young won the presidency. Unlike Smith, Young did not resort to revelations to make decisions.

The first decision was to leave Nauvoo. Young wanted to go west, but Oregon and California were ruled out. The settlers there were of the same mindset as those in Ohio, Missouri and Illinois. He decided to start the Great Migration in the spring of 1846. Young left even before the great river thawed out to scout the way. It would take several years to get all of the Saints out of Illinois. Way stations were established along the Missouri River near Winter Quarters.
In 1847 an all-volunteer company left in search of Zion. They followed the Platte River, paralleling or following the Oregon Trail to Fort Bridger and crossed the Wasatch Range into the Great Basin. When the Great Salt Lake valley came into view, Young gazed upon the valley, recognized it as a place he had seen in a vision and said, "It is enough. This is the right place. Drive on." History has shortened this to "This is the place."

A second emigrant party left three months after the first. Young met them half way on his way back to organize the third party for 1848. This largest group brought over 2400 Saints on the four month trip to newly founded Salt Lake City.

A territorial government was set up in 1850 for Utah with Brigham Young as governor, but to the Mormons it was the State of Deseret. The decade of 1850 to 1860 was marred by friction between federal and territorial officials. President Buchanan considered Utah to be insurrectionary and in 1857 replaced Young as governor with Alfred Cumming.

An army detachment from Fort Leavenworth under General Albert Sidney Johnston escorted the new governor. Anxiety was high and plans were almost carried out to destroy Salt Lake City. Johnston's army was sabotaged in route as Mormons stole supplies, destroyed wagons, set grass fires and even burned Fort Bridger. Able negotiations allowed the army to enter the city unmolested. The new governor made himself acceptable to the Mormons and the $15 million expeditionary force was returned to Kansas.

Hundreds of converts from Europe, heading for the New Zion, were sent from England to Kanesville. Not enough wagons could be secured so handcarts were constructed to bring the 1300 immigrants to Salt Lake City. Five companies left Nebraska in 1857. The first three arrived safely but the last two left late and were hit hard by winter in the Rockies. They were met by a rescue party after scores of deaths.

Although the Mormons lacked the individualism of their Gentile neighbors, they did prove to be able trailblazers and established a highly successful desert community.

The Reminiscence of Henry Garrison - 1846

About one in every 200 emigrants on the Oregon Trail kept accounts of their travels. First hand accounts of life on the Oregon Trail are numerous. Three types of Oregon Trail narratives exist. Two of them, diaries and journals were actually written by emigrants as they trekked the 2000 miles west. The third type of narrative is a reminiscence written much later in life.

A copy of one such narrative, the reminiscence of Henry Garrison was given to this author by Marijane Rea of Oregon City, a direct descendant. Written in 1903 when he was 78 years old, 57 years
after the trip, it tells of a 15 year old boy on the Oregon - Applegate Trail. One event conflicts with other accounts but most of the story appears to be accurate.

Hannah Sester, one of my 8th grade students, wrote the following review. "This is a story of a kind of strength that not many people today can boast of. I was glad I read it. It seemed more real to me to read it out of a real diary! Sometimes the Oregon Trail seems more like a fairy tale passed down from generation to generation."

Henry Garrison's remembrances start in Missouri in 1841 at a place called Irish Grove, five miles from the river near St. Joe. He tells of being a Methodist preacher's son in a Catholic community.

His uncles left for Oregon in 1843 and he wished to some day join them. During the winter of 1845-46 they tried selling their farm, settling for $800.

They left for Oregon on May 5, 1846, heading to the ferry across the Missouri River. With 50 wagons ahead it took three days to cross. They elected Rily Gragg as their captain and Henry's father as 1st Lieutenant and member of the camp legislature. Three Indians guided them to the "Old Emigrant Trail" as the Oregon Trail was called then. In 1846 finding the trail was sometimes a challenge.

At the crossing of the Big Blue River, Henry first met David Inglish, the same age and a "bully among the boys always ready for a fight." On several occasions Inglish tried to beat up or even kill Garrison. A postscript added by Mrs. Rea is a document from Idaho mentioning a vigilant committee hanging David English for robbing miners.

Along the Platte River Henry's father took ill with inflammatory rheumatism and was entirely helpless. He had to be propped up in the wagon, not able to move below the neck. After arriving in Oregon his father recovered and became a Yamhill preacher and 1848 California gold miner.

Henry at fifteen became responsible for his family and their wagons. A few days later 7 year old brother Enoch broke his leg. Henry recommended amputation but the doctor, actually a government hospital steward, refused. By the time amputation was performed it was too late and Enoch died of infection.

In Henry's own words: "It was reported that the Indians was in the habit of opening graves for the purpose of getting shrouding. To prevent this, the grave was dug in such a place that the wagons when leaving camp might pass over it. In digging the grave, those who have it in charge was careful to cut and lift the sod in squares so they could be replaced when the grave was filled. Before commencing the grave, bed-quilts were spread on the ground to receive the dirt as it was thrown from the grave. After the grave was filled up, the sods were carefully replaced. The remaining dirt was carried and thrown in the River. When we broke camp next morning, the wagons 74 in number passed over the grave."
Henry talks of seeing the Rocks - Court House Rock, Chimney Rock and Independence Rock. There on July 12th, three of them climbed the rock, crawled down into a crevice and engraved their names. At South Pass they realized they were on the Continental Divide and finally in Oregon. They had problems staking down the horses as the ground was frozen less than a foot below the surface.

The first contact with Indians was a Crow War Party of 400 along the Green River. They swapped horses and left satisfied. Later near Klamath unfriendly Indians had to be fought off three times. Two people were killed.

At Fort Hall they met Jesse Applegate who convinced them to try his route into Oregon. At the Umpqua River they were met by their uncle, who had come to Oregon in 1843. He brought supplies.

"Our journey is ended, our toils are over, but I have not tried to portray the terrible conditions we were placed in. No tongue can tell, nor pen describe the heart rending scenes through which we passed."

Oregon Trail Diaries

The period between 1820 and 1860 in America is sometimes called the Age of Reform. People were driven by a religious revival. Reformers demanded an end to alcoholism, prison reform, and conditions of the handicapped and mentally ill. People like Dorothea Dix, Samuel Gridley Howe and Thomas Gallaudet were horrified by conditions.

Horace Mann was upset by the condition of American schools. He said, "In a republic, ignorance is a crime." Many communities had no schools, or the one room schools were terribly overcrowded. Students learned by rote memorization and recitation. Misbehavior was punished by beating and teachers had no formal training. As Massachusetts Secretary of Education, he created a revolution in American education. He established graded schools where students moved from one grade to another after achieving required skills. And he set up training institutions that prepared teachers.

Horace Mann's reward was a seat in Congress. America's reward was a better educated populace. The benefit to the Oregon Trail was a literate middle class, able to read and write. Emigrants down on their economic luck never lost their hopes for the future. They carried with them textbooks to start schools and lawbooks to continue democracy.

They were able to read guidebooks and family Bibles to make fateful decisions. School sessions were held at evening campfires. They could write, and write they did in great profusion. Other than the Civil War, no single event in 19th century American history produced more first hand narratives. They wrote any time and to anyone. They left
graffiti on rocks. They wrote letters back home to loved ones. They recalled their adventures in newspapers, magazines and dime novels. And they wrote to themselves.

Merrill Mattes, historian of the Great Platte River Road, estimates one in every two hundred emigrants wrote diaries. Considering the large number of children and California bound argonauts who did not write diaries, the 1/200 figure looks good. There were around 3000 personal historians to the Oregon Trail experience.

The large number of diarists is remarkable considering the conditions the authors had to write under. Pencils, pens and inkwells, and paper all had to be brought with them. Time was limited, the only time available being that last hour of daylight after the animals had been tended, meals made and cleaned up, and chores completed.

And energy was limited, they had already walked about fifteen miles that day. Many diarists can be excused for writing journal entries only on occasional laundry days, at forts or Sunday rest stops. Most letters were written at forts, as they could be posted home from there.

Those letters home and family diaries have become the valued possessions of relatives. Grandma would bring out the old letters or diary and remind the grandkids of what life was like back then. Not surprisingly most diaries remained in Oregon or California and most letters remained in the East.

It is assumed that most diaries and collections of letters have long since been turned over to museums and libraries. But every so often come rumors of a relative holding on to one.

Collections of diaries are valuable resources for researchers. Many have microfilmed their collections and make them available. Collections worth noting are the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Brigham Young University, the Huntington Library in California, the Library of Congress, the National Archives, the Western History Research Center at Yale University, and state historical societies in California, Missouri, Nebraska and Oregon.

Genealogical societies in Oregon, California and Utah have extensive data on pioneers. The best is in Salt Lake City and is not limited to Mormons. The Daughters of the American Revolution in Independence, Missouri, offers a certificate to anyone related to an overland pioneer. Membership in the Sons and Daughters of Oregon Pioneers is limited to anyone proving a direct relationship to an Oregon bound Oregon Trail immigrant.

With a renewal in interest in the Oregon Trail, diaries are being published in books such as Mattes' Platte River Narratives and Dr. Ken Holmes' Covered Wagon Women. Publications of historical societies are also excellent sources. Among the best are the Missouri Historical Review, Oregon Historical Quarterly, Nebraska History, Wisconsin Magazine of History and OCTA's Overland Journal.

The Oregon-California Trails Association is bringing
diaries into the computer age with its COED program. COED, which stands for Census of Overland Emigrant Documents, is creating a huge computer data base which will be invaluable to historians. Cross referenced will be emigrant's names, journey years, mileages, maps, routes, modes of travel, numbers of emigrants and animals, places named and Indians encountered.

It's hard to imagine a young married woman enduring the blazing heat of Idaho in August, sitting down to enter her diary entry into a personal computer so the entire world can share her ordeal.

The Final Leg of the Trail

Looking down on the Columbia River Gorge from high up on Rowena Loop one sees where the river cuts through the Cascade Mountains. For three years this was the end of the Oregon Trail, at least the overland portion. It was here, just past The Dalles, that the wagons were loaded on rafts or bateaux and floated down to Fort Vancouver and Oregon City.

The gorge was unsuitable for a wagon road. Before 1843 no wagon had made it much past Fort Hall intact. From 1843 until 1845 wagons reaching The Dalles had little choice but to make a raft of pine logs, buy a raft from enterprising Indians, or rent a bateaux from the Hudson Bay Company for around $50. Many lives were lost on the rapids of the Columbia River, the wind overturned many a raft, and the Cascades Rapids had to be portaged. In addition families were often divided as cattle were driven across Mt. Hood's Lolo Pass to Eagle Creek and Oregon City. Despite these hardships almost a quarter of later emigrants chose the river route even after the Barlow Road was opened.

When, and if, the pioneers successfully braved the river, they arrived at Fort Vancouver, a British fur trading post. The Chief Factor there, Dr. John McLoughlin, was under instructions to discourage Americans. The "Great White-haired Eagle", as he was called by the natives, was too kind-hearted to just ignore the on-rushing immigrants. He extended credit to penniless pioneers.

McLoughlin encouraged the Oregon Trail travellers to head south to Oregon City and the Willamette Valley. He had a stake in the city he had founded at Willamette Falls in 1829. The HBC ran a store there and Dr. John would build a house and later retire there. Oregon City had three stores to supply farmers and was capital of the American Provisional Government. Anyone wishing to file a land claim had to come to Oregon City.

Two emigrants would make decisions at or near The Dalles that would change the character of the trail. In 1843 Jesse Applegate had the misfortune of losing a wagon. His wife suffered the heartbreak of watching a child drown whom she had refused permission to learn to swim.
From this experience Applegate made the decision to open a trail across northern California and into the Willamette Valley from the south. The Applegate Trail was less than desirable. Klamath Indians raided trains and more than one had to be rescued.

In 1845 Sam Barlow found himself in The Dalles late, waiting for a bateau that was downstream with no scheduled return. Running out of money, food and patience Barlow stated that "God never made a mountain but what He provided a place for man to go over or around it." He then set off with his wagons around the south shoulder of Mt. Hood, Oregon's tallest volcano.

Following an Indian trail, Barlow managed to get his wagons about halfway around the mountain before sending some wagons back to The Dalles. Three men including Barlow attempted to walk on into Oregon City. At the crest of the Cascade Mountains Joel Palmer climbed the glacier now named for him and scouted a route off the mountain.

Dragging themselves, exhausted, into Eagle Creek they met local resident Philip Foster. Joining his wife and family in Oregon City, Barlow spent the winter contemplating his route across Mt. Hood. He approached the Provisional Government and obtained official permission to build the Mount Hood Road and charge 5$ a wagon and 10¢ a head for stock to use it.

With Philip Foster as his financial backer and a crew of forty, Barlow hacked out a narrow road across forests, marshy meadows and rivers from The Dalles to Oregon City, about 150 miles. Reuban Gant drove the first wagon across the new road in 1846. Barlow reported to the Oregon City Spectator 145 wagons and nearly 1600 head of livestock crossed that first year.

A series of five toll gates served the Barlow Road from 1846 until 1915 when it was willed to the State of Oregon and the last tollgate was removed. The route was one way - west - for the first fifteen years until a road was built around Laurel Hill, the spot where wagons had to be lowered by rope down a steep grade. Emigrants were replaced by stagecoach riders. In the 1880's the road became a tourist route from the Willamette Valley to the vacation sites on the mountain.

Today much of the western half of the road in Clackamas County is paved over and used by modern day skiers and campers from Portland. The eastern half in Wasco County is still very pristine, just as the last emigrant wagon left it 120 years ago.

The City at The Dalles

In 1906 Ezra Meeker and the people of Dalles City, Oregon, erected a monument near the city center proclaiming the "End of the Old Oregon Trail 1843-1906." The boulder is incorrect in dates, location and facts.

Meeker had a policy of placing monuments at city centers or parks where they could get the best exposure. He is to be commended for this. If he had
placed a boulder at Crates Point that said "Temporary End of the Overland Portion of the Old Oregon Trail 1843-1845" few people would give it notice.

In April 1806 Lewis and Clark stayed at "rockfort" camp. As salmon ran up the swift water Indians were spearing them from the rocks of Celilo Falls or dipping them with long handled nets. These Indians menaced whites as they portaged the rapids. Lewis and Clark as well as the 1811 Stuart Party paid tribute. The Indians stole what they could. They earned the reputation of the worst thieves between the Missouri River and the Pacific Ocean.

James Birney of the North West Company established a brief fur trading fort here in 1820. His French-Canadian trappers are responsible for giving the place its name, The Dalles, a French word for rapids of a river through a narrow gorge. Despite the official name Dalles City, the United States Post Office, and most people, call it The Dalles.

In 1838, the Methodists created a branch mission named Wascopam. Jason Lee's nephew, Daniel Lee was put in charge. In 1840 Alvin Waller was transferred from Oregon City to assist in building a parish. At first they seemed successful but backsliders outnumbered converts.

The Oregon Trail emigrants described the mission as two dwellings, a schoolhouse, stable, barn, garden and cleared fields next to the wooden huts of an Indian village. The Applegate Party was provided a warm greeting and fresh meat.

Wascopam Mission was abandoned in 1847 and sold to Dr. Marcus Whitman for $600. After the Whitman Massacre the property was returned to the Methodists. Emigrants of 1849 found the mission in ruins and decay. After Fort Dalles was built, the old mission was burned and the U.S. government paid $24,000. Various suits proved that the Methodists had not filed legal claim to the land and $23,000 was returned to claimants.

At Crates Point, the protected harbor at the mouth of Chenowith Creek, the Oregon Trail pioneers put into the river. Dr. John McLoughlin, despite orders from his superiors, sent bateaux and food here to rescue emigrants.

Nearby were many pine trees to cut for rafts, rafts that could hold up to six wagons. John C. Fremont described the rafts in 1843 as "ark-like rafts, on which they had embarked their families and households, with their large wagons and other furniture, while their stock were driven along the shore."

In 1845, a rescue party, sent to meet the lost Stephen Meek Party attempting to go from Fort Boise straight to the Willamette Valley, made The Dalles in October. Two weeks earlier the Palmer-Barlow-Rector Party had tardily arrived in The Dalles and headed around Mt. Hood, scouting what would become the Barlow Road.

Sam Barlow's 1846 Mount Hood Toll Road originated at 3rd Street. It was no longer necessary to abandon the trail for rafts or HBC bateaux. Later travellers
bypassed The Dalles, leaving the Oregon Trail ten miles east.

In 1847 Captain Nathan Olney established a store in a log hut only two blocks from the Oregon Trail and Barlow Road. It was the first business east of the Cascades in the Oregon Country other than trading posts.

Major H.A.G. Lee, of the Provisional Government’s Oregon Rifles, arrived in The Dalles during the 1847-48 Cayuse War. He built a stockade around the old mission buildings. It was called Fort Lee or Fort Wascopam.

In 1849 Colonel Loring of Fort Leavenworth established posts along the Oregon Trail to protect the emigrants. He established the new Fort Laramie, Fort Hall’s Cantonement Loring, and Fort Drum at The Dalles. Started May 1850, west of the old mission, crude log buildings were constructed. The fort was redesignated Fort Dalles.

Fort Dalles was the headquarters for the 1855-56 Army operations of the Yakima Indian Wars. Eight companies were assigned to the garrison. The Surgeon’s Quarters that serves as the Fort Dalles Museum was built at that time. After 1861 Fort Dalles was a quartermaster depot, then was abandoned in 1867.

A town grew up around the fort in 1852 and was incorporated in 1857 as Fort Dalles. The land claim was entered at the U.S. Land Office at Oregon City. The name was later changed officially to Dalles City. A U.S. Mint to handle gold coming out of Eastern Oregon and Idaho was built in 1867.

Discovering the Barlow Road

Three year old Nicholas Bigelow leads his mother through the snow down the actual ruts of the Barlow Road. They join the rest of the special Saturday class of school children from East Orient School and their parents. At the bottom of the trail they watch the Pioneer Woman’s Grave Memorial Snowball Fight. Rachael Ross, a quiet studious eighth grader, clobbers her mother with a snowball. In an instant Rachael is on her face in the snow at her mother’s feet.

Hundreds of people have gone on field trips on the Barlow Road, parents and children, teachers and students, from 5 to 95. It takes at least two days to see most of what is left of Barlow’s Mount Hood Toll Road.

At The Dalles on top of the cliff an old wooden sign indicates the junction of the Oregon Trail and the Barlow Road.

In Dufur the main street is the Barlow Road. You go over the top of Tygh Ridge at just about the same spot as the emigrants. Ruts of the trail go straight up Tygh Grade.

About seven miles out of Wamic, Barlow’s first toll gate was at Gate Creek. The only toll gate on the east side operated from 1846 to 1853, the heaviest years for emigrant traffic. Barlow was much hated and criticized for his road. One criticism was that he collected toll from dead people, that is people who would not survive to see the other end.
The Barlow Road is driveable almost all of the way to Barlow Pass. It generally follows the White River passing Immigrant, Charity and Faith Springs. From Barlow Crossing the trail follows Barlow Creek next to Barlow Ridge and up to Barlow Butte and Barlow Pass.

Two meadows are passed before reaching Barlow Pass, Palmateer Meadows and Devil's Half Acre Meadow, so called because of its proximity to the last arduous climb before the summit.

The remainder of the Barlow Road has been disrupted by highway construction over the years but some remnants remain.

Summit Meadows was the location of the third tollgate from 1866 to 1870. On a nearby rock is a plaque dedicated to Baby Morgan, the littlest pioneer, buried there in 1847.

The drive through Government Camp is on the route of the Barlow Road. Just downhill is Laurel Hill. Here is the "Chute" where wagons were lowered by rope down the hill. This section is named in almost every diary as the worst section on the entire Oregon Trail. Imagine the poor pioneer coming 2000 miles just to lose everything less than 50 miles from their destination.

A few miles farther down the mountain is a replica of the fifth and final toll gate, used from 1879 to 1915. The original toll was $5.00 a wagon and later lowered to $2.50 but one pioneer still "ran like a turkey."

At Rhododendron the Barlow Road divides into two trails. The original 1846 route crossed the Sandy River early and stayed north of it. The popular South Alternate Route stays close to US 26 to Brightwood where it rejoins the original route.

The route across the top of the divide between the Sandy River and Bull Run River was called Devil's Backbone by the pioneers. Going down to the Sandy River you cross just above where Francis Revenue built his bridge and operated the second toll gate from 1853 to 1865. A long steep pull leads up to the town of Sandy. Then you go south to Eagle Creek.

Eagle Creek was the home of Philip Foster. In 1846 he loaned Barlow money and equipment to build the road in return for a partnership. Foster's cabin was accompanied by a restaurant and blacksmith shop to cater to the emigrants as they passed.

Following the founding of the city of Portland by Francis Pettygrove, Foster's brother-in-law, emigrants were encouraged to leave from Eagle Creek for Portland.

Going south straight toward the Clackamas River you see where the trail crossed Eagle Creek and the row of oak trees planted along the trail. The beautiful old house built at Feldheimer's Ferry can still be seen.

Following the Oregon Trail signs west to Baker Cabin be sure to notice the old pioneer homes along the route. Most are the traditional T-shaped structures. Baker Cabin is an original dating back to 1853.

Continue to follow the signs to Oregon City. The north edge of Abernethy Road is old Abernethy Green, the portion of Governor Abernethy's Donation Land Claim used as a final camping ground by
the Oregon Trail emigrants. Two plaques and a kiosk on the corner of Abernethy and Washington Street mark the physical end of the trail.

Applegate's Road Into Oregon

Of the three brothers Applegate - Charles, Lindsay and Jesse, Jesse was the dominant member of the Applegate clan. He was a college graduate and surveyor. After being turned down by William Sublette as a member of his fur company, he surveyed and farmed along with his brothers in Western Missouri.

A good friend of Jesse, Robert Shortess migrated to Oregon in 1840. Shortess wrote letters back to Applegate expounding on the Oregon Territory. While Shortess was helping to build the Oregon Provisional Government, Jesse was protesting his neighbors' practice of holding slaves and advertising his intent to migrate to Oregon in the spring of 1843.

The Applegate brothers sold their farms and bought several hundred head of cattle, the largest group of the more than 5000 head of livestock on the 1843 migration.

Within eight days of their departure Peter Burnett resigned as captain. The Great Migration of 1843 broke into two parties. William Martin was elected captain of the "light column," those with three or less cows each. The remaining "cow column" was headed by newly elected captain Jesse Applegate. They were able to keep a steady pace, following eight miles behind.

The Applegate brothers left their guide Marcus Whitman then abandoned their wagons at Fort Walla Walla. They spent several weeks sawing lumber and building flat boats. They departed for Fort Vancouver via the Columbia River on November 1st.

Near The Dalles. "Whirlpools looking like deep basins in the river, the lapping, splashing, and rolling of waves.... Presently there was a wail of anguish, a shriek, and a scene of confusion in our boat that no language can describe. The boat we were watching disappeared and we saw the man and boys struggling in the water." Eleven year old Elisha and nine year old Warren Applegate were drowned. Lindsay and Jesse each lost a child.

The Applegate clan spent the winter in three log cabins of the abandoned remains of Jason Lee's Old Mission. Lindsay recalled, "We resolved if we remained in the country, to find a better way for others who might wish to emigrate."

The Applegates settled at Rickreal Creek in Yam Hill County where Jesse was elected twice to the Provisional Government. He was responsible for obtaining the support of the Hudson's Bay Company.

The Applegates learned from Peter Skene Ogden that the Cascades had a low pass near Klamath Lake. Jesse and Lindsay organized a company to undertake the enterprise of discovering a southern route into Oregon and luring emigrants to use it.
On June 20, 1846, they set out from Rickreal into what maps called an "unexplored region." Constantly watched by Indians, they traveled south. They broke out of the forest near Klamath Lake, crossed the Tule and Goose Lake valleys to northern California, and crossed Black Rock Desert to the Humboldt River where they picked up the California Trail to Fort Hall.

They found a large wagon train gathered at Fort Hall and were able to persuade 150 families to take the southern route. Lindsay and a few volunteers went ahead to improve the trail. The bulk of the group cut off from the Oregon Trail at Raft River on August 9, 1846.

There was insufficient food for the livestock and never enough water. Fourteen year old Henry Garrison describes battles with Indians, disappointment with Applegate for not improving the road, and a trading post where Applegate bilked the emigrants out of their last dollars.

Constant complainer J. Quinn Thornton said, "having at various times upon the journey thrown away my property, I had little remaining save...the most valuable part of our wardrobe. We passed many wagons, that had been abandoned by their owners...the appearance of a defeated and retreating army." Thornton’s controversy with Applegate over the relief of the emigrants was carried on for almost a year in the Oregon Spectator.

A pack train of Willamette Valley settlers was sent to meet the southern emigrants. It included Henry Garrison’s uncle, who had emigrated two years earlier. They joined up at North Umpqua on November 14th.

When gold was discovered in California in 1848, the Applegate Trail was used by Oregonians to get a head start on the 49ers. They followed the Applegate Trail to Tule Lake and then the Lassen Cutoff to the Sacramento River.

The April 6, 1848, Oregon Spectator contains an article written by Jesse Applegate. In it he gives details and mileages along his southern road to Oregon. All of the estimates were short and optimistic. The Applegates and Peter Lassen were reviled by 49ers who were deceived into believing that route was better than the California Trail. The grassless, waterless route accented by spiteful Indians was better only than the Hastings Cutoff.

Claiming The Farm

Two miles south and west of Canby, Oregon, is the town of Barlow. The gorgeous old house on the main highway was built by William Barlow, son of pioneer Samuel K. Barlow. William bought the property from his father in 1852. Barlow settled sections 5 and 8 of Township 4 South, Range 1 East, Willamette Meridian, in October of 1849 and claimed the property (Certificate 72, Notice 559, Claim 50, 639.52 acres) under the Donation Land Act of 1850. His son James
claimed the 640 acres next door and another son John had Willamette riverfront property two miles north.

The Barlow family claims were filed in Oregon City in 1850 along with over 5000 other patents. The single most important impetus for coming to Oregon was free land. The most important act of the new settlers upon arriving in Oregon was to claim a piece of property.

There had been Americans in Oregon since the early 1810's when fur trappers first arrived but there was no real settlement until the 1830's. Their numbers were small enough to escape the need for an organized land claims system. With the arrival of missionaries and the first wagon train, a need arose for means to secure title to their lands.

From 1841 until 1843 Americans in Oregon had struggled with the problem of land claims, courts and organized government. In 1843, by a vote of 52 to 50, the settlers of the Willamette Valley authorized a government provisional upon the extension of U.S. authority.

The first constitution of Oregon was called the Organic Act. Section seventeen was the report of the Land Claims committee. It explained the methods of designating, recording and improving a land claim. It limited the number and size of claims and excluded any religious missions.

Oregon City was named the capital of Oregon and land claims were filed there with the recorder. Married couples were allowed 640 acres, free.

Joe Lane, the Territorial Governor in 1849 was empowered to review all Provisional Government laws including land claims and accept or reject them. Only the law on minting gold "Beaver" coins was declared unconstitutional.

The Donation Land Act of 1850 called for the orderly and legal ownership of property in Oregon Territory. It voided all laws previously passed making grants of land. It then granted every white settler and American half-breed Indian above the age of 18 already living in Oregon a free 1/2 section if single or a full section if married, with half in the wife's name. Residence and cultivation for four years was required. Any settlers arriving after 1850 were allowed one half of the acreage.

The office of Surveyor-General for Oregon was created and the first land office was opened in Oregon City. A total of 7437 patents were issued under the 1850 law. Probably the most famous filing in Oregon City was the plat for the city of San Francisco filed there as the closest land office. The plat proudly belongs to Clackamas County, despite the efforts of San Francisco to have it returned.

The Surveyor-General was required to survey the land by the method established by the 1787 Land Ordinance. Willamette Stone was placed just west of present Portland, the Willamette Meridian established, and the first survey of Oregon City was completed by Joseph Hunt in March 1852.

After 1854 land was no longer free in Oregon. The price was set at $1.25 an acre with 320
acre limits. As the years progressed the cost per acre rose and the number of acres dropped.

In 1862 Congress passed the Homestead Act. Any head of family of any age or single person over 21 who was, or intended to become, a U.S. citizen could claim 160 acres of public land by paying a $34 fee then residing on and cultivating the property for five years. After five years they got title. Or, after six months of occupation they could purchase the property for $1.25 an acre.

1866 Railroad Land Grants provided successful companies title to every odd-numbered section of land for twenty miles back from each side of their right-of-way. They could sell it for not more than $2.50 an acre.

Ben Holladay's Oregon and California Railroad was the successful company in western Oregon. In 1916 Congress tired of the railroads delaying securing patents to avoid taxes and took away 3 million acres. This land is administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

Original DLC boundaries are still carried on some county maps. Probably the best known in Oregon City is the George Abernethy DLC. It was on the corner of his claim, on what has become known as Abernethy Green, that the emigrants of the Oregon Trail camped long enough to file their own land claims.

Surveying the Land

A boy growing up east of Portland, Oregon, in the late 1950's remembers driving Base Line Road past Twelve and Thirteen Mile Corners and then going south one mile to Section Line Road. His father took him to a small Oregon State Park on Skyline Boulevard in Portland's West Hills. After a short walk to a point overlooking the Tualatin Valley, they came upon a short concrete obelisk. On two sides were engraved the words "BASE LINE" and on the other two sides were the letters "WILL. MER."

This is the Willamette Stone, the starting point for all surveys of the Oregon Country. Base Line Road is now called Stark Street and Section Line Road is Division Street. The Willamette Stone is little known except to those who chance upon it. The main street of Hillsboro, west of Portland, is still called Base Line Road.

Before 1785 there were two systems of land survey and dispersal in the United States. The New England township plan called for a survey first and then claims only on contiguous properties. Claims were smaller and the close cooperation of neighbors was a necessity, but there were no conflicts and no wasted land.

The Virginia practice allowed people to claim up to 400 acres with an option of 1000 more and then have the property surveyed. Used widely outside New England, this system was chaotic, caused confusion, and the land warrants required considerable administration.

Thomas Jefferson witnessed this confusion and
recognized the need for a new system in the Northwest Territory. He was on the committee that authored the Land Ordinance of 1785. Resembling the New England township system, it established a rectangular system of survey. The basic unit of one square mile with 640 acres replaced the geographical mile of 850.4 acres.

A range, 6 miles wide, and townships, 6 miles square, were created. The 36 square mile sections (23,040 acres) replaced the "hundred" plan of 10 square miles. Sections are numbered from 1 to 36. A portion of mineral resources was reserved for the government and section 16 was reserved for schools. A provision for support of religion by sale of public lands was stricken before final adoption.

Since Oregon was settled before becoming part of the United States, settlers did not have surveyed lines to block off their claims. They resorted to a modified Virginia practice, trying to approximate the 640 acre limit allowed by the 1785 Land Ordinance.

Almost immediately after Oregon became a territory, Congress passed the 1850 Donation Land Claim Act. It called for surveys on the ground to establish boundaries of previous claims. The law called for a Surveyor General and also created a Federal Court and Land Office at Oregon City, the first west of the Missouri River.

The survey of Oregon began on June 4, 1851, with the placing of the Willamette Stone. The base line was drawn from the Pacific Ocean to the Snake River. The Willamette Meridian was drawn from the Columbia River to California. Difficulties included rugged terrain, dense vegetation, cloudy or rainy weather, and the temptation for surveyors to take off to the gold mines.

Claims prior to the first survey were laid out by metes and bounds, literally walking off boundaries. These claims had to be translated into townships, ranges and sections. One example of this chore is the Trullinger claim near Molalla. Parts of the claim are in sections 20, 21, 22, 27, and 28 of Township 4 South, Range 2 East. "Trullinger's claim has 646.70 acres which is 6.70 acres more than he was entitled to have."

Surveyors walked section lines, taking field notes. They noted what they crossed and what they saw. At a later date, sometimes weeks later, a cartographer would make a township map from the field notes. They showed section corners, subdivisions, types of terrain, vegetation and cultural features such as roads, trails, houses and fields.

The original survey of Oregon City (T2S, R2E) by Joseph Hunt, was registered on June 30, 1852. The Barlow Road is labeled "Oregon City to Fosters." As it skirts around Holcomb's farm, it traverses land "hilly and rolling, soil 2d rate clay loam." The road ends at George Abernethy's claim. Identified in Oregon City are Willamette Falls, a mill, the Court House and Female Seminary.

Richard Hanes and Stephen Beckham are working on a project for Clackamas County to accurately locate the Barlow Road.
Beckham is researching diaries. Hanes is using original surveyor's notes to plot entries such as "T2S, R2E, section 24, direction of survey - south, 62.00 chains (4092 feet) along east boundary of section: A road from Oregon City to Foster's, course NE & SW." An educated process of dot-to-dot and actually walking the the ground will give Clackamas County a valuable resource map.

The 49ers and Other Argonauts

1848 had just arrived. The United States was recovering from a depression. War with Mexico was over. Fur trade and its once great empire was waning. The Oregon question was being settled diplomatically. Mormons were in route to Utah. Farmers were in route to Oregon. The national pace had slowed down, everyday life was returning, then....

Johann Augustus Sutter, a Swiss immigrant to Mexican California in 1839, had convinced the Spanish governor he was a European noble and was granted a rancho in the Sacramento valley. He had become a successful farmer and herder. On January 24th gold was discovered at his sawmill.

Despite efforts to keep it a secret, the word got out. Oregon found out in July when a shipowner tried buying out Fort Vancouver's mining supplies. The East Coast heard in August. Newspaper headlines proclaimed "GOLD! Gold from the American River." Success stories abounded. Two prospectors found $17,000. Nuggets worth $5,356 were found in 64 days. The first dependable account was to the War Department in November. Colonel Mason brought back 230 ounces in a tea caddy. By Christmas the whole world knew.

Californians got a head start to the gold fields. Then came Oregonians, Mormons, and Hawaiians. The gold rush from the East began in the spring of 1849. 25,000 argonauts came by ship and another 80,000 arrived by overland trails. Miners from around the world, Europe, South America, Australia and China, were welcomed at first, but later taxed or driven out.

Most of the gold in California was discovered before the 49ers even arrived. Soon the ships and trails were littered with returning prospectors. Many stayed in California to farm, ranch or keep shops. Most who found gold did not make millions overnight but worked from sunup to sundown for $20 a day. That was still better than the $1 a day pay back East.

Life in the gold fields was unlike anywhere else in the country. Camps sprang up overnight. Cabins consisted of tents or old blankets over a wood frame. Dirty, muddy streets, filled with garbage, led to outbreaks of diseases such as smallpox and malaria.

Costs were outrageous. Flour sold for $400 a barrel, sugar $4 a pound and whiskey $20 a quart. Miners spent gold as fast as they found it. The miners drank, gambled, and danced with each
other to Stephen Foster's popular song "Oh Susanna" which took on new verses.

Gamblers, saloon keepers, merchants, prostitutes and lawyers preyed on the mostly male communities. The only real buildings in boom towns were the saloons and the only women worked in the dance halls or the little rooms upstairs. There was no law in mining camps. Robbery, murder and violence became common. Vigilant committees were formed and judges called alcaldes were elected to keep the peace.

Sacramento, San Francisco and Stockton boomed as merchants sold out their supply of picks, shovels, knives, pans, skillets, canteens, and tents. In 1850 San Francisco was a jungle of tents and wood shacks. Its harbor was littered with deserted ships. That year a fire leveled the town. It was entirely rebuilt with good buildings.

Unlucky miners had many opportunities to search for gold as strikes occurred throughout the West. There was a rush a year from 1850 to 1873. Boom towns included Virginia City, Boulder, Carson City, Boise, and Denver.

From 1851 to 1858 there were strikes in southern Oregon, Montana, Idaho and Nevada. 1859 was a banner year for mineral strikes. In Nevada "Old Virginia" Finney and "Old Pancake" Comstock discovered the king of all mineral strikes, Virginia City's Comstock Lode. Miners brought out silver and gold, a million dollars a month, during the peak of the big bonanza.

Also in 1859 miners came to Colorado under the slogan "Pikes Peak or Bust." About half left with the slogan "Busted, by God." From 1860 to 1864 rushes were in Idaho and Montana. One Helena nugget weighed 175-ounces.

In 1873 miners and soldiers with Custer's army discovered gold in South Dakota's Black Hills on Sioux land. The Indians refused to vacate their reservation. By 1876 thousands of miners were in the Black Hills and a war with the Sioux had begun. The last great strike in the lower states was at Cripple Creek, Colorado, in 1891.

As each gold rush cooled off mining became big business requiring large mining companies and Eastern money. A Swedish scientist, Alfred Nobel, had discovered dynamite. It came to America in 1868. Placer mining using pumping machinery and a large number of men channeled streams, opened sluiceways and removed entire mountains. During the first five years of the California Gold Rush $276 million in gold was removed by hand. In the next five another $220 million was removed by machines.

Oregon Fever, Gold Fever

Secretary of State James Buchanan received a letter in 1849 describing San Francisco and Monterey. It said that three-fourths of the houses were deserted or selling for the price of a building lot. Every blacksmith, carpenter and lawyer had left.
Brickyards, sawmills, and ranches were abandoned. Volunteer soldiers and sailors had deserted. Public and private vessels were losing crews. Both newspapers were discontinued. Even the judges had left.

Californians had word of the discovery of gold all to themselves for the first six months of 1848. Eventually news spread to Oregon. In July, Captain Newell of the brig Honolulu docked at Fort Vancouver. He bought all the mining supplies he could under the pretense of supplying coal miners digging for fuel. Soon the word was out and two-thirds of all adult males in Oregon headed south. Wagon trains of up to 150 men and fifty oxen-pulled wagons traversed the Applegate Trail and Fremont's route to Sacramento.

In Oregon crops were neglected and Indian wars forgotten. Gaps appeared in newspaper editions. The Oregon Spectator, published in Oregon City, disappeared from September 7th to October 12th, 1848, then reappeared. "The Spectator, after a temporary sickness, greets its patrons, and hopes to serve them faithfully, and as heretofore, regularly. That 'gold fever' which has swept about 3000 of her officers, lawyers, physicians, farmers and mechanics of Oregon from the plains of Oregon into the mines of California, took away our printers."

The 1848 session of the Oregon legislature was scheduled to meet on December 5th. Twelve of the twenty-two representatives were missing. Seven had bothered to write their resignations. Five had been replaced by special elections. Among the missing were Oregon Trail pioneers Asa Lovejoy (Oregon City store owner and founder of Portland), Peter Burnett and James Nesmith (wagonmasters), and Osborne Russell (member of Oregon's first executive committee).

Arrest warrants were issued for those who had not resigned. The session was cancelled. Elections were held for a special session held starting February 5, 1849.

Some Oregonians struck it rich and lived out their lives on Nob Hill in San Francisco. Most had returned to the Willamette Valley before the 49ers even arrived from the East.

Oregon changed from a community content to provide for itself, to an ambitious and efficient supply house for people too busy mining to produce their own food. New flour mills, sawmills, towns and enterprises grew up along the banks of the Willamette. The river was alive with vessels loading goods for California. Debts were paid off and depression gave way to optimism.

Across Oregon businesses and industries were growing. New varieties of sheep were imported from Australia. Wheat purchased for 62¢ a bushel at the mill sold for $9 a bushel in California. Apples grown for $1 a pound by the box sold for $1.50 each. 6000 bushels were sent immediately. New orchards were set in the fall of 1848 and by 1856 20,000 bushels were shipped. Roads and mail service from Oregon City to Sacramento were developed or improved.

Merchants like Francis Pettygrove, ship builders such as Lot Whitcomb and ship owners
like Captain John Brown made lifetime fortunes overnight. Along the bluff of the second level of Oregon City were located at least a dozen fancy mansions financed with California gold. Almost all of these mansions are gone today, giving up their prime view locations to businesses and new homes.

A total absence of circulating medium had spawned such innovations as Abernethy Rocks, small stones inscribed with the letters "GA" and used as change in Governor Abernethy's store. But now gold was pouring into Oregon, $2 million a year, but no standards existed for exchange. On February 16, 1849, the Provisional Government passed an act to provide the territory with coinage. The law allowed $16.50 an ounce for virgin gold, without any alloys, to be minted into five and ten pennyweight pieces.

The only coins actually minted under this law were the Beaver coins produced by the Oregon Exchange Company. The pure gold $5 and $10 pieces were stamped "T.O. 1849, Territory Oregon, KMTAWRCS" on the obverse and "Oregon Exchange Company. 130G. Native Gold, 5D" or "10pwt, 20 grains, 10D" on the reverse. The initials stood for the owners of the company: Kilbourn, Magruder, Taylor, Abernethy, Wilson, Rector, Campbell, and Smith. The coins became collectors items because they contained 8% more gold than U.S. coins and were produced for only two weeks.

When Territorial Governor Joe Lane arrived to take office one of his duties was to review all Provisional Government laws and declare any void that were unconstitutional. The only law he voided was the coinage act. The stamps were to be broken on the rocks of Willamette Falls, but somehow ended up in a museum.

Beginnings of Self-Government

Oregon came into the American sphere of influence in the 1790's when Captain Gray discovered the mouth of the Columbia River. Jefferson sent Lewis and Clark to explore Oregon in 1804, but saw its future as possibly a parallel independent republic rather than a part of the United States.

The 1818 Treaty of London which settled the War of 1812 and set the northern border of Louisiana at the 49th parallel, defined the Oregon Country as from Russian Alaska (54° 40' N) to Spanish California (42° N) and from the Pacific Ocean to the crest of the Rocky Mountains. Political control was not vested in either the U.S. or Britain but under "joint occupation". The treaty would be automatically extended every ten years (as it was in 1828 and 1838) unless one side gave notice of renegotiation (as the U.S. did in 1846).

In Oregon at this time the need for government depended upon who you were. The local Indians had tribal law and customs. Hudson's Bay Company employees, whether active or the
retired French-Canadians farming the Willamette Valley's French Prairie, came under the jurisdiction of the HBC charter and its factors. But the American fur traders, missionaries, former seamen and arriving immigrants were without the protection of a government.

An incident occurred early in 1841 that underlined the need for an American government. Ewing Young, entrepreneur and cattle baron, died with considerable wealth, no apparent heir and no system to probate his estate. A meeting followed Young's funeral and proposed a probate government. Dr. Ira Babcock of Jason Lee's Methodist Mission was elected Supreme Judge.

Most offices were vacant by 1843. Dr. Babcock chaired two "Wolf Meetings" that discussed the need to protect the country from wolves and other vermin "worse than wild animals," a veiled reference to the British. He also chaired the two Champoeg Meetings.

During 1842 agitation for an organized government increased. At one point a movement to make Oregon an independent country seemed popular. Increasing population and resentment of the British made debates at the Oregon Lyceum and the Willamette Falls Debating Society lively. Three individuals led this independence movement: Lansford Hastings, William Bennett and James Marshall. All three later made the pages of California history. Hastings for his guidebook recommending the Hastings Cut-off, Bennett for his role in the Bear Flag Revolution, and Marshall for discovering gold in 1848.

On May 2, 1843, one hundred and two settlers met at Champoeg on the edge of French Prairie, halfway between Lee's Mission and Oregon City in the heart of the Willamette Valley. Fifty-two Canadians had instructions to head off any attempts at government. Fifty Americans stood united. Chaos almost prevailed, but a vote was called for. Two Canadians joined the unified Americans for a 52-50 vote to set up a Provisional Government.

A legislative committee was created and instructed to report a constitution on July 5. This committee met in Oregon City in May and June. Their constitution, called the Organic Act, was adopted on the 5th of July.

The makeup of this nine man committee was truly American comprised of a mountain man, missionaries and Oregon Trail pioneers. Robert "Doc" Newell had been in Oregon as a mountain man since the early 1830's. He was retired to his Champoeg farm. Thomas Jefferson Hubbard jumped ship in 1834 and was cleared of a murder on Sauvie Island. James O'Neil arrived with the 1834 Wyeth Expedition.

The next four members had all come to Oregon to be part of Jason Lee's Methodist Mission. William Gray was an 1836 Presbyterian farmer at the mission. Alanson Beers had arrived in 1837 from Connecticut. Robert Moore at age 62 was the oldest member. He had arrived on the Great Reinforcement of 1840. A Presbyterian farmer at the
mission, he had been a justice of the peace since 1841. Robert Shortess had also arrived in 1840. Oregon's first constitution is in his handwriting.

The last two members of the legislative committee had come to Oregon on the Oregon Trail. William Doughty was the youngest member at age 31. He came with the Bidwell Party of 1841. David Hill had just arrived that winter and was farming the Tualatin Valley. Hill would join Beers and Joseph Gale on the first Executive Committee.

A last gasp attempt to set up an independent government was headed off in the revision process. The preamble originally stated, "We, the people of Oregon Territory, For purposes of mutual protection, and to secure peace and prosperity among ourselves, Agree to adopt the following laws and regulations." At the insistence of the ultra-American party the words "until such time as the USA extend their jurisdiction over us" were added. The three independence leaders left for California.

Politically On Their Own

On May 2, 1843, one hundred and two settlers met at Champoeg on the edge of French Prairie, halfway between Jason Lee's Methodist Mission and Oregon City in the heart of the Willamette Valley. Fifty-two Canadians were present with instructions to head off any attempts at creating a government. Fifty Americans stood united. Chaos almost prevailed, but a vote was called for. Two Canadians joined the unified Americans for a 52-50 vote to set up a Provisional Government.

John McLoughlin, Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, reported to his superiors that the "American party with a few Englishmen formed themselves into a body." The HBC was invited to join the government but refused. His superior, Governor Simpson, saw them as "very energetic, the Bowie knife, Revolving Pistol and Rifle taking the place of the Constable's baton in bringing refractory delinquents to justice."

The 1843 Organic Act created a legislature, an executive committee, a judicial system, and a system of subscriptions to defray expenses. The laws of Iowa were extended to cover areas not provided for. Four districts were created: Yam Hill, Twality, Champooick, and Clackamas. Clackamas County originally covered much of present day northern Oregon, all of eastern Washington, most of British Columbia and Idaho and part of Montana.

An 1845 revision of the Organic Act changed the dates of elections and meeting dates of the legislative sessions. The executive committee was changed to a single governor. George Abernethy, a miller for the Oregon City Methodist Mission, was elected Oregon's first governor.

In 1845, with the Organic Act revisions, conditions changed for the HBC. The census of 1845
reported 2109 people in Oregon, 1900 of them Oregon Trail immigrants. Canadians were in a minority for the first time and a new tolerance was emerging. For the first time an HBC employee, Frank Ermatinger of Oregon City, was elected to office, Treasurer. In August of 1845 the HBC formally joined the Provisional Government. John McLoughlin came under much criticism from Peter Skene Ogden and Governor Simpson for selling out to the Americans. Within six months McLoughlin was demoted to Associate Chief Factor with Ogden and retired to Oregon City. He later applied for U.S. citizenship.

Oregon City was designated as capital. Significant bills included one preventing the introduction, sale and distillation of ardent spirits; an income and property tax of 1/8 of 1%; an act in regard to slavery and free negroes that banned both with a penalty of 20-39 lashes and men hired to remove blacks; the incorporation of Willamette Falls into Oregon City, the Methodist Mission into the Oregon Institute, and Multnomah Circulating Library; and the authorization of Sam Barlow to open a road across Mount Hood.

The 1846 session was pared back to only essential business upon hearing the U.S. had given notice to abrogate the joint occupation treaty. The 1847 session was punctuated by the Cayuse War as the Provisional Government in cooperation with the Hudson's Bay Company put an army into the field to pursue the murderers of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. Five Indians were tried and hanged in Oregon City for the murders. The 1848 session was postponed until early 1849 because the gold discovery in California nearly emptied the male population of Oregon and not enough legislators were left in the territory.

The 1849 session would be the final session as Governor Abernethy informed the legislature of the imminent arrival of Joe Lane and other federal territorial officers. But first the debts of the Cayuse War had to be paid off and 1/2 million dollars in gold dust circulating in Oregon had to be taken care of. A bill creating a mint passed with only two dissenters who pointed out the unconstitutionality of minting money. $5 and $10 Beaver coins were stamped. When Governor Lane took over the government the only Provisional Government law he threw out was the minting of money. The U.S. mint in San Francisco had to collect all the Beaver coins they could. Collectors held back as the Oregon money contained more gold than the legal specie.

In autumn of 1849, Joe Lane of Indiana, President Polk's choice as Oregon governor, stood on the balcony of William Holmes' Rose Farm and proclaimed Oregon to legally be under the jurisdiction of the United States. The Provisional Government, created at Champoeg, was out of business. But it had done a credible job of assisting Oregon in growing from a British dominated territory to a full part of the United States. For the increasing numbers of new immigrants arriving every year on the Oregon Trail they had come full circle and were again back in the U.S.
The Great
White-Headed Eagle

He was six foot four inches tall. His abundant hair had turned brilliantly white. He had absolute control for twenty years territory stretching from California to Alaska to Nebraska. The natives called him the White Headed Eagle.

John McLoughlin was born in 1784 at Riviere du Loup, Quebec. He was the son and grandson of Irish farmers. His mother was a Fraser, niece of Simon Fraser, for whom the Fraser River was named.

Raised a Catholic, McLoughlin left home at 16 to be trained in medicine. At 19 he was practicing in Montreal. He joined the North West Company as a resident physician and fur trader. In 1812 he married Margaret McKay, the Chippewa widow of a NWC trader who had been killed in the Tonquin massacre. She brought three children, he had an older son, and together they had four more.

In 1824 the NWC consolidated with the much older Hudson's Bay Company (Here Before Christ). McLoughlin was named co-factor of Fort George at Astoria, one of 25 chief factors in the new HBC. He was paid 16/17 of a share of the company ($8000 a year) plus a £500 stipend.

McLoughlin was personally appointed by Governor George Simpson head of 13 posts based at Fort Vancouver. He was the chief factor of the largest trading center west of the Rockies prior to the gold rush. North of the Columbia River near where the Willamette joins it, Fort Vancouver had eight substantial buildings within the enclosure for the 100 whites and a number of smaller buildings outside for the 300 Indians. Indians were not allowed inside and traded through a porthole in the door.

Managing the post's fur trade, farm products for Alaska, shipyard, lumber mill and salmon production, McLoughlin ran the Columbia district like a feudal baron. He kept it free from war. His influence was wise but his word was law. He employed Kanakas from the Sandwich Islands as servants. These Hawaiians were called "Blue Men" because they turned blue in winter.

American immigrants started arriving in great numbers. McLoughlin met the first missionaries and advised them of the best locations. John Ball became the first school teacher in Oregon with a dozen half-breed sons of employees, including McLoughlin's.

When the Oregon Trail immigrants arrived, quite often in dire distress, they were aided with HBC boats and food at The Dalles. McLoughlin sold them goods on credit and advised them of the best lands in the Willamette Valley. John Boardman wrote in 1843, "Well received by Doct. McLoughlin, who charged nothing for the use of his boat sent up for us, nor for the provisions, but not satisfied with that sent us plenty of salmon and potatoes,
furnished us house room, and wood free of charge, and was very anxious that all should get through safe."

Immigrants were told of the Provisional Government, created from a desire to seek protection from HBC rules. In 1845 he agreed to join the government. Clark County was created north of the Columbia and two employees became officers in the government. This cooperation with the Americans was McLoughlin's downfall.

Governor Simpson demoted McLoughlin. Accused of violating the spirit of his contract with the company and engaging in business on his own, his stipend was eliminated. On November 20, 1845, McLoughlin sent off one last angry letter to Simpson and retired to Oregon City.

In 1829 Dr. McLoughlin had taken possession of a claim at Willamette Falls, which he later named Oregon City. The claim was for the HBC although in later years he considered it as his own place to retire. He surveyed, platted, erected buildings and made improvements. In 1846 he built his retirement home.

McLoughlin remained a public figure during his retirement. He donated land for a jail and female seminary. In 1851 he was elected mayor of Oregon City. He died in his home in 1857.

The last years of his life were not pleasant. A conspiracy to strip him of his claim and ruin his reputation began as soon as Oregon became a part of the United States in 1849. Samuel Thurston, Oregon's Delegate to Congress, had written into the Donation Land Law a section giving most of the claim to the legislature. Thurston and Jason Lee made false statements about McLoughlin.

McLoughlin continued to live in his house and was duly naturalized in 1851. The people of Oregon City rewarded him by electing him mayor. But the legal challenge continued and McLoughlin died before the injustice could be rectified. In 1862 the State returned portions of his claim to his family. In 1909 his house was moved up the hill where it stands proudly restored as a National Historical Site. In 1957 Dr. John McLoughlin was named "Father of Oregon" by the state legislature.

The First Men In Charge

Six men can claim to be the first American Governor of Oregon. Three of them served as a committee. And at one time Oregon had two sworn Governors, one appointed by the President and the other elected by the people of Oregon.

The Organic Laws of 1843, called for a three person Executive Committee. Two were elected in 1843 and 1844 before these Organic Laws were modified in 1845. The first committee was comprised of David Hill, part of Dr. Elijah White's 1842 wagon train, Alanson Beers, part of the 1837 Methodist reinforcement, and Joseph Gale, 1834 immigrant with Ewing Young. Beers would join Governor Abernethy as a partner.
in the Oregon Milling Company. Gale built the first ship in Oregon, the Star of Oregon.

The second Executive Committee, elected May 25, 1844, was made up of Peter G. Stewart, of the 1843 migration, Osbourne Russell, a trapper with Gale on the 1834 Wyeth Party who had taken to the mountains and returned to Oregon in 1842 as guide to Dr. Elijah White, and Dr. William J. Bailey, a sailor who jumped ship in Yerba Buena. Russell later went to California for the gold rush. Dr. Bailey had recovered at the Methodist Mission from wounds inflicted by Rogue River Indians, was part of Ewing Young’s cattle company and studied medicine under Dr. Elijah White.

George Abernethy, Whig, merchant and steward of the 1840 Oregon City Methodist Mission was the first man elected to the office of Governor in Oregon. The green behind his house was the end of the Oregon Trail. He was elected on June 3, 1845, as the candidate of the Mission supported “American” Party. He was reelected in 1847.

As Governor, he squelched Democratic editors of the Oregon Spectator by demanding no politics in the paper. He vetoed a liquor law and was a member of the Oregon Exchange Company which coined Beaver money.

Joe Lane was a Mexican War hero and Indiana Legislator but his personal affairs were a mess. President Polk offered him the job of Oregon Territorial Governor in 1848. Polk, a Democrat, gambled that Lane would be in Oregon before incoming Whig President Taylor could legally cancel the commission. Lane accepted immediately. Joe Meek escorted him to Oregon. With a layover for winter at Fort Hall, they arrived in Oregon City one day early.

When Lane arrived in Oregon he invited Abernethy to pay him a visit. Noting that Lane had not been been regularly sworn in, Abernethy responded that he would be glad to receive Lane should he call to pay his respects.

Lane resigned in 1850. Territorial Secretary Kintzing Pritchette became acting Governor for two months. John Gaines, a veteran of both the War of 1812 and Mexican War, was appointed by President Taylor. Enroute his two daughters died of yellow fever, his wife died from a fall from a horse in Salem, and his son died soon after.

Gaines spent three years bickering with the Democratic legislature. He kept the capitol in Oregon City. His main opponent, Asahel Bush, wanted Salem. The Whig newspaper the Argus called him Ass of Hell. Bush called it the Air Goose.

Lane returned for a three day term in 1853 just so President Pierce could remove Gaines from office. Lane became Delegate to Congress and Oregon’s first U.S. Senator. While Senator he was an unsuccessful candidate for Vice President. His views favoring slavery and secession made him unpopular in Oregon.

George Law Curry was Territorial Secretary when Lane resigned. The former editor of the Oregon Spectator had resigned rather than keep politics out of the paper. He served in Salem until
Pierce’s appointee John Davis arrived.

Davis spent half of his term getting to Oregon. He spent six months getting to Oregon and another six months as Governor before resigning and returning to Indiana. Curry became interim Governor again, this time for six months until his own appointment as Governor arrived. He remained until statehood.

For seven months Oregon had two sworn Governors in office. The State Constitution was adopted and "Honest John" Whiteaker was elected Governor in June 1858. He was an authentic 49er, had gone home to fetch his wife and returned to live in Eugene City in 1852. Whiteaker discreetly waited for President Buchanan to give him a state to govern. Statehood was granted February 14, 1859 and he was sworn in March 3.

As Governor Whiteaker fought for land laws that favored settlers, not land speculators and urged Salem be selected as capitol. Before the Civil War he had advocated slavery. Yet he guided the state with the motto "The Union" through the "wicked war." Judge Matthew Deady said "Old Whit ... Wrong in the head in politics, he is honest and right in the heart."

**The City on Willamette Falls**

Near the mouth of the Clackamas River was an old moss-covered, dilapidated house 300 feet long. In it lived the entire Clackamas Indian tribe. The Indians along this portion of the Willamette River were hosts to the hundreds of migrating Mollalas, Calapooyas, Multnomahs, Teninos and Chinooks who came each year to catch salmon at Hyas Tyee Tumwater, what white men call Willamette Falls. The Indians permanent mark can still be seen in the petroglyphs at the base of the falls.

The first white man to take an interest in the Willamette Falls area was Alexander Ross of the NorthWest Company in 1815. In 1829 the Hudsons Bay Company under Dr. John McLoughlin took a land claim at the falls and encouraged former trappers to settle nearby. Next were the Methodists. In 1840 the Rev. Alvin Waller established a mission and in 1842 a church. The Methodists and McLoughlin would be at odds for a dozen years.

McLoughlin surveyed and laid out the townsite of Oregon City in 1842, replacing the commonly used name of Willamette Falls. The first plat of Oregon City, signed by Dr. McLoughlin, sits proudly next to the original plat of San Francisco filed in the same Clackamas County Courthouse, at that time the only U.S. Court House west of the Rockies.

Oregon City has always been a natural place of commerce. The first business, the American Store, was established in 1840 by Captain Couch who represented J.P. Cushing of Massachusetts. In 1843 Francis Pettygrove opened his Red Store. He and Oregon City lawyer Asa Lovejoy would later
stake the claim which became Portland. In 1844 the HBC opened their own store at Oregon City. The three stores were in response to the increasing immigrants from the Oregon Trail who needed to be resupplied to start their farms.

In 1845 Oregon City was incorporated by the Oregon Provisional Government. It soon had 500 residents, 2 churches - Catholic and Methodist, 2 saloons, a newspaper, 75 houses, 2 blacksmiths, 2 coopers, 2 cabinet makers, 2 hatters, 2 silversmiths, and 4 tailors to resupply and properly clothe the new settlers.

Along the northern edge of McLoughlin's townsite was the land claim of George Abernethy. He was a steward of the Methodist Mission from 1840 to 1844. He supervised their granary and operated a mercantile business. He made and used Abernethy rocks for change due to the lack of currency. The flints inscribed with letters G.A. were backed by his high standing. From 1845 to 1849 he served as Provisional Governor. Abernethy Green, just above his house, was the marshalling point for wagons newly arrived on the Oregon Trail, both those arriving by raft from Fort Vancouver or on the Barlow Road.

In 1846 John McLoughlin retired to Oregon City. He immediately applied for U.S. citizenship and started building his house. The Provisional Government denied his citizenship as they had no authority. When Oregon became a U.S. Territory in 1849, McLoughlin applied again and was naturalized on September 5, 1851. At this time he was serving as Mayor of Oregon City. In 1851 he applied for land patents under U.S. laws. Due to misrepresentation by U.S. Delegate Samuel Thurston and Jason Lee directly to Congress, the McLoughlin claim was denied. McLoughlin died in his house, without title to it, in 1857. In 1862 title to most of his claims, were given to his son David. In 1941 his house became a National Historic Site.

Oregon City was the first capital of Oregon. The Provisional and Territorial Governments met here from 1843 to 1853 until the capitol moved to Salem. Other firsts, for Oregon City, west of the Rockies, included the first newspaper (1846), mail delivery (1846), jail (1845), library (1845), debating society (1842), public elevator, and long distance transmission of electricity in North America (1889).

Oregon City became rich from the gold discovered in California. Residents sold local lumber and wheat for up to 1000 times what it cost them. Gold was minted into Beaver coins in Oregon City and a dozen fine mansions were built along the rim of the bluff.

Industry in Oregon City is represented by the mills circling Willamette Falls. Originally started in 1830 by Dr. McLoughlin blasting a mill race to power a sawmill, the power of the falling water was used to create lumber, flour, woolen cloth, and paper. The first paper mill began in 1866.

Getting around the falls was always a challenge. An 1852 attempt to build a canal was destroyed by fire just before a
devastating flood. A portage railroad was run by stagecoachman Ben Holladay in 1861. The current Willamette Falls Canal and Locks was completed in 1871.

Oregon City has been drowned by seven major floods. The last was on Christmas Day, 1964.

From Robins Nest To Stumptown

The Indians had a village at Wallamt, their "river of life" on the edge of Hyas Tumwater. The village was replaced by the American settlement of Willamette. The whites gave the name Willamette Falls to Hyas Tumwater. Across the river was the settlement of Willamette Falls, now called Oregon City. Oregon City was Oregon's largest city and capitol. Portland, once known as Stumptown, was one of many towns competing to become the premier city in Oregon.

Oregon City had three advantages - its location on Willamette Falls, the end of the Oregon Trail, and the first courthouse west of the Rockies. The residents of Oregon City worked hard to enhance that advantage.

Steamboats have plied the Willamette since 1850 and the Falls had to be portaged. Canemah began in 1845 as the upper terminal of that portage. A portage railroad was built in 1861 from Canemah to Oregon City. Canemah is part of Oregon City today along with Clackamas City at the mouth of the Clackamas River.

Robert Moore developed Robin's Nest opposite Oregon City in 1840. By 1845 he was operating a ferry to Oregon City and renting tents to immigrants arriving on the Oregon Trail. Robin's Nest was renamed Linn City in honor of Senator Lewis Linn of Missouri who was promoting an Oregon Bill in Congress. In 1854 the town became West Linn. The entire town was swept away by the flood of 1861 and nearly again in 1891. Today West Linn includes Willamette and Multnomah City.

Attempts began in 1852 to build a canal around Willamette Falls on the West Linn side. Robert Moore's enterprise grew into a boat basin and moorage, but no canal. Ben Holladay, former stagecoachman and owner of the portage railroad, negotiated for locks on the Oregon City side but lost. The Willamette Falls Canal and Lock Company in West Linn won the contract in 1868. To receive their $450,000 payment, the canal and locks had to be opened by January 1, 1873.

Actual construction lasted nine months using rock quarried in Carver, the same rock used to build the Pioneer Courthouse in Portland. When the owners attempted to rent a steamboat to open the locks they found all boats rented to Holladay. A boat was found in Washington Territory and brought to Oregon City, only to become grounded at the sandbar at the mouth of the Clackamas River. The boat was freed, cleared the locks, and the money was awarded. Today the locks are
operated toll free by the Corps of Engineers.

Whereas Oregon City's advantage was Willamette Falls, its disadvantage was the river itself. As ocean-going ships demanded deeper drafts, the river was too shallow. The mouth of the Clackamas River was the worst spot. It became apparent some other city was destined to become Oregon's chief port.

Multnomah City, Oswego, and Milwaukie, located between Oregon City and Portland, were unable to tap a hinterland. Multnomah City was next to Linn City. Joel Palmer, 1845 partner of Sam Barlow, predicted it would outlive Linn City. Oswego was started by an Oregon City sawmill operator. The entire town was sold in 1865 to the owner of Oswego Milling Company.

Milwaukie was founded by Lot Whitcomb and named for Milwaukee, Wisconsin, with the intentional spelling variation. The first steamboat on the Willamette, the Lot Whitcomb, was built in Milwaukie in 1850 by Henderson Leuelling. His brother Seth Lewelling (note spelling) was a noted horticulturist who had brought a wagon load of fruit trees across the Oregon Trail.

East Portland was originally inhabited in 1829, making it as old as Oregon City. It was sold in 1845 for $200. It became a town in 1850 and part of Portland in 1891.

Linnton was laid out in 1843 by Peter Burnett of Champoeg and Morton M. McCarver of Oregon City. It was also named for Senator Linn. Burnett stated, "I have no doubt that this place will be the great commercial town of the territory." Hoping to tap trade with the Tualatin Valley, the road up Cornelius Pass was impassable and their venture failed. Burnett went to California to become their first Governor.

An 1843 pioneer of Linnton, James John, moved across the river and started St. Johns in 1865. It became part of Portland in 1915. Linnton became joined Portland in 1917.

Saint Helens was closest to the Pacific. Captain H.M. Knighton settled the Columbia River townsite at the tip of Sauvie Island in 1845. A devastating fire destroyed the city's chances of competing with Portland.

Access to a hinterland is the key to success and the town known as Stumptown found that success by making a wagon road up Canyon Creek to the Tualatin Valley. They later tapped the rich wheat lands of Eastern Oregon and Washington.

The Budding Of The City Of Roses

Portland was begun by two Easterners. Francis Pettygrove was from Portland, Maine. He came to Oregon in 1842 by ship. His sister, Mrs. Philip Foster, brought a lilac tree which now grows in front of the Foster House on the Barlow Road. Asa L. Lovejoy was from Boston. He came to Oregon on the Oregon Trail in 1843 with Marcus Whitman and Jesse Applegate, almost losing his life to Indians.
The original inhabitant of what was to become Portland was William Johnson in 1842. He had no intent to establish a city and moved across the river to start a sawmill on Johnson Creek.

On their way to Fort Vancouver in November 1843, William Overton and Asa Lovejoy pulled their canoes ashore on the western bank of the Willamette long enough to claim 640 acres in Lovejoy's name. Overton become the proprietor for the absentee owner. He took half the claim as his payment and promptly sold it to Pettygrove for $50. Pettygrove had the Red House Store in Oregon City and a warehouse in Champoeg. He arrived in 1844 and built a log house on the waterfront.

Lovejoy and Pettygrove platted their new city in 1845. Pettygrove favored the name Portland and Lovejoy wanted to call it New Boston. Following dinner in Oregon City, a penny was flipped, and Pettygrove won. Portland's first settler was Captain John Couch, who built a wharf.

Lovejoy sold his half to Benjamin Stark in 1845, staying in Oregon City. Daniel Lownsdale, who had built a tannery in 1847 where Civic Stadium is located today, bought out Pettygrove for $5000. Lownsdale eventually owned all of Portland. Captain Nathaniel Crosby had a frame house shipped in, Portland's first. Pettygrove moved to Washington Territory and founded Port Townsend.

Portland actively sought business. Merchants sent delegations to The Dalles and Eagle Creek to distract immigrants from Oregon City. Portland grew so fast that tree stumps were left in the middle of the roads so residents could jump across them and stay above the mud. Hence the name "Stumptown". They even painted them white to make them more visible.

In 1853 a corduroy road was completed up Canyon Creek to tap the Tualatin and Yamhill Valleys. This access was key to Portland's success. In 1855 a fruit peddler from Yamhill, Aaron Meier, brought his merchandise over the road. Twelve years later he teamed with Sigmund Frank, creating Oregon's oldest retail house, Meier and Frank.

The late 1860's began a cultural heyday in Portland. Theaters such as the Oro Fino and New Market opened. Henry Pittock bought the Oregonian and built a fine mansion. Harvey Scott was his editor. Scott was against free silver, free high schools and woman's suffrage. His sister, Abigail Scott Duniway, was Oregon's leading suffragette.

The waterfront was crammed with rooming houses, saloons, bawdy houses and an underground system of professional shanghaiers. By 1873 Chinese were arriving by the boatload. That same year a fire destroyed 30 city blocks.

The late 1870's started a business heyday. Portland had banks, wholesale grocers, brokerages, commission houses, corporations and transportation companies. Captain Ainsworth owned the Oregon Steam Navigation Company. Henry Corbett had the California Stage Line. Simeon Reed and William
Ladd owned seventeen farms. By the turn of the century Portland was the terminus for steamboat transportation on the Willamette and Columbia, shipping across the Pacific, and three transcontinental railroads.

From its original one square mile along the Willamette west shore Portland spread south across Marquam Creek and Palatine Hill and west up Marquam Hill and the West Hills. Judge Philip Marquam, builder of the Grand Opera House, was the father of good roads. Marquam Hill was originally the property of the Oregon-Washington Railroad but a land swap brought the University of Oregon Medical School to the hill.

A large addition to Portland was across the river. In 1891 East Portland and Albina were added. A real estate development named for Reverend Sellwood was annexed in 1893. Further east was Ladd's Addition. North of Portland came St. Johns in 1915 and Linnnton in 1917. Portland has spread further east towards Powell's Valley.

Portland is the city of bridges as eleven span the Willamette River. The first was built in 1887. One has two separate lift spans, one for highway traffic and another for railroads. Another is so beautiful that San Francisco copied it to build their Golden Gate Bridge.

The crowning glories were the adjacent structures built of the same rock as Willamette Falls Locks. Pioneer Post Office replaced the original log post office founded in 1849. Next door was the Queen Anne Chateau style Portland Hotel, finished in 1890. It was razed and is today Pioneer Square, public meeting place and terminus of a showcase light rail system.

**Iron Horses Over The Ruts**

While American emigrants were travelling the Oregon Trail, American soldiers were fighting a war with Mexico. Lessons learned from that war ended the trail as a major migration route. In November of 1845, while Sam Barlow was getting permission to build his toll road, America was being rebuffed in Mexico City attempting to purchase California and New Mexico. On May 12, 1846, while the Donner Party was still in Kansas, Congress declared war with Mexico over a disputed Texas boundary.

In September of 1846, while the Donner Party was approaching their fate in the high Sierras, General Zachary Taylor was capturing Monterrey. A year later, while the Mormons were settling Salt Lake City, General Winfield Scott was capturing Mexico City. On February 2, 1848, less than two weeks after gold was discovered in California the Treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo was signed, ending the war.

The army learned two valuable lessons from the war. First was the need to explore the West more fully. Second was the need for a railroad system, especially a transcontinental.

Secretary of War Jefferson Davis ordered Colonel John James
Abert of the Army Corps of Topographical Engineers in 1853 to make a series of explorations to determine railroad routes. Six surveys crossed the United States that year. Each surveyor proclaimed his route the best. Davis, a Southerner, favored a southern route.

Isaac I. Stephens, already named the first Governor of the new Washington Territory, and Captain George B. McClellan, later Civil War general and presidential candidate, surveyed between the 47th and 49th parallels. They went from St. Paul to Puget Sound, where Stephens took over as governor.

Lt. John Gunnison worked along the 38th parallel from Fort Leavenworth to the Rockies. In the Great Basin he was killed by a Ute Indian massacre and replaced by Lt. Edward G. Beckwith.

Lt. Amiel Whipple surveyed the 35th parallel from Fort Smith, Arkansas, to Santa Fe and then on to Los Angeles. Lt. John Park and Lt. John Pope started on opposite ends of the 32nd parallel. They surveyed from Texas and San Diego.

Lt. Park then went from Fort Yuma on to San Francisco while Lt. Henry L. Abbott went from Fort Vancouver to California and back covering two routes, one in the Willamette Valley and the other east of the Cascades.

Before the Civil War, no railroad company wanted to take on the cost of building a transcontinental railroad. During the war the federal government decided to back five companies - the Union Pacific; the Central Pacific; the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe; and later the Southern Pacific and Northern Pacific. The Pacific Railroad Bill was signed into law on July 1, 1862.

Subsidies of public money and land made the effort possible. For every mile of track laid, the companies got a square mile of public land to sell to settlers. Federal and state governments gave away 170 million acres. Railroad tycoons emerged, such as Charles Crocker, Mark Hopkins, Collis Huntington and Leland Stanford of the Central Pacific, James J. Hill of the Great Northern, Cornelius Vanderbilt and Jay Gould.

Omaha was the eastern terminus of the Union Pacific. James Evans, working for Col. Grenville Dodge, discovered Evans Pass in 1866. As the UP moved westward, paralleling the Oregon and California Trails, the new terminals became jumping off spots for both the trail and stagecoach lines.

Sacramento was the western terminus of the Central Pacific. The CP bogged down at the edge of the Sierras. Most of the men had left to search for gold or silver. Charles Crocker tried an experiment. One day in February, 1865, fifty Chinese arrived on a flatcar. They worked twelve hours that same day without complaint. Crocker sent for more Chinese. 3000 Chinese pushed the CP through the mountains.

The Chinese took jobs no one else wanted. They hung over cliffs from ropes to tap holes in the rock. They inserted dynamite and were lucky to clear the explosion on their way back up. They used the new liquid nitroglycerin when others balked. Surviving on a diet of oysters and vegetables rather
than meat, they did not take sick working at the 7000 foot level.

The photograph of the golden spike ceremony on May 10, 1869, at Promontory, Utah, has plenty of Irishmen, Civil War veterans and tycoons, but no Chinese. As the last rail was being carried in someone yelled, "Take a shot!" The Chinese dropped the rail and ran. The telegraph flashed a single word, "Done."

The last link to Oregon took another two decades. Portland was connected with the Union Pacific. John Ainsworth's Oregon Steam Navigation Company started up the Columbia River Gorge in 1865. The Oregon Short Line reached Granger, Wyoming in 1884. The Oregon Trail ruts were now completely covered by iron rails.

Reliving the Oregon Trail

The Oregon Trail is alive today thanks to the efforts of a great number of people with various talents, abilities and one driving force - preserving the last remnants of the Great American Migration. There are activities for all ages and interest levels. Tourists can follow the route of the trail, see where history was made and have it interpreted. Tours can be made to view or walk on the actual ruts. Pageants or festivals entertain the modern day emigrants.

Several museums grace the Oregon and California Trails. They are anchored by two showcases located at the cities recognized by the federal government as the beginning and end of the Trail. The National Frontier Trails Center is in an old flour mill in Independence, Missouri. The displays section is set out as if the visitor is actually walking the Santa Fe, Oregon and California Trails. The new Center is the national headquarters for the Oregon-California Trails Association and is also a federal repository for the National Archives collection of trails related materials.

The End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center is soon to be constructed in Oregon City at Abernethy Green, the actual end of the trail. Besides a museum, the Center will have a living history demonstration area, an outdoor amphitheater for history plays, an education center and places for tourists and history buffs alike to recreate the past.

Many other museums dot the trail, mostly in larger cities. The Kansas City Museum and Oregon Historical Society in Portland have excellent trail related exhibits and libraries. The Pony Express Museum, located in the old stables in St. Joseph, Missouri, focuses on that brief chapter of history. Even art museums have an Oregon Trail flavor. In particular is Omaha, Nebraska's Joslyn Art Museum and its excellent collection of western art including most of Alfred Jacob Miller's 1830's watercolors. Also in Omaha is the Union Pacific Historical Museum.

Most historic sites that remain along the Oregon Trail are in state parks or national historic
sites and include interpretive centers and/or living history demonstration sites. Hollenberg Ranch in Kansas is a surviving Pony Express Station. At Rock Springs Station in Nebraska visitors can learn about the Oregon Trail and the Pony Express, see a working blacksmith, visit the site where "Wild Bill" Hickok gained his fame and ride an oxen-pulled covered wagon next to actual trail ruts. A portion of old Fort Kearny has been reconstructed and is operated as a state historical park.

At Chimney Rock visitors can ride in a wagon train up to the spire. At Scotts Bluff balloonists ride the winds of history in the annual Old West Balloon Race or listen to scholarly talks on history. At Fort Laramie one can tour Old Bedlam or visit the sutler's store. Forts Bridger and Hall have also been restored.

Branches of the federal government have a number of centers including BLM's facility at Flagstaff Hill in Baker City, Oregon, which provides interpretation as well as a panoramic view of ruts and old mines. The Whitman Mission near Walla Walla, Washington, has interpretation about the mission and the massacre. Fort Vancouver has been restored in Vancouver, Washington, as well as the McLoughlin House in Oregon City.

Day trips from Sacramento, California, take tourists to orchards, vineyards, missions, and gold rush country. Empire Mine State Park was California's richest lode. At Gold Discovery State Park a statue of James Marshall points to the spot where he discovered gold. Angels Camp in Calaveras County recreates Mark Twain's celebrated Jumping Frog Contest.

Guided tours of the Oregon Trail are sponsored by the Oregon-California Trails Association. Member chapters across the West have several outings each year along segments within their areas. Tour conveyances range from walking, horseback, automobile, van or recreational vehicle to tour buses. In addition OCTA provides extensive tours every summer at their convention cities. Guided educational tours are provided by instructors along the trail. This author offers college credit classes for teachers and other interested students out of the Environmental Learning Center in Oregon City.

Cities along the trail celebrate their heritage history through festivals and pageants. Every Labor Day weekend Independence Courthouse Square is crammed with revelers enjoying Santa Caligon Days in honor of the three trails that started in that Missouri town. The third week each July is the Oregon Trail Days at Scotts Bluff. There are three days of parades, barbecues, dancing and competitions.

For three weeks in July and August every summer Oregon City opens up for the Oregon Trail Pageant. Visitors from around the world come for salmon bakes, history talks and performances of the play Oregon Fever. Visitors in an outdoor theater watch the pioneers of 1851 cross the plains, brave hardships and joys, sing and dance, and fight off villains to reach Oregon City.
Preserving The Oregon Trail

Modern emigrants to Oregon can travel by jet plane from Kansas City to Portland in about the same amount of time some pioneers spent fording a major river or digging a wagon out of mud. In 1924 Ezra Meeker also flew over the trail. This accomplishment gave him the distinction of being the only person to travel the trail by covered wagon twice, by train, automobile and airplane.

An emigrant of 1852, Meeker clearly qualifies as an Oregon Trail pioneer. In 1906, during a wave of interest in all things relating to pioneers, Meeker went from Puget Sound to Iowa, this time to publicize the trail. He raised money for the trip by selling postcards.

As Meeker travelled east, followed by a host of reporters, he pointed out significant sites. He would stay in a town long enough to speak to a public forum and encourage the locals to mark the route of the trail. Towns would anticipate his arrival and his presence would be required for an unveiling of a monument to the trail. Usually in the city park or next to the city hall, school or courthouse. The monument at South Pass is considered his most significant.

Other markers dot the trail. Near Barlow Pass on Mt. Hood is a rock cairn memorializing the unknown pioneer woman. The memorial was placed by the Daughters of the American Revolution, a patriotic group who also have a marker at Abernethy Green marking the end of the trail. The DAR also maintains old homes, such as the Robert Newell House and the recreation of a log cabin typical of those used by pioneers, both located in Champoeg.

In addition to markers at significant sites are the trail route markers placed along highways that parallel or cross the trail. Placed by varying groups such as the DAR, Oregon Centennial Commission, the Oregon-California Trails Association, or local historical societies, they come in many sizes, shapes, designs and conditions of repair. OCTA is attempting to mark the entire trail with unobtrusive, indestructible carsonite reflectors.

Besides marking the trail OCTA is involved through their national and local preservation officers in other projects. Included are efforts to purchase California Hill and its ruts leading up from the South Platte River in Nebraska, protecting emigrant graves, and persuading industry to relocate roads and pipe lines to preserve miles of pristine ruts in South Pass.

As more and more modern trail seekers set out across prairie, mountain and desert, looking for the route of the great migration, the need exists for accurate assistance. The first help came from guidebooks such as those written by Irene Paden in the 1930's-40's and Gregory Franzwa in the 1970's. The first accurate and useful maps of the entire trail were published by Franzwa. He
superimposed the route of the Oregon Trail on top of city or topographical maps. Even on these maps the margin for error is too great for some trail seekers.

Maps showing greater detail is an on-going project of OCTA. Using air photos, old surveys, and on-the-ground inspection by experts, they are plotting the trail on large topographic maps. Similar efforts are being made locally along the trail. Probably the most difficult is in Clackamas County, Oregon, where the Barlow Road led into Oregon City. Here the rainy climate has obscured almost all traces of the trail. Dramatic ruts such as those found in Wyoming are not to be found.

The Oregon Trail is now part of the National Park Service. A movement that started in 1968 with the National Trails Act which included the Appalachian and Pacific Crest hiking trails is to include lineal strips of land under the care of the United States Department of the Interior. The first trails were continuous hiking trails known as National Scenic Trails. The Oregon and Mormon Pioneer Trails are among the first National Historic Trails. The system also includes the Lewis and Clark Trail, Iditerod Sled Trail and others. As of this writing, OCTA is still lobbying for inclusion of the California, Pony Express and Santa Fe Trails.

Its headquarters office in Seattle, The Oregon Historic Trail does not have a central visitors center or camping facilities like some National Parks. It has responsibility for coordinating, marking, preserving, and setting administrative policy concerning the trail.

The NPS envisions two types of users of their "Park" - one is the occasional visitor to one or more of the sites under their jurisdiction. The other is the extended visitor trying to see the entire trail. They see this user starting at St. Louis at the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, the famous gateway arch, and then driving across parts of ten states to Oregon City. They will visit the National Historic Sites at Independence, Scotts Bluff, Fort Laramie, Whitman Mission, Fort Vancouver and Oregon City.

**Trail Buffs and Historians**

The story of America's great migration to the West was built by the initiative, toil and hardships of thousands of individual pioneers. They explored, scouted, trapped, traded, preached, taught, farmed, mined and settled. The story is preserved by individuals interested in the preservation of this country's heritage. They research, write, teach, guide tours, preserve documents, tend graves and attend conventions.

The heritage established by the pioneers is a unique record, never to be duplicated again. It is a fragile record that needs to be cherished. If it is lost, it is forever. A growing number of historians, environmentalists, landowners, government agencies and just concerned citizens are working to
preserve that record for future generations.

The first trail buff was an actual emigrant, Ezra Meeker, who migrated to Oregon in 1852 and retraced his steps in 1906. In 1926 he founded the Oregon Trail Memorial Association. Their goals were to establish the route, erect monuments, restore historic buildings and collect written records. Commemorative 50-cent coins were issued to finance markers.

OTMA became the American Pioneer Trails Association in 1940 committing itself to celebrating the Oregon Trail Centennial in 1943, a hundred years after the first large wagon trains. World War II prevented the centennial celebration. APTA continued to mark the trail until 1954 then it quietly slipped into history.

For 25 years there was no national organization to direct the effort of saving the trails. During that period a wholesale destruction of the land was begun, checked only by local historical societies and interest groups. Oil companies were drilling on Sublette's Cutoff, bulldozers were plowing up ruts, a pipeline was planned through Devil's Gate, potato fields were planted over the trail, and marijuana growers and vandals took over Alcove Spring. 25% of the trail was obliterated in ten years.

Books were written by "trail junkies" interested in locating the old ruts. Irene Paden was first to publish. Paul Henderson, a railroad man, was next. Authoritative books were written by Merrill Mattes, Thomas Hunt, Aubrey Haines and Gregory Franzwa. A network was formed to write letters, hike the trails and share knowledge.

But more was necessary. In 1982 trail buff Franzwa took matters in hand, contacted his peers and called for an organizational meeting in Denver. The Oregon-California Trails Association was born. The group established their goals.

Goal one is to coordinate the identification, preservation, interpretation and accessibility of the trail remains, historic sites and landmarks. OCTA is involved in protecting emigrant graves, placing carsonite markers along the route and working with the Bureau of Land Management to protect the trail through their lands. Local chapters explore trails such as Wyoming's Sublette Cutoff, Nevada's High Rock Canyon and Black Rock Desert, and Oregon's Barlow Road.

Goal two is to prevent further deterioration of the trail. OCTA is participating in public forums to persuade government and industry to relocate roads and pipelines to preserve pristine ruts.

Goal three is to secure easements from private landowners to trail sites or segments. OCTA is purchasing Nebraska's California Hill where ruts were cut by emigrant wagons as they climbed from the South Platte River.

Goal four is to seek public exposure of the goals and activities to create popular awareness and concern for preservation. OCTA is lobbying to designate the California and Santa Fe Trails as National Historic Trails.

Goal five is to facilitate research projects and to publish
scholarly articles. OCTA is developing instructional materials to help students understand the western migration. Projects include a recommended booklist and a student activity book. A computer-based census of emigrant diaries, newspaper accounts, letters, and other documents is being developed.

Members receive the newsletter News From The Plains which gives member and chapter news, convention reports, legislative action and reports pf special activities and outings. Members also receive the quarterly Overland Journal. Over 150 libraries, historical societies and travel bureaus subscribe. A recent volume contained articles on types of covered wagons, John Studebaker’s 1853 journey, Sabbath on the Trail, and navigating by the stars.

OCTA has held an annual convention each August since 1983. Each consists of several days of committee work, public meetings, field trips to historic sites around the host city, and the social activities that make any convention fun. The first convention was held in Independence, Missouri. That year OCTA had 300 members. 200 people attended the convention. Convention attendance has about tripled, depending upon location, while overall membership has increased tenfold.


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**Educating the Public About the Trail**

About 5000 students and adults in Missouri, Kansas, Oregon and Washington have seen four Oregon City area residents, myself included, dress up as emigrants or mountain men, narrate a slide show, show off authentic artifacts, and talk about what it was like to travel the Oregon Trail. Impetus for the program was a teacher exchange program between Oregon City and Independence, Missouri.

For several years eighth graders at Orient School District in Gresham have written plays about life on the trail and acted them out for the fourth graders using a real covered wagon as a prop. Interested students of any age and their parents have been hiking the Barlow Road as part of a Saturday school program at Orient.

Throughout Oregon teachers are learning about the Oregon Trail so they can teach it in their classrooms. With the 1993 sesquicentennial coming, there is a renewed interest in the trail.

The Oregon Trail Advisory Council’s 1988 report to the Governor of Oregon made eleven
recommendations. One was to have a statewide celebration in 1993. Another was to create Jim Renner’s position as "Wagon Master." Recommendation 3.f. charges the State Department of Education to focus on Oregon Trail education, increase information on Oregon Trail in Oregon history units 4th grade and up, encourage state symposiums on Trail history at the college level, and offer creative incentives for graduate level students to conduct research on the Oregon Trail.

Teachers who have been including the Oregon Trail in their curricula are sharing their knowledge by conducting inservices and teacher training classes.

The Oregon Trail offers an excellent topic for units of instruction on pioneering in whole language block classes; a theme week or cross discipline unit combining language arts, social studies, science, math and drama; or hands-on cooperative learning, discovery or research projects.

The Oregon Trail offers a mixture of knowledge areas. Students can learn about native Americans, pioneer lifestyles, modes of transportation, the economics or sociology of migrations, the geography of the plains or mountains, the history of overland migration, methods of settlement, railroads, house types, emigrant dress, explorers, types of government, missionaries, natural history or gold mining.

A wide range of educational activities are possible with the Oregon Trail as the topic. Writing assignments could include diaries, journals, plays, comparisons of people along the trail, newspapers, or TV commercials for emigrants. Penpals could be established with students in cities along the Trail. A favorite creative writing assignment is to send a modern student back in time to travel with a wagon train or to bring a pioneer to the present day to experience and compare lifestyles.

Reading or viewing activities include reading actual diaries or viewing videotapes of the Oregon Trail Pageant. Map skills assignments could include replicating Trail maps, transposing Trail maps onto present maps, interpreting survey maps, or making jigsaw puzzles of Trail maps. Timelining skills can be honed by making comparative timelines for a time of day or day of week for an emigrant in comparison with the student.

Art, drama or music classes can be involved by acting out diaries or plays, making Indian rattles or owner-sticks, making life-size paper dolls, drawing official Oregon Trail flags, listening to authentic Trail music or writing official Oregon Trail songs. Computers can be utilized by playing the MECC Oregon Trail game or other simulations, word processing writing assignments, or creating Oregon Trail databases.

Hands-on activities include making recreations of a covered wagon, playing Indian games, taking tours or field trips on the Oregon Trail or Barlow Road, visiting museums or cemeteries, or playing the Interact PIONEER simulation game.
Whether it be a short activity or an entire unit, the Oregon Trail offers a wealth of possibilities. Now is the time to include the Trail in the curriculum.
Oregon Trail Bibliography

Following is an annotated list of books and materials necessary or useful to learn about the Oregon Trail.

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The definitive biographies of Dr. John, Dr. David and Marie Louise McLoughlin.

Brown, Dee; Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee; Henry Holt Co.: New York (1970)
A fully documented Indian history of the American West

The complete definitive history of Oregon, a must for anyone wanting to get below the surface

A necessary guidebook for locating and researching the Barlow Road

Cogswell, Philip, Jr.; Capitol Names: Individuals Woven Into Oregon's History; Oregon Historical Society: Portland, OR (1977)
Short concise biographies of the 158 names inscribed around the state capitol building.

An early Oregon historical geography, predecessor of the Oregon Atlas

Dodds, Gordon B.; Oregon: A Bicentennial History; American Association for State and Local History: Nashville, TN (1977)
A comprehensive history of the state by my professor at P.S.U. and Oregon expert

Maps of the Oregon Trail superimposed on modern maps for tourists

Franzwa, Gregory M.; The Oregon Trail Revisited; The Patrice Press: St. Louis, MO (1988)
A tourists guide to the Oregon Trail with instructions to get to various sites and an excellent preface history of the trail
Gibbons, Boyd; "Oregon Trail: The Itch To Move West", National Geographic, Volume 170 number 2; National Geographic Society: Washington, D.C. (August 1986)
Picture essay on the trail in a national magazine

An excellent resource with good pictures and maps.

Site by site description of markers, diary entries, and background information

Kimball, Stanley B.; Historic Sites and Markers Along the Mormon and Other Great Western Trails; University of Illinois Press: Chicago, IL (1988)
Site by site description of markers and background information

Music and diary entries for the trail, comes with audio tape of hammered dulcimer

Excellent narrative and pictures of this fort and forts in general

Lavender, David; The Great West; The American Heritage Library; Houghton Mifflin Company: Boston, MA (1965)
A comprehensive textbook on the entire history of the West

Excellent narrative and pictures

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A comprehensive textbook on the Oregon Trail

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The definitive reference for all Oregon Trail scholars. Accompanies Mattes' Platte River Road Narratives, a complete listing of diaries with synopses

Mattes, Merrill J. and Paul Henderson; The Pony Express: From St. Joseph To Fort Laramie; The Patrice Press: St. Louis, MO (1989)
Describes all of the Pony stations in Missouri, Kansas and Nebraska
A complete history and derivation of place names in Oregon

Moeller, Bill and Jan; The Oregon Trail: A Photographic Journey; Beautiful America Publishing Co: Wilsonville, OR (1985)
A "table-top" picture book with good text and dramatic photographs

A history magazine for young people

Olson, Joan and Gene; Oregon Times and Trails; Windyridge Press: Grants Pass, OR (1965)
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Oregon Society Daughters of the American Revolution; Oregon Historic Landmarks; Emerald Valley Craftsmen: Eugene, OR (1971)
A guide to old houses on Oregon

Paden, Irene D.; Prairie Schooner Detours; The Patrice Press: St. Louis, MO (1990)
First-hand description of short cuts along the Oregon Trail

Originally published in 1943, this is the work that started almost all modern histories of the Oregon Trail

Steber, Rick and Jerry Gildemeister; Where Rolls The OREGON; The Bear Wallow Publishing Co.: Union, OR (1985)
A fine table-top picture book with excellent text including quotations

Stewart, George R.; The California Trail; University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, NE (1962)
A year by year chronicle of the conditions and character of the California Trail

Turnbull, George S.; Governors of Oregon; Binsford & Mort Publishing Co.: Portland, OR (1959)
A handy shallow guide to all Governors from John McLoughlin to Mark Hatfield, providing in one book information that would otherwise have to be dug from various sources.
Cultural Resource Series


