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The Oregon Trail

A Thesis Submitted for Degree of Master of Arts
University of Wisconsin
1918

By

JONATHAN TRUMAN DORRIS

Reprinted from Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society
Volume 10 No. 4, January 1918

[Printed by authority of the State of Illinois.]

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE OREGON TRAIL.

By Jonathan Truman Dorris.

A thesis submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts, University of Wisconsin, 1918.

I chose this subject for my master's thesis at the suggestion of Professor F. L. Paxson, under whose able direction I have endeavored to give a fair account of one of the most interesting events in the expansion of our great nation. Excepting in the chapter on Government Aid and Protection, comparatively little attention has been given to things relating to the Trail before 1842. The narrative, then, consists very largely of those elements of interest on the Trail during the years of 1842-1847. I have quoted from the sources very freely, hoping, thereby, to render the story more interesting.

I desire to express my keen appreciation of the pleasure and privilege of preparing this work in so delightful environment as the Wisconsin Historical Library.

J. T. D.

THE OREGON TRAIL.

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CHAPTER I.

The Eastern Termini.

A. The Causes of the Emigration to Oregon.

Prior to 1819 four countries claimed the region commonly known as the Oregon Country. They were Spain, Russia, England and the United States. In 1819 Spain relinquished her claim in a treaty with the United States in which she recognized 42 degrees as the northern boundary of her possessions. Russia eliminated herself in the same manner in 1824-25 in separate conventions with the United States and England by which she recognized 54° 40′ as the southern extremity of Alaska.[1]

England and the United States even before their treaties with Russia had agreed to a joint occupation of Oregon for a period of ten years. In 1827 this convention was renewed for an indefinite time with the provision that either nation could terminate the agreement on one year's notice.[2]

Active American interests in Oregon may be dated from the expedition of Lewis and Clark in 1804-6.[3]

Some five years after this John Jacob Astor established a trading post upon the Columbia.[4] From this time forth communication through trade existed between the Oregon Country and the Atlantic Coast region. Traders and trappers, following old Indian trails and the general route of

[1] History of Oregon and California and Other Territories on the North Coast of North America, by Robert Greenhow, Boston 1845, second edition, chapter 15, page 314,315; chapter 16, page 341.
[2] Ibid. p. 354.
[3] Ibid. p. 284, 296.
[4] Ibid. The text of the five treaties may be found 477-481 in Greenhow.

Lewis and Clark, beat out a line of communication between the valley of the Columbia and the valley of the Mississippi which became known as the Oregon Trail. Missionaries in time located in Oregon and augmented the interest in that region.[5]

British interests in Oregon, on the other hand, were being fostered and extended by the Hudson Bay Company, which operated from Canada. The English traders, also, were accompanied by missionaries whose interests in the final disposition of Oregon were decidedly pro-English.[6] Traders and missionaries, then, representing both English and American interests, were precipitating a crisis between their respective countries over the ownership of the Oregon Country, since their interests clashed in that region and since the progress and development of the region necessitated the laws and the control of some one government there. Both the English and the Americans were pressing claims to the entire region and demanding a settlement based on their respective claims.[7]

The greatest concern in the United States over the settlement of the Oregon question, as might be supposed, was in those states nearest the eastern terminus of the transcontinental line of communication with that country. In Missouri, perhaps, the spirit of a settlement based upon the ownership of the United States was strongest. Both of her senators[8] during the later thirties and early forties were champions of measures which provided for American control of the Columbia valley. England seemed disposed to hold on to the country and much anxiety prevailed in the United States over the probability of her securing all of it. This anxiety became intense when it became known in 1842 that the Webster-Ashburton Treaty had been concluded settling the northeastern boundary between the United States and Canada without any understanding of the ownership of the region beyond the Rockies.[9]

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[5] Greenhow, p. 360.

[6] Ibid. p. 30–32.

[7] See Greenhow, chapter 18.

[8] Greenhow, p. 379–384. Senators Linn and Benton led in the program of the colonization and occupancy of Oregon by the U. S.

[9] See Greenhow, chapter 18, especially pages 376–394.

Citizens of Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Kentucky and other western and southern states demanded through memorials to Congress that the United States terminate the treaty of joint occupation with England and assert her claims to the territory. In these states public meetings and conventions for the purpose of declaring American ownership to Oregon were numerous. Such towns as Alton and Springfield, Illinois, Bloomington, now Muscatine, Iowa, Cincinnati, Ohio, and St. Louis, Mo., held public meetings and adopted resolutions stressing the importance of the retention of Oregon. Emigration societies were also organized to encourage the settlement of Oregon with an American population, which would compel Congress to retain possession of the region and eliminate the English.[10]

Returning travelers from the Pacific had always given glowing accounts of the fertility of the soil, of the climate, and in general, of the favorable prospects of human habitation in the Oregon Country. From the time of Lewis and Clark's expedition much had been published, which had diverted people's attention to that region. Sporadic attempts at colonization were made even before the forties.[11] After the emigrations of the forties were well under way, the written material favorable to further emigration was voluminous.

Added to the interest in Oregon due to international complications there were other conditions, not so remote in point of place, which influenced emigration. The United States experienced a severe panic in 1837, the evils of which continued to operate for a number of years. The West suffered most. Thousands of people were hopelessly in debt and in no wise able to see how they were ever to succeed where they were. In their despair they heeded the seductive "Call

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[10] Greenhow, p. 376, 377. See also Oregon Historical Society Quarterly Vol. 9, March, 1908—December, 1908, (Salem, Oregon) pp. 388-411. The Edinburgh Review in July 1843 asserted that "'However the political questions between England and the United States, as to the ownership of Oregon, may be decided, Oregon will never be colonized overland from the United States. The world must assume a new face before the American wagons make plain the road to the Columbia as they have done to the Ohio.'" Greenhow, page 392, footnote.

In Boston as early as 1829 was formed the American Society for encouraging the Settlement of the Oregon Territory. See general circular issued by that body to encourage emigration in 1831, in Oregon Pamphlets, vol. 1 and 3.

[11] The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, vol. 29, History of Oregon, vol. 1, San Francisco, 1886, for account of Peoria party of 1839. In footnote of same volume, page 251, several estimates of the number of Americans in Oregon in 1841 are given.

of the Wild'' and turned their faces toward the land ''where rolls the Oregon.'' Economic conditions, or influences, then, were the chief factor behind this westward emigration.[12] The legislation favorable to emigration pending in Congress in 1842-43 was another factor in influencing many to go in 1843. The bill which was under consideration during the session of '42 and '43 and which the Senate did pass, provided for large land grants to emigrants to Oregon and for the establishment of a line of military posts for protection along the way.[13]

Besides the hard times following the panic of 1837, other conditions favoring emigration were lack of sympathy with the institution of slavery among some people in ''Kentucky, Missouri and other border slave states.'' Climatic conditions in the Mississippi valley were also conducive to the ''Oregon fever.'' Chills, Malaria, and other ailments were said to be foreign to Oregon.[14]

B. The Western Missouri and Iowa Towns.

The region of the Great Bend of the Missouri, accustomed to only a mild visitation of travelers and traders in the twenties and thirties, became the recruiting ground for great companies of emigrants in the forties. In 1842 the emigration really began when about 100 men, women and children crossed the continent to Oregon; in 1843 a thousand others followed.[15] Over the country in wagons drawn mostly by oxen, with their wives and children, household goods, and sundry other things, and often driving their cattle before them, came hundreds of farmers, merchants, and men of other vocations on their way to the Columbia. Not only were the highways crowded by these pilgrims, but the river craft came in for their share of the transportation.[16] The steamboats up the Missouri carried passengers who depended on fitting themselves out at one of the terminal towns.

This eastern end of the Oregon Trail, then, may be regarded as having several termini, where the emigrants arrived from the East, made their final preparations for the

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[12] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. I, p. 352, pages 140-144.

[13] See Peter H. Burnett, Recollections of an Old Pioneer, (New York) 1880, p. 97. Burnett, having a wife and six children, under the provisions of the bill would have received 1600 acres.

[14] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 1, p. 352-53.

[15] Bancroft, vol. 29, pp. 391-395.

[16] Francis Parkman, the California and Oregon trail, (New York) 1849, p. 10.

journey, organized themselves into companies, bade farewell to civilization, and began their real exodus to that land which was to be their Canaan.

The towns which witnessed the departure of, and gave the last aid to the emigrants were Independence, St. Joseph, Westport, Weston, Missouri,[17] and Council Bluffs, Iowa. From these several points of advantage on or near the Missouri the caravans moved westward striking a common trail, which they pursued to the valley of the Columbia.

The part which these frontier towns played in the communication between the States and the far west during the period under consideration was very considerable. From the Great Bend of the Missouri another Trail—The Santa Fe Trail—had long been in use.[18] It was the line over which traffic with the far Southwest was carried on. The prosperity which all of this overland trade brought to these towns was also very considerable.

The exigencies of the journey to Oregon demanded much forethought and consideration preparatory to starting: the time consumed was about five months; the route lay through a region uninhabited, except by the Indian and the wild beast; very little in the way of provision could be found on the way, even water was scarce or unfit for drink for long distances; the wear and tear on the wagons and teams would be considerable; and then the emigrant must take with him some necessities of civilized life to insure his comfort and success at the end of his journey.

The time of departure, through necessity, was in the spring. Yet the start could not be made until the grass was of sufficient growth to furnish grazing for the cattle. In many instances the emigrants disposed of their property in the fall, winter, or early spring, and went to western Missouri to await the most convenient time to begin their journey, depending for the most part on outfitting themselves at one of the terminal towns.

The inhabitants of these towns and of the immediate vicinity catered to the emigrant trade, endeavoring to supply

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[17] Reuben Gold Thwaites, Early Western Travels, 1748-1846, volume 30, Joel Palmer's Journal of Travels, Cleveland, 1906, p. 261. Also Joel Palmer's Oregon, Cincinnati, 1851, p. 12.

[18] Colonel Henry Inman, The Old Santa Fe Trail (New York, 1897).

every want and to render every possible assistance. The newspapers were active in giving valuable information concerning the Oregon Country, the journey over the trail, and the necessary preparations for the journey. The Independence Expositor announced in the spring of 1845 that "animals, provisions, and everything for complete equipment are to be obtained in abundance and on the most liberal terms in this country."[19] This same paper in February 1847, after giving the facilities in Independence for fitting out emigrants and explicit information concerning the character of the knowledge necessary for the journey, gave a long list of mercantile establishments there which showed how well the business interests of the place were organized to care for the emigrants. At that time there were "47 blacksmith forges with between some four and five hundred employed, directly and indirectly in the manufacture of wagons."[20] The editor further stated that the farmers and merchants of Independence vied with each other in furnishing the best articles and commodities at the lowest rates.[21] The newspapers advertised that emigrants would do well to wait until they arrived at the frontier before fitting out, as they would save not only the carriage but profit by purchasing in a cheaper market than that farther East.[22]

As has been inferred, Independence was the first Missouri frontier community to profit by this traffic with the West. Here the traders and missionaries had made their last preparations many years before the period of Oregon colonization. From here the first considerable company of emigrants, that of 1842, set forth. At Independence hundreds more assembled in the spring of 1843 preparatory to going to Oregon. As early as September, 1844, the Independent Journal stated that Independence would continue to be the annual rendezvous for the Oregon emigrants whose outfitting would cost $50000, " 'all of which our citizens may furnish.' " The same issue also stated that $150000 was expended annually at Independence in outfitting Santa Fe traders.[23]

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[19] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 11, p. 310.

[20] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 11, p. 310-11.

[21] Ibid. From article taken from Independence Expositor for February, 1847.

[22] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 4, p. 270.

[23] From Independence Expositor.

As already stated Independence did not enjoy a monopoly of the emigrant business. St. Joseph, a neighboring town on the east bank of the Missouri and about fifty miles farther north, figured very prominently as an outfitting place. The town had only 200 inhabitants in 1842, but by 1846 it had nearly 1000 people.[24] In the spring of 1849 the population is given as 1900 with 19 well equipped stores with an aggregate stock of $400000.[24b]

Beginning with 1844 St. Joseph became an important fitting out station.[25] The prominent part the town took in the emigrant trade was largely due to its position. Those who took steamboat passage to the frontier often continued up the river to that point to disembark. The route from this place was more direct, too, than that from the vicinity of Independence, for those coming from Iowa, Illinois, Northern Missouri and Ohio, and Michigan.[26] Other advantages were attributed to St. Joseph also. Ox teams and other needs were easily obtained; fewer streams were to be crossed in approaching the frontier.[27]

Other Missouri border towns which deserve mentioning were Westport and Weston.[28] The former, with Independence, is now a suburb of Kansas City. The old Santa Fe Trail led through Westport as well as through Independence. The rise of this town was due to the "caprices of the Missouri river" which destroyed the landing at Independence; a stable landing being located further up the stream the boats went there. Westport, being a short distance from this landing, came to divert much trade from Independence.[29] Weston was on the east bank of the Missouri about midway between Independence and St. Joseph. The Weston Journal published there was very active in disseminating news concerning the Oregon country and facilities for emigration there. The

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[24] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 1, 357.

[24b] History Buchanan County and St. Joseph, St. Joseph Publishing Co., page 83.

[25] Ibid, p. 87. From March to September 1843, one hundred and forty-three buildings were erected in St. Joseph. Ibid. p. 85.

[26] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 1, p. 354.

[27] Ibid. Also see Thwaites Early Western Travels, vol. 30 (Palmer's Journal) p. 261.

[28] Oregon Historical Quarterly, vol. 1, p. 354.

[29] Hiram Martin Chittenden, History of the American Fur Trade, 3 vol. (New York 1902), vol. 1, p. 463-4.

prospectus of this paper regularly contained a paragraph stating "that the patrons of the Journal may expect to find in its columns everything of interest which may be gathered either from public or private resources relating to a country (Oregon) of such vast extent, varied scenery and diversified soil and climate."[30]

The most northern point of departure for Oregon was Council Bluffs, Iowa.[31] A correspondent in the Weston Journal for April 1845 wrote that all emigrants to Oregon should pass through Council Bluffs as the road that way was in excellent condition. The streams were bridged or had ferries, "so that no obstacle to cause an hour's detention until the company should reach the Bluffs existed".[32] He also stated that the road west from that place was better than the lower route. By 1850 Council Bluffs came to have the largest transcontinental travel.[33]

The scenes of activity presented by these border towns on the eve of the departure of the emigrants was picturesque. Here upon the western frontier of civilization, as it were, assembled people from every state in the Union, especially from those west of the Alleghenies, representing every nationality of western Europe. The whole atmosphere seemed disturbed with energy and action. There seemed to be no idlers; but, on the contrary, every person seemed to be bent upon the speedy accomplishment of something. Some men were purchasing wagons, yokes, harness, tenting; others were having wagons repaired and horses shod; farmers were marketing their products; dealers in stock were selling oxen, cattle, mules and horses; merchants were displaying their wares and supplying customers with necessities for the journey; blacksmith shops and forges were resounding with the preparation of conveyances for the emigrants; carpenters were building and enlarging houses to accommodate the ever increasing demands on the community; traders were arriving from various western parts, augmenting the already varied picture.

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[30] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 4, page 273.
[31] Thwaites, Early Western Travels, vol. 30, p. 261.
[32] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 4, p. 284.
[33] Ibid. 354.

A witness to all this wrote later an excellent account of its picturesqueness.[34] "The town of Independence was at this time a great Babel upon the border of the wildnerness. Here might be seen the African slave with his shining black face driving his six-horse team of blood-red grays, and swinging from side to side as he sat upon the saddle, and listening to the incessant tinkling of the bells. In one street, just driving out of town, was an emigrant, who, having completed all his preparations, was about entering upon the great prairie wilderness, whistling as though his mouth had been made for nothing else. * * *

"Here might be seen the indolent, dark-skinned Spaniard smoking a cigar as he leaned against the sunny side of a house. He wears a sharp conical hat with a red band; a blue roundabout, with little brass buttons; his duck pantaloons are open at the side as high as the knees, exhibiting his white cotton drawers between his knee and his low half-boots.

"Santa Fe wagons were coming in, having attached to them eight or ten mules, some driven by Spaniards, some by Americans resembling Indians, some by negroes, and some by persons of all possible crosses between these various races; each showing in his dress as well as in his face some distinctive characteristics of his blood and race, the dirty poncho always marking the Spaniard. The traders had been out to Santa Fe, and having sold their goods in exchange for gold dust, dollars and droves of mules, were then daily coming in; the dilapidated and muddy condition of their wagons and wagon sheets, and the sore backs of their mules, all giving evidence of the length and toil of the journey they had performed and were about to terminate.

"Merchants were doing all in their power to effect the sale of supplies to emigrants. Some of the emigrants were hurrying to and fro, looking careworn, and many of them sad, as though the cloud had not yet passed away, that had come over their spirits as they had torn themselves from friends and scenes around which had clustered memories of the heart. One was seen just starting, calling out to his

[34] This bit of excellent description was written by Jesse Quinn Thornton in his Oregon and California in 1848, two volumes, (New York 1849.) See vol. 1, p. 14-16. Mr. Thornton went to Oregon in 1846. Francis Parkman, California and Oregon Trail, pages 1-18 gives a good description of Independence in the Spring of 1846.

oxen and cracking his whip as though the world was at his control. Although some four or five children in the wagon were crying in all possible keys, he drove on, looking cheerful and happy, as though he was perfectly sure that he was going to a country where the valleys flowed with milk and honey."

Such was the spectacle which the traveler witnessed in the frontier towns during the flourishing days of the Oregon Trail.

C. The Equipment.

The instructions and guides for emigrants were explicit and inclusive to the finest detail in giving the kind and character of the outfitting. The wagons were such as experience had found to be the best. "The running gear should be made of the best materials and it should also be of the most excellent workmanship. The wagons should have falling tongues, as they have a decided advantage over any other kind for this trip.[35] * * * The wagon sheets, instead of being painted, should merely be daubled, as painting makes them break, and the bows should be well made and strong. It is best to have sideboards, and to have the upper edge of the wagon body bevelled outwards, so that the water running from the sheet may, when it strikes the body, be shed down the sides. It is well, also, to have the bottom of the bed bevelled in the same way, to preclude any possibility of the approach of water to the inside. With your wagon thus prepared you are as secure as though you were in a house."[36] Every thoughtful man always took with him a chest of tools, nails, bolts and sundry other things for repairs.

The wagons, in most part, were drawn by oxen. Horses and mules were sometimes used, but experience proved that oxen were more reliable, being sure-footed and more willing to go through difficult places. Moreover, they fared far better for food along the way. Cows were recommended to serve all the purposes of oxen, and in addition they would furnish a wholesome beverage along the journey.[37]

Since there were no stations along the route where provisions could be obtained, it was necessary that an ample

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[35] George Wilkes, The History of Oregon, (New York 1845), p. 67-69; Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 3, pp. 418-419.

[36] Wilkes, History of Oregon, p. 67.

[37] Palmer's Oregon, pp. 142-3; Wilkes Oregon, p. 68.

supply be provided at the point of departure. "One hundred and fifty pounds of flour and fifty pounds of bacon must be allowed to each person. Besides the above, as much rice, corn meal, parched corn meal and raw corn, peas, dried fruit, sugar, tea, coffee, and such necessary articles of food as you can find room for, should by all means be brought along.[38] * * * A few beef cattle or fat calves should be taken to kill on the way, as before you fall in with the buffalo you will need fresh meat."[39]

Little furniture was recommended to be taken. There were instances, however, where some fine pieces, often imported, were brought along, the owners finding it necessary to leave them along the trail to lighten their burdens. A few trunks for clothes chests were always advised.

Other articles necessary were a water keg and a tin can for milk. "* * * A few tin cups, (abjure all crockery), tin plates, tin sauces, a butcher's knife, a shovel and a pair of pothooks will go very far to completing your culinary arrangements, and a small grindstone to keep them in edge will also lend a valuable assistance to this department. * * * Rifles, fowling pieces, pistols, powder, * * * and all the destructive articles of warfare upon game" were provided. The clothing taken "should be of the same description used in the middle states, and enough should be taken to last a year. Care should be taken that, amongst the rest of your wardrobe, a half dozen or a dozen pair of strong shoes should not be forgotten."[40]

Besides the above the emigrant, since he was most likely to engage in agriculture in Oregon, took some necessary farming utensils, seed for sowing and planting, and cattle. Horses were taken also, but it was not wise to use them to draw wagons unless the loads were light.[41] A wagon drawn by four yoke of oxen might start with a load of 2,500 pounds. Each day's rations, of course, would reduce this weight.

D. The Organization of the Emigrants.

The matter of the organization of the emigrants presents a very interesting aspect of the Oregon emigration. This

[38] Palmer advised 200 pounds flour and 75 pounds bacon. See his Oregon, p. 143.
[39] Wilkes, Hist. of Oregon, p. 69.
[40] Wilkes, History of Oregon, p. 69.
[41] Palmer's Oregon, p. 142.

phase of the movement really began in the home communities of the emigrants by the organization of emigrating societies. The first of these, the American Society for the Encouragement of the Settlement of Oregon, was formed in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1829.[42] This effort to make good the claims of the United States to Oregon by occupation through actual settlement, was too early to produce immediate results. In 1838, at Lynn, Massachusetts, was formed a similar society, with the additional purpose of converting the natives of Oregon.

So active was interest in the settlement of the Oregon question and emigration to the Columbia from 1838 to 1843 that numerous emigrating societies were organized all over the country. At their meetings "books, speeches and letters about Oregon were read and discussed and information regarding Oregon disseminated".[43] Even agents were sent out to secure adherents. The work of these organizations in the movement of Oregon emigration and in the acquisition of the Columbia Valley by the United States was a very important factor in the achievement of these two things.[44]

Some of these societies were local[45] in character and existed solely for the purpose of promoting emigration and influencing companies to go under their auspices. Other societies were transient in character and were formed as a controlling and governing instrument for companies enroute to Oregon. Examples of the latter were the Oregon Emigrating Society of Bloomington, Iowa, 1843; the Oregon Emigrating Society formed by the great band of emigrants of 1843, as they left the Missouri frontier; and the Savannah Oregon Emigrating Company, Savannah,[46] Mo., 1845. Sometimes a company was formed in the community where the members lived, the organization operating only while the society was forming and moving to the place of general rendezvous on the frontier, where the emigrants joined others to

[42] Oregon Pamphlets, vol. 1 No. 3.

[43] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 16, pp. 205-227 gives a good discussion of the "Oregon Emigrating Companies."

[44] The society at Lynn published a journal from October 1838 to August 1839, called "The Oregonian and Indian Advocate", which "spread out before the public generally information respecting the country west of the Rock Mountains". (See page 27 of the journal). This magazine is a very illuminating publication of the interest in Oregon at the close of the thirties.

[45] Such were the two at Boston and Lynn.

[46] The constitutions of two of these societies are given in the appendix.

form a new company. This was the case with the Bloomington, Iowa, Society of 1843.

In the formation of the "moving societies" there was a serious problem of getting the emigrants reconciled to the military discipline which the exigencies of the journey made necessary. Democracy and individualism were distinct characteristics of the West, and obedience to military authority was not popular at all. As a result, the regulations of the companies were rather civil in character while the emigrants were in the states where they were really amenable to the state laws, and the making and operation of rules of a military order deferred until after the frontier was crossed and the companies were in the region where no legal authority existed.

The organization of the traveling companies is well illustrated in the emigration of 1843.[47] Companies like that organized at Bloomington,[48] Iowa, and emigrants who were members of no societies met at the general rendezvous, about twenty miles a little southwest of Independence, to take steps toward perfecting an organization which was to operate during their journey across the vast unorganized territory to the Columbia. On May 18th the emigrants held a meeting and appointed committees, one of which was composed of five men, "to draw up rules and regulations for the journey." "The meeting then adjourned to meet at the Big Springs on Saturday, the 20th of May." May 20th, at Big Springs, the committee of five reported and, amid much speech making and wrangling over different measures of control suggested, the "Resolutions of the Oregon Emigrating Society" were adopted.[49]

The resolutions provided for an elective council of nine, a majority of whom were to adjudicate all differences and infractions of the regulations of the company which might arise on the journey. A captain was to be elected as "supreme military commander of the company." His duties were not only executive, but he also had the power to veto decisions of the council of nine, whose decisions could only be passed over

[47] A good account of which may be found in Wilkes' History of Oregon, pp. 69-73 and in Peter H. Burnett's Recollections of an Old Pioneer, New York, 1880, pp. 101-102.

[48] The town is now called Muscatine.

[49] See Appendix II.

his veto by the council's again passing upon the matter. An orderly sergeant, also elected, was to have charge of the roll of the company and to have strict control over the guard necessary to protect the company enroute. It is significant that the resolutions deferred the election of officers "until the company meet at the Kansas River," some sixty-five or seventy miles beyond Independence.

By June 1st the emigrants were across the Kansas and ready to elect their officers. They had now been on their journey some ten days since leaving the rendezvous. The manner of election was very unique and even ludicrous. A writer in the New Orleans Picayune, November 21, 1843, who witnessed this election, gives the following account:[50]

"* * * The candidates stood in a row behind the constituents, and at a given signal they wheeled about and marched off, while the general mass broke after them 'lick-a-ty-split,' each man forming in behind his favorite, so that every candidate flourished a sort of tail of his own, and the man with the longest tail was elected! These proceedings were continued until a captain and a council of ten [nine] were elected; and, indeed, if the scene can be conceived, it must appear as a curious mingling of the whimsical with the wild. * * * These men were running about the prairie in long strings; the leaders—in sport and for the purpose of puzzling the judges—doubling and winding in the drollest fashion; so that the all-important business of forming a government seemed very much like the merry school boy game of 'snapping the whip.' It was really very funny to see the candidates for the solemn council of ten [nine] run several hundred yards away, to show off the length of their tails, and then cut a half circle, so as to turn and admire their longitudinal popularity in extenso themselves. * * *"

Another problem of organization, very serious in the consequences of its solution, was the matter of keeping the emigrants together in companies.[51] There were many things to encourage disintegration. The strong individualism in the

[50] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 1, p. 399, (from the New Orleans Picayune, November 21, 1843).

[51] The problem of military and civil control was sometimes met by providing for two forms of government in the constitution. This was so in the constitution of the Savannah Oregon Emigrating Society. At the head of the civil was a president whose authority ended when the rendevzous was reached. Then a commandant, captain and subordinates were elected to hold office the remainder of the journey.

pioneer was conducive to defections; disappointed office seekers, too, were often stirring up disaffection. Sickness, burials, breakdowns, straying of cattle, and other disturbing elements often made progress very slow. The larger the company the more numerous were such occurrences. Companies like those of '43, '44 and '45, which started from the rendezvous and organized as one body, found their numbers too large to move as one body.[52] The emigrants in 1843, owing chiefly to the large number of cattle which some insisted on taking, divided on June 9th into two columns and proceeded as two companies, one of which became distinguished as "the cow column."[53] In 1844 several large companies left the frontier. The largest, composed of three divisions which had formed a military organization some eighty miles west of St. Joseph, because of delays and dissatisfactions broke up into three companies and proceeded independently of each other.[54]

The Oregon Company of 1845 separated into three bodies, each of which elected its own officers.[55] It was agreed, however, that the captain and pilot who had been elected by the whole company on the start should be retained and travel on in advance. It was further agreed that the companies should take weekly turns of traveling in advance, and a common treasurer was also agreed upon. Nevertheless these plans did not work as expected. In time it was advised that companies should never exceed six or eight wagons.[56]

As one may easy see, the operation of the emigrant governments was no simple and easy matter. Executive authority was invested in a "president,[57] captain, commander-in-chief, general, colonel, or whatever might be the title under which the chief officer was elected." Where the company was large there were captains and subcaptains and other subordinate officers. The latter were sometimes appointed. The superior officers determined, with the pilot, "the course to be taken

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[52] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 1, p. 360.

[53] Wilkes History Oregon, p. 74; Burnett Recollections, Old Pioneer, p. 103. Resolutions provided that no family could take more than three loose cattle to every male.

[54] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 2, p. 135-152. Remin of John Minto. This same thing happened with another large company in 1844 which on the way separated into two companies. Ibid. vol. 1, p. 275.

[55] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 16, pp. 223-224; Thwaites, *Palmers Journal*, p. 43.

[56] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 1, p. 361.

[57] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 16, pp. 224-227.

each day, decided on the site for camp and the disposition of the emigrants and their effects during the night, maintained order and discipline, and presided over the meetings of the company." The subordinates looked after details. The executive council, which consisted of from nine to thirteen men, functioned "primarily in offering counsel to the commanding officers in determining the general policy to be pursued by the emigrant government and in reviewing proposed legislation."

Meetings for the good of the companies were held and business attended to usually by committees, who were sometimes paid for their services, in order that efficiency might be had.

A company usually adopted a code of by-laws, which were often modified and enlarged. For this purpose a majority vote was all that was necessary. An amendment of the constitution sometimes required a two-thirds majority.

On the whole it may be said that the emigrants showed evidence of a marked degree of ability in organizing governments to suit emergencies of a peculiar character and under the most adverse conditions for successful operation. They showed that they had learned well the lessons in government which they had been taught in the great school of democracy of the republic of which they were citizens. The West, to which these pilgrims were going, came later to solve problems of state government far in advance of the Atlantic states.

CHAPTER II.

The Trail to South Pass.

A. The Eastern Termini to Grand Island.

From the points of departure on the Missouri there were two main roads which converged on the Platte River near Grand Island. The first of these, in time and importance, was the trail from Independence which ran along the south bank of the Kansas River for a hundred miles or more. After crossing the Kansas this road ran in a northwestern direction across and up streams emptying into the Kansas until it came to the Platte. The second branch of the trail,[1] which came into use later, ran west from Council Bluffs, Iowa, up the Platte, where it united with the route from Independence. There were branches of minor importance from other places on the Missouri, which joined these two routes before reaching Grand Island.[2]

The emigrants' route from Independence to the Platte passed through a region traversed by many streams, which made progress very slow. To make conditions still worse the rainfall during the spring and early summer was very great, thereby making these streams very difficult to cross. The company of 1842 was 27 days in going from Independence to the Platte, an average of hardly 10 to 12 miles a day. Water seems to have been the chief difficulty with all the companies while in this territory.[3] The emigrants of 1843 arrived at the Kansas River the forenoon of May 26th. On the morning of the 27th a committee was appointed to make arrangements

[1] By the end of the forties the road from Council Bluffs was in general use.

[2] There are instances where emigrants kept the north bank of the Platte for a long distance. The Mormons in 1847 never crossed to the south side until they reached Fort Laramie. Another company going to California in 1852 kept the north bank as far as Independence Rock. For latter, see *"Trumbull's Travels,"* F. L. Paxson, Wisconsin *Historical Proceedings,* 1913.

[3] The information at hand concerning the experiences of the emigrants consists mainly of diaries and letters, written on the trail and after arriving in Oregon, and other accounts and reminiscences published after the emigrations. Medorem Crawford's diary, Oregon Historical Sources, vol. 1, is the only diary of 1842 extant.

for crossing, as the stream could not be forded. The committee refused to accept the proposition of a Frenchman living near to use his platform, or ferry, and began to construct a raft, which was not ready until the 29th. The Frenchman, however, came to terms with a body of the emigrants, who began to cross on his platform, which sank on the 28th and floated down the river. This accident came near drowning several women and children. The general crossing began on the 29th and was concluded on the 31st. Thus five days were consumed in crossing the Kansas and a sixth, June 1st, spent in the election of officers.[4]

The crossing of streams was a very serious business and required all the ingenuity at the emigrants' command. "Where logs were available they were hollowed out and calamaran rafts made so as to fit the wheels of the wagons. Sometimes the best wagon boxes would be selected and calked and used as flatboats. Where buffalo skins were plentiful they were stretched around the wagon box to make it air tight. In later stages of the journey, after the streams became more reliable, it was a common practice to raise the wagon beds several inches above the bolsters, if the depth of the stream required it, couple several teams into a train with the most reliable in front on a lead rope," and, with drivers along the downstream side of the other teams, to drive safely to the opposite side.[5] After 1849 there were fairly good ferries at the most important crossings.

The emigrants suffered much from terrible rain storms early in their journey. A writer in the emigration of 1846 wrote, "May 27—A terrific thunder storm roared and raged, and poured its flood throughout a great portion of the night. But for the protection against the violence of the wind, afforded by the bluffs on one side and the timber on the other, our tents would have been swept away by the storm. * * * The river (Big Blue) since last night has risen several feet, and there is now no hope of fording it for several days."[6]

But water was not the only discomfort which the emigrants encountered before reaching the Platte. The Indians

[4] History of Oregon, George Wilkes (New York 1845) pp. 72-73. This company was until June 19th in reaching the Platte.

[5] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly vol. 2, p. 368.

[6] Edwin Bryant, What I Saw in Oregon (New York, 1848) p. 60. For a very literary picture of these storms see Thornton's Oregon and California, vol. 1, ch. 2 and 3.

through whose territory the trail ran, soon began their thieving and intimidations. Most of the emigrants were unaccustomed to the savages and manifested fear at their presence. On June 6th Wilkes reports that the Osage and Caw Indians in their accoutrements of war visited the emigrants and begged food. They were given a calf and some bread; but when they were gone two horses were missing.[7] Thornton speaks of the natives as being miserable and destitute and professional beggars. He reports hiring a Kansas chief to restrain his people from stealing.[8]

Besides the trouble occasioned by swollen streams, rain storms, and bad Indians, serious difficulties often arose over conditions among the emigrants themselves. For example, the company of 1843, after crossing the Kansas, organized by electing Peter H. Burnett Captain. He adopted rules, which he found impracticable to enforce, and because of dissension and opposition resigned seven days after his election, and permitted William Martin to be chosen his successor. That was not the only trouble. "Some of the emigrants had only their teams, while others had large herds in addition, which must share the pasture and be guarded and driven by the whole body." The discontent growing out of the delay and problem occasioned by so many loose cattle, with other elements of discord, caused the company to divide at the crossing of the Big Blue into two columns. "Those not encumbered with or having but few cattle attached themselves to the light column with Martin as captain; those having more than four or five cows had of necessity to attach themselves to the cow column, with Jesse Applegate as captain.[9] Hence the cow column, being much encumbered with its large herds, had to use greater exertion and observe a more rigid discipline to keep pace with the more agile consort."

Bryant, of the emigration of '46, reports a division of the company as originally organized due to disaffection,—"it being too numerous and cumbrous for convenient progress. Thirty-five wagons moved forward, and the remainder sep-

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[7] Wilkes, History Oregon, p. 73.

[8] Thornton, Oregon and California, vol. 1, pp. 39-40.

[9] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 1, pp. 371-72: "A Day with the Cow Column in 1843" by Jesse Applegate. See also Burnett, Recollections, pp. 101-102.

arated from them.'"[10] A little later he tells of a serious altercation between two Oregon emigrants, one of whom owned a wagon and the other the oxen which drew the wagon. The latter insisted on removing his oxen from the wagon, the owner of which naturally objected. The standing committee appointed to adjust such matters was unable to reconcile the parties, who were prevented at a late hour of the night from settling their difficulty with violence and blood. On the following morning the men of the company were summoned to assemble "for the purpose of adopting measures for the prevention of similar outbreaks, disturbing the peace and threatening the lives to an indefinite extent, of the party." Since the malcontents with some twenty other wagons were bound for Oregon, a proposition was unanimously carried to separate them from those bound for California. "The Oregon emigrants immediately drew their wagons from the corral and proceeded on their way.'"[11] Thus occurred a second division of the company since organization.

Births and deaths were frequent concomitants to traveling, which, of course, caused delay and anxiety. Crawford tells of the death of a sixteen months' old girl and the subsequent serious illness of her mother, which caused the father and mother to turn back leaving their little daughter buried on the plains.[12] The emigrants of '46 buried a woman of seventy before reaching the Platte. "At 2 o'clock p. m., a funeral procession was formed, in which nearly every man, woman, and child of the company united, and the corpse of the deceased lady was conveyed to its last resting place, in this desolate but beautiful wilderness. Her coffin was lowered into the grave. A prayer was offered to the Throne of Grace by the Rev. Mr. Cornwall. An appropriate hymn was sung by the congregation with much pathos and expression." After a funeral discourse, another hymn, and the benediction, "the grave was then closed and carefully sodded. * * * The inscription on the tombstone, and on the tree beneath which is the grave, is as follows: 'Mrs. Sarah Keyes, Died May 29, 1846; Aged 70.' "[13]

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[10] A division of the company had occurred at the time of organization before reaching the Kansas, Bryant, 31.
[11] Bryant, pp. 68-69.
[12] Crawford's Journal, p. 8.
[13] Thornton, vol. 1, p. 55; Bryant, p. 64.

Thornton for May 19 says, "An event occurred, which ought to be chronicled in due form in our journal of adventures. At 10 o'clock on the previous night, Mrs. Hall became the mother of twin boys. Dr. Rupert, the attending physician, gave his own name to one of them, and the name of our worthy leader, Col. Wm. H. Russell, was given to the other. While we moved forward to a new encampment, Mrs. Hall and her husband and a few friends remained behind 'to hunt cattle,' alleged to have strayed. Eleven wagons, belonging to James F. Reed, George Donner, Jacob Donner, and Mr. Hall, the latter containing the little fellows, came up to us where we had remained in camp on account of these interesting young strangers."[14]

By the time the emigrants had reached the platte they had passed through many of the experiences which attended emigration from the Missouri to the Pacific. To those narrated might be added the seeing and killing of the first buffalo and antelope, the scarcity of wood as they approached the Platte, being obliged to burn buffalo chips to cook, the breaking down of wagons, and sundry other incidents.

The trail from the south always struck the Platte near Grand Island. "This is a beautiful island, lying in the center of the stream (very wide at this place) seventy-five miles in length, and covered with the finest timber, while not a solitary tree grew on the south side of the river * * *"[15] It was near Grand Island that the government located the first military post west of Fort Leavenworth on the route to Oregon, which was called Fort Kearney.

B. Grand Island to Fort Laramie.

The trail from Grand Island to Fort Laramie, a distance of nearly 350 miles, lay along the Platte River and its North Fork. "The Great Platte is one of the most remarkable rivers in the world, and when considered with a view to the facility its level banks afford for intercommunication with our Pacific territories, its value is immense." It rises in latitude 42½° degrees near the South Pass, flows in an easterly direction for nearly a thousand miles and empties into the Missouri in the same latitude. "Like the Nile, it runs hundreds of miles

[14] See page 29.
[15] Wilkes, Oregon, p. 78.

through a sterile wilderness, and like the Nile it unrolls its strip of green across the vastness of the desert, and is the father of all the vegetation near it." The Platte is very shallow and not navigable, even for canoes in places. "Its banks are low and sandy, its waters muddy like the Missouri, and its current very rapid." Being shallow it is easily forded except when rains swell the stream." * * * "Its average breadth is about two miles, and its centre is frequently diversified with most beautiful islands, * * * covered with the finest trees whose rich and clustering folliage contrast splendidly with the sand hills and wide prairie plains on each side. On each side of the river, and at the distance of about three miles from either bank, run a continuous line of sand hills. From the foot of these, to the water's edge, is spread a sheet of lively verdure, and on the other side, the boundless level is only lost in the line of the horizon."[16]

The scarcity of trees along the Platte made it difficult for the emigrants to cook their food. They, therefore, made use of the buffalo chips along the route and other debris, consisting mostly of dead willows and drift waste, to build their fires.[17]

Along the valley of the Platte, which is only about fifteen miles wide, the emigrants cattle found their food. The sandhills were about three miles through and often contained oases of verdure and pools of water where buffalo were likely to be found. During the dry weather the pools disappeared and the buffalo, as well as other animals, came to the river for water, making numerous paths at right angles with the stream, which the emigrant trains crossed as they progressed.[18]

Along this road and in this environment the emigrants wended their way. "The greatest inconvenience attendant on its travel * * * is the unconquerable propensity it occasions in one to sleep in the day time. The air is so bland, the road so smooth, and the motion of the vehicle so regular, that I have known many a teamster to go to sleep while his team stood winking idly in the road without budging a step. The usual custom * * * was for each wagon in turn to drive cau-

[16] Wilkes, Oregon, p. 78.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Wilkes, Oregon, p. 79.

tiously around the sluggard and leave him to have his nap out in the middle of the road. It would sometimes happen that the sleeper would not awake for two or three hours, and when he arrived that time behind in camp, he would either swing around in a towering passion, or slink out of the reach of our merciless taunting, heartily ashamed."[19]

Yet a day's journey along the Platte was not so monotonous and uninteresting as the above bit of description would indicate. There was variety and color enough to thrill even the most phlegmatic. Take for example, a day with the cow column, which was one of the two companies of the emigrants of '43. At 4 a. m. the sentinels on duty fire their rifles, which immediately arouses the whole camp to action. The women and children busy themselves with preparing breakfast, while the men go out in every direction to drive in the thousands of cattle which ran loose during the night. Some of these have strayed a long way off and are not easily found. "In about an hour five thousand animals are close up to the encampment, and the teamsters are busy selecting their teams and driving them inside the corral to be yoked. The corral is a circle one hundred yards deep, formed with wagons connected closely with each other; the wagon in the rear being connected with the wagon in front by its tongue and oxchains. It is a strong barrier which the most vicious ox cannot break, and in case of an attack of the Sioux would be no contemptible entrenchment."

By 7 o'clock breakfast is eaten, the oxen yoked and hitched, the tents struck, and the signal for the start ready to be given.[20] The sixty wagons "have been divided into fifteen divisions or platoons of four wagons each, and each platoon is entitled to lead in its turn." The pilot stands ready to lead the way and a band of hunters are mounting to forage for game during the day. Everything and everybody is ready to start: "the clear notes of a trumpet sound in front; * * * the leading divisions [platoons] of the wagons move out of the encampment and take up the line of march; the rest fall into

[19] Wilkes, Oregon, p. 79.

[20] The description of this day's experiences along the Platte is an abridgment of "A Day with the Cow Column in 1843" by Jesse Applegate, Oregon Historical Quarterly, vol. 1, p. 371-383. The author has used considerable freedom with his own expressions.

their positions;'' and the hunters canter away to the hills and plains beyond where the buffalo and antelope may be found.

From the summits of the hills, unobscured by the pure and transparent air, the hunters look down upon the wonderful panorama beneath. The verdant valleys and pools below; the broad Platte in the distance, studded with many wooded isles; the great expanse of prairie, widening out until it seems to touch the sky far away; and the slowly moving caravan, all present a scene of intense interest and unique picturesqueness. The caravan is likely to hold the attention the longest. In the lead is a company of horsemen, who are approaching a stream which they must ford. The whole caravan comes to a halt until the horsemen find a crossing. Then all is motion again. The wagons, four abreast, ''form a line three quarters of a mile long.'' After them follows a drove of horses, which have learned that noon and night are feeding times. In the rear moving only at the vigilant insistence of the drivers, whose vexations are legion, come a large herd of cattle cropping at every bit of vegetation within their reach. The hills, the valleys, the Platte and its islands, the prairie, the horsemen, the canvas covered wagons drawn by several yoke of oxen, the drove of horses, and the great herd of cattle of every stripe and color with a band of active mounted men urging them forward, make a picture worth beholding. The scene is still more worth the seeing when a fleet-footed antelope flees across the plain, a herd of buffalo grazes undisturbed or rushes over the prairie, or a band of Indian warriors appears on the horizon. Here are a thousand souls with all their earthly possessions, traveling in a very primitive fashion, two thousand miles and more across a vast region where the Indian and the wild beast are the sole[21] occupants to the most western extremity of the habitable part of the globe—the kinsmen of that energetic tribe of mankind who for eons of time have been expanding civilization to the remote parts of the world!

The pilot and his aids have ridden far enough in advance to choose and prepare a place where the caravan is to stop at noon. When the place is reached, the wagons are drawn up

[21] Excepting the few traders and their forts.

four abreast, the oxen unhitched to drink and graze, and the emigrants' meals prepared and eaten. "Today an extra session of the council is being held to settle a dispute that does not admit delay." The plaintiff and the accused are heard, the witnesses are examined, the evidence is weighed, and the decision of the judges is rendered, deciding the case "according to its merits."[22]

At one o'clock the caravan is in motion again, and, as the time of day seems to invoke, "a drowsiness has fallen apparently" over man and beast, and the caravan moves more slowly than ever. "But a little accident breaks the monotony of the march. An emigrant's wife, whose state of health has caused Doctor Whitman to travel near the wagon for the day, is now taken with violent illness. The Doctor has had the wagon driven out of the line, a tent pitched and a fire kindled."[23]

Evening finally comes and the caravan arrives at the place chosen for the night's corral. The pilot leads "the train in the circle he has previously measured and marked out. * * * The leading wagons follow him so nearly around the circle that but a wagon's length separates them. Each wagon follows in its track, the rear closing in on the front, until its tongue and ox-chains will perfectly reach from one to the other," the hindmost of the train closing the gateway. The oxen are left within the circle and their chains and yokes used to fasten the wagons securely together. Fires are built of buffalo chips, dried vegetation, and what little wood is at hand, the tents pitched, supper prepared and eaten, and preparations made for the night. By this time the wagon and doctor left by the wayside have come in with the wife a mother, and at once all anxiety regarding her condition is at ease.[24]

"All able to bear arms in the company have been divided into three companies, and each of these into four watches; every third night it is the duty of one of these companies to keep watch and ward over the camp, and it is so arranged that each watch takes its turn of guard duty through the different watches of the night. Those forming the first watch tonight

[22] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 1, p. 378—The Cow Column.
[23] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 1, p. 379—Cow Column.
[24] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 1, p. 380—Cow Column.

will be second on duty, then third and fourth, which will bring them through all the watches of the night. They begin at 8 o'clock p. m. and end at 4 o'clock a. m."

The evening meal is now over, and the corral is cleared of cattle and horses. With many it is now a time of leisure. Children are romping about the circle, women are chatting and mending clothing, the council is holding an evening session, the lads and lasses are courting or dancing upon the green to the music of the violin, the cattle and horses are grazing outside the corral, and the whole caravan presents a scene of satisfaction after a successful day's journey. When the time for the watch comes the fires are put out, good nights are said, the sentinels are stationed at their posts and the whole train is wrapped in repose.

One of the greatest objects of interest to the emigrants in the Platte River Country was the buffalo, or bison. This interest arose from three angles: first, and most important, the animal was a valuable source of food of a most nutritious and delicious character; second, the frequent appearance of large numbers of buffaloes, sometimes in herds of thousands, always engaged the travelers' attention; and third, the excitement which the buffalo hunt furnished was a diversion and recreation which the men and often the women enjoyed. The killing and eating of the first buffalo was always chronicled as an important event. Sometimes the slaughter of these animals was great and shamefully wasteful. Antelope, too, were found on the prairie, but in small numbers compared with the buffalo. They were so wild and fleet-footed that the matter of killing them was very difficult. They, however, furnished a very wholesome diet on many occasions. The chase of the antelope was another agreeable sport for the hunters.[25]

Perhaps the most distressing incidents of the journey to Oregon were bodily injuries, due to accidents, and sickness. Such human misfortunes are bad enough under normal conditions; but in a hot and dry region, often approaching the features of a desert, far away from skillful, medical and surgical aid, and in a moving caravan, the misfortune is ten times greater. Bryant reports a case of a boy falling off a wagon

[25] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 1, p. 260-261; vol. 2 pp. 145-150; Crawford's Journal, p. 9; Wilkes, Oregon, pp. 75; 79-80; Parkman, p. 72-79; Bryant, pp. 85-95; Burnett, p. 104.

tongue and of the wagon's crushing one of his legs. After nine days Mr. Bryant, who had a smattering of the knowledge of medicine, was summoned to treat the boy, whose limb had lain, since the accident, wrapped in a sort of trough. By this time gangrene had developed and even amputation was useless, as the lad could not possibly live.

The hysterical pleading of his mother prevailed upon a Frenchman, who claimed some surgical ability, to amputate the limb. The man tied a string tightly about the leg above the knee and, using a knife and a handsaw, performed the operation. The boy died immediately and his mother, brothers and sisters were frantic with grief. The father, too, who lay at the time prostrate in his tent with rheumatism, caused by wading in water while taking calomel, was sorely distressed. And this was not all. There were many others sick of fever and needing medical attention not available. The unwell often augmented the seriousness of their condition by unwisely taking large doses of medicine.[26]

The distress and misery occasioned by sickness and death during the early and middle forties, however, were nothing in comparison to the awful years of 1849-50, when tens of thousands came rushing pell-mell over the trail regarding neither the laws of nature nor the laws of man, with only one ambition and that to get to the El Dorado of gold in California by the shortest route and in the quickest manner possible. Space permits only mention of the awful condition among the emigrants of those years, when the cholera decimated their ranks in a most frightful manner. Then death came rather quickly and often men were left alone along the trail to die, while their companies hurried madly on. Burials were hurried and many deceased were often covered in one grave.[27]

When a death occurred during the years to which this account properly belongs, the deceased was buried and the

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[26] Bryant, pp. 86-91 (Emig. 1846).

[27] Hundreds bound for California in 1849-1850, becoming discouraged, turned back to the states. Osborne Cross, in charge of the regiment of mounted riflemen in 1849, estimated that 20,000 persons were ahead of him on the route to California and many more in his rear. He reported that the large numbers and the sameness of their wants made it impossible for the regiment to be of much assistance to them. See Osborne Cross, Oregon Expedition, (Washington, 1851). Same in Sen. Exec. Doc., 31 Cong. 2d Sess., vol. 1, (1850-51).

wagons of the train made to pass over the grave to obliterate any sign of it; so that the Indians or wolves might not molest the corpse, the former for any clothing or anything else which might be of interest to them. Sometimes rocks were piled high over the grave; yet these precautions were not always effective.[28]

Signs of death existed all along the trail. Especially was this true along the Platte. As the years wore on, the bleached bones of cattle, horses, buffaloes, and even human beings, became more numerous, until, if there had been no other indications of the trail, an emigrant could have easily found his way across the desert by the bones of the dead. A very unique custom developed among the emigrants of writing messages upon the white bones communicating something of importance to those coming in the rear.[29]

Before arriving at Fort Laramie on the North Fork it was necessary for the emigrants to cross the South Fork somewhere above its junction with the northern branch of the Platte. They never had any special place for crossing, but forded the stream wherever a place seemed to invite them. The river at the crossings was from one-half mile to one and a half miles in width and, unless a rise had come, was usually forded without any serious mishap. Often, however, quicksand along the stream made crossing very dangerous.[30]

As the emigrants neared Fort Laramie, they always passed a natural phenomenon which never failed to receive their attention and comment. This was a conical mound about 200 feet high with a chimney projecting some 75 or 100 feet from its summit, making in all a "Chimney Rock," standing 300 feet above the plain. This freak of nature was a bluff worn away by the elements. The emigrants often sighted it thirty-five or forty miles away.[31]

After leaving Grand Island Fort Laramie was the most important place on the trail. This post of the American Fur Company was situated on the Laramie River near its junc-

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[29] Bryant, California, p. 80. At other times smooth pieces of boards and pieces of paper with communications written on them were placed where they might be found. Ibid.

[30] Crawford, Journal, p. 10; Cross, Journal, pp. 32-33.

[31] Cross, Journal, p. 37; Bryant, California, pp. 100-102. "Courthouse Rock" ten miles below Chimney Rock and "Scotts Bluff" two days journey above were also objects of interest.

ture with the Platte. It was of quadrangular shape, enclosing an area of about three quarters of an acre. Its walls were made of sundried bricks and defended by two watch towers placed at the most advantageous positions. On three sides of the court and next to the walls were the company's offices, storerooms, and shops; on the other side was the main building of the fort two stories high. The post was in the country of the Sioux and Crows, some of whose tents were always near. This point of advantage was chosen in 1847 as a military post to protect the route to Oregon.[32]

C. Fort Laramie to South Pass.

From Fort Laramie on, the difficulties and trials of the emigrants increased rapidly. The Indians were more hostile, the route more difficult, the cattle more footsore and jagged, the provisions scarcer, the wagons less serviceable, and the people themselves more fatigued and care-worn. From here on, accidents were very numerous and deaths more frequent. There was yet nearly twice as far to go.

The Cheyennes and Sioux in the upper Platte region had become so hostile that an engagement occurred between them and the whites in 1841, in which several were killed on both sides. The first body of emigrants, those of 1842, found little encouragement in this news. They were in no condition for hostility with anything. "Division and misunderstandings had grown up among them. They were already somewhat disheartened by the fatigue of their long and wearisome journey; and the feet of their cattle had become so much worn as to be scarcely able to travel." Being assured of the lack of grass and the scarcity of buffalo beyond, and the improbability of their being able to take their wagons over the mountains, they disposed of many of their wagons and cattle at the fort, "* * * taking in exchange coffee and sugar at one dollar a pound, and miserable old worn-out horses which died before they reached the mountains."[33]

As inferred above, Fort Laramie served as a sort of resting place for the emigrants where they replenished

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[32] Bryant, p. 109. At the juncture of the North Fork and Laramie River was another post called Fort Platte.

[33] Fremont, Expeditions, pp. 40-53; Fremont, Memoirs, p. 113.

their stores of provisions, bought fresher horses and mules, and repaired their wagons. The place resembled civilization more than any other which they saw after leaving the frontier. Provisions here were very dear, however, and only bare necessities were purchased.[34]

The trail from Laramie to South Pass lay along the North Fork of the Platte by the foothills of the Black Hills on the left to the Sweetwater, a stream that flowed into the North Fork; thence it went up the Sweetwater past Independence Rock and through South Pass. The road now became more broken and mountainous; it was soon to pass over the divide of the continent into the region where the waters flowed to the Pacific. The soil, full of mineral, was parched and almost void of vegetation. Limestone, gray, yellow, and red sandstone, and gypsum marked the way.

So much travel came to produce a great deal of dust which the fierce winds kept in a whirl, so that the dust found its way into everything possible. At times it was almost suffocating. To make matters worse the water became so impregnated with mineral that it often caused illness. The emigrants also drank large quantities of milk from the cows, that were often in a feverish heat and otherwise in a bad state of health, which doubtless helped to cause sickness. To make matters worse gnats and mosquitoes bit both man and beast most frightfully. Calomel seems to have been the chief medicine. This the travelers took in large doses and often under the most unfavorable conditions. One can hardly imagine a more distressing condition than a person sick unto death, lying in a canvas covered wagon, with the hot sun beating down upon it and the dust fogging everywhere, with not even a pure cold drink of water to be had, or a competent physician at hand, a thousand miles away from civilization in a desert land.[35]

The oxen faired even worse than the emigrants. At Laramie many were very footsore and nearly exhausted. The character of the road from the fort only added to their bur-

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[34] Bryant, California, pp. 111-114; Thornton, Oregon, pp. 111-114. Burnett, Old Pioneer, p. 112: "Coffee $1.50 a pint; brown sugar, the same; flour unbolted, 25 cents a pound; powder, $1.50 a pound; lead, 75 cents a pound; percussion caps, $1.50 a box; calico, very inferior, $1.00 a yard."

[35] John C. Fremont, Expeditions p. 130; Bryant, California, pp. 121-129; Thornton, Oregon, p. 121-2, 144-155; Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 2 pp. 159-163.

dens. As a result many of these faithful animals succumbed to their tortures and were left worn-out and dying along the way.[36]

Early on the journey the emigrants discovered that they had many articles they could never carry with them to Oregon. Before one reached South Pass he might see household furnishings thrown by the wayside to lighten the burden of both man and beast. Pieces of splendid furniture, often imported, intended to grace homes in Oregon, were left to the destruction of the elements.[37] Wagons, too, became unserviceable and were left behind. The dying of oxen and the leaving of furniture made fewer wagons needed. Many in pretty good condition, therefore, were often left. Repairing, of course, was done by using parts of these discarded vehicles.[38]

Yet there were times when hardships were forgotten, apparently, and pleasure was allowed to have its way. The emigrants of 1843 had what one called a "grand complimentary ball to the Rocky Mountains" just before crossing the South Pass.[39] The Independence of the great country to which these pilgrims belonged and whose might and glory their work was to increase, was sometimes celebrated in the vicinity of South Pass. A company of Americans crossing the continent in an earlier day happened to be near a great rock not far from the north bank of the Sweetwater on July 4. There they celebrated in frontier fashion the birth of their country, christening the rock "Independence" and leaving a record of their act indelibly carved on its side.[40]

Those going to California in 1846 celebrated this national holiday in appropriate fashion. They formed a procession around the corral, listened to the reading of the Declaration and an address from their commander, after which they feasted, gave toasts, and sang songs.[41]

The South Pass was not so difficult as it was once supposed to be. The ascent from the plains up the North Fork and the Sweetwater was gradual and the Pass, which was

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[36] Bryant, California, p. 124, 132; Thornton, Oregon, p. 139.
[37] Fremont, Expeditions, p. 21.
[38] Crawford, Journal, p. 14.
[39] Wilkes, Oregon, p. 81.
[40] This massive landmark is an isolated elevation near the Sweetwater, and is about 120 feet high and a mile in circumference. The emigrants took delight in carving their names upon it. Fremont, Expeditions, p. 56.
[41] Bryant, California, p. 120; Thornton, Oregon, p. 120.

more than 7000 feet above the sea, reached without any serious difficulty. This gap in the mountains was found to be something like 19 miles wide and rather easily traversed. The emigrants emerged from the farther end to find themselves where the waters flowed to the Pacific Ocean.[42]

[42] Bryant, California, p. 132; Fremont, Expeditions, p. 60. The South Pass was at least 950 miles from the point of departure on the frontier. Ibid.

CHAPTER III.

South Pass to the Willamette Valley.

A. South Pass to Fort Hall.

From South Pass two routes ran, uniting on the Bear River. One extended westward across the two Big Sandys and the Green Rivers to the Bear; the other extended southwest, also crossing the Sandys and the Green, to Fort Bridger, just north of the Uintah Mountains. From this fort it ran in a northwestern direction to the Bear, uniting there with the other branch of the trail. From this juncture the trail followed the Bear to a point near the Snake River, to which it then crossed, touching that stream near Fort Hall. Here the route struck a tributary of the Columbia River. (See map.)

In this region the trail was in such high altitudes that, although it was still July and August, the nights were so cold that ice more than an inch thick often formed. The climate, therefore, was very much diversified. At times the dust and heat were suffocating and at other times cold, rains and tornadoes produced great discomfort.[1] Sickness and death continued to claim their victims. One journal tells of the death of first the father and then the mother of seven children, two of whom received bad injuries from accidents about the same time. The condition in which these children were left was pitiful in the extreme. The little orphans were cared for, however, until the caravan arrived at Dr. Whitman's, who adopted them.[2]

The trail was now very rough and often at such angles that ascent and descent were very dangerous. Sometimes the oxen had to be unhitched and the wagons guided by hand down the steep inclines. Once in a while a vehicle turned

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[1] Thornton, Oregon, pp. 144-155; Bryant, California, p. 139; Crawford, Journal, p. 14.

[2] S. A. Clarke, Pioneer Days in Oregon. (Portland 1905), vol. 2, pp. 502-510; Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 2, p. 159.

over or broke down. The road, of course, was even worse for the oxen than that east of the Pass, and the emigrants continued, to leave them to die by the way.[3]

The emigrants often passed and repassed each other, and companies increased in size as occasions occurred. There was a tendency, however, for companies to become smaller after leaving Fort Laramie and the Platte, owing to the increasing difficulties of travel. Many times the emigrants met parties returning from Oregon and California, who disseminated information concerning the route ahead and reported favorably or unfavorably concerning the region from which they were coming.

Fort Bridger, on the southern route from the Pass, had been established in 1843 purposely for the emigrant trade. The Founder, James Bridger, in a letter ordering goods, dated December 10, 1843, said:

" 'I have established a small fort with a blacksmith shop and a supply of iron, in the road of the emigrants, on Black's Fork of the Green River, which promises fairly. They, in coming out, are generally well supplied with money, but by the time they get there are in want of all kinds of supplies. Horses, provisions and smith work, etc., bring ready cash from them, and should I receive the goods hereby ordered, will do a considerable business in that way with them. * * *' "[4] This post was, indeed, of much assistance to the emigrants for many years as a place where supplies and repairs were obtained.[5]

From Bridger the first route to California west of South Pass left the Oregon Trail, and there both Oregon and California emigrants often met traders and travelers from California.[6] Many emigrants, however, did not take the longer road by Fort Bridger, but continued straight on to the Bear River. Likewise did many emigrants to California, as the trail from Bridger was more difficult and uncertain.[7]

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[3] Thornton, Oregon, p. 151. There is mention of much unnecessary fast driving to get or to keep ahead, which was hard not only on the wagons but death to the oxen. Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 2, pp. 210-11.

[4] Chittenden, Fur Trade, III, p. 972.

[5] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 2, p. 165; vol. 7, p. 86; Bryant, California, p. 142.

[6] Bryant, California, p. 143. See Map.

[7] This shorter cut from the Pass was fifty or sixty miles nearer; but for more than forty miles between the two Sandys there was no water; therefore, many preferred the route by Bridger as it insured water.

The buffalo country was left behind as the trail entered South Pass.[8] Many saw their last buffalo on the Sweetwater. By the forties game had ceased to be plentiful in the mountains along the route.[9] The trappers and fur traders were largely responsible for this. There remained, however, some elk, deer, goats, antelopes and other smaller animals to furnish food for the travelers and Indians. Wild ducks and other fowls, too, were killed to eat. Fortunately the mountain streams yielded a good supply of trout; and after the emigrants reached the Snake River they found salmon very plentiful. Wild berries, roots and other forms of plant life were another source of food in this region.

The emigrants, notwithstanding their fears to the contrary, generally found the Indians of the mountains peaceably inclined toward them. They usually secured their good will by giving them presents and by trading them one thing or another for food and often for horses. Many of these Indians were obliged to spend all their time searching diligently for berries, roots, seeds and other forms of the vegetable kingdom, which constituted by far the greater portion of their food.[10]

The Bear River valley afforded very good pasture for the cattle, and in this vicinity the emigrants often rested and recuperated their own and their oxen's strength for the more difficult journey down to the Columbia. Fremont speaks of seeing oxen on this river in excellent condition, looking as fresh as they did on the Missouri.[11]

The scenery through which this part of the trail ran was magnificent. The mountains, towering above with their snow covered peaks; the deep passes and awful precipices; the many colored and strangely shaped rocks; the extinct volcanoes; the sparkling waters of the rivers and brooks; the loud waterfalls and mysterious springs; the invigorating atmosphere; and above all the clear, ethereal sky, excited the emigrants's admiration and wonder and inspired them to greater and nobler deeds!

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[8] Fremont, Expeditions, pp. 143-4; Bryant, California, p. 144.

[9] Fremont, Expeditions, pp. 133, 135, 140; Crawford, Journal, p. 14; Oregon Society Historical Quarterly, vol. 2, p. 210-11, 215-16.

[10] Fremont, Expeditions, p. 134; Crawford, Journal, p. 15; Oregon Historical Quarterly, vol. 2, pp. 213-222.

[11] Fremont, expeditions, pp. 133-4.

Near the place where the Bear turns southward in its course to the Great Salt Lake, there were numerous springs. In fact, these phenomena were common in this vicinity. But those known as the Great Soda Springs, near the bend of the Bear, always received special attention because of their large proportions and the gases which they emitted.[12]

As the trail to Oregon emerged from the mountains through which the Bear River runs, the emigrants descended into the valley of the Columbia, or at least the region drained by its tributaries. This extraordinary event was usually accompanied with some expression of triumph and satisfaction. One narrator writes as follows: "We soon arrived at the waters of the Portneuf, and from this point reined up our panting steeds to gaze upon the valley of the Saptin [Snake or Lewis], which lay at last before us. In an instant every head was uncovered and a cheer rang back into the gorge to the ears of our companions, which made every team strain and every wagon crack with renewed exertion. It is impossible to describe the enthusiasm which this event created in our party. * * * Jim Wayne, who was always about when anything of moment was afoot, was one of the foremost to reach the point of sight, and there with his bugle * * * he planted himself, receiving every wagon with 'Yankee Doodle,' 'Hail Columbia' or 'Star Spangled Banner,' and only pausing in the tunes to wave the instrument in the air, in innumerable sweeps, to the measure of the answering shouts."[13] The frowning barriers of the Rocky Mountains were now in the rear of the emigrants and they were at the threshold of their promised land.

It was only a matter of three or four days' traveling from Soda Springs to the Snake River and Fort Hall, a trading post of the Hudson Bay Company. Three miles above this post the government located a military post in 1849. Fort Hall resembled very much the American Fur Company's post on Laramie River. The commander, Captain Grant, was always very hospitable to the emigrants, who rested at

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[12] Cross, Oregon Expeditions, pp. 66-67; Thornton, Oregon, pp. 104-157; Wilkes, Oregon, p. 82.

Near this bend of the Bear another route turned off to California, passing in its course Great Salt Lake. See Map.

[13] Wilkes, Oregon, p. 82.

his post and replenished their stock of provisions and repaired their wagons.[14]

The trail from Fort Hall was so difficult that it was generally believed before 1843 that it was useless to try to take wagons through to the Columbia. Apparently the Hudson Bay agents at the fort discouraged the effort. The emigrants of 1842 exchanged the running gears of their wagons for provisions and went on with what goods they could take packed on horses and mules.

When the great caravan of 1843 arrived at the fort, and the question arose as to the possibility of getting the wagons through to the Columbia, Captain Grant told the emigrants that he did not see how it could be done. "He had only traveled the pack trail, and certainly no wagons could follow that route, but there might be a practical road found by leaving the trail at certain points."[15] Doctor Whitman, however, assured them that they could take their wagons through and urged them to do so.[16] His counsel prevailed and the wagons went through, setting a valuable precedent for emigrants of succeeding years.

An emigrant of 1844 told of a conversation full of meaning which he heard between a fellow traveler and Captain Grant. The former asked the latter whether he thought the emigrants could take their wagons through to the Columbia. The latter's "* * * reply was in substance: 'Mr. Cave, it's just about a year since a lot of people came here just as you have done and asked me the same question. I told them "no; that we found it very difficult to pass the narrow trails with our pack ponies." They went on, just as you will do; just as if I had not spoken a word, and the next I heard of them they were at Fort Walla Walla. You——Yankees will do anything you like.'"[17] The captain said more, perhaps, than he knew; not many years hence the Yankees were the sole possessors of the Columbia.

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[14] "Flour was $40 a barrel, coarse brown sugar, 50 cents a pound, and all other prices were equally high". Thornton, Oregon, p. 160; also Wilkes, Oregon, p. 83; Crawford, Journal, p. 15.

[15] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 5, p. 77.

[16] The first wagon ever taken to Oregon was driven over the Oregon Trail in 1836 by Whitman. See William Barrows, Oregon, the Struggle for Possession (Boston, 1884), Ch. 16.

[17] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 2, pp. 217-218.

B. Fort Hall to the Columbia.

The trail from Fort Hall lay along the south bank of the Snake River to a point below Salmon Falls, where it crossed the Snake and ran along at a distance from its north bank to the Boise River, which it crossed and continued past Boiling Spring to Fort Boise. Here the trail crossed the Snake again and a little farther on the Burnt River, a tributary of the Snake. At this point it left the Snake River, which makes a great curve to the north before it comes to the Columbia, and ran in a northwestern direction to the Columbia. Across this path lay the Blue Mountains, which the trail ascended to Grand Round, a magnificent valley about 100 miles in circumference embossomed among the mountains. The trail then descended these mountains from Grand Round to the Umatilla River, following the course of this stream to the Columbia.[18] (See map.)

From Fort Hall the route became more impassable. Here the wagon road ended until the emigration of 1843. Dry valleys abounding in sagebrush had to be crossed. The wagons of '43 had much difficulty in getting through this undergrowth. This part of the journey had to be made in the fall, as it was far along the trail; when in such high altitudes the weather was likely to be very disagreeable. If the journey was not made quickly, winter was certain to overtake the travelers. The delays and mishaps of this last part of the trail before arriving at the Columbia were only those which one might expect from the mountainous character of the country.[19] The knowledge of the difficulties of the passage from Fort Hall to the Columbia and down the Columbia to the Willamette Valley influenced some Oregon emigrants to take a more southern route after leaving the Pass.[20] The same influence caused others bound for Oregon to decide for California and to turn off before reaching the Blue Mountains to that country.

In this region the emigrants did considerable trading with the natives, whose stock in trade consisted chiefly of salmon, fresh and dried, the camas root and vegetables. The emigrants' principal articles of barter were ammunition,

[18] The emigrants of 1842 seem to have passed over the mountains to the right of Grand Round.

[19] Palmer's Journal in Thwaites, pp. 90-110; Wilkes, Oregon, pp. 85-89.

[20] Meeks Cut-off and Barlow's and Applegates' Roads.

clothing and fish hooks. The most highly valued garment to the natives was a shirt, and as a result many emigrants hardly had a change of shirts when they arrived in the Willamette Valley. Fish hooks were like small coins, or change, in the states; they came in very handy for small purchases.[21]

The Snake abounded in salmon, which the Indians very dexterously caught with spears of their own contrivance. The salmon were dried and preserved for periods when the waters no longer contained that fish. This article of food was to the natives of the Snake and Columbia what the buffalo was to the Indians on the plains. It was likewise of the same importance to the emigrants along these rivers that the buffalo was along the Platte. The chief difference was that the Indians furnished the salmon. The fish was abundant at the falls of the rivers. Salmon Falls obtained its name for this reason. The camas root was a valuable article of food eaten with salmon. It was to salmon with the Indian as bread was to meat with the white man. The Indians also attributed medicinal qualities to this root.[22]

Boiling Springs were as interesting to the emigrants on the Snake as the Great Soda Springs were on the Bear. These springs, five in number, contained water hot enough for culinary purposes. A fish could be boiled in a few minutes and at the same time be seasoned by the mineral in the water.[23]

The emigrants found Fort Boise only a recruiting station for the larger and more important post of the Hudson Bay Company at Fort Hall. At this lower post they often obtained some provisions. Emigrants of 1845 paid $20 per hundredweight for flour, which had been brought all the way from Oregon City.[24]

When the emigrants passed over the Blue Mountains into the Umatilla Valley they found a class of Indians who seemed to be fairly well along toward civilization.[25] They had better physiques, were better clad, were less inclined to fish and hunt, and were more disposed to farm and trade than Indians generally were. Missionaries had been working for a number of years among these natives and with considerable success.

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[21] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 2, pp. 219-226; vol. 5, pp. 79-80; Palmer's Journal in Thwaites, pp. 105-116; Crawford's Journal, p. 19.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Palmer's Journal, in Thwaites, p. 97.
[24] Ibid., pp. 98-9.
[25] Ibid., pp. 107-112.

The emigrants, therefore, of the middle forties were able to obtain some provisions from them. Palmer says in his journal (1845): "They brought wheat, corn, potatoes, peas, pumpkins, fish, etc., which they were anxious to dispose of for cloths, calico, nankins and other articles of wearing apparel. They also had dressed deer skins and moccasins. They had good horses, which they would gladly exchange for a cow, esteeming the cow as of equal value."[26]

At last the emigrants arrived on the south bank of the Columbia. "* * * There was something inspiring and animating in beholding this [river]. A feeling of pleasure would animate our breasts akin to that filling the breast of the mariner, when after years of absence, the shores of his native land appear to view. We could scarce persuade ourselves but that our journey had arrived at its termination. We were full of hope, and as it was understood that we had but one more difficult part of the road to surmount, we moved forward with redoubled energy * * *."[27]

Not very far east of Fort Walla was the Whitman mission station called Waulapu. With another man by the name of Parker, Marcus Whitman had started to Oregon in 1835 as a missionary to the Indians for the American Board of Foreign Missions. At the Green River Whitman turned back to bring out other helpers for the proposed mission station. Parker continued to Oregon and chose the site mentioned above for the mission. In 1836 Whitman married, and with his wife and another newly married couple, Rev. H. H. Spalding and wife, went to Oregon and began his labor among the Cayuse Indians. Spalding's station, Lapwai, was not far from Waulapu. (See map.)[28]

In the fall and winter of 1842 Dr. Whitman returned east by a circuitous route far to the south of the Oregon Trail on business for his mission. When he reached the states in the spring of 1843, he found much excitement over the Oregon question and preparations underway for a great emigration that year.[29]

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[26] Palmer's Journal, in Thwaites, p. 108; also see Wilkes, Oregon, p. 88, (emig. 1843).

[27] Palmer's Journal, pp. 115-16.

[28] Mowry, W. A., Marcus Whitman and the Early Days of Oregon, (New York, 1901), p. 69-70.

[29] Marshall, Wm. I., Acquisition of Oregon and the Long Suppressed Evidence about Marcus Whitman in 2 vols., (Seattle, 1911), vol. 1, pp. 110-120, 125-130.

After visiting Boston, Whitman returned to the frontier and accompanied the emigrants over the trail to Oregon. His journey to the Green River in 1835 and his pilgrimage over the same route to Oregon in 1836, as well as his skill as a physician, made him a valuable personage among the emigrants of 1843, who sought his counsel often. He labored unceasingly to ameliorate the hardships and sufferings of the people throughout the entire journey, and his services were highly beneficial. As he had taken his wagon as far as Fort Boise in 1836 and later to the Columbia, he assured the emigrants that they could take their wagons through to Oregon. And it was largely due to his advice that the Hudson Bay Company's agents at Fort Hall did not get wagons in 1843 as they did in 1842.

Whitman's station was a place where the emigrants often replenished their supply of provisions after crossing the Blue Mountains and reaching the Umatilla and Columbia. Every emigration from 1842 to 1847, inclusively, felt the beneficence of his mission, and many times when aid was sorely needed. Spalding's mission, too, often aided the pilgrims. The emigrants of 1842 rested at Waulapu and secured provisions before they proceeded down the Columbia. Likewise did those of 1843. The rear of the caravan of 1844 remained with Whitman until spring; and Palmer (1845) says that Mr. and Mrs. Whitman met his company with a wagonload of supplies while they were encamped on the Umatilla.

In 1847, however, serious trouble developed between the Indians in the vicinity of the mission and the whites. The emigrants of that year had a plague of the measles as they neared the end of their journey. About fifty of this emigration remained at the mission, and, as might be expected, the measles spread among the savages, many of whom died from exposure. The Indians, of course, blamed the whites for the misery and death which the disease caused, although Dr. Whitman did all he could to mitigate their suffering. Since 1842 the Indians had asked pay for the land occupied by the whites and requested that boundaries be fixed. Their demands had never been granted. The disaffection crystallized late in 1847, when one Joe Lewis, an Indian half-breed, and some other renegades excited the natives to attack the mission suddenly and massacre the whites. They killed Whit-

man and his wife and a number of emigrants, and held in captivity a still larger number of emigrants. The captured, however, were later rescued. Thus Dr. Whitman came to his death at the hands of those whom he had served faithfully for eleven years. The Spaldings at Lapwai were warned in time to escape.[30] This, for a time, was the end of the Protestant missions in this region. The amount of credit really due Marcus Whitman for his part in the settlement of Oregon will probably never be satisfactorily determined. It can not be denied, however, that his wagon trip to Oregon in 1836, his service to the emigration of 1843, and the aid which his mission gave the passing emigrants of 1842-3-4-5-6 and 7 give him a prominent place in the early history of Oregon.[31]

C. Down the Columbia into the Willamette Valley.

The last part of the trail ran along the Columbia River to the Willamette Valley. This route was beset with difficulties equal to or even greater than any the emigrants had thus far encountered. The high bluffs and mountains, reaching to the very bank of the river, were almost impassable. Then there were many streams emptying into the Columbia, with high, steep banks and rapid currents, which the emigrants had to ford or ferry. Furthermore, the currents and rapids of the Columbia made the voyage down that stream exceedingly perilous.[32]

So fraught with dangers was this last part of the journey that many of the emigrants of 1843 were persuaded by those at the mission and Fort Walla Walla to leave their wagons and to sell their cattle, receiving orders from the Hudson Bay Company's agent at the fort for other cattle at Vancouver. These with their other belongings went down the river in canoes.

There were a few who, after disposing of their wagons, put what possessions they could on their horses and drove their cattle through. The main part of the caravan, however, kept their wagons and drove to the Dalles.[33]

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[30] Bancroft, Oregon, vol. 1, pp. 648-655.

[31] A keen controversy arose a few years ago over the part Whitman had in "Saving Oregon". See Wm. I. Marshall's Acquisition of Oregon and the Long Suppressed Evidence about Marcus Whitman; also Nixon, O. W. How Marcus Whitman, saved Oregon. Chicago 1895. Bourne in Historical Criticism. Scribner's 1901 gives good evidence on the question.

[32] Palmer's Journal, pp. 116-120.

[33] Bancroft, Oregon 1, p. 406-448; Clarke, Pioneer Days in Oregon, II, p. 483; Wilkes, pp. 89-90.

Farther than the Dalles wagons were not driven before 1845. Here the Cascade Mountains presented a formidable barrier to wagon transportation. The emigrants of 1843 who drove to the Dalles built rafts large enough to carry six or eight wagons, and on these floated down the river to the Cascades.[34] Their cattle were driven across the stream and down its north bank to Vancouver where they recrossed to the south side.[35] Others of this company remained at the Dalles and the Cascades until those who went ahead returned with boats from Vancouver to take them down the river.[36] This number consisted mostly of those who came from Walla Walla in canoes.

A part of the emigration of 1844, following the advice of Peter H. Burnett, from whom they received a letter at Fort Hall, sent a party to the Willamette for aid. This proved a wise thing to do, for they were sorely in need of help when they arrived at the Dalles. Here they received a boat load of supplies from Vancouver and Oregon City.[37] A member of the Caravan of 1874, writing in the Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, says that, when they reached the Dalles a division of opinion arose as to the best route to follow into the Willamette Valley. Some desired to go down the Columbia by boat, while others proposed to cross to the north bank of the Columbia and proceed to Vancouver. They chose the former method. Their wagons were taken to pieces and loaded on the boats, while their cattle were driven across the river and down its north bank to Vancouver, where they were driven over the river again.[38]

The emigrants were nearly always in very poor circumstances when they arrived at Vancouver and Oregon City. In fact, if it had not been for the aid rendered them by the missions and Indians after crossing the Blue Mountains and the further aid from the Hudson Bay Company's agent, Dr. McLoughlin, many would never have arrived in the Willamette Valley. Of course, after 1843 some assistance was given by those who had already settled in Oregon.

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[34] A child was born on one of these rafts before it reached the Cascades.

[35] Wilkes, p. 89.

[36] Ibid. The sufferings of these before leaving the Cascades were awful. At one time many were reduced to eating boiled rawhide and hempseed. Dr. McLoughlin sent food to them twice, which doubtless saved many from starvation. Bancroft, Oregon, pp. 408, 412.

[37] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 2, pp. 218-239.

[38] Hugh Cosgrove in Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 1, p. 265.

The assistance which Dr. McLoughlin gave the emigrants deserves special mention, as he was the agent of the great English company which operated in that quarter of the world and which naturally hoped to see England's claims to Oregon made good. The emigrants, before arriving at Vancouver, were prejudiced against the Hudson Bay Company, whose policy really was to discourage emigration from the states to Oregon; but its chief agent, out of the goodness of his heart, gave the emigrants much valuable aid. He gave them credit for supplies, consisting of food, clothing and other immediate needs. He furnished them seed for the spring sowing and loaned them boats to assist them in getting to their destination. Many of those whom he aided, however, were very ungrateful and some even failed to pay their obligations to him when due. "An immigrant of 1844, Joseph Watt," says: "'When we started to Oregon we were all prejudiced against the Hudson Bay Company, Dr. McLoughlin, being chief factor of the company for Oregon, came in for a double share of that feeling. I think a great deal of this was caused by the reports of missionaries and adverse traders, imbuing us with a feeling that it was our mission to bring this country under the jurisdiction of the Stars and Stripes. But we found him anxious to serve us, nervous at our situation on being so late, and doing so much without charge—letting us have of his store, and waiting, without interest, until we could make a farm and pay him from the surplus of such farm, the prejudice heretofore existing began to be rapidly allayed. We did not know that every dollar's worth of provisions, etc., he gave us, all advice and assistance in every shape, was against the positive orders of the Hudson Bay Company. * * * In this connection I am sorry to say that thousands of dollars [60,000] virtually loaned by him to settlers at different times in those early days was never paid, as an examination of his books and papers will amply testify.'"[39]

The fertile valley of the Willamette River, between the Cascade and the Coast Ranges, received the thousands of emigrants who went to Oregon in the early and middle forties. (See map.) Here they settled, organizing a provisional gov-

[39] Katherine Coman, Economic Beginnings of the Far West, 2 vol. (New York, 1912) II, pp. 159-60.

ernment as early as 1843, and laid the foundations of a great commonwealth on the Pacific Coast.

D. Meek's Cut-off and Barlow's and Applegate's Roads.

Near Fort Boise a part of the emigration of 1845 was met by Elijah White, the Indian sub-agent of Oregon, returning to the states on business for the provisional government of Oregon. Earlier in the year, in consequence of a subscription of $2,000 by the citizens of Oregon to be used in promoting a road over the mountains for the emigrants of 1845, White had tried and failed to find a pass over the mountains connecting with an extinct trapper's trail leading from the Malheur or Powder Rivers by Mount Jefferson into the Willamette Valley. He advised the emigrants at Boise, it appears, that such a road existed and that it would shorten their journey some 150 miles and at the same time lessen their hardships, as it was much more easily traversed than the old trail over the Columbia.[40]

Stephen Meek, the emigrants' guide, believed from previous experience in that region that this shortcut to the Willamette was much more practical than the main route and persuaded 200 families to follow him.[41] He led this company up the Malheur River and over the mountains to the Humboldt River. The journey was most disastrous. The struggle over the mountains hurt the oxen severely; there was little grass and water, the latter being so full of mineral that it was nauseous; and the days were hot and the nights so cold that ice often formed. The country through which they passed was barren—so barren that the Indians seemed not to inhabit it. The consequences were that the emigrants found themselves in a terrible condition. The mountain fever and dysentery caused several deaths, while many cattle died for want of grass and water. Despairing of ever reaching the Willamette by this southern route, the wanderers turned north to pursue the shortest road to the Columbia River. The route taken lay between the John Day and Des Chutes Rivers.

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[40] Bancroft, Oregon, I, p. 484.

[41] Meek had had a long experience in the West, having gone to California in 1833-34, been in the Willamette Valley in 1841, and having piloted the emigrants of 1842 from Fort Laramie. Thwaites, vol. 30, *Palmer's Journal*, p. 40, (footnote).

But the emigrants' condition became worse, and to many it seemed that man and beast would perish together in the desert. Meek, being blamed for the disaster, feared for his life, and with some of his friends fled from the main caravan and hurried down the Des Chutes. Being overtaken by the main body, he again fled to save his life and arrived at the Dalles in advance. Here Meek, after much solicitation, succeeded in getting a few horse loads of food taken to the emigrants, who, when this aid arrived, were on the Des Chutes River, thirty-five miles from the Dalles, "their provisions nearly exhausted and the company weakened by exertion, and despairing of ever reaching the settlements." The emigrants were where a crossing of the river was imperative and at the same time most hazardous. "The means finally resorted to for the transportation of the families were novel in the extreme. A large rope was swung across the stream and attached to the rocks on either side; a light wagon bed was suspended from this rope with pullies, to which ropes were attached; this bed served to convey the families and loading safely across; the wagons were then drawn over the bed of the river by ropes. The passage of the river occupied some two weeks.[42]

These pilgrims finally arrived at the Dalles about the middle of October, having lost twenty of their number by disease. As many more died after their arrival from the same causes, and many others were so weakened and broken in body and spirit that they never regained their former vitality and energy. Their arrival at the Dalles was preceded only a few days by the main body over the old route.

When the emigrants of 1845 arrived at the Dalles they found the conveyances for transportation down the Columbia so inadequate for their large numbers that some planned to take their wagons over the Cascade Mountains into the Willamette. This number, however, was very small, as the task was generally believed too hazardous to undertake. The first promoter of this road and the one after whom it received its name was Samuel K. Barlow, captain of one of the companies and among the first to arrive at the Dalles. The Barlow family, which included three grown sons, and some others,

[42] Thwaites, Palmer's Journal, pp. 121-124; Bancroft, Oregon, I, pp. 511-516.

making a company of seven wagons in all, started on their transmontane journey about the first of October. After some effort one of the party and his wife gave up the task as impossible and returned to the Dalles.

The remainder of the company, determining to win at all costs, continued their efforts. Twenty-three other wagons joined the Barlows later, making about twenty-nine wagons which dared to drive over the mountains rather than risk the voyage down the Columbia. They found the way so difficult, however, that they sent their cattle back to the Dalles to be driven through east of Mount Hood. They were obliged, also, to send back to the Dalles for food. Winter came early in the mountains, food was scarce, the stock strayed, and the Indians stole at every opportunity. The emigrants, fearing the rainy season, finally arranged to leave their wagons and baggage guarded in the mountains and to send the women and children through on horses to the Willamette. They had hardly done this when rain, which soon turned to snow, set in. The sufferings of man and beast now became fierce. The snow covered the vegetation, so that the horses had to eat from the poison laurel. The people were poorly clad and it appeared as if they would soon be reduced to eating horse and dog meat. Their whereabouts, however, were known in the Willamette Valley and, fortunately, a relief party from Oregon City met them when help was most needed. Barlow found it necessary, however, to leave the wagons and much of the baggage under guard in the mountains, at a rude structure which he called Fort Deposit. It was near the end of the year when the last of his company arrived in the Willamette Valley.[43]

The Oregon provisional government in 1846 authorized Barlow to find a pass in the Cascades through which the emigrants might drive their wagons. He succeeded in reaching Fort Deposit and brought his own wagons through, and so improved the route that some of the emigrants of 1846 drove over it. The descent of the mountains, however, was so steep that they had to tie tops of trees to their wagons to hold them back.

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[43] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 3, pp. 71-81 (History of the Barlow Road by William Barlow); Thwaites, Palmer's Journal, pp. 128-157. (Palmer accompanied Barlow); Bancroft, Oregon, I, pp. 517-522.

By 1846 interests in the Willamette Valley were such that settlers in the vicinity of Oregon City and settlers in the Upper Willamette and in the Umpqua Valley were advocating a road into their respective localities.[44] Those of Oregon City in that year had the satisfaction of seeing Barlow's Road improved so that emigrants came over it that fall. By this time a keen rivalry had developed between the communities of the Lower and the Upper Willamette for preferment among expected emigrants to Oregon. Each tried to divert emigration to it. The inhabitants of the Upper Willamette and of the Umpqua desired a southern route into Oregon, not only to hasten the development of that region, but also, in the event of a war with England, to provide a military route over the Cascades far south of the Columbia. The Barlow Road might not prove adequate for the transfer of troops across the mountains; and again, it would be better to have a route leading into the valley far away from British influences near the Columbia.

The determination to open up a southern route caused a company, at the expense of the citizens of Polk County, to set out in May, 1846, to undertake the enterprise. Owing to the desertion of some of its members, this party accomplished nothing. A second company of fifteen men, including the leader of the first, Levi Scott, and the promoters of the enterprise, Jesse and Lindsey Applegate, set out the latter part of June of the same year to locate a southern road from the Bear River to the Upper Willamette Valley.

The explorers went up the Willamette across the Umpqua River in a southeastern direction to the Humboldt River, passing Lakes Klamoth, Modoc and Goose. Their route then ran up the Humboldt to Thousand Springs. From the Springs most of the party proceeded to the Bear River, while Jesse Applegate and some others went across to Fort Hall to persuade the emigrants of '46 to take the southern route to the Willamette. The road thus marked out took the name of Applegate. This trail which the Applegates were ready to recommend was fraught with many difficulties. The party

[44] Bancroft, Oregon, 1, p. 532. The government of Oregon had authorized Thos. McKay to locate and construct a toll road over the mountains to Fort Boise in time for the emigration of 1846. He had failed. Stephen Meek petitioned the authorities to construct a road from the Upper Willamette to Boise. Petition rejected. Ibid.

in exploring it had suffered many privations. For nearly two days at one time they had gone without water. One of their number succumbed and remained behind in the shade of some rocks while his companions continued to search for water. When water was found it was often so alkaline that one could not retain it. Yet, through this barren waste along and north of the Humboldt these men advised caravans of emigrants to go.

Jesse Applegate believed the southern route superior to the northern and urged the emigrants at Fort Hall to take it. He proposed to guide them through and expected to avoid for the most part the alkali desert through which he had passed. He was mistaken, however, in believing that this road was shorter than the old trail. His argument influenced about one hundred wagons to turn off at the fort and take the Applegate Road. The promoter of this route and some companions were to go before and mark out the trail, while two of his party, who had gone to the Bear River, were to meet the emigrants at Thousand Springs and guide them safely through to the Willamette.

These emigrants endured many hardships on the way, some of which were due to their own carelessness. The Indians stole their cattle and shot poisoned arrows from behind rocks at them. One company had an engagement with the natives, in which one white man was killed, another wounded and several Indians killed. The spurs of the Cascades often required sixteen to twenty yoke of oxen to draw one wagon up a sharp acclivity. Such barriers to progress made it impossible for one hundred wagons to keep together in a single body. In the Rogue River Valley those in the rear received provisions from the exploring party which was ahead. The fall rains caught a large number in the Umpqua Valley. As a result their suffering became great; often they had to wade water; famine overtook them; and their condition became deplorable. Notwithstanding the aid which they received, many abandoned their wagons and much of their property. Some left their cattle guarded on the Umpqua, and it was February before many got out of the valley.[45]

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[45] Bancroft, Oregon, I, pp. 542-565; Thornton, Chapters IX to XII, gives a detailed and graphic account of the experiences of these emigrants.

The rivalry between the promoters of the Barlow and the Applegate Roads became very keen. Agents for the former route met emigrants of 1847 at the Green River to urge them to continue on the old trail to the Dalles. Levi Scott was also near Bear River to guide those who might desire to take the southern route. The representatives of the northern road sent letters to the emigrants near Green River, "in which they [the emigrants] were counseled to starve, whip, and even kill any person advising them to take the southern road. A circular was distributed containing an exaggerated account of the calamities suffered the previous year, and recommending the Barlow road." These circulars made no mention of the hardships endured by those who took the northern route. As a result only forty-five wagons of the enormous emigration of 1847 took the Applegate road.[46] These arrived in good season and in good condition, while those who took the northern route to the Dalles suffered many privations.

The hostilities of the Cayuse Indians in the winter of 1847, which threatened to close the northern route, and Scott's success in guiding his party over the southern road caused the Oregon Legislature to pass an act for the improvement of the latter, "making Levi Scott commissioner and allowing him to collect a small toll for his services." This road continued in favor.[47]

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[46] From four to five thousand emigrants went to Oregon in 1847. Bancroft, 623-4.

[47] Bancroft, Oregon, I, pp. 567, 623-4.

CHAPTER IV.

Government Aid and Protection.

A. Jefferson's Interest in the North West.

Even before American Independence Thomas Jefferson had manifested a keen interest in exploring the region beyond the Mississippi to determine whether or not the sources of the Missouri and the sources of another stream rising in the Rock Mountains but flowing into the Pacific Ocean, were not very near together. Such belief had long existed in the minds of many and much speculation had been entertained as to the benefits to be derived from discovering an almost continuous water course from the Mississippi to the Pacific. As early as 1783 Jefferson proposed to George Rogers Clark that he lead an exploring party to ascertain the facts regarding the interior of this region.[1]

Again in 1786 while he was minister to France, Jefferson made overtures to another adventurer, a certain John Ledyard, that he explore the western part of North America. His proposition was accepted and plans were made for the party to begin its work from Nootka Sound and proceed eastward across the continent. Ledyard was finally arrested in Siberia at the instigation of the Empress of Russia and nothing came of this plan.[2]

Jefferson's next effort to have the Great North West revealed was during his secretaryship in Washington's cabinet, when he detailed a scientist by the name of Andre Michaux to explore the parts drained by the Missouri system and

[1] Reuben Gold Thwaites. A Brief History of Rocky Mountain Explorations, (New York, 1904), Chapter IV; Katherine Coman, Economic Beginnings of the Far West (New York, 1912, vol. I, pp. 231-234).

[2] Thwaites, Rocky Mountain Travels. ch. IV. Ledyard was the first of the Americans to propose an expedition to the northwestern coast of North America. His first attempt was in 1783-4. Russian Fur traders caused his arrest in 1788 and his subsequent banishment from the borders of Russia. See Appleton's Encyclopedia of American Biography by James Grant Wilson and John Fiske (New York 1900) III, p. 655.

For this chapter revised see The Oregon Quarterly for December, 1929 – The Oregon Historical Quarterly.

to learn whether another stream rising near the sources of the Missouri did not flow into the Pacific. But again he was disappointed; complications growing out of the Genet episode frustrated these plans.

Jefferson seemed destined to play even a greater role in the fortune of the West than any one of the projects mentioned above would have given him. The year 1803 found him president of the United States and the greatest factor in concluding negotiations for the acquisition of the region commonly known as the Louisiana Purchase. Now this nation builder could carry out to his heart's satisfaction his desire of twenty years' standing to have the vast undeveloped territory lying west of the Mississippi River explored and its interior revealed to the world. Even before the consumation of the purchase, Jefferson planned to send an exploring party into the region, and by May 1804 a company under the command of Captain Meriwether Lewis and Lieutenant William Clark[3] was at the mouth of the Missouri River under instructions from the president to explore the waters of the Missouri and even to penetrate through to the Pacific Ocean. In general, the party was to obtain detailed information, from observation and otherwise, of the various geographical features, the possibilities for commerce, and the most valuable facts concerning the natives of that quarter. They were especially instructed to treat the Indians " 'in the most friendly and conciliatory manner' " and to encourage amicable intercourse between them and the states.[4]

This expedition lasted through the years 1804-5-6, and extended along the Missouri to its source, thence across the Rockies to the Columbia, and down that river to the Pacific. A full account of it was soon published, and for the first time the world was given a comparatively authentic description of the Missouri River Country and the Columbia Valley.

In 1805 Jefferson sent another exploring party under Z. M. Pike to the Upper Mississippi. By April 1806 Pike had complied with his instructions and returned to St. Louis. After about three months he was again at the head of another

[3] The younger brother of George Rogers Clark.

[4] Elliott Coues, History Lewis and Clark Expedition (New York 1893), I, Memoir of Meriwether Lewis, pp. xxiii-xxxiii.

expedition directed this time to explore the interior of Louisiana. Pike's two expeditions furnished abundant information about the region beyond the Mississippi. Councils with the Indians were held and much done to cultivate a conciliatory attitude on the part of the natives of the regions visited.[5]

To Jefferson, then, and to the government belongs the greatest credit for really opening up and revealing for the first time the interior of the Far West. This early work was of inestimable value to all who, for pleasure or gain, desired to operate in that vast undeveloped territory.

B. From Jefferson to 1840.

Soon after the explorations mentioned above a considerable fur trade developed between the states and the West in the direction of the Columbia Valley. The general line of communication was the difficult and circuitous path taken by Lewis and Clark. After the Second War with England the population began to flow toward the Missouri River Valley. With this western expansion interest in the direction of Oregon increased. With this increasing interest a desire for a safer and more direct route to the Pacific Coast region came to demand the attention of the government. It was believed that a path further south, up the Platte, and through a pass near the source of that river, would prove more practicable.

Pursuant to this need, Calhoun, Monroe's Secretary of War, detailed Stephen H. Long in 1819 to command an expedition to explore the region in question. Long's party really was a scientific branch of a military expendition sent out under Colonel Henry Atkinson in 1818 for the purpose of establishing a military post near the mouth of the Yellowstone. The military detachment was poorly managed and never got any further than the region of Council Bluffs. Its only achievement was the establishment of a military post of some eight years' duration near the present site of Omaha.[6]

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[5] Z. M. Pike, An Account of an Expedition to the sources of the Mississippi and through Western Parts of Louisiana, (Philadelphia 1810).

[6] See Edwin James, Expedition to the Rock Mountains under command of Major Stephen H. Long, (Philadelphia 1823); American State Papers, Military Affairs, II, p. 324; Niles Register, XVI, p. 344; Thwaites Rocky Mountain Explorations, p. 211, footnote.

Calhoun in a letter to Benton, Dec. 19, 1819, thought that a post near the mouth of the Yellowstone would probably be established in the summer of 1820. See American State Papers, Military Affairs, II, p. 32.

Atkinson's men wintered 1818-19 at Camp Martin near the mouth of the Kansas. The failure of this expedition to accomplish its purpose caused much unfavorable criticism by the public.

Long's party left the vicinity of the union of the Platte and the Missouri in the early summer of 1820. Their instructions were " 'to explore the Missouri and its principal branches and then in succession, Red River, Arkansas, and Mississippi above the mouth of the Missouri.[7]' " The expedition was " 'to acquire as thorough and accurate knowledge as may be practicable, of a portion of our country, which is daily becoming more interesting, but which is as yet imperfectly known.[8]' " The company explored the Platte to the mountains, thence turning south divided into two divisions and followed the Arkansas and Canadian Rivers to the Mississippi.

This expedition was very popular. Many thought it would open up considerable trade with China via Mississippi, Missouri, and Columbia Rivers. The account edited and published by Edwin James, the Botanist and Geologist of the party, gave valuable additional information of the region south of the route pursued by Lewis and Clark. This knowledge gave a new impetus to emigration to and communication with the Oregon Country.[9]

The Missouri, even after Long's expedition, continued for a time to be the chief route of commerce between the North West and the States. The Indians of this region were usually hostile to the traders, who often sustained great losses from their depredations. In 1823 Colonel Henry Leavenworth lead a considerable military force against the Aricara Indians on the Upper Missouri. The expedition, however, accomplished very little. Two years later General Henry Atkinson was sent with a detachment of soldiers to conclude treaties with the Sioux, Mandans, Crows, and other tribes on the Yellowstone. This effort was much more successful than the former. The maneuvers of the soldiers and the bursting of shells from the howitzers so overawed the Indians that they readily concluded treaties with Gen. Atkinson. The troops

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[7] James, Expedition to the Rock Mountains, I; also Thwaites Western Travels, vol. XIV. S. H. Long's Expedition, vol. 1, in Preliminary Notice.

[8] Ibid. See also Chittenden, the American Fur Trade of the Far West, vol. II, p. 563; " 'The expedition ordered to the mouth of the Yellowstone, or rather to the Maudan Village, is a part of a system of measures which has for its objects the protection of our northwestern frontier and the greater extension of our fur trade.' "

[9] Thwaites, Rocky Mountain Expeditions, pp. 215-217; Niles Register, vol. 16, p. 320; Oregon and Texas, Selections of Editorial Articles from St. Louis Enquirer, 1818-19, by Thos. H. Benton, pp. 14-27.

escorted a large party of traders from the Yellowstone to the States. Atkinson did not see the wisdom of establishing a military post on the Yellowstone; instead he recommended the sending of military expeditions into that country every three or four years.[10]

With these last two expeditions the Government ceased for a period of ten years to give any real aid or protection to private enterprise in the Far West. During this time a policy of protecting the western frontier matured. The predominant opinion of the decade was that expansion would stop a short distance west of the Mississippi River. The state documents of the time give numerous recommendations by those in a position to know, concerning the establishment of military posts and roads along a line of demarcation between the Indian country and the states. This disposition on the part of the Government to recognize a dividing line, to be more or less constant, between the Indians and the whites, led to the establishment of a line of forts from the place where the St. Peters flows into the Mississippi to a point on the Kiamichi branch of the Red River. Forts Snelling, Leavenworth, Towson, Gibson and Jesup, therefore, became the chief bases of operations against the Indians. In this manner the Government confined its operations to the settled area of its domain and established a zone of security along the frontier.[11]

At no time, however, did interest in Government protection of the transcontinental communication with Oregon cease. On the contrary, this policy continued to have strong adherents among statesmen. In 1821 a committee of the House had recommended that a military post be established on "the most northwestern point upon the Missouri," and also one at the mouth of the Columbia.[12] This report emphasized the almost water route between the Mississippi and the Pacific and estimated that twenty men in ten days could make it possible for loaded wagons to pass easily over the mountains. In January of the same year Congressman Floyd of Virginia introduced a bill in the House providing for the occupation of Oregon, the extinguishment of the Indian title

[10] Chittenden, II, ch. III and IV; also American State Papers, 19th Cong., 1st Sess., Doc. 117.

[11] American State Papers, Military Affairs, vol. III, pp. 615, 828; vol. IV, pp. 219, 371, 631; vol. V, pp. 373, 729; vol. VI, pp. 149-153; vol. VII, pp. 974-985, 1002.

[12] American State Papers, Miscellaneous, II, pp. 629-634.

and a provisional government in Oregon. The measure never got any further than a reference to a committee of the whole after the second reading. A second bill by the same author met a similar fate, being tabled January, 1823.[13]

A third bill, introduced by Floyd January, 1824, providing for a military colony in Oregon, a territorial government when expedient, and the donation of a section of land to actual settlers in Oregon, was received more favorably. While it was under consideration the President laid before the House an estimation of the cost of an expedition from Council Bluffs to the Columbia. The measure passed the House the following December and went to the Senate for consideration, where it was finally tabled, in spite of the able championship of Senators Benton and Barbour.[14] (March, 1825.)

President Monroe, in his last annual message to Congress, December, 1824, recommended the establishment of a "military post at the mouth of the Columbia, or at some other point in that quarter within our acknowledged limits, to promote intercourse between our Western States and Territories. * * *"[15] Likewise did President Adams, in his first annual message, suggesting also, "the equipment of a public ship for the exploration of the whole North West coast. * * *"[16] Floyd promptly followed Adams' recommendation with a bill, authorizing, among other things, the President to erect forts west of the mountains and garrison them, and to send an exploring party to the Columbia under military escort. The measure failed to pass on the third reading by a vote of 29 to 75.[17]

The contests over these bills gave considerable publicity to the various phases of the Oregon question and the matter

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[13] Bancroft's Oregon, I pp. 350-359; Annals of Congress, 16th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 941-959.

[14] Bancroft, Oregon, I, pp. 360-365; American State Papers, Military Affairs, II, pp. 623-4.

A House report for April, 1824 contained a letter by Gen. Thos. S. Jesup, recommending a line of posts across the continent from Council Bluffs to protect traders and to prevent the English from operating in the territory of the U. S. See House Reports, 18th Cong., 1st Sess., II, p. 110.

In 1823 John Jacob Astor wrote the Secretary of State, on solicitation, regarding the need of government posts in Oregon. He had asked for such protection in 1813 which was promised, but never given. See American State Papers, Miscellaneous, II, pp. 1007-1112.

[15] House Miscellaneous Doc., 53d Cong., 2d Sess., vol. 37; Messages and Papers of the Presidents, II, p. 262.

[16] Ibid., p. 313.

[17] Bancroft's Oregon, I, pp. 367-8. It was not until 1838 that a bill similar to Floyd's was introduced again.

of protecting the interests of American citizens in the unorganized public domain. The debates contained long and detailed accounts of the resources of the Columbia Valley, the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Oregon, and the region of the Upper Missouri. The information, which was turned into argument, was obtained from reports of travelers, traders, explorers, and Government investigations. Those in favor of the measures emphasized the trade advantages which would be realized from such Government aid as was contained in the proposed legislation. They argued that the establishment of a Government trade route up the Missouri and its tributaries, over the mountains, down the Columbia, and across the Pacific to the Orient, would produce great profit to the Nation. Furthermore, they declared that it was the Government's duty to protect its citizens from molestations at the hand of the Indians, and especially the British. The strong arm of the government, they maintained, should protect and encourage American enterprise wherever it pursued a legitimate course in the territories of the United States. Yet, with all the ardor, which such a program could summon, not enough support was rallied to effect the desired legislation.[18]

It is, indeed, significant that Congress did nothing during the twenties and thirties to gratify the desire that substantial Government aid and protection be given American enterprise in the region in question. The reasons might be summarized as being due to:[19] (1) The existence of extreme partisanism and the growing feeling of sectionalism in the country—"The Era of Hard Feelings"; (2) the lack of interest in Oregon on the part of many, due to its remoteness and the vast undeveloped expanse of seemingly uninhabitable territory between it and the states; (3) belief that such aid would be class legislation; (4) the improbability of the Government's ever receiving returns commensurate with the necessary investment; (5) the existence of the treaty of joint occupation with England; and (6) the general belief that the Great Bend of

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[18] See Annals of Congress for 1822-23, pp. 355, 390, 411, 583, 602, 678, 691, 696, 700; also Pamphlet, Proceedings in the United States Senate on the Bill for the Protection of the Fur Trade in answer to Mr. Barton's Publication of July 1824, by Thos. H. Benton; also Abridgment of the Debates of Congress, VIII (1824-25) pp. 183-198, 203-213.

[19] Ibid.

the Missouri River was the western limit of civilization—that the region beyond was to remain the Indian country, a semi-arid desert waste and mountainous region, unworthy of civilized effort. It took more than a quarter of a century of effort before any legislation was passed to protect those interests operating between the western frontier and Oregon.

Nevertheless there were some acts of the executive branch of the Government during the thirties which deserve mentioning, since they can be construed as benevolent to private enterprise in Oregon and the intervening territory. In 1835 the Secretary of War sent Colonel Henry Dodge with an expeditionary force of about 120 men to explore the region south of the Missouri to the mountains. He left Fort Leavenworth in May and returned in September, exploring the Platte River country to the mountains and the Upper Arkansas. The Secretary reported that the expedition was "employed in exhibiting to the Indians a force well calculated to check or to punish any hostilities they may commit," and to add to the general knowledge of that region. Many councils were held with the Indians and much done to conciliate the warlike tribes and to impress upon them the necessity of their respecting the interests of the whites among them. Dodge recommended in his report "one or two good positions for a military post, should it ever be the policy of the Government to establish one in this portion of their territories."[20]

A complaint that settlers in Oregon were subjected to hardships at the hands of the Hudson Bay Company caused President Jackson to direct W. A. Slocum of the naval service to proceed to Oregon to investigate conditions. Slocum visited the Columbia in 1837, remaining only a short time, but long enough to give some material assistance and encouragement to Americans there. His report contained valuable information regarding the Oregon country.[21]

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[20] Sen. Doc., 24th Cong., 1st Sess., I, p. 43; Colonel Dodge's Journal, House Doc. No. 181, 24th Cong., 1st Sess.; American State Papers, Military Affairs, V, p. 373.

Col. Dodge, the year before, had been sent from Ft. Gibson with about 500 dragoons to escort traders over the Sante Fe Trail. House Exec. Doc. No. 2, 23d Cong., 2d Sess. As early as 1829 the government had set a precedent for giving cavalry and military aid to the Santa Fe Trade. George A. Forsyth, Story of the Soldier, (New York 1900), p. 150.

[21] Bancroft's Oregon, I, pp. 100-103, 140-142; Slocum's Report, House Report Supplement, 25th Cong., 3d Sess.

C. *The Acquisition of Oregon and Assurance of Protection in the Forties.*

By the close of the thirties and the beginning of the forties the Oregon question began to assume such proportions that Congress was obliged to reopen the consideration of measures concerning the control of the Columbia and the protection of American interests there, as well as measures pertaining to communication with that region. Private enterprise, unaided by the Government, had continued to exploit the North West; missionaries had braved the wilds to carry Christianity to the natives of the Columbia. Business interests of Americans and English were clashing beyond the Rockies. A considerable population from the states had trekked over the mountains and were demanding the protection of the United States Government in their extremities. It was clearly evident that the fate of Oregon must soon be decided.[22]

So earnest was the public that the Government bring the treaty of joint occupancy to a close and protect Americans going to and in Oregon that petitions, memorials and resolutions praying congressional action began to be sent to Washington from all parts of the country. On January 13, 1840, citizens of Elizabethtown, Ky., petitioned Congress to plant a colony in Oregon, to "cut" a road from the Missouri across the mountains to Astoria, and to place garrisons at convenient places along the route to protect emigrants from the Indians.[23] Petitions of like character were received from citizens of Indiana and Missouri early in the same year.[24] The State Legislature of Illinois went so far as to pass resolutions for the speedy settlement of the title to Oregon.[25] The citizens of Oregon, too, petitioned Congress in 1840 to extend the jurisdiction and laws of the United States over that region.[26]

As early as 1838 Senator Lewis F. Linn of Missouri had forced the Senate to consider a bill providing for the occupation of Oregon with a military force, a fort on the Columbia,

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[22] The first petition from the citizens of Oregon was in 1838. It asked that the laws of the United States be extended beyond the Rocky Mountains.

[23] Sen. Doc. 26th Cong., 1st Sess., No. 172; Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 3, p. 393.

[24] Sen. Doc. 26th Cong., 1st Sess., Nos. 40, 244.

[25] Ibid. No. 93.

[26] Ibid. No. 514.

and the establishment of a port of entry in that country.[27] The measure, after reference first to the committee on military affairs and later to a select committee, who returned it somewhat modified to the Senate, failed to pass (February, 1838). Linn's second bill secured no more favorable reception.[28] The passage of Linn's bills, it was believed, would have endangered our relations with England over the Maine boundary.

In March, 1840, Linn introduced a third bill. This was in response to a recommendation by the Secretary of War in compliance with a resolution of the Senate, directing the Secretary to give his opinion of the expediency of establishing a line of military posts from the Missouri to the mountains to protect trade and to facilitate communication with Oregon. This bill, besides protection, provided for the appointment of an Indian Agent for Oregon and the donation of 1,000 acres of land to each male settler over 18 years old. The controversy over the Maine boundary prevented action on this bill also, as it did on still another bill a little later providing for the extension of a portion of the laws of the United States over Oregon.[29]

Beginning with 1841, the President's messages began once more to include recommendations for the establishment of military posts along the route to Oregon. President Tyler, in his annual message of that year, asked Congress to give special attention to "that portion of the Secretary's (war) report which proposes the establishment of a chain of military posts from Council Bluffs to some point on the Pacific Coast within our limits. * * * giving protection to our frontier settlements, and of establishing the means of safe intercourse between the American settlements at the mouth of the Columbia and those on this side of the Rocky Mountains. * * * "[30] Linn responded at once by introducing a bill in the Senate, similar to his former measures. This he followed in January with a resolution requesting the President to give

[27] Bancroft's Oregon, I, pp. 370-71.

[28] Ibid. pp. 372-373. Five thousand copies of this bill were printed and circulated to create public sentiment. The Foreign Committee of the House at the same time reported adverse to the expediency of establishing a territorial government in Oregon, giving Maine situation as the reason, 1,000 copies of this report were circulated. Ibid.

[29] Bancroft's Oregon, I, pp. 375-378. Linn's fourth bill was prompted by a report that England had extended the laws of Canada over Oregon. Further efforts by Linn in January and August, 1841, were just as fruitless. Ibid. 378.

[30] House Miscel. Doc., vol. 4, Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 53d Cong., 2d Sess., p. 3265.

England the one year's notice to terminate the treaty of 1827. The Maine boundary was still in the balance and action was once more deferred.

The next year several important things, emanating in one way or another from the Government, happened, all of which materially augmented the interest in Oregon. The first deserving consideration are the explorations in the Columbia Valley by Lieutenant Charles Wilkes in 1841. Wilkes was authorized by Congress in 1836 to explore parts of the Pacific Ocean, including the coast of Oregon and the Lower Columbia. His report, which he delivered before the National Institute, Washington, in 1842, gave much information about the Columbia River as far inland as Walla Walla.[31]

Another act of considerable consequence was the appointment of Elijah White as Indian Agent in Oregon. White was to go immediately and encourage as many emigrants as possible to accompany him. With about one hundred men, women and children he left Independence, Mo., in the early summer of 1842 and arrived among the settlements on the Columbia in the autumn of the same year. This was undoubtedly one of the most important preliminary movements which determined the speedy occupation of the Columbia Valley by Americans. White's band was the vanguard of thousands who trekked over the trail to Oregon during the next few years. The Government had now, for the first time, a resident agent in that country and seemed to approve of a considerable emigration thither.[32]

Perhaps the most important event in the history of Oregon and the West in 1842 was the appointment of John C. Fremont "to explore the country between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains." This action was authorized by "the Topographical Bureau with the sanction of the Secretary of War."[33] The real purpose of Fremont's expedition seems to have been known to only a few. It was not until long after that it was declared to be "in aid of and auxiliary

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[31] See Synopsis of the United States Exploring Expedition, 1838-1842, delivered before the National Institute, Washington, by Charles Wilkes, pp. 34-40. Another account is, Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition, 1838-42, by Charles Wilkes, five volumes, (Philadelphia, 1844), II, ch. 9-15.

[32] See White's report to the Commissioner of Indian affairs, April 1, 1843, Exec. Doc., 28th Cong., 1st Sess., I No. 2, p. 450.

[33] John C. Fremont, Memoirs, (Chicago and New York 1887), pp. 69-72. President Tyler was averse to any aid to western emigration. Ibid.

to the Oregon emigration.'' Benton was back of this movement to aid emigration to the Columbia. Fremont himself says in his memoirs that the purpose of the expedition ''was to indicate and describe the line of travel and the best positions for military posts; and to describe and fix in position the South Pass in the Rocky Mountains.''[34]

Fremont, with about twenty companions and Kit Carson as guide, left Missouri in the early summer of 1842 and returned to St. Louis in October. The route taken was that commonly taken by the Oregon emigrants. The work performed was of a scientific nature and such as to contribute materially to the knowledge of the region traversed. Benton, in his Thirty Years' View, says: ''* * * The exploration of Lieutenant Fremont had the double effect of fixing an important point [South Pass] in the line of the emigrants' travel, and giving them encouragement from the apparent interest the Government took in their enterprise.''[35]

The appointment of an Indian Agent to Oregon and the sending of Fremont to explore the route to the South Pass were acts of the Government sufficient to encourage those desiring to emigrate to Oregon.

A fourth act of the Government in 1842, interpreted in the light of its sequel, was a crucial one in the history of Oregon. It was expected that the ministers who were concluding a settlement of the northeast boundary between Canada and the United States would also arrange the boundary on the northwest. When it became known that the Webster-Ashburton Treaty left the Oregon question unsettled, a storm of indignation and disappointment went over the country. Resolutions from bodies of citizens and state legislatures began to implore Congress to terminate the treaty of joint occupation of Oregon and to protect and aid American interests in that country. President Tyler, in his annual message in December, apologized for the neglect of Oregon by explaining that its inclusion in the negotiations of the other matter would have created complications injurious to the settlement of the Maine boundary. He further expressed

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[34] Fremon't Memoirs, pp. 69-72.

[35] Thos. H. Benton, Thirty Years in the U. S. Senate, 1820-1850, (New York 1858,) II, p. 478. Fremont made his report to his superiors, March 1, 1843. The Senate ordered 1000 copies published for distribution.

his intention of urging upon England "the importance of its [Oregon boundary] early settlement."[36]

Soon after the provisions of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty became known Senator Linn began to urge the enactment of a bill providing for a line of military posts, not to exceed five in number, from the western frontier to the mouth of the Columbia; large grants of lands to settlers, their wives and children; the appointment of Indian agents in the West; the organization of a judicial system between Iowa and Oregon; and for an appropriation of $100,000 to carry on the work. The best talent in the Senate was enlisted in the debate. Benton ably aided Linn. The argument for and against the measure was very much the same as that given in the debates on the previous measures by Linn and Floyd.[37] The bill passed the Senate February, 1843, by a vote of 24 to 22 and went to the House, where it failed.

The interest in the progress of events relating to Oregon in 1842-43 was intense. Many petitions suggesting legislation for that region were received in Washington. Members of Congress received letters from all over the country, particularly from the western states, urging them to support measures favorable to American interests in the Columbia Valley and the intervening territory. Senator Linn, who died in October, 1843, received hundreds of such letters up to the time of his death. During the session of 1843-44 memorials continued to implore Congress to legislate in favor of American interests west of the Rockies.[38]

The events of 1842, and especially Linn's bill of '42-'43, led many to believe that the Government was now determined to aid in the colonization of the Columbia Valley. Though Linn's measure was not passed by the House, "the emigrants assumed it to mean protection." It was the generous provisions of this proposed legislation, which seemed certain to be enacted, that encouraged the great emigration in 1843.[39]

In this same year the Government sent Fremont on a second expedition "to connect with the first expedition at the

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[36] Sen. Doc., 27th Cong., 2d Sess., III, p. 5.

[37] See pages 133-136. Benton's Thirty Years' View, II pp. 468-478 gives a good account of the debate on this bill.

[38] Bancroft's Oregon, I, pp. 381-84.

[39] Burnett's Recollections, p. 97; also Greenhow's Oregon, pp. 338-91.

South Pass * * *" and "* * * to examine the broad region south of the Columbia River."[40] Thus, with Wilkes' explorations there would be "a connected survey of the interior and western half of the continent."[41] To insure protection from the Indians, Fremont obtained a howitzer from the arsenal at St. Louis. This made the expedition seem military rather than scientific and caused the authorities at Washington to send orders to Fremont to return to the capital to explain his action. Fortunately Mrs. Fremont prudently delayed the order and hurried her husband on his mission.

This expedition took a course somewhat farther south of that of the first. It explored an area including the sources of the Platte and Arkansas Rivers in the region which is now Colorado, then went on through South Pass to the Salt Lake country, where further explorations were made. From Salt Lake Fremont went on to the Columbia, where he was the guest of Dr. McLoughlin at Vancouver, November, 1843. From the Columbia, Fremont explored the heart of the region southward as far as the most southern part of California. From there he pursued a northeastern direction to Salt Lake, thence eastward to the sources of the Arkansas, which stream he followed for a time, leaving it for a more direct route to Western Missouri. He arrived in St. Louis in August, 1844, and soon went to Washington, where in March, 1845, he completed and gave his report to the public, 10,000 extra copies being ordered by Congress for distribution.

The service which this intrepid explorer performed, not only for his own country, but for the world, was incalculable. His two expeditions furnished much scientific information concerning the West. Moreover, the presence of a Government force at times near the chief route of communication between the states and Oregon could not but have a salutary effect upon the emigrants.

While Fremont was concluding his second expedition and preparing his report Congress was considering legislation for the benefit of Oregon. Missouri sent David R. Atchison to succeed Senator Linn, deceased. Atchison followed the good

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[40] Benton's Thirty Years' View, p. 579; Fremon't Memoirs, p. 165.

[41] Fremont's Memoirs, p. 276.

Fremont's other expeditions, 1845, 1848, 1853, are little concerned with the Oregon Trail and interests in Oregon.

example of his predecessor by introducing a bill in the first session of the Twenty-eighth Congress similar to Linn's bill of 1843. The arrival of an agent from England, however, to negotiate the settlement of the Oregon difficulty caused action to be deferred. A second bill by Atchison to establish a government in Oregon failed to get a third reading. During the same time the House considered a measure to extend the civil and criminal code of Iowa over Oregon as far north as 54° 40′; but nothing came of it other than the printing of 10,000 copies for distribution.[42]

President Tyler, in referring to Oregon in his annual message of 1844, said that "military posts at suitable points upon the extended line of travel would enable our citizens to migrate in comparative safety. * * * These posts would constitute places of rest for the weary emigrant, where he would be sheltered securely against danger of an attack by the Indians, and be able to recover from the exhaustion from a long line of travel." Yet, with the President urging protective legislation, with the Secretary of War suggesting suitable places for garrisons, with committees of both houses of Congress reporting bills providing all the protection needed, and with resolutions of conventions and state legislatures asking the national legislature to aid and protect the emigrants, it was impossible to get a majority of both the House and the Senate to favor a law embodying even a part of the program for Oregon. The House did succeed in passing a bill to organize the Territory of Oregon, February, 1845. This measure replaced a bill by Atchison in the Senate; but that body let it fail for the want of time. Another measure "to protect the rights of citizens in Oregon," passed the House, April, 1846, but failed in the Senate. This last measure was in response to a petition from the provisional government of Oregon that the Government protect American citizens in that country.[43]

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[42] Bancroft's Oregon, I pp. 384-386.

[43] See Bancroft's Oregon, I, pp 386-87. Interest in Texas influenced southern members often to oppose legislation for Oregon, Ibid. In December 1845, Stephen A. Douglas introduced a bill in Congress for a national highway to the Pacific to aid emigration. See Richard Smith Elliott, Notes taken in Sixty Years, (St. Louis, 1883), p. 190.

See also House Report, 27th Cong., 3d Sess., Doc. 426, No. 31; Cong. Globe, 1844-5, pp. 17, 155, 237, 277; Sen. Doc., 28th Cong., 2d Sess., No. 56. The reports of the Secretary of War for 1841, 1843, 1844 all recommend the establishment of a line of posts on the route to Oregon.

The War Department, being executive in character, could respond more easily to the demand for protection on the route to Oregon. In May, 1845, Colonel S. W. Kearny was ordered to proceed from Fort Leavenworth to the South Pass with five companies of dragoons, numbering about 250 men. The soldiers were well armed and took with them two howitzers. Here was an armed force sufficient to overawe the Indians and impress upon them the danger of molesting the emigrants. This expedition was purely military in character, though its purpose was to cultivate peace among the savages. The troops returned to Leavenworth after an absence of ninety days, by going down the Arkansas and over the Santa Fe Trail.

Kearny reported that the Indians "were distinctly told that the road opened by the dragoons must not be closed by the Indians, and that the white people traveling upon it must not be disturbed, either in their persons or property." The savages were instructed in the destructive qualities of the howitzers by witnessing the discharge of the two pieces, which filled them with amazement. The report further stated that "although we did not see as many Indians on our march as we had desired, yet the fact of our having been through their country is, no doubt, at this time well known to every man, woman and child in it. And as those were the first soldiers ever seen by those upper Indians, and as those who saw them were much struck with their uniform appearance, their fine horses, their arms and big guns (howitzers), it is most probable in their accounts to those who did not see us, they have rather exaggerated than lessened our number, power and force."[44]

Kearny thought that no army post should be established near Fort Laramie, as was recommended, as the advantage would not be commensurate with the expense. In fact, his report seems to discourage the location of military posts anywhere on the route to Oregon. He advised, instead, that military forces similar to his be sent out every two or three years to keep the Indians quiet and to remind them of the effectiveness with which the dragoons could operate in any

[44] See Sen. Doc., 29th Cong., 1st Sess., I, No. 1, p. 210 for Kearny's report. Mention also in Niles Register, vol. 69, p. 303.

part of their country.[45] This act of the Government was indeed protection for the emigrants, who must have been greatly encouraged to see a strong detachment of soldiers along the trail, whose purpose was to warn the savages to let them alone.

The year 1846 witnessed the settlement of the title to Oregon and the passage of an act providing for the establishment of a line of military posts along the route to the Columbia. In April Congress authorized the President to abrogate the convention of 1827,[46] and the following August the commissioners fixed the boundary at 49°.

On May 19 Congress passed "An Act to provide for raising a regiment of mounted riflemen, and for establishing military stations on the route to Oregon."[47] The main provisions of the measure were the raising of one regiment of ten companies for duty at the posts; the appropriation of $76,000 for the expense of mounting and equipping the regiment; and the additional appropriation of $5,000 to defray the expense of each post which the President might see fit to establish, and to purchase locations from the Indians.

It was not until the spring of the following year, however, that a move was made to carry out the provisions of this act. "March 31 a call was made on the State of Missouri for a regiment of mounted volunteers, a part of which was to be employed in establishing military posts on the route to Oregon."[48] The war with Mexico, however, caused the entire regiment to be ordered to New Mexico. The Secretary of War then made a requisition upon Governor Edwards of Missouri for "a battalion of similar troops" to establish the long wished for posts. One company of artillery, two of mounted men and two of infantry soon set out from Missouri to locate and begin the erection of the forts. Two posts were located, "one near Grand Island, where the road to Oregon strikes the Platte, and the other at or near Fort Laramie."[49]

The Missouri battalion began work in 1847 on the post near Grand Island, which they called Fort Kearney. Not

[45] Kearny recommended that the whole unorganized territory west of the Mississippi be put under martial law.
[46] U. S. Statutes at Large, 29th Cong., 1st Sess., vol. 9, p. 110.
[47] Ibid., p. 13.
[48] Sen. Doc., 30th Cong., 1st Sess., No 503, (The report of the Secretary of War, December 2, 1847)
[49] Ibid. See Niles Register also, vol. 72, p. 370.

much was accomplished that year toward its construction, but the following year the troops returned and continued the work. Besides locating the two posts and beginning work on the first, these troops did excellent service in operating against the Indians in that region.

But the task of establishing the posts on the route to Oregon moved slowly, as it had ever done. Reports of Indian massacres in Oregon caused the President in 1848 to order a regiment of mounted riflement in Mexico to Jefferson Barracks, and from there to proceed to Oregon. The soldiers, however, took advantage of a privilege to resign and the regiment was depleted. Vigorous measures were used to recruit the regiment and several more companies were quickly raised. Two of these proceeded westward and relieved the Missouri Volunteers who were at Fort Kearney.[50] The lateness of the season prevented the sending that year of any relief to Oregon over the trail. By the winter of 1848 three buildings had been erected at Fort Kearney for the two companies, with a bakery, stables and a large storehouse.[51]

Early in 1849 a regiment of mounted riflemen proceeded from Ft. Leavenworth to complete the work of establishing the line of posts to Oregon.[52] After resting and overhauling their equipment at Fort Kearney, the regiment went on to Forth Laramie where two companies remained, occupying the old fort buildings which the government had purchased.[53] During the summer the soldiers erected a hospital and magazine and got other buildings under way of construction. The remainder of the regiment went on to Oregon, leaving two companies to establish a post near Ft. Hall, and arrived at Vancouver early in October. Owing to the scarcity of forage near Ft. Hall the post there was abandoned and one located near the Dalles instead.[54]

This regiment of riflemen was the first military force to travel the entire route to Oregon. Its mission was success-

[50] Exec. Doc., 30th Cong., 2d Sess., vol. 1, pp. 79, 162.

[51] Exec. Doc., 31st Cong., 1st Sess., vol. 3, p. 225.

[52] Congress did pass an act for a territorial government in Oregon, August, 1848, and in September of the same year, a military escort accompanied the newly appointed governor and marshall of the territory from Ft. Leavenworth over the Sante Fe Trail and along the Gila River to California. In November 1848 two companies of soldiers sailed from New York for service in Oregon, arriving there the next May and locating at Fort Vancouver and at Fort Steelacoom on Puget Sound.

[53] Exec. Doc., 31st Cong., 1st Sess., vol. 3, p. 225.

[54] Exec. Doc., 31st Cong., 2d Sess., vol. 1, p. 5.

fully performed; the posts were finally established and protection provided for the emigrants throughout the entire length of the Trail. It should be borne in mind, however, that the expeditions of 1845, 1847, 1848, and 1849 moved independently of the emigrant trains. There were times, of course, when the soldiers and travelers met and passed each other. The presence and operations of the military forces on the route, nevertheless, served as a valuable protective agency to the emigrants. The Indians could easily discriminate between United States soldiers on duty and companies of emigrants passing through their land, and they knew they could not molest the latter without danger of punishment by the former. Fort Laramie was especially well located since it was in the country of the Sioux and the Crows, who were the most hostile to the movements of the emigrants.

By 1849-50, then, the government had a line of military posts on the route to Oregon from Fort Leavenworth on the Missouri to Fort Vancouver on the Columbia. The intervening posts were at Fort Kearney, Fort Laramie, and the post at the Dalles. There were posts also at Astoria and Steelacoom.[55] The United States was now the sole possessor of the Columbia Valley, and had given Oregon a territorial government to replace the provisional one, which the settlers had formed several years before. The government had also established post roads in Oregon, and in 1849 Congress had authorized the Secretary of War to furnish arms and ammunition at the cost to the government to persons emigrating to Oregon, California, and New Mexico.[56] The Trail to Oregon was now under government protection, even though the aid came slowly and was not entirely adequate to the emigrants' needs.

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[55] Sen. Doc., 32d Cong., 1st Sess., vol. 1, p. 145.

[56] United States Statutes at Large, 29th Cong., 2d Sess., (vol. 9), pp. 200, 418; Ibid., 31st Cong., 1st Sess. (vol. 9) p. 496.

APPENDIX I.

[Organization of Emigrating Company, Bloomington, now Muscatine, Iowa, 1843.]

"Saturday April 1, 1843.[1]

"The meeting was organized by calling David Hendershott to the chair, and Silas A. Hudson as secretary; when a motion of James G. Edwards the report of the committee read in part on Saturday last, was ordered to be read in full.

"Mr. Hight, from the committee on correspondence, made the following report:

"Your committee of correspondence beg leave to report that they have written to Independence, Missouri, and to Columbus, Ohio, and have requested information, and also have proposed to join at some point this side of the mountains. Your committee have also thought it proper to submit a set of resolutions for your consideration, which ought to govern the company. It is expressly understood that we emigrate to Oregon for the purpose of settlement; men of families are requested to join; we have already engaged a physician and expect a chaplain to accompany the enterprise.

"Organization of the Oregon Emigration Society. There shall be elected one captain, four sergeants, and as soon as the company shall arrive at the gap of the Rocky Mountains, and consists of not less than one hundred men, they may choose one first and one second lieutenant. The captain and the four officers next in rank shall direct all the movements, and make all arrangements for the society for their march: and they shall act as directors, and shall qualify candidates and receive them as such at their distinction. They shall have charge of the funds of the company; shall choose their own clerk, who shall keep a regular account of all moneys expended and the amount on hand; and the directors shall report to the company monthly. The clerk shall keep a regular journal

[1] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 3, p. 392.

of the march. No negroes or mulattoes shall be allowed to accompany the expedition under any pretention whatever.

"*Equipment*—Rifle guns, to carry from thirty-two to sixty bullets to the pound, and a tomahawk and knife, $16; 1 chopping axe, spade, etc., $2; 100 pounds side bacon, $3; 1 barrel flour and 1 peck of salt, $2.25; ½ pound cayenne pepper, 1 barrel beans, $1; 1 canteen and 1 blanket, $5; 1 tent to every six men, $150; 1 pony or mule, $60; teams and horses to be shod, and spare shoes; ½ barrel, iron hooped, to each wagon, for carrying water, $1.50. To each wagon, 3 sets plow irons; 1 cradling scythe to each wagon; all mechanical tools to be taken; $20 cash to be deposited with the directors for company use.

"Every man ought to carry with him a Bible and other religious books, as we hope not to degenerate into a state of barbarism.

"The whole amount necessary for each man, without a horse, will be about $65.

"As soon as fifty men shall have joined and been inspected, and found competent, they shall choose their officers and then agree as to the time of taking up the line of march. We shall pass through Mount Pleasant, and to the agency, and thence the best route to Council Bluffs.

"Mr. Edwards moved that the report be adopted and printed, which was agreed to; when, on motion of General Hight, the meeting adjourned to meet on Saturday, April 8th at 2 o'clock p. m."

APPENDIX II.

Rules and Regulations for the Government of the Oregon Emigrating Company.[2]

Resolved, Whereas, we deem it necessary for the government of all societies, either civil or military, to adopt certain rules and regulations for their government, for the purpose of keeping good order and promoting civil and military discipline. In order to insure union and safety, we deem it necessary to adopt the following rules and regulations for the government of the said company:

Rule 1. Every male person of the age of 16, or upward, shall be considered a legal voter in all affairs relating to the company.

Rule 2. There shall be nine members elected by a majority of the company, who shall form a council, whose duty it shall be to settle all disputes arising between individuals, and to try and pass sentence on all persons for any act for which they may be guilty, which is subversive to good order and military discipline. They shall take especial cognizance of all sentinels and members of the guard who may be guilty of neglect of duty or sleeping on post. Such persons shall be tried and sentence passed upon them at the discretion of the council. A majority of two-thirds of the council shall decide all questions that may come before them, subject to the approval or disapproval of the captain. If the captain disapproves of the decision of the council, he shall state to them his reasons, when they shall again pass upon the question, and if the same decision is again made by the same majority, it shall be final.

Rule 3. There shall be a captain elected who shall have supreme military command of the company. It shall be the

[2] Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, vol. 3, page 407; Wilkes, History, Oregon, Part II, p. 70.

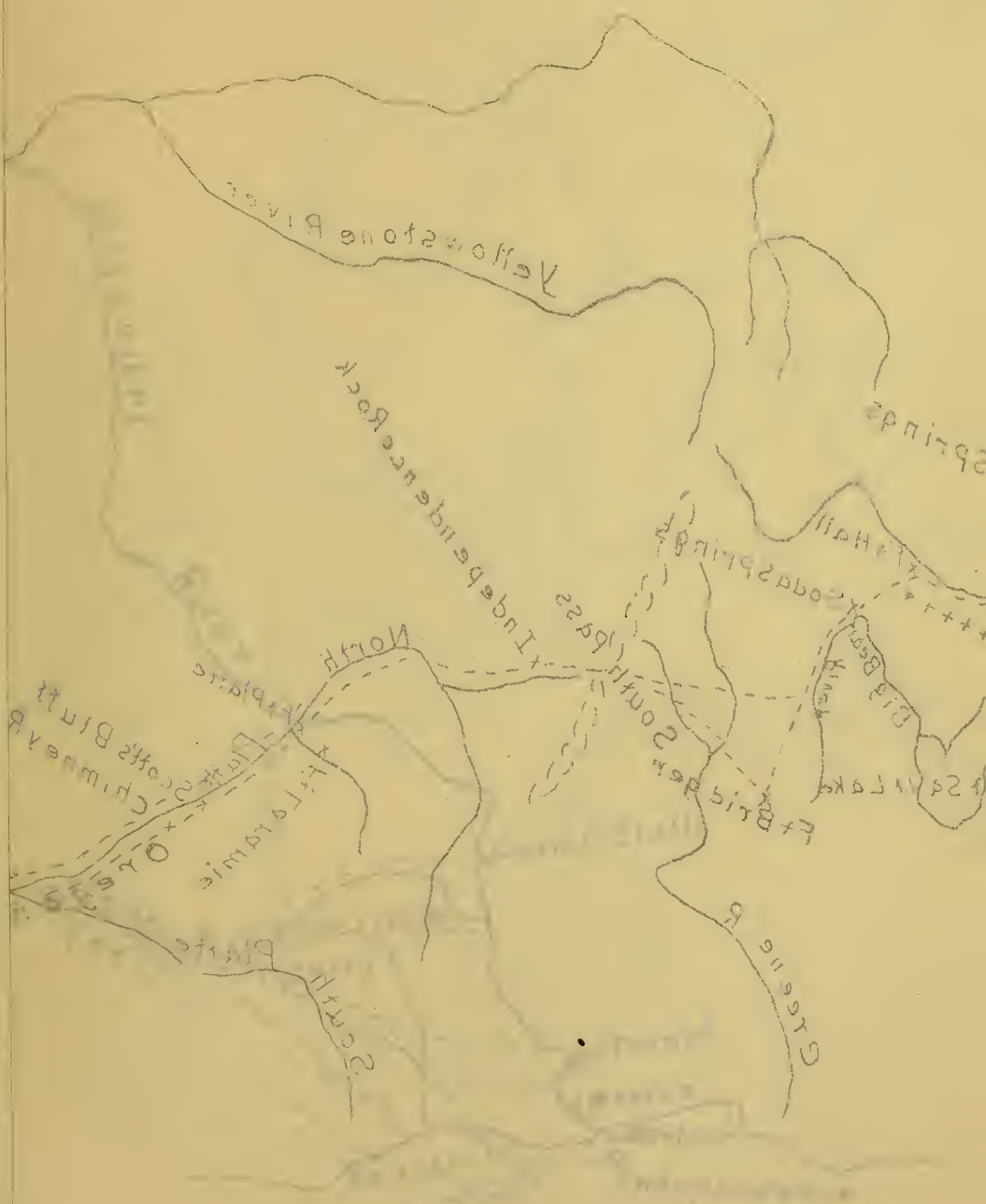
duty of the captain to maintain good order and strict discipline, and, as far as practicable, to enforce all rules and regulations adopted by the company. Any man who shall be guiity of disobedience of orders shall be tried and sentenced at the discretion of the council, which may extend to expulsion from the company. The captain shall appoint the necessary number of duty sergeants, one of which shall take charge of every guard, and who shall hold their office at the pleasure of the captain.

Rule 4. There shall be an orderly sergeant elected by the company, whose duty it shall be to keep a regular roll, arranged in alphabetical order, of every person subject to guard duty in the company, and shall make out his guard details by commencing at the top of the roll and proceeding to the bottom, thus giving every man an equal tour of guard duty. He shall also give the member of every guard notice when he is detailed for duty. He shall also parade every guard, call the roll and inspect the same at the time of mounting. He shall also visit the guard at least once every night and see that the guard are doing strict military duty, and may at any time give them the necessary instructions respecting their duty, and shall regularly make report to the captain every morning and be considered second in command.

Rule 5. The captain, orderly sergeant and members of the council shall hold their offices at the pleasure of the company, and it shall be the duty of the council, upon the application of one-third or more of the company, to order a new election for either captain or orderly sergeant, or new member or members of the council, or for all or any of them, as the case may be.

Rule 6. The election of officers shall not take place until the company meet at Kansas River.

Rule 7. No family shall be allowed to take more than three loose cattle to every male member of the family of the age of 16 and upward.



MAP OF THE OREGON TRAIL.

MAP OF THE OREGON TRAIL.

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