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EARLY SETTLEMENT AND ORGANIZATION OF DOUGLAS COUNTY; HISTORICAL DATA CONCERNING COMING OF FIRST WHITE MAN

Condition of This Region When the Provisional Government Was Organized—First Knowledge of Douglas Co.—Sir Francis Drake and His Pilot Morera—Bartolome Ferrello in 1543—Cape Blanco and Rio de Aguilar

AT THE TIME when the few American settlers who had gathered on this far western frontier, knowing not yet to whom this fair country belonged, and feeling the absolute need of some form of government for the protection of society, for united defense in case of an attack by the aborigines, and for these purposes for which governing authority is necessary even in such a primitive state of society, organized the Provisional Government of Oregon, there were then no American settlers living within the limits of the present county of Douglas.

The only representatives of the Caucasian race living south of the Calapooia mountains, were the few white employees of the Hudson Bay Company, stationed at Fort Umpqua, just opposite the mouth of Elk creek, and the members of trapping parties belonging to the great corporation, trapping along the streams of that region and Northern California. The fertile valleys, which are now the abode of civilization, whose surrounding hills echo the ringing invitation of the church bell, where the school house door stands open and the smoke curls upward like an incense to heaven from the chimney tops of a thousand happy homes, were then occupied by a race of savages. The fertile fields which now reward the husbandman's toil with bountiful harvests of grain, knew not the uses of the plow; seed time and harvest came and went unheeded. Nature had dealt lavishly with this fair land, and upon her bounteous gifts these simple natives depended for their sustenance. Their food was the wild game of the forest, roots, grass seeds, nuts, berries, wild fruits and fish. They were children of nature, and nature had to provide for their wants unaided.

The extent of their own providence consisted of laying in a store of each thing in its season, to be used when nature was resting from her labor and recuperating her energies for another effort. Forty years have wrought a mighty change, how great the following events will show. The Indian has disappeared before the irresistible advance of a superior race; the fittest has survived; the lesser civilization has vanished. It is all in accordance with that great rule of evolution and steady development towards higher and better forms by which the whole universe is governed; and no one, seeing the great results accomplished, can fail to say that it is best; Even the few survivors of the lower race, gazing upon the blossoming fields which once belonged to their ignorant ancestors, though the iron enter their soul and they mourn the decadence of their people, sadly admit that the result was inevitable and was so ordained by the Great Spirit.

There is much uncertainty as to the knowledge of the Oregon coast possessed by the early Spanish explorers. From their reports it seems that in nearly every instance when, indeed, they reached as high latitude as all, they remained out of sight of land from Cape Mendocino to Vancouver Island. It thus happened that the extreme northern coast was explored and its details marked upon the maps with approximate correctness long before the character of the coast line of Oregon was understood, and before the mouth of the Columbia was discovered Spain and England were involved in a quarrel at Nootka, on the island of Vancouver, many leagues further north.

It is possible that Douglas county contains the soil upon which rested the first Caucasian foot that ever set on the Pacific coast of the United States. In 1578 Sir Francis Drake, that great English freebooter and scourge of the Spanish commerce, who was knighted by his queen for being the most successful pirate of his time, ravaged the Pacific colonies of Spain and plundered and burned her ships. According to Spanish accounts, though English narratives of his adventures are silent on the subject, Drake made his first landing on the northern coast in the vicinity of the Umpqua. Here he entered a "good harbor" and put ashore his Spanish pilot, Morera, leaving him among savages, who had never before seen or heard of a white man, to perish at their hands or by starvation or by exposure while making his way through 3,600 miles of unknown wilderness to Mexico. It was an act to be expected of such a reckless sea rover. Morera seems to have accomplished this wonderful journey, since from him could only the account have come, provided the whole story is not an invention of early Spanish historians, whose opinion of Drake was little better than of the father of all evil himself.

Though Drake was the first to make a landing on the coast, he was not the first to see it from the deck of a vessel. In 1543, Bartolome Ferrello, in command of two vessels dispatched by the Mexican

vealed any authority for the above story, while on the contrary there are many evidences, of a negative evidence to be sure, which throw discredit upon it. For many years before and after the date mentioned no explorations of the coast were made by Spanish vessels or those of any other nation; yet it is possible that one of the Spanish dias, which usually first reached the coast south of Cape Mendocino, may have been blown out of her course and entered the Umpqua in distress, as stated. If this had been the case, however, and the river named as related, then Spanish charts would thereafter have had indicated upon them the Umpqua river; but such was not the case, for the only river marked in this region on Spanish maps was the one discovered in 1603, and invariably named Rio de Aguilar. It is difficult to understand upon what authority this story of the discovery and naming of the Umpqua rests and it may well be doubted until better evidence is produced.

From that time until 1827, the Umpqua appears to have remained unknown. The great Northwest company and Hudson Bay Company occupied the disputed territory of Oregon many years before they explored Southern Oregon. Their streams lay to the east, and north of the Columbia. In 1827 Jedediah S. Smith, a partner in the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, entered Oregon from California at the head of a party of American trappers. The circumstances attending this expedition have been given at length in historical works following. The scene of Smith's disaster is located variously as on the Umpqua river near the coast on Smith river, which serves in its title to perpetuate the event, and on various streams further south. Just where it occurred is uncertain. From that time trapping parties of the Hudson Bay Company roamed through this region and set their traps on its numerous streams. So great was the trade which sprang up with the natives that the great company established a fort on the Umpqua a few years later, which served for many years as the headquarters for the business in this region. The post was called Fort Umpqua, and stood on the bank opposite the mouth of Elk creek. This was the outpost of civilization in Southern Oregon. This post was finally abandoned in 1862 and the site is now an immense grain field. Nothing remains to speak of former days but an aged apple tree, which was bearing fruit when the first settlers arrived.

The first division of Oregon into districts for purposes of election and local government was made July 5th, 1843. At that time all of Oregon south of Yamhill river and west of the Willamette and a supposed line running due south from its headwaters to the California boundary, was designated Yamhill district. All south of the Anchelyoke and east of the Willamette and the supposed line as far as the Rocky Mountains was called Champlain district. By this arrangement, Douglas county was cut into two nearly equal parts. The population of these two districts was confined to the region north of the Calapooia mountains, all south of the divide, as well as that vast stretch of unoccupied and almost unknown country lying between the Cascade and Rocky mountains, was tacked onto these districts simply because the boundaries of the territory comprehended them, and it was necessary to include them within the limits of some district. Extensive as they were, and important as they subsequently became, they were then of no political consequence whatever, and it mattered little to what district they belonged or how they were designated.

On the nineteenth of December, 1845, the territory was again subdivided. Southern Oregon was again cut into two parts by the continuation of its south from the Willamette to the western border, or Yamhill district, being bounded north by the Tuolumne river and Champlain district by the Clarkamas. Three days later a statute was passed changing the name district to county. On the same day the county of Polk was created from Yamhill, its northern boundary being nearly the same as at present and its southern limit the California line. This was done because of the increased number of settlers in the upper end of the Willamette valley. Two years later the population of that section had so increased that two new counties were created. The act of December 23, 1847, confined Polk to its present limits, and erected all south of Polk and west of the middle fork of the Willamette and its production to the California line into a new county called Benton. Five days later Champlain county, the name of which had been changed to Marion, was created, and all south of the Santiam and east of Benton county, clear to the summit of the Rocky mountains, was made the county of Linn. In 1848 a party of fifteen men from Willamette valley entered the Umpqua region, commanded by Major Peters. Among them was Philip Peters, who settled on Deer creek in 1851, where he still resides (1884). No immediate settlements followed this exploring tour.

This was the condition of Douglas county when it was first invaded by citizens of the United States in search of a home; divided in its allegiance between the counties of Linn and Benton, named in honor of those two sturdy giants of the United States senate who had fought so long, so earnestly and so successfully for the rights of our country in Oregon, and occupied only by representatives of that great English corporation which had rendered the battle necessary. It was in June, 1846, that the explorers of the southern emigrant route passed through the county, but it was not until the spring of 1848 that the leader of that party, Captain Levi Scott, left his former

home in the Willamette and settled in Scott's valley, on Elk creek, not many miles from the Hudson Bay Company's post. At the same time, his two sons, William and John, settled near by in Yoncalla valley, as did also Robert and Thomas Cowan. The next year Jesse Applegate, J. T. Cooper, John Long and ———— Jeffery settled in the same neighborhood. Prior to all these settlements was that of Warren N. Goodell, who located a donation claim on the site of the present town of Drain, in the year 1847.

In 1850 travel to and from the California mines increased, and pack trails with loads of goods began to be seen on the trails. The number of settlers materially increased, especially in the upper end of the county, the majority of the newcomers being from the Willamette valley. Captain Scott went down the Umpqua and laid out the town of Scottsburg, as a supplying point for the upper country.

There were accessions also from

the south, by way of the sea from San Francisco. The map of Fremont's explorations, which was the one upon which all Americans relied for their information in regard to Pacific coast geography, indicated the Klamath as issuing from Klamath Lake and entering the ocean in the vicinity of Rogue River, the two streams being confounded by the great "Pathfinder." The excitement about the Trinity mines and the discovery of gold on the Klamath river and its affluents, coupled with the knowledge gained from dear experience that the Klamath was not navigable, led a number of men to look still further north to the Umpqua as being a river which could be entered, and on the banks of which could be founded a city which would be a base of supplies for the mines of Northern California. These men organized under the name of Winchester, Payne and Co., and dispatched the schooner Samuel Roberts up the coast in command of Captain Coffin, the expedition being in charge of Peter Mackey. They passed the Klamath and came to the mouth of the Rogue river, and supposing it to be the Umpqua, Mackey landed with two of his party. They were quickly surrounded by Indians, who evinced a hostile intent. The men endeavored to reach their boats with the purpose of returning to their vessel, but the savages interposed, crowded around them and pulling their clothing, buttons, etc., in an exceedingly impolite manner. The three men stood back to back in the center of the crowd of savages, partially defending themselves by pushing their fingers away or knocking them off with their revolvers, not daring to shoot for fear of the consequences. Seeing their precarious condition, Captain Coffin moved the vessel closer in shore and discharged a cannon loaded with nails, in such a manner as to have the contents cut through the trees over the heads of the savages. The noise and effect were so novel and terrifying that the Indians fled in a panic to the seclusion of the dense forest. The men then went aboard and continued their voyage up the coast. The Umpqua river was reached in due time and safely entered. This was the first American vessel to enter the Umpqua and possibly the first vessel of any kind, in spite of the traditions about a Spanish ship having done so more than a century before.

After a hasty examination of the river, the party returned to San Francisco with glowing accounts of the Umpqua and its adaptability for a port of entry for goods, and travel to the mines of Northern California. Winchester, Payne and Co. immediately fitted out another schooner, the Kate Heath, and dispatched it to the Umpqua with a party of 160 men, headed by Winchester himself and containing many men who have since been closely identified with the development of Southern Oregon, among them being A. C. Gibbs, later governor of the state. The object of the expedition was to select suitable townsites at favorable points for the transaction of business, to have them laid off in lots which were to be divided equally among the members of the company and to ship to San Francisco timber to be used for piling, for which there was then an urgent demand. The Kate Heath sailed in September and soon entered the mouth of the Umpqua.

As they crossed the bar they were surprised to observe the wreck of a vessel which had but recently run upon the sands. This was the Bostonian, which had been dispatched around Cape Horn by a Boston merchant named Gardiner. The merchandise with which the vessel was loaded was under the charge of George Snell, a nephew of Gardiner. In endeavoring to enter the river, the Bostonian lost the channel and was wrecked upon the bar. By much labor the crew managed to save the bulk of the covering made from the sails of the stranded ship. The place thus occupied was named Gardiner, in honor of the owner of the ship and goods, and on the same spot now stands the town of Gardiner.

At the entrance of the river, on the north bank, Winchester, Payne and Co. laid out their first town, which was christened Umpqua City. They passed up the stream finding the shipwrecked Yankees in camp at Gardiner. At the mouth of Smith river a number of men were landed, who began getting out piling timber to be shipped back to San Francisco upon the return of the vessel. The others continued the river to Scottsburg, where they found Captain Levi Scott already in possession of a townsite. They laid out a town adjoining his location and embracing a tract donated by him for that purpose. This was a portion of Scottsburg, called the "Lower Town," which succeeded in the power of the flood in the winter of 1861-2, and is now a sandy waste. A number

Legion of Spanish Vessels in Umpqua—Disaster of Jedediah S. Smith—Ft. Umpqua Built by Hudson Bay Co.—Umpqua Co. Organized—Douglas Co. Organized—County Seat Contest Umpqua and Douglas Consolidate

of the party went up the stream to Elk creek and laid out the town of Elkton, while Mr. Winchester secured a fine location still further up the Umpqua, where he founded a town upon which he bestowed his own name.

Winchester and the others then returned to the mouth of Smith river, and the schooner was loaded with allies and spurs for her return voyage to San Francisco. Meanwhile harmony had not prevailed in the company. A misunderstanding arose between Mr. Winchester and some of his associates. They refused to sail for a long time, alleging that the bar was too rough to be crossed in safety, and when the schooner finally arrived in San Francisco with her cargo the time of her contract had expired, and Winchester, Payne & Co. became bankrupt. The association dispersed, the town sites were abandoned and the great project came to an inglorious end. The subsequent history of Umpqua City, Gardiner, Scottsburg, Elkton and Winchester will be found on another page.

Mr. A. R. Flint, a hale and hearty old gentleman of seventy-six years, a surveyor, by profession and the first clerk of Douglas county, spoke of his advent into the Umpqua region, and his experiences are given as an example of the many. Mr. Flint says: "In September, 1850, I came to Oregon to lay out the town of Winchester, on the North Umpqua river. While there I learned of the passage of the donation homestead act for Oregon, which induced me eventually to take a claim and consider Oregon as my future home. I returned to San Francisco in the spring of 1851, and came back with my family in the first steamer that came into the Umpqua river. From the steamer we took an open boat to Scottsburg. From here the only means of travel was on horseback, on an Indian trail. On arriving at Winchester we found John Alton and family, Thomas Smith, who together owned the ferry at that place. We were informed by him that there was not a house south of that place until we reached Sacramento valley in California. (A mistake, for Yreka and Scott river mines were then in full blast.) We located and built a small house there. While at Winchester I went out to see the location on which Roseburg is now situated. At that time there was an Indian rancheria near the river, on what is now the western part of the city of Roseburg. Mrs. Flint did not at that time have courage enough to locate among the Indians, so we abandoned the idea of taking for our future home the location which we have since made our home for the past twenty-five years."

The increase of settlements along the Umpqua in 1850 led to the establishment of a county government for their benefit the following winter. The county seat of Linn was fixed at Albany and that of Benton at Marysville, subsequently called Corvallis. These two counties were circumscribed to nearly their present limits on the south, while the region between them and California was apportioned between two new counties called Umpqua and Lane, the latter named in honor of the first governor, whose name appears so often in this volume. Umpqua county's boundary line began on the coast at the southwest corner of Benton, and ran east to the dividing ridge of the Calapooia mountains, followed the ridge to Calapooia creek and down that stream to its mouth, and thence west to the Pacific. All the remainder of Southern Oregon south of Benton and Linn belonged to the county of Lane.

In April, 1851, the governor issued a proclamation designating Jesse Applegate's house in Yoncalla valley, Resin Reed's, Alton's at Umpqua Ferry, and Scottsville (Scottsburg), as polling places for the election to select officers for the new county. The election was held on the second of June, and resulted in the choice of the following officers: J. W. Drew, representative; J. W. Huntington, clerk; H. Jaquet, sheriff; A. German, treasurer; A. Pierce, assessor; B. J. Grubbe, J. N. Hull and William Golden, county commissioners. The total vote was seventy-eight. A. R. Flint received a large number of votes for representative, and Daniel Wells and E. R. Flak were well supported for clerk.

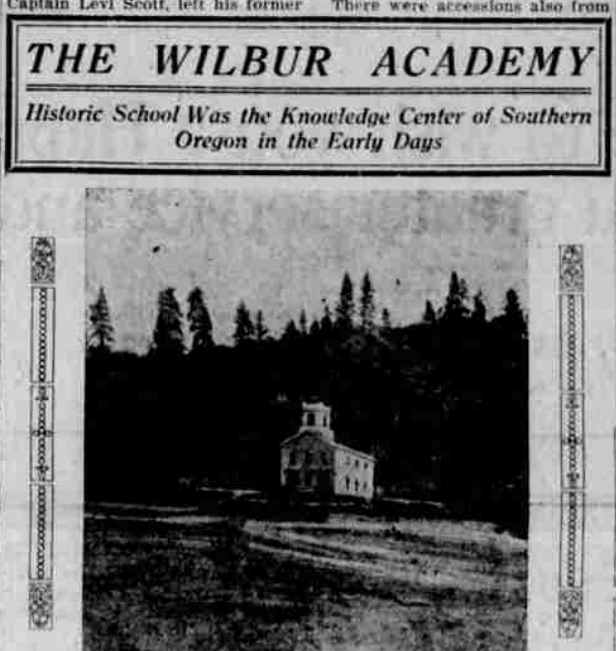
The condition of that portion of

the present county of Douglas is well described in the following extract from a letter to the "Statesman," dated at Mt. Yoncalla, July 4, 1851. The correspondent says: "Our county (Umpqua) is organized, the machinery is set up, and it will soon start. We need internal improvements very much, which it is supposed the new machinery will supply, but we ought not to expect too much. The roads leading to Scottsburg are as yet but trails and travelers' descriptions of them are prefaced with horrid oaths and violent imprecation. Elkton has as yet but a political existence, but is named as the site of the county seat. It is opposite Fort Umpqua, on the river. Claims are taken from here to the mouth of the river. Those east of Scottsburg team with luxuriant grass, those below are overhung with luxuriant speculation of their future. As far up as Winchester claims are being improved. Twelve months ago, but two or three claims had been taken on the river; now they are all taken. Scottsburg or Myrtle City, is at the head of navigation, but below it are many prospective towns, beautifully pictured on paper. There are two ferries on the Umpqua, and a road from Winchester to Scottsburg. Winchester lies on both sides of the Umpqua river about five miles above the forks, and is located upon favorable ground, thickly timbered. General Lane's claim adjoins it on the south. The plot has been laid out in lots and fast becoming a mart of trade. The main road to the Canyon passes through Winchester. Major Kearney is now exploring for a road east of this, and Jesse Applegate and Levi Scott are with him as guides. They are now near Table Rock on Rogue river."

The year 1851 saw a marked change in the condition of this region. Many families came down from the Willamette valley while numerous emigrants came in direct from the east. Nearly every little valley received from one to half Calapooias to Rogue river could be seen every few miles the smoke ascending from the clay chimney of some pioneer's log cabin. The population became so numerous that a successful effort was made the next winter to secure a separate county government for the region of the Upper Umpqua, and Myrtle, Cow and Canyon creeks. By the act of January 6, 1852, Lane county was deprived of all its territory south of its present limits, by the creation of Douglas county, a concurrent act, though not passed until the twelfth, establishing Jackson county to embrace all south of Douglas and Umpqua counties.

As first created Douglas county's boundaries were as follows: Commencing at the mouth of Calapooia creek; thence following said creek up its main fork to its source; thence due east to the summit of the Cascade mountains; thence running due south to the summit of the dividing ridge separating the waters of Rogue river from the waters of the Umpqua; thence westerly along the summit of said ridge to the summit of the Coast Range of mountains separating the waters of Coquille and Cones (Coss) rivers from the Umpqua; thence northerly along the summit of said Coast Range to a point where the south line of Umpqua county crosses said range; thence due east along the south line of Umpqua county to the point of beginning. Election precincts were designated at Resin Reed's in Winchester, at Knott's in the Canyon, and at Robert's in South Umpqua valley. By the act of the seventeenth of the same month the county seat was located at the town of Winchester.

A clerk and a temporary board of county commissioners were appointed for the purpose of settling the county machinery in motion. The first meeting of the board of county commissioners was held at Winchester on the fourth day of April, 1852. On this occasion E. R. Hill called the body to order and its organization was effected. Lots were drawn to determine the length of term, and J. E. Sanford drew the shorter term. His official life expired after the election to be held two months later, William F. Perry's ending in the following year and Thomas Smith's in 1854. The first day's business of the board consisted mainly in granting licenses for the keeping of "arce-



THE WILBUR ACADEMY
Historic School Was the Knowledge Center of Southern Oregon in the Early Days

The Umpqua Academy, pioneer institution of education in Southern Oregon, was located at Wilbur, Oregon, in Douglas county. It was chartered by the territorial legislature of Oregon, January 15th, 1857, and its history as an academy ended October 19th, 1900. Before the granting of the charter a school was taught in the same locality that bore the same name.

The legislative enactment that became its charter was signed by James K. Kelly, president of the council, and Lafayette P. Grover, speaker of the house of representatives.

The essential features of the charter do not differ materially from those of other educational institutions of later date. The corporation was given the right to "acquire, receive and possess, by donation, gift or purchase, real, personal and mixed." The entire use of the property was limited to educational purposes, and the annual income was limited to \$10,000. This limited the burdens of the community.

James H. Wilbur was its founder, and distinctly the author of the early events that led to its establishment and splendid career. He played an essential part in the early growth and development of the Umpqua country, so it was but natural that the seat of the Umpqua Academy should be named for him. Formerly the locality had been known as Buntion's Gap.

The academy came into history in 1854. The first academy building was two stories high, well proportioned, substantially built, and well adapted to the needs of the time. Terraced on the side of the mountain around which the village clings, at an elevation of about 200 feet above the level of the surrounding valley, it commanded an excellent view. It could be seen, from some directions, a distance of ten miles.

The first principal was Rev. James H. B. Royal, who served two years. He was educated at Rock River Seminary and McKendree College, Ill. Mr. A. R. Flint, formerly of Boston, succeeded Mr. Royal as principal. He was long a resident of Southern Oregon and was well known as a civil engineer and surveyor of public lands.

Prof. Ebenezer Arnold was the first principal in the new building, covering the year 1859. He was compelled to resign to ensure his health. Rev. Isaac Dillon was the second principal. He was later editor of the Pacific Christian Advocate and a well-known member of the Oregon conference. Rev. T. F. Royal was the succeeding principal, serving from 1859-1867, inclusive. He was perhaps the best known of any of the principals for he was longer in control connected with the academic work, and prior to his work directly having travelled much in Southern Oregon as agent for the school.

It was during his principality in 1864 that the first class graduated. There were four in the class and three of the members were children of the principal.

Rev. Clark Smith was principal during the year 1867, there being 119 pupils in attendance.

By this period the attendance at the school had entirely outgrown the facilities offered, and the building and equipment, once ample, became entirely inadequate to meet the growing attendance. An additional building of much greater dimensions was erected in 1868, and came to be known as the "new building." It was the first occupied under the principality of Professor Beardsford, who served two years. Of the old days, these were the very best in point of attendance and in intensive work and accomplishment.

Prof. J. A. Jackson was elected principal in 1870, but resigned in mid-year, and was succeeded by Prof. I. H. Herren, who continued until the close of the year 1873-4.

In 1873 the "new building" burned. The old building—the first academy building—early outgrown, now by no means met the needs. Thereupon it was decided by the trustees to change the location of the school buildings and a new site was purchased about one-half mile to the west near the center of the village. On this new site, the last academy building was erected in 1874.

The work heretofore done by the academy of the state was being superseded by the public schools. The church felt that it had fulfilled its mission in pioneering the educational work and with common accord it appeared best to abandon further denominational effort in the school work. Accordingly, it was voted on June 20, 1888, to lease the premises to the public school district for the term of ten years for \$500, the rental money to be applied in improvement of the building and grounds.

On October 20, 1900, a resolution was adopted to sell the premises to the district for \$400. At the meeting G. W. Grubbe was president and E. E. La Brie, secretary. Here the record closes.

Each year the former students and teachers of the old Wilbur Academy gather at Wilbur for a reunion and may have formed an Umpqua Academy Students Association. Officers are elected each year and the reunions are a tremendous success. The pioneer students attending from all parts of the coast.