



Michael Lopez/Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

A dusting of snow sits on the statue of Marcus Whitman in Walla Walla in 2016.

Scrutiny continues to mount for pioneering Northwest missionary

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS
Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — For generations Marcus Whitman has been widely viewed as an iconic figure from early Pacific Northwest history, a venerated Protestant missionary who was among 13 people killed by the Cayuse tribe near modern-day Walla Walla in 1847.

But this past year has seen a continued reappraisal of Whitman, whose actions have increasingly been viewed as imperialistic and destructive.

The Washington Legislature voted to strip his likeness from the U.S. Capitol. Students at Whitman College in Walla Walla demonstrated recently to demand another Whitman statue be removed from campus. A new book says a well-known story about Whitman's efforts to save the Northwest from British rule was fabricated.

The developments come amid a nationwide movement, following George Floyd's death last year, to shed Confederate monuments and depictions of historical figures who mistreated Native Americans. Statues of colonizers have been targeted in several states.

Marcus Whitman is known for leading a small group of missionaries in 1836 into what was then Oregon Country, a region about the size of Alaska. He established the Whitman Mission at Waiilatpu, near the Walla Walla River.

The mission was in the territory of the Cayuse Tribe, which was wary of the white settlers.

Whitman and his wife, Narcissa, were strict Calvinists who preached a demanding version of Christianity that proved unpopular with the tribe. In more than a decade of effort, they managed to convert only two members of the tribe, said Blaine Harden, an author and former New York Times and Washington Post reporter who wrote the newly published "Murder at the Mission" about the massacre.

"Whitman was a mediocre missionary," Harden said.

But the mission became an important stop along the Oregon Trail from 1843 to 1847, and the Cayuse became suspicious that the white settlers were coming to take the land.

After a few years, the Whitmans lost interest in the Cayuse and spent their time trying to convert white settlers. Whitman eventually decided the Native Americans needed to give way to the settlers.

An 1847 measles outbreak killed half the local Cayuse. The illness also broke out in the mission, but more white settlers survived. Some of the Cayuse blamed the devastation on Whitman and his wife. The Cayuse had a tradition of killing failed medicine men, Harden said, and Whitman, a medical doctor, was warned to leave the area. The Cayuse attacked the mission and killed the Whitmans and 11 others.

The deaths shocked the nation.

After the massacre, the settlers of the region sent a delegation to Washington, D.C., and used the massacre to motivate Congress to make Oregon Country an official part of the United States, completing the continental nation, Harden said.

Prior to that, the region that became the states of Oregon, Washington and Idaho had been jointly held with the British, Harden said.

"The killing of Whitman was the trigger that made Walla Walla part of the United States," he said.

Twenty years after the massacre, fellow missionary Henry Spalding manufactured a false story about Whitman. Spalding contended Whitman had traveled to Washington, D.C., and "persuaded President (John) Tyler to stop the British plot to steal the Oregon Territory from the United States," Harden said.

There is no evidence Whitman actually did this, Harden said.

But Spalding relentlessly promoted that story, and it became the popularly accepted myth, Harden said, printed in history books for decades. The myth was debunked in 1900 by a Yale professor and dropped from wide use.

Whitman's name still adorns landmarks across the Pacific Northwest, including many schools, streets, a hotel in Walla Walla, a county in eastern Washington, a national forest in Oregon and a glacier on Mount Rainier.

In 1953 a heroic statue to Whitman was placed in Statuary Hall at the U.S. Capitol as one of two representing Washington state. He is standing, wearing buckskin garments and holding a thick Bible and saddlebags. Some people grumbled about the false story of Whitman's achievements even then, Harden said.

Harden noted that Whitman College has taken concrete steps for decades to distance itself from the Whitman myth. That includes moving a statue identical to the one in Statuary Hall to a remote corner of campus. The college in 2016 voted to change its mascot from the Missionaries to the Blues, in honor of a nearby mountain range. There are no plans to change the name of the elite college.

Washington legislators had been working for several years to replace Whitman's statue in Statuary Hall. This year they chose deceased Native American fishing and environmental activist Billy Frank Jr. for the honor.

The measure's prime sponsor, state Rep. Debra Lekanoff, a Democrat, is the only Native American in the Washington Legislature.

Her strategy was to praise Frank without criticizing Whitman, to avoid antagonizing supporters of the missionary.

Gov. Jay Inslee in April signed the bill, beginning the process of putting a statue of Frank in the U.S. Capitol.

"We expect to send our best from the state of Washington to be memorialized in the United States Capitol in Statuary Hall," Inslee said at the bill signing ceremony. "We can't send the Nisqually River or Mount Rainier, but we can send Billy Frank Jr."

Meanwhile, Whitman students have been working to remove a Whitman statue from campus, including at an April demonstration.

Sophomore Gillian Brown told the school newspaper she was uncomfortable with the way the statue glorified Whitman's legacy.

"Even when I first came to Whitman and they took us to the monument, I thought, 'This guy is a colonizer. He's not someone to be celebrated,'" Brown told the Whitman Wire.

The issue is still up in the air.

The campus statue is owned by Walla Walla, college spokeswoman Gina Ohnsstad said. The city is working on a process to allow residents to submit formal requests for the removal of public art.

'EVEN WHEN I FIRST CAME TO WHITMAN AND THEY TOOK US TO THE MONUMENT, I THOUGHT, 'THIS GUY IS A COLONIZER. HE'S NOT SOMEONE TO BE CELEBRATED.'

Gillian Brown | sophomore at Whitman College in Walla Walla

WANTED

Miracle-Ear Hearing Centers are looking for qualified people to test their latest product, The Miracle-Ear Ready-Fit **RISK FREE!**

Here's the catch: You must have difficulty hearing and understanding in background noise and your hearing must fall in the range of the hearing aid. People that are selected will evaluate Miracle-Ear's latest advanced digital hearing solution — the Miracle-Ear Ready-Fit.



You will be able to walk in to our office and walk out knowing how much help there is for you. Candidates will be asked to evaluate our instruments for 30 days (risk free*). At the end of the 30 days, if you are satisfied with the improvement in your hearing and wish to keep the instrument, you may do so at tremendous savings. But this is only for a limited time! Schedule your Appointment Now! Don't wait until it's too late!

SOME FEDERAL WORKERS AND RETIREES MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR HEARING AIDS AT NO COST!
That's Right...No Co-Pay! No Exam Fee! No Adjustment Fee!

BCBS federal insurance pays the total cost of 2 Miracle-Ear Audiotone Pro aids. Most federal government employees and retirees are eligible. You may even be covered if you have other non-federal insurance coverage. Special factory pricing is available for non-qualifiers. See store for details & accurate coverage.

AT THESE PARTICIPATING LOCATIONS ONLY!!

Miracle-Ear Center
Youngs Bay Plaza

173 S. Hwy 101, Warrenton, OR 97146
(503) 836-7921

Visit us online www.miracle-ear.com



Miracle-Ear®

Miracle-Ear Center
2505 Main Ave N, Suite C
Tillamook, OR 97141
(503) 836-7926

Use code **21JunWanted**

Another Great Way to Save!
Make your appointment today!

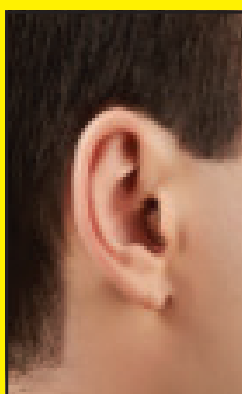


BUY 1 GET 1 50% OFF

HURRY!
Offer ends 6/7/2021

Miracle-Ear®

Good only from participating Miracle-Ear representatives. One coupon per purchase. No other offers or discounts apply. Discount does not apply to prior sales. Offer valid on ME-5, ME-4, ME-3, ME-2 Solutions. Cannot combine with any other offers. Cash value 1/20 cent.



Save on one of our smallest custom digital hearing aids!

NOW BUY ONE GET ONE FREE!

HURRY!
Offer ends 6/7/2021

Miracle-Ear®

Valid at participating Miracle-Ear locations only. Limit one coupon per purchase. May not be combined with other offers and does not apply to prior sales. Cash value 1/20 cent.

Risk Free Offer- The aids must be returned within 30 days of delivery pursuant to terms of your purchase agreement and 100% of the purchase price will be refunded. **Hearing test is an audiometric test to determine proper amplification needs only. These are not medical exams or diagnoses. Blue Cross Shield, the Blue Cross, the Blue Shield, BCBS, and Federal Employee Program are a registered trademark of Blue Cross Blue Shield Association. Blue Cross Blue Shield Association and its independent licensees are not affiliated with, nor do they endorse or sponsor, the contents of this advertisement. Trademarks referring to specific providers are used by Miracle ear for nominative purposes only: to truthfully identify the source of the services about which information is provided. Such trademarks are solely the property of their respective owners.