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Morning

Fifty Years Ago The Oregonian Completes Its First Half Century Today

BY H. W. SCOTT.

whole region west of the Rocky when the first number of The Oregonian The Oregonian has been a witness and most considerable city in it.

The modern state finds a history, or transcript, of its life in the growth of the newspaper. In the olden time there was growth of states. The state grew, and owes the triumph of its career. the newspaper came later. But in the are coincident with the progress of the state.

So The Oregonian appeared at the very American pioneers had, in-Northwest. deed, been in the country 10 or 15 years, but their number was too few to constishould be a newspaper to make her name known, to record her growth, to advooreover, to set forth the attracbilities, to prove to all who would read that here was a seat of coming empire. The time had come for Portland to reach out for trade, to assert her position in respect to external and internal commerce; and in the early part of the year 1850 William W. Chapman and Stephen Coffin, two citizens who took a leading part in all undertakings to establish Portland, determined to visit San Francisco on varinsiderable part of their purpose was to make arrangements for establishing a ewspaper here

On this errand they were and about that cisco July 4, 1850. There, and about that On this errand they were in San Fran-J. Dryer, a native of Uister County, New York, who had recently arrived in Cali-Mr. Dryer had worked on the country press in his state, and was a vig-orous, rather than a polished, writer. Ho loss, which ace where he might start a newspaper. Mr. Coffin introduced him to Mr. Chapman, and the two explained to him that they wanted a newspaper at Portland. Mr. Dryer at once consented to come to Portland. "Now we shall have a paper at

IFTT YEARS AGO today the first | ways on time, with the best it could give. number of The Oregonian appeared. The paper had been published nearly three years when Henry L. Pittock came census of that year was 12,294. The to it. He was a practical printer, a youth territory that existed then under the of steady habits and untiring industry. and he it is who has made The Oregodesignation of Oregon included the nian. He came across the plains with the emigration of 1853, was in Oregon City Mountains between the 42d and 49th par- in October of that year, and about Noallels of latitude. Within this region at vember I came to Portland to seek work the present time lie the States of Oregon, at his trade. He was engaged at once, Washington, Idaho, part of Wyoming and and upon him gradually fell the duty of a large portion of Montana. Portland, publishing the paper. Mr. Dryer gave little attention to details, and the office was insued, had probably 600 inhabitants. Ical. Mr. Pittock was just the man it needed a man who was steady and method-The Oregonian has been a witness and wanted, and to this day he has continued the main chronicler of all the growth of the soul of its management, carrying the this great region, containing now 1,250,000 paper from one stage of improvement to inhabitants, and Portland remains the another, and rising continually to meet every new opportunity and to fill every new demand of the situation. Nay, more;

he has anticipated possibilities, and has kept The Oregonian at all times ahead of the general development of the counno newspaper to record the birth and try. To him, more than to all others, it

It was slow business for many years, modern time the newspaper appears at for growth was hardly possible under the beginning, and its work and its growth the limitations of pioneer life in so small and so sparse a community. The earn-

ings of the paper were small and debts accumulated. Mr. Dryer, through its colbeginning of development in the Pacific umns and through his activity in the small politics of the time, kept himself continually before the people, and was one of the prominent figures of that day; tute an active social organization and liv-ing community. But as Portland began Territorial Legislature, where he was as grow into a village, the ambitious men aggressive as in the columns of his newsof the place were resolved that there paper, and later he was a member of the convention that framed the constitution of the state. He was not a man of busicate her interests, to carry her message ness habits, yet, as he was owner to the world. She must have a news- of the paper, he did what he chose with it, and his fitful methods of work tions of the country, to represent its pos- and minagement were hindrances to business success. Nevertheless, Mr. Dryer was a sturdy character, a man for the times, and the paper under his direction was a positive force in Portland and throughout Oregon.

In 1860 Mr. Dryer was chosen one of the Electors of Oregon on the Lincoln Presidential ticket. He now looked for official recognition from the Administration, and obtained it. After + an experience of 19 ous business of this character, and one years, he had found that there was no profit, in the way of business, in conducting a weekly paper in a new and spursely settled state, and the day of the daily newspaper here had not come and ould not be foreseen. An official position much below the first class was co Indered better than The Oregonian of that day, and Mr. Dryer was elated with the offer of the mission at the Hawailan Islands. Owing Mr. Pittock quite a sum for servhe had no other means of had brought with him to California a paying. Mr. Dryer gave Mr. Pittock The hand printing press and a small lot of Orogonian for the debt, and in a short printing material, and was looking for a time took his departure for Honolulu where he remained several years as the representative of the United States. Aftarward he returned to Portland, where

Mr. Pittock now had to find means to publish the paper on his own account. Its fortunes, never promising, were at Portiand," said Mr. Chapman, "and we Its fortunes, never promising, were at will call it "The Oregonian." " As soon as the lowest ebb. The paper was in debt; practicable Mr. Dryer's press and mate- quite an amount of credits stood on its rial were shipped, but did not arrive at books. little of which was collectible; Portland till November. Messrs, Chap- there were other newspapers in Portland

be died in 1878.

never paid its way, and when its re- does not owe its position and success to amid great difficulties, and was glad of sources were finally exhausted and it was forced to succumb, its various propri-etors had sunk fully \$150,000. Yet, while this competitor was in the field, The Ore- Of the editorial management of The Orenian, by one who had no thought beyond gonian had still another to meet. In 1870 gonian, after Mr. Dryer's time, it now re- doing his best and his utmost for the Ben Holladay started the Oregon Bulletin. mains to speak. During some months paper, began. This paper he backed lavishly, but it there was no regular editor. Mr. Pittock With the en With the exception of the interval be was always a losing business, and after got work done as he could, and superin- tween October, 1572, and April, 1577, The a career of a little over five years it, too. tended it himself. In 1981 Simeon Fran. Oregonian has ever since been under the gave up the ghost. In that time it had cls, who had long published the Spring- editorial direction of Mr. Scott, During

sunk nearly or quite \$200,000. A third for- field (IIL) Journal, came to Oregon and that interval the editor was W. Lair Hill, sunk nearly or quite \$200,000. A third for-midable effort was made in 1550, when the daily Northwest News appeared. This paper was as unsuccessful as its prede-cessors. The original proprietor, after los-ing a great amount of money, abandoned it, and it passed from the hands of one



Conducted - Starting the Daily BY H. L. PITTOCK ECAUSE of my long and contin- and business force. He was editorial uous connection with The Ore- writer and local reporter. But there was gonian, I am told that a personal no very extensive amount of news in the narrative is, for this particular oc-casion, not only justified, but de-manded. I am induced, therefore, to re-controversies with the conducted acrimonious late a part of my own experiences in the cratic press, and these were the great early days of The Oregonian, and to tell substance of the paper. It was Dryer's some things that may be of interest in duty, too, to look after the business its history at times when its vicissitudes end, but for this he had very litwere many and its future not certain. I tie liking. He had, nevertheless, have little to say about the later career of The Oregonian, for it is all sufficiently within the knowledge of the up in politics and public matters. His present generation of readers; and I shall services were in demand as stump-speaker nfine myself largely to the period when and orator on various occasions, and he its first proprietor controlled its desti- was also a member of the Constitutional nies, and also to the time when my own Convention and of the Territorial Legisefforts were exerted to establish a lature. It may be readily surmised that daily newspaper strong enough to survive the fierce competition to which it was deal of time to the business of the paper, long subjected. The responsibility of even if he had had the inclination. It "getting out the paper" was placed upon my shoulders at an early date; and it was not divided with another for some went to press and reached its readers de-years. My association with Mr. Scott volved upon somebody else, and that dates from 1864; and It has continued, with one interruption, made necessary by business exigencies, until the present time. It will continue, no doubt, until its natu-I came to Oregon in 1853, with my

How the Old Weekly Oregonian Was

A Personal Narrative

brother, Robert Pittock. I was first attracted to the distant Northwest by letters written to the papers of Pittsburg. where I lived, from members of the which was waiting above the fails to go United Presbyterian church. That de- up the river, I crossed over and came nomination, then as now, was guite strong in Pennsylvania, and it had a flourishing missionary colony out here in Oregon. I read also in the Pittsburg Dispatch much interesting correspondence from Mr. Ed-ward Jay Allen, who had come out here in 1852 and rafted down the Snake River. I was then a mere boy, but I determined go out and seek my fortune. My brother was of the same mind. We joined two families named Stewart and Love, River to St. Louis, and then up the Mispoint of rendervous for the long journey across the plains. We met with some adventures, the most serious of which was Boise River. The Stewarts and Loves edition, which was then considerable. It was literally the hardest work I ever did in my life, and I have never been left us at the Malheur River and went up that stream across the Cascades to Eugene City. My brother Robert went with with the family of John Stephenson, of cated a claim near what is now Fulton, in this county. At the John Day River we cut off from the main road and came

through Tygh Valley and over the Barlow road into Oregon City. My father was a printer, and I had learned a little more than the rudiments of the trade with him. When I was 12 years old I began to set type. My first effort, therefore, when I reached Oregon

City, was to obtain employment in the office of the Oregon Spectator, then under the control of D. J. Schnebly. I failed, went on with the Stephensons, alded them in their preliminary work of establishing a domicile among the trees on their claim, and after a month came on to Portland, arriving here in November,

the

come an active force in the affairs of the territory, and his time was largely taken Mr. Dryer could not have given a great even if he had had the incitnation. It therefore naturally fell out that much of the responsibility of seeing that the paper volved upon somebody else, and that somebody was myself. It was my duty, for example, when the paper missed the Oregon City boat, to get a horse and carry to Oregon City the list for up-Valley read-ers. Publication day was Saturday morning, but we went to press Friday after floon. The trip to Oregon City was not an unpleasant experience, for as soon as I had delivered the papers aboard the hoat up the river, I crossed over and came down to the home of my friends, the

home early Monday morning. I remember that on one occasion news reached Portland of the Cascades massacre, wherein a number of people had been slain by Indians. The entire population of the town was much stirred up, and boarded the steamer Jennie Clark to go to the assistance of the white people The printers in the office deserted their and in April, 1853, started down the Ohio posts, and I wanted to go with them, but I could not. The paper had to be made souri to St. Joseph, which was the usual up and put to press. I was alone in the office, and there was a good deal to do, but I managed somehow to set enough type to fill up, lock up the forms, put an unsuccessful effort on the part of Inhome, went to bed, and the burning down them. I came on down to the Columbia of a house across the street, an exciting event for those days, was not sufficient Parkeraburg, Va., who afterward lo- to get me out, although some one awakened me.

Stephensons, and spent Sunday, returning

The habit of Mr. Dryer may be illus trated by an experience I had in 1856. I went up the Valley on a canvassing and collection tour. I presented bills to many people, who appeared surprised, and said that they had already paid. When I returned and reported occurrences of this kind to Mr. Dryer, he would say: "Well, if that man said he paid, give

him credit for it." And so it was in other instances. I had

many disagreeable collisions with subscribers and advertisers who were not delinquent. Mr. Dryer was entirely indifferent to income and outgo. He simply could not bring himself to pay attention to details. I do not at all narrate these

issue of the first number, and there was the page, and was to be published weekly, first number was delivered through the town by Arthur and Thomas, sons of Mr. Chapman, and by Henry Hill, stepson of Mr. Coffin. The subscription price of this little paper was \$7 a year. Mr. Chapman hired a man to go on horseback and de liver the first number as far as Corvallis (then Marysville), on the West Side, with instructions to cross there and deliver it on the East Side upon his return. Thus The Oregonian was given to the world. The office was at the northwest corner of Front and Morrison streets, in or two later.

Plunging into the discussions that attended the efforts to settle a new country and to lay the foundations of its growth, and adding no little to the controversies and contentions that grew out of such a situation, The Oregonian at once became well known. An incisive vigor characterized its work. Mr. Dryer was an aggressive and spirited writer, well suited the requirements of ploneer journalism. There was little of what would now be known as news; Oregon was remote and isolated; intercourse with the outside of that day gave little attention to reporting the ordinary incidents and affairs of their own localities. Petty politnewspaper's work. A few months after The Oregonian was started at Portland. the Statesman was started at Oregon as one was Whig and the other Democrat, each was a spur to the partisanship of rivalry in the obtainment and publication the year 1854 telegraphic comm ing odds in politics, and it was the steady champion of the interests of Portland the most important character. against all rivals. At first it received its news from abroad at irregular intervals, of white paper, and for weeks together ild be

man and Coffin took great interest in the that divided with it the little business forthcoming journal; they assisted Mr. there was, and two of these papers, the Dryer in furnishing a publication office; Times and Advertiser, had begun to issue they sat up all the night preceding the dailles. Mr. Pittock's first resolve on coming into possession of The Oregonian a series of solemnly amusing ceremonies was to start a daily also. As yet there as the first paper came off the press. It was no room or business for a daily was a sheet of four pages, six columns to paper, but Mr. Pittock had to compete with his rivals or drop out altogether; On the morning of December 4, 1850, the so February 4, 1861, he issued the first number of The Daily Oregonian. The weekly had then been published 10 years and two months. The first number of the dally was a paper of four pages, four columns to the page. As the Civil War was just then breaking out, great efforts were made to get news, and the energy of The Dregonian, under the direction of Mr. Pittock, soon put it in the lead of its competitors. The contest was one in which patience, industry, application and skill had the usual result, and the contest was soon decided in Mr. Pittock's a "shack" that was pulled down a year favor. Another helpful thing was The

Oregonian's vigorous espousal of the National cause in the crisis of the Rebellion The people began to look to it, not only for the news, but for expression of the

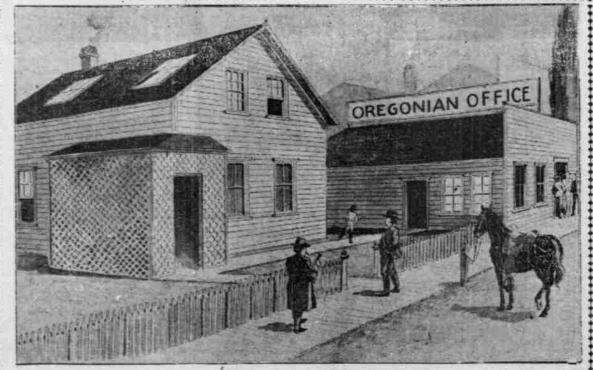
National sentiment of the Northwest. Then, and for a long time afterward, the news of the world came to Oregon wholly through San Francisco. In 186 there was a weekly steamer from San Francisco to Portland, which was the main dependence; so Portland got a week's news at a time. California new had telegraphic communication with the East, and not much later extension of a world was infrequent, and the journals line from California to Oregon began. As this line approached Oregon, the time was shortened. Brief news reports were taken off at Redding, then at Treka, then scal contention formed the staple of the at Jacksonville, and forwarded to Portland by daily mail, then first established. The Oregonian was foremost in getting news by this method, and as the war City, then the capital of the territory, and news of those days was eagerly sought, as one was Whig and the other Democrat, the paper quickly took the leading position as a medium of news that it has ever the other. In those days there was no since maintained. In the early part of infestion of news. The rivalry of newspapers was was established between San Francisco shown in the championship of the claims and Portland, and The Oregonian began of their respective localities and in the to receive regular telegraphic reports, rough discussions of local and provincial which, however, for a long time gave only politics. During the first 10 years of the a bare outline of most important news. existence of The Oregonian, the territory. The rates were high, the resources of the and then the state, were controlled by the paper were small, there was but a poor smocratic party, and opposition was vir- system of gathering news at that day, tually hopeless. But The Oregonian never and even the journals of San Francisco relaxed its efforts against the overwheim- were obliged to content themselves with slender reports, though the news was of

Though The Oregonian's competitors, soon after it started a daily, dropped out as vessels would come in from San Fran- of the field, other papers were started no claco; but after a time there was a month- long time after; but they, too, were shortsteamer, and later two steamers a lived. It is unnecessary to make any list month; while San Francisco herself re- of them here. In the year 1866 a more preceived the news of the world from New tentious and formidable effort was made. York, by the Isthmus of Panama, often The Oregon Herald, daily and weekly, was after it was a month old. Many times started; it was a Democratic paper, was The Oregonian exhausted its slender stock backed by a good deal of money, and as paper, and for weeks together compelled to appear on colored deal more. The Herald was published sheets, but it never missed an issue or nearly 20 years. It was able to get the begged the indulgence of its readers for same telegraphic news as The Oregonian, arfections or emissions. It was al- but it never was prosperous, probably

THE OREGONIAN BUILDING

ment.

to another, till finally, after a career of he withdrew from The Oregonian. His Mr. Hill, a controlling interest in the six or seven years, it suspended. Its successor was Amory Holbrook, an able paper, but Mr. Pittock retained the busi-losses had also been very heavy-equal man, but an irregular worker, who held ness management. In March, 1577, Mr. probably to those of either of the un-fortunate ventures that preceded it. John F. Damon, now of Seattle, and sold to Mr. Corbett, and Mr. Pittock and There have been other efforts of like kind, vigorous, yet unsuccessful, needless to re-successively. In May, 1965, Mr. Clarke re-had been sold to others, and Mr. Scott recount here. These statements are pre-sented as part of the history of The Ore-him. Mr. Scott had come to Oregon in Oregonian, as known today, has been cregonian, since they tend to show that it his early boyhood, had educated himself ated.



OREGONIAN BUILDING IN 1853, WITH RESIDENCE OF THE EDITOR. 1853. I diligently hunted for work for things for the purpose of criticising him or his methods, but simply to show what some days. I remember that I was offered his fashion was. It was, indeed, the weak the place of assistant to the bartender at the Columbia Hotel, Front and Washing- point in all the journalism of those days, ton, but my talents and inclinations did and he was no exception to the rule In the meantime Mr. Dryer became not lie in that direction, and I declined. heavily in arrears to me, as well as to

I sought out the office of the Times, then conducted by John Orvis Waterman and Gunn, who had come back to the paper, Russell D. Austin. The Times, by the In 1858 he proposed to take Gunn and myway, was the successor of the Western self into partnership with him. The valu-Star, which had been started at Milwauation of the paper was placed at \$6009, kie, but had been soon "run off" by Wa- and we each had a third interest. This terman to the more promising City of arrangement did not last long. Gunn took Portland. They had no place for me. sick and went away, the partnership was Finally Mr. Dryer offered me my board dissolved, and the old status resumed, so and clothing in exchange for my services | far as Dryer and I were concerned. Durfor six months. I accepted. At the end ing the campaign of 1860 I took charge of of that period I engaged myzelf for a year the paper under contract with Dryer. for \$909, and then I got journeyman's was a Republican candidate for Presidenwages. It is interesting to recall that the tial Elector, and made a joint canvass of first piece I set up was an account of the state with Delazon Smith, who was negotiations for opening of the ports the Democratic Electoral of Japan, then under way between Com-Smith died immediately after the election, and Dryer came home a very sick modore Perry and the Japanese Governman. It was at this time that he gave

The quarters of the paper at that time me a bill of sale for the paper to dis-(1853) were far from comfortable. The building was at the corner of First and charge his debt to me.

It had long seemed to me imperative Morrison streets, and had been that The Oregonian, if it could survive at cheaply all, must be transformed to a daily. Two and rudely built. It had no lining, and on cold Winter days it was very diffi-cult to keep warm. That Winter it was S. J. McCormick, and the Daily News, by cult to keep warm. That Winter it was so cold that the Willamette River froze Henry Miller-were already established over, and the interior of the office was something like a refrigerator. The types existence. The town had been growing on the stone froze so solidly together rapidly, and the country filling up with that we had to pour bolling hot water population, and it seemed to me that a over them when we wanted to distribute daily paper, properly conducted, could be (the process of returning the type to the made to go. I at once arranged to go to cases). We never did get into a comfort-San Francisco to procure the necessary able place until we moved into the second additional outfit, including a cylinder story of a brick building on Front street. press. I embarked on the steamer Constitution, in company with Dryer, who had The Weekly Oregonian had a meager recovered and was bound for Washingoutfit. As nearly as I can remember, it consisted of one imposing stone, six ton City, carrying the state's three Linstands, 40 or 50 (type) cases, a Washington hand press and a sink for wetting the paper. The editorial-rooms were in the adjoining residence of Mr. Dryer. In the on the reserve list of the steamship comcomposing-room of The Oregonian is still pany. She was called into use while to be found that old stone, which is, I regular steamer was being repaired. Her think, the only remaining part of the seams opened and the water poured into paper's original mechanical equipment, I the cabins through them. A foot of water made myself generally useful about the sloshed around on the cabin floor. One of office, doing anything that came to hand; my cabin-mates was Mr. N. G. Northrop, and there was much to do. The mechan- afterward editor of the Walla Walla ical force consisted of two others besides Statesman, who was in the berth above myself. William Davis Carter, who had me. Northrop and the man below me en associated with Waterman on the were soaked in water, but somehow Times, was foreman, and E. T. Gunn was caped baptism and got through all right. On arrival the vessel had to be repaired the printer. A man named D. S. Southmayd, who lived down on the Columbia for the return journey, and it took several Slough, usually came in and helped out weeks. I made the necessary arrangefor a day or two during the week. The ments for press and additional equipment hand press was a man-killer. It was a and re-embarked on her for the return self-inker, and it took muscle, and a great voyage. Her appearance in the Columbia deal of it, to run it. It had taken the Biver was a surprise; for, owing to her place of the original Ramage press, which long delay, it had been believed in Ore-A. M. Berry, first foreman of The Ore- gon that she had been wrecked. There had been no communication between San gonlan, took with him to Olympia, where he started a paper called the Pioneer. I Francisco and Portland since she left. never knew what became of that old Upon my return I found that a third press. I should like to know. The Wash- paper, the Times, had been started as a ington hand press which succeeded the daily. I brought with me a lot of bour-Ramage was in its turn taken to Idaho, geols and nonparell body type, and February 4, 1861, The Daily Oregonian made after The Oregonian was through with its appearance it, and was used for the first paper started We got along as best we could with the in that territory.

Mr. Dryer composed the entire editorial old Washington hand press until the Host