

BELLES AND BEAUX OF EARLY '50s

SOCIAL LIFE WHEN THE METROPOLIS OF OREGON WAS A VILLAGE



Mrs. H. W. Corbett.



Mrs. Barlow.



Mrs. Thomas Fearn.



Mrs. Isaac Dillon.



Mrs. Hattie Morse.



Mrs. D. Routledge.



Mrs. E. J. Northrup.

CHRISTMAS BALL.



Your company is most respectfully solicited to attend a CHRISTMAS BALL, at the Oregon House, on Christmas Evening, Dec. 25, 1850. Ball to commence at 6 o'clock.

Floor Managers: GEORGE CARTER, J. S. ROLLAND. MANAGERS: A. L. LOVEJOY, A. R. POST, THEO. MAGRUDER, JAS. BALSTON, J. S. RINEARSON, JOHN M'LOSKY, (The U. S. Band is engaged.)

THE heart fluttering of the modern society belle who is to attend a grand ball or a swell german is as much excited by the excitement and expectancy of the Portland belle of 1850 experienced upon the receipt of such an invitation as the above by the beaux. The dance was a simple and unpretentious affair as we view it through the long vista of years, but at that date it was a great social function—the beaux and belles, the matrons and benefactors all attended. There were no carriages and flowers, no bright array of dazzling electric lights to make the ballroom look like fairy land, no tropical decorations, no expensive favors, but the accommodations such as they were, gave untold pleasure to the young folks who had so little of this diversion in those strenuous pioneer days. What matter if there was but one "best" gown which had to be worn on all occasions, what matter if they had to pick their way through muddy streets and use lanterns to avoid running into stumps—there was a good time in store

for all hidden to the dance. There was sometimes music by the U. S. Band from Fort Vancouver and often a good supper; not a wafer and an ice, as satisfies the hot-house debutante of today, but a good substantial meal that the healthy appetites of boys and girls who had probably worked hard all day at various labors, and danced hard all evening, demanded and did full justice to.

Yes, primitive times they were, but the sturdy youth of the day made the best of them—far more than the boys and girls of this generation would do if transplanted to such conditions.

In the early '50s the few residences of Portland were grouped down near the river front, those built a few blocks back being away out in the woods. The young folks went early to these dances and parties and returned by lantern light. When there were social events in Oregon City or Milwaukie, the trip was made in canoes—for there was a great exchange of courtesies between these three places and the society of the three villages might have been said to compose one circle. As the number of young people was limited owing to the small population of the place, the church circle and the society circle were virtually the same. Our parents or our grandparents did not allow a few good times to turn their heads as the young people of today are sometimes wont to do; they attended to their church duties and took actual pleasure in going to service and singing in the choir. Churches were few in those early days and if one's creed was not represented, the creed that was here answered and no excuse was given for staying away. In fact, the church seems to have been the rallying point for all, and the prominent youth of the town attended, not because it was fashionable, but because they were stanch and true and fearless, and believed in worshipping God. One of the first choirs to be formed was at the Congregational Church, Second and Jefferson, which was then considered a long distance from the resident and business section. There were church picnics, but not many of these as the days were even too busy to spend in this manner. Surprise parties were in vogue for a long time, and happy crowds of young

VOCAL CONCERT.

MR. WILLIAM MORGAN,

Who has given concerts in New York and other eastern cities, has the honor to announce to the inhabitants of Oregon and Linn cities and vicinity that he will give his first concert on Monday evening, the 10th instant, at

THE ASTOR HOUSE ASSEMBLY ROOMS.

Next door above Governor Lane's.

PROGRAMME.

PART I.

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| 1. Jennette and Jeno. | Lover. |
| 2. The Ivy Green. | Russell. |
| 3. My Own Sweet Native Vale. | Lover. |
| 4. The Angel's Whisper. | Alex. Lee. |
| 5. Meet me in the Willow Glen. | Russell. |
| 6. The Newfoundland Dog. | |

PART II.

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| 7. Pretty Star of the Night. | Alex. Lee. |
| 8. Three cheers for the girls that we love. | Moore. |
| 9. The Bold Soldier Boy. | Lover. |
| 10. The Rose a' Lee. | Christy. |
| 11. The Pilot. | W. Balfe. |
| 12. The Wonderful Crocodile. | Scroggins. |

There will be an interval of 15 minutes between the parts.

The concert will commence at 7 o'clock precisely. Admission, 75 cents. Tickets to be had at the Rooms from 9 A. M. to 4 o'clock, P. M. Oregon City, Dec. 5, 1849.

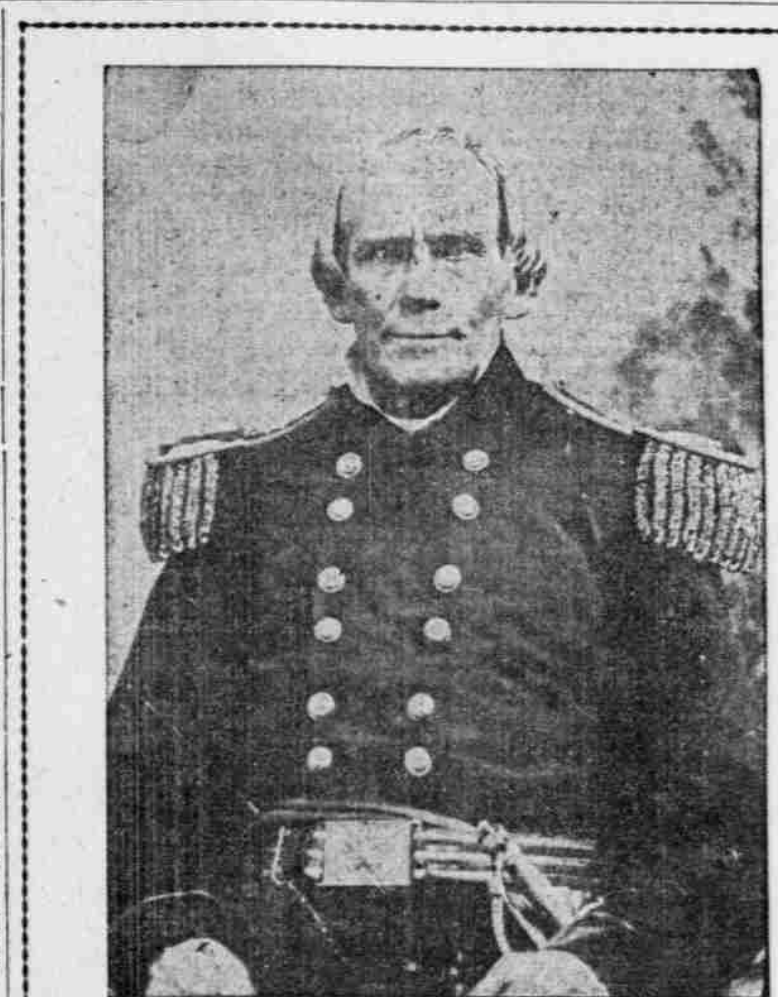
of one pattern to upholster the whole church was out of the question, so the individual members attended each to his own pew. The result was that there was a very great variety of colors and material, but it showed that these young men were deeply interested in their church and spent their time and money in its upbuilding.

An event of interest in those early days was the forming of the "Portland Library Association," in 1850. A meeting was called on June 12, of that year and a committee appointed to solicit subscriptions. They were successful in their undertaking and a few days later a constitution was adopted and the following officers elected: W. W. Chapman, president; Horace Lyman, vice-president; C. A. Reed, secretary; W. S. Caldwell, treasurer; C. A. Reed, librarian. Board of Directors: A. P. Dennison, L. B. Hastings, W. S. Caldwell, Stephen Coffin and Shubrick Norris. Later on the names of T. J. Dyer, W. P. Abrams, Simon B. Mayo, J. H. Wilbur, J. W. Davis, W. S. Ogden, W. L. Higgins, W. B. Otway, C. S. Kingsley, H. Felling, P. A. Marquam and others appear as officers and directors. The first meeting was held in the schoolhouse, the next in Norton & Dennison's store. One of the annual meetings was held in the Methodist Church and another in the Canton House.

This Library Association owned as many as 100 books at one time, and when the present library was formed about 600 of the old books were collected and turned into it. Hospitality was the key note in all circles during those days. The stranger was ever welcome and made to feel at home by the friends of any household to which chance led him. When preparations for a dance or picnic were in progress, did a visitor appear in the city an invitation was promptly sent him and he was most courteously received and entertained.

The example set by Dr. McLoughlin when many of these young people and their parents arrived in Oregon by the plains route was indelibly stamped upon their memory, and that one taste of the peerless hospitality offered by this noble man instilled within the natures of this generation a love and reverence for such qualities in mankind, and his example was ever spontaneously emulated. The stranger within their doors was received with manifest cordiality, and if he was in need of assistance of any kind it was graciously proffered.

One dear old lady, who is pictured here as she appeared in her youth, now past her three-score years, told with pride of the dress she wore when the picture was taken. "It was of a changeable silk, my dear, gold one way and green the



GENERAL STEPHEN COFFIN.

other—very pretty. I assure you, and I made it by hand myself to wear to a ball given at the home of Mr. Ogden. That is an occasion I shall never forget, for I had but lately arrived in Portland, and this was my first dance," and she smiled indulgently at the memory of those long-ago frolics.

"All the young folks of the town were there that night, and, as I remember, most of the ladies were gowned in silk. Yes, we had several good stores in '54, and, while materials were very expensive, one could always manage to have a best frock for such occasions. Girls in those days all made their own clothes, and it was all finger work, too. In fact, they did all sorts of work, and cared for their parents' homes. So when they came to marry they were fully competent to take charge of the new household, and there were none of the strange experiences we read of brides having in these days."

"What kind of music did we have? Now let me see! At that ball I spoke of at Mr. Ogden's, I believe we had music furnished by some of our local musicians—a couple of violins, as I remember it. But frequently we had the United States band from Vancouver, which we all liked so much better; and the Army officers were often invited up to our parties and dances, which made it very gay for us."

"Rev. Mr. McCarty, the chaplain of the regiment stationed at Vancouver, was a great favorite with all the young folks, and, while he did not attend our dances, he was present at many other functions and entered into the spirit of our good times like a young boy. He knew all the boys and girls intimately, and they always enjoyed having him around."

MARION MACREA.



CAPTAIN AND MRS. JOHN H. COUCH.

people—with such familiar and well known names too—would gather and go to the house of some one of their associates and spend a happy evening. The surprised host or hostess would have to skimpish around to get up some kind of refreshments for their impromptu guests as there was no convenient cafe and telephone to meet such an emergency.

As early as 1849 we have the programme of a vocal concert given at the Astor House Assembly Rooms in Oregon City. Mr. Wm. Morgan, who had "given concerts in New York and other Eastern cities," rendered 12 vocal numbers and "The Ivy Green" and "Pretty Star of the Night" sounded as sweet to the ears of those who had traveled so far from that well-remembered East as Nordic's selections from grand opera sounded to us of late.

In 1850 a number of dances were given, always beginning at 6 o'clock, but in 1851 came cotillon parties at 7 o'clock. Daniel O'Neil, A. L. Lovejoy, Geo. L. Story, John McLoocky, John McCracken, H. W. Corbett, Josiah Felling, Dr. R. B. Wilson, Griffin, Davenport, Misses Hamilton, Hyde, Chapman, Preston, Couch, Corbett, Clark and Jagger were among that first social set, and right happy times they had.

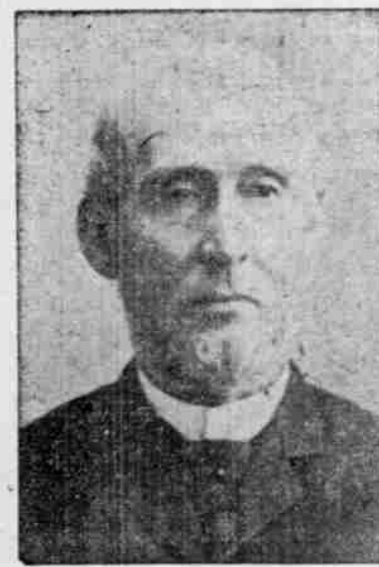
The New England dinner was an event of social importance in 1853. The dinner was an elaborate one for the times, and invitations were issued first to all residents who came from any of the New England states, and then to a chosen few outside of these. This was a happening of no small importance and great preparations were made for it. In the invi-

tations issued one's company was "respectfully solicited to join in the festivities of the Sons of New England on the 23d of December." The committee on arrangements for the 1853 dinner consisted of A. Wisenthal, George L. Story, George H. Flinders, William P. Abrams and Charles B. Pillow. Army officers and many distinguished visitors were present and notable speeches were made around the banquet-board. There was not a French menu on this occasion, but one of the participants lately declared that he had never eaten a better dinner than the one served that day. When the Methodist Church organized a choir, its membership consisted of George Barnes, Brook Trevett, three Roberts brothers, Thomas Saxler, Dr. Griffin, Warren Davis, A. B. Hallock, Thomas W. Davis, John Murphy, Dr. J. W. Davenport, Misses Mary Davis, E. B. Comfort, Mary Purple, Emily Roberts, Charlotte Barnes, Sarah Davis, Evaline Chipman and Mrs. George Barnes.

These names do not sound strange to any of us, for many of them are still with us and most of the names are among our residents of today. Fifty years is not such a long time, and yet how different are conditions. Today we have magnificent churches and pipe organs to accompany the trained quartet comprising the up-to-date choir. Then a group of volunteers sang the good old-fashioned hymns without an organ. In the Episcopal Church, Dr. R. B. Wilson used to start the hymn, giving the pitch, when all the congregation would join in the singing of it. There was great rivalry existing among the young men of this congregation as to who could have the handsomest pew in church. To get enough cloth-



R. B. Wilson, M. D.



Cicero H. Lewis.



Rodney Gibson, M. D.



J. W. Brance.



Benjamin Stagb.



Rev. John McCarty, D. D.



Dr. J. R. Cardwell and Joseph Buchtel.



D. W. Burnside.



Sam M. Smith.



George W. Snell.