

ACCOUNT OF HOW OREGON EMPIRE WAS WELDED TO A STATE

BY LEONE CARR BAR.

TODAY is the semi-centennial of Oregon as a state. A little less than 50 years ago, March 15, 1859, the Brother Jonathan, a fine little steamer under command of Captain George H. Stephens, arrived at the wharf in Portland, at 4:30 in the morning, bringing the news, by Overland mail, that the Senate bill for the admission of Oregon had passed the House of Representatives by a majority of 11 votes, on February 12.

The steamer had sailed from San Francisco, bringing the latest reports which had reached there on March 10, having left St. Louis early in the morning of February 10, and had been in Portland for the signing of the bill by President Buchanan.

With the arrival at Portland, on March 22, of the steamship Northern, commanded by Captain W. L. Dall, came the confirmation of the news, and that President Buchanan had signed the bill on February 14, signed the bill that made Oregon a state.

Act Favorably on Bill.

With the session of the House of Representatives in 1852, February 15, the chairman of the committee on territories, Mr. Stephens, of Georgia, made the announcement that the Senate bill for Oregon's admission into the Union had been favorably acted on, and made the request that a vote be taken on it. Immediately pandemonium reigned. The territory of Kansas was asking for admission, and in the midst of a hot argument as to whether she should be a slave or free state. A large percentage of her inhabitants had declared themselves in favor of a free state; on the other hand, the slaveholders in Missouri and adjoining states were demanding permission to take their slaves into the territory of Kansas.

Since Mr. Stephens was from Georgia, a slave state, it was thought matters were radically wrong somewhere, when he announced himself as a partisan in behalf of Oregon's admission, particularly so since the territory of Oregon had declared itself as against slavery.

An additional source of unrest was caused by the knowledge that both the United States Senators-to-be that Oregon had sent to Washington—Joseph Lane and Delazon Smith, were not only Democrats, but friends of the slave.

A provision of the law at this time, required that no territory could be admitted into the Union until its white population of at least 50,000 white residents. Joseph Lane made the declaration that there were more than 50,000 white people residing in Oregon, and that the Georgia declaration that 100,000 white men and women were then living in the territory.

The fact is that the census of the United States, taken in 1850, a year later, showed a population of 22,000.

Friends of the Kansas territory were incensed because the constitution of Oregon prohibited free negroes from being residents of the state, and declared that Kansas contained a far larger population than the Oregon territory.

Ohio Fights Oregon.

A Representative from Ohio, Mr. Groves, was leader in the strenuous fight made against the Oregon bill. On February 12, Stephens demanded a vote, the bill was carried just as it came from the Senate, with 134 for admission and 108 against. It was then that the growing family of states, and her admission to the Union witnessed the fourth change in her government, bringing 15 years prior to her becoming a state.

The first change had been brought about with the institution of the territorial government, the second change was the Republican provisional form of government.

The third change had been the adoption of the territorial form of government, and now with the state's admission, came the people's representative republican form of government in the highest degree.

No Provision for Self-Support.

Oregon was the first state admitted into the Union, with no provision having been made for her self-support and maintenance. In this one case the parent Government had entirely neglected the offspring, and the latter had been forced to fight unaided in its battles, to wage war against a common enemy, and protect itself as best it could. When, faint, starved and exhausted, it had clamored at the door for admission, the parent was reluctantly opened for its admission into the Union, but the newly-born commonwealth was refused all aid or assistance in placing it in a position of self-protection.

Oregon was admitted—but with no provision for the support of a state government, no revenue, no public buildings, no courts and no library. There had been no appropriation for the Indian department and no money provided to repay the people what the Indian war had cost the Government and them. A war debt of \$5,000,000 had been contracted, and there was no certainty that the United States would assume it.

The Oregon people were groaning under taxation. A long, dreary winter had destroyed a large amount of stock and the Indian wars had been a heavy drain on the treasury. In Oregon alone 70 white people had been massacred or become victims in other ways of hostile Indians, and more than 2500 men had been sent to the front in the greater part of one entire year.

All Industries Suffer.

As a consequence, agricultural and industrial pursuits had suffered greatly. The new Pacific Railroad had not yet been opened, when the National question of Oregon's admission as a state into the Union, began to press on the people. In every sense of the word, the Oregonian pioneers were common folk, of the plain middle-class, with common conceptions of life, and modest ambitions. Of the very wealthy class, as well as the poverty-stricken poor, there was none.

Politically most of them were Democrats, personal embodiments of the Jacksonian and Jeffersonian spirit—"No one is better than I am." Basing their ideas of Democracy on this sentiment, its followers clung through thick and thin to their opinions, with all confidence and few questions.

Again and again they had elected Joseph Lane as delegate to Washington, and Curry, who had been appointed Territorial Governor, in 1854, was kept in possession of this position until Oregon became a state.

All Were Democrats.

The Federal Judges, Deady, Williams, Nesmith and Olney, were all Democrats, Nesmith at that time being Indian Superintendent. Asahel Bush, editor of the Salem Statesman, and R. P. Boise, a leading attorney and judge, with many others from the territorial capital, were of the same party.

Thomas F. Dryer, then editor of the Oregonian, and W. L. Adams, of the Oregon City Argus, were among the first exceptions, advocating Whig principles vigorously and often bitterly, and later the doctrine of the Republican party.

The Oregon common people possessed the marked traits, prejudices and instinctive sentiments against the institution of slavery and refused to allow it in their territorial constitution. They hated and distrusted the system of slavery, and long before they had the courage and conviction to antagonize the masters

CARRYING THE NEWS TO SALEM.

On Tuesday, March 15, 1859, at 4:30 in the morning, the possible Brother Jonathan arrived from San Francisco bringing the news of the admission of Oregon as a state to the Union. The bill for admission of the state had passed Congress and received the signature of the President February 14, 29 days before the news reached Portland.

The same morning the news was carried to Oregon City by river-boat, reaching there about half past 10 o'clock. The party at Canemah, hearing the news, decided that it would be well to transmit it to Salem as early as possible. A steamer was lying at Canemah just ready to start up the river; but it was suggested that a rider on horseback might carry the news more quickly. 1859, reached Salem before the boat could arrive. A young man of the party, named Stephen Senter, volunteered to be the messenger. Quickly as possible he got a horse, saddled him and galloped off up the road to Salem, but did not arrive there till very late that night. There had been a heavy rain, the roads were very muddy and the streams were all full to the top of their banks. He arrived at Salem some time in the midst of a storm.

The news was received at Salem with very little interest, and it was a number of days before it was carried to John Whiteaker, the first Governor, who had been elected in the preceding June in anticipation of the admission of the state. It devolved on the Governor to call the Legislature to put the state government in motion. As soon as practicable he issued his proclamation calling the Legislature together in special session. It assembled May 16, 1859, and sat until June 4, following. The President of the Senate was Luther Elkins, John E. Haft, chief clerk. The Speaker of the House was William G. T. Vault, of Jackson; chief clerk, Chester N. Terry, of Clatsop; members of the House 33.

The first regular session of the State Legislature began September 16, 1859, and ended October 15, 1859. At this session James W. Nesmith and Edward D. Baker were elected Senators.

and military types of society, they had destroyed and made effort to escape the system. The free Territory form of government had been instituted in Oregon, as elsewhere in the United States, and in May, 1855, a meeting had been held in Lindsley school house, of Eden district, Jackson County, in which a resolution was passed declaring the sentiment of the meeting to be "Freedom is National-slavery sectional." Congress could not change the institutions in the states then existing, but could prevent slavery from being introduced into the territories. That slavery was only an institution of law, existing only by law or statute, and belonged not to the Nation, but to a section, was one of the earliest expressions of the party afterward known as Republican.

Attention having been riveted on the question of statehood, in June, 1858, it was voted by over 7000 votes in a poll of less than 30,000, to form a state constitution. Oregon at that time possessed a population embracing more than 50,000 people.

With this strong vote the natural question of "free" or "slave" state was brought up for consideration. The Republicans, still weak in number and influence, wanted a "free" state. Only one Democrat is mentioned as opposing slavery, Judge Williams. The Salem Statesman, of July 25, 1857, contains, in an extended article, an argument by Judge Williams against slavery as inexpedient in Oregon and inadaptable to our form of labor.

The constitutional convention met August 17, 1857, in Salem. Matthew P. Deady was elected president; Chester N. Terry, secretary; John Baker, sergeant-at-arms, and Asahel Bush, printer. The standing committees were as follows: Legislative department—Boise, chairman; Lovjoy, Babcock, Chadwick, Watkins and Elkins. Executive department—Kelly, chairman; Farrar, Reed, Kelsey, Bratton, of Lane, Dryer and McBride. Judicial department—Williams, chairman; Olney, Boise, Kelly, Grover, Logan and Prim. Military affairs—Kelsey, chairman; Whitted, Burch, Moore, Scott, Corly and Matzger. Education and school lands—Peckler, chairman; Boise, Lockhart, Shattuck, Starkweather, Kinney and Robbins. Seat of government and public buildings—Boise, chairman; Prim, Campbell of Lane, Lewis, Olney, Chadwick, and Shannon. Corporations and internal improvements—Meigs, chairman; Williams, Elkins, Henderson, Campbell of Clackamas, Bristol and Miller. State boundaries—Lovjoy, chairman; Meigs, Olney, Newcomb, Applegate, Anderson and Watts. Suffrage and elections—Smith, chairman; Babcock, Bratton, of Lane, Cox of Marion, Dryer, Olney and White. Bill of rights—Grover, chairman; Reed, Wayne, McCormick, Brooks, Shrum and Fitzhugh.

The chief speakers of the convention were Deady, Logan, Williams, Smith, Boise, Kelly, Grover, Wayne, Olney, Farrar and Dryer. The various provisions of the constitution were taken up and amply discussed.

The question of slavery gave evidence of proving so disquieting that a born pacificator—Jesse Applegate—moved that it should not be discussed. This motion failing to prevail, the matter was freely talked about and settled in the Democratic way, by referring it to the people. This was not done in order to avoid the issue but because the leaders of the Democratic party felt sure of their voters.

On September 18, 1857, the constitution as a whole was adopted by a vote of 55 for it to 19 against it. Those voting against it were Anderson, Dryer, Farrar, Henderson, Kinney, Logan, Olney, White, Watts and Watkins. Those absent and not voting were: Applegate, Bristol, Campbell of Lane, Chadwick, Lewis, McBride, Meigs, Nichols, Olney, Prim, Reed, Short, Shrum, Shattuck and Scott.

Slavery Badly Beaten. The constitution was adopted by a vote of 2155 for, and 315 against it. Slavery was defeated by a vote of 10 for it, and 727 against it. The exclusion of free negroes was carried also—with a vote of 840 for it, and 1681 against it.

Though the greater portion of these voters were identified with a party that believed in the sectional institution, and in spite of the fact that for some time they had been assiduously instructed by pro-slavery advocates—still it is a matter of historic interest that the decision of the Oregonians was final and supreme, rejecting overwhelmingly the institution of slavery, with its sectional policies and ideas.

On the side of slavery stood General Joseph Lane, then—as always, the idol of the people. Still delegates to Congress it was an odd fact that he aspired to first place on the Democratic ticket, the highest honor they could give him—President of the United States.

But not even the strong personality, and influence of this magnetic leader, this man who possessed lofty ambitions, and whose ascendancy would be regarded in the light of a personal and state source of pride, could win the Oregonians to identify themselves with a sectional institution.

On March 16, 1858, a State Democratic Convention met at Salem, to nominate candidates to hold office under the new state government, in the event of Oregon being admitted to the Union. James W. Nesmith was chairman, and Shubrick Norris secretary. L. F. Grover was nominated for Representative in Congress, John Whiteaker for Governor, L. Heath for Secretary of State, John D. Boon for Treasurer, Asahel Bush for State Printer, M. P. Deady for judge of the First district, R. E. Stratton or Judge of the Second district, R. P. Boise for judge of the Third district, A. E. Walt for judge of the Fourth district, A. C. Gibbs Prosecuting Attorney for the First district, J. S. Smith for the Second, H. Jackson for the Third, C. R. Meigs for the Fourth.

Republicans in Convention.

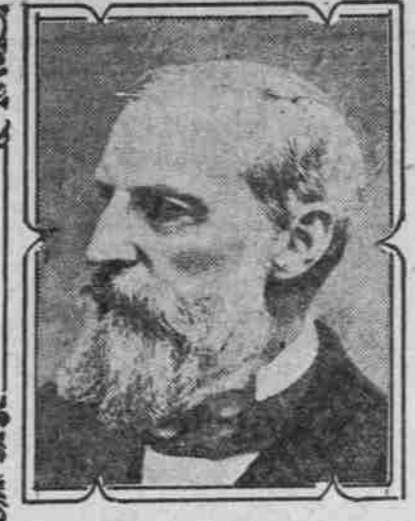
On April 2, 1858, a Republican state convention met at Salem also, and nominated candidates for the new government. John Denny was chosen for Governor; John R. McBride for Representative in Congress; Leander Holmes, Secretary of State; E. L. Applegate, for State Treasurer, and D. W. Craig, State Printer. They denounced the Dred Scott Decision, the Kansas policy of Buchanan's administration, declared slavery a sectional and not a National institution, antagonized the platform and "viva voce"



JOSEPH LANE - ONE OF OREGON'S 1ST UNITED STATES SENATORS



DELAZON SMITH PIONEER SENATOR FROM OREGON



LAFAYETTE GROVER FIRST CONGRESSMAN FROM OREGON



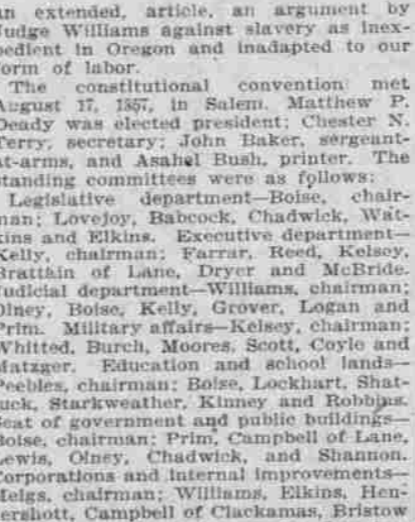
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GEORGE ABERNETHY, FIRST GOVERNOR OF THE TERRITORY OF OREGON



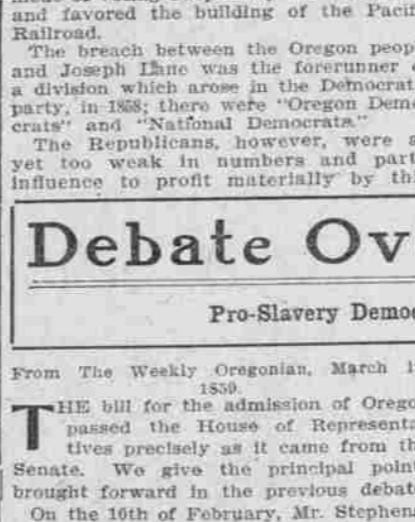
GOVERNOR CURRY TERRITORIAL GOVERNOR WHEN OREGON WAS ADMITTED INTO THE UNION



LANSING STOUT WHO SUCCEEDED GROVER AS CONGRESSMAN FROM OREGON



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GOVERNOR CURRY TERRITORIAL GOVERNOR WHEN OREGON WAS ADMITTED INTO THE UNION

OREGON! MY OREGON!

Melody: Maryland, My Maryland.
By May Beadle Frink.
We shout thy praises near and far,
Oregon! my Oregon!
Thy name hath been a guiding star,
Oregon! my Oregon!
Safely led by unseen hand,
Saved from many a hostile band,
Our fathers fought to win the land,
Oregon! my Oregon!
Proudly then to thee we sing,
Oregon! fair Oregon!
Fondest memories round thee cling,
Oregon! my Oregon!
Hail thy valleys' living green,
Hail thy vine-clad slopes between,
Hail thy silvery lakelets sheen,
Oregon! my Oregon!
Tenderly to thee we sing,
Oregon! loved Oregon!
And tribute to our heroes bring,
Oregon! my Oregon!
Where roly thy rivers broad and deep,
Where lofty pine their vigils keep,
Thy saviors rest in dreamless sleep,
Oregon! my Oregon!
From snow-crowned peak and vale and hill,
Oregon! dear Oregon!
From rock-ribbed stream and tinkling rill,
Oregon! my Oregon!
From forest depths, from wave-washed strand,
From every hamlet in the land,
Swell, the psalm, loud and grand,
Oregon! my Oregon!
By thy great and honored name,
Oregon! my Oregon!
By Marcus Whitman's deathless fame,
Oregon! my Oregon!
Praise thy sons, a loyal band,
May as thy snow-capped mountains stand,
For God and Home and Native Land!
Oregon! my Oregon!
Eugene, Or. (All rights reserved.)

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The breach between the Oregon people and Joseph Lane was admitted by a vote of division which arose in the Democratic party, in 1858; there were "Oregon Democrats" and "National Democrats."

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division of the forces of their opponent.

At this stage, the Legislature, anticipating that the territory would in all probability become a state, elected Governor, Lafayette Grover, a man of integrity and power. Two Senators were also chosen, and John Whiteaker was elected Governor, to serve in the event of Oregon's statehood.

The members of the Legislature of 1858 were as follows: Senate—Jackson, A. M. Berry, Lane, W. B. Johnston, John E. Haft, of Washington, Clatsop, Columbia and Tillamook, T. R. Cornelius, Marion, E. K. Colby and J. W. Grimm; Linn, C. Drain and L. Elkins; Douglas, J. E. Casley, E. Y. Smith, J. Lamson, Benton, J. S. Meltey, Wasco, J. S. Ruckel, Josephine, S. R. Scott, Umpqua, Coos and Curry, a Mr. Wells, Multnomah, J. M. Pollock, Polk, of Waimye.

House—D. B. Hannah, of Clackamas; Robert Morrison, of Clatsop and Tillamook; Nelson Hoyt, of Columbia and Washington; Whitcomb, of Coos and Curry; L. Norris and A. J. McGee, of Douglas; James H. Slater and Henry B. Nichols, of Benton; John W. McCauley, David Newton, of Clatsop; T. T. Thomson, of Jackson; D. S. Holton, of Josephine; A. J. Crugan, R. B. Cochran and A. S. Patterson, of Lane; L. H. Cranor, T. J. Crooks, E. E. Smith, of Clatsop; M. Pollock, B. F. Bonham, B. F. Harding, J. H. Lasater and John Stevens, of Marion; T. J. Dryer and A. D. Shelby, of Multnomah; B. F. Burch and K. W. W. M. Pollock, of Umpqua; W. S. Brown, of Washington; Vic Trevett, of Wasco; Andrew Shuck, of Yamhill.

These members met at Salem, July 5, 1858. Luther Elkins was President of the Senate; E. Carpenter, secretary; W. G. T. Vault, speaker of the House and C. N. Terry, chief clerk.

Confusion Then Arose. Here a singular confusion and seeming hesitancy on the part of the party leaders began to be evidenced. Lane, when in Washington, had favored the admission bill, as had been expected of him, and there also seemed an unwillingness on his part to secure the recognition of the war debt.

The Assembly had been convened by Governor Curry, who was still serving the territorial government in this capacity, pending the taking of office of John Whiteaker. At this session Governor Curry gave out the singular doctrine, that Oregon, by adopting a constitution had made herself a state with no action of the United States Government. The only sane conclusion to be derived from his statement, being that of her own volition Oregon had become a state, but was not in the Union.

This serves simply as an illustration of the confusion existing at that stage, a confusion which had a certain influence on the minds of the Oregonians, which were representative men of both parties.

In marked contrast to the executive movement of the party leaders, the people level judgment and clear foresight of the common people stands out. It was at length decided to proceed

with the regular form of admission, and on February 14, 1859, the bill passed Congress, and Oregon became a state.

Lafayette Grover took his place in the House of Representatives, and the elected Senators, Delazon Smith and Joseph Lane, took their seats in the Senate. Lane having drawn the slip of paper marked "one," was in that class of Senators whose terms expired March 30, 1861; Smith, having drawn slip "one," was identified with the class whose term expired March 3, 1859, allowing him but 17 days to serve.

Special Session Is Called. Of interest is the historical fact that Governor Whiteaker called a special session in May following to elect a Senator to fill out Smith's term, but it met without effecting an election, and thus brought into existence a precedent that has since been followed with general persistency.

In the month of April, 1860, a Democratic convention held at Salem resulted in the nomination of Lansing Stout for Congress. The Democratic associations endorsed the Dred Scott decision, and the administration of James Buchanan, and set the stamp of their approval upon the National Democratic platform of the previous year.

Also, in April, a Republican convention was in session in Salem. At this meeting David Logan received the nomination for Congressman, and W. Warren, Leander Holmes and A. G. Hovey were chosen as delegates to the National Republican Convention with instruction to vote for William H. Hunt, then the party's nominee for President. In this convention resolutions were passed as favoring the Pacific Railroad, internal improvements, free institutions, and her approval of slavery in the territories.

Owing to the party split among the Democrats, their candidate for Congress, Lansing Stout, was elected by a very narrow margin, and in the following year their candidate, George K. Shell, was elected by only a small majority.

In both instances the unsuccessful candidate was David Logan. Oregon's record in the past 50 years might be summed up in two words—"prosperity" and "progress"—written with a pen.

She has more than amply fulfilled any promise or destiny foreseen in her early days and the treasures and harvests also has given, and she is the product of her own fertile soil.

The fastness of her resources are, even today, not known. Vast tracts of her lands are still unexplored, whose value is not to be approximated. The soil of her domain and her valleys in particular is of unsurpassed fertility, and there is no climate in all God's workhouse so kindly, so salubrious and so fruitful as is Oregon's. Her commercial interests, internal and foreign, are active and extensive, with every year a noticeable increase. Her institutions and her people are representative types of all that is best and cleanest in American ideals and learning.

For this is the record of a mere handful of years—a paltry fifty in number—what may she not accomplish ere another fifty years have followed her?

Debate Over Admission of Oregon

Pro-Slavery Democrats Opposed It Because Oregon Had Declared for Free Soil.

From The Weekly Oregonian, March 19, 1859.

THE bill for the admission of Oregon passed the House of Representatives precisely as it came from the Senate. We give the principal points brought forward in the previous debate.

On the 10th of February, Mr. Stephens, of Georgia, from the committee on territories, reported back, without amendment, the Senate bill for the admission of Oregon into the Union. He said there can be no question that there is sufficient population