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## ABRAHAM LINCOLN COULD HAVE BEEN OREGON GOVERNOR

Great Emancipator Was Tendered Executiveship of Territory but Mrs. Lincoln Objected

[This is the twenty-fourth of a series of articles on Oregon and its history, written for The Sunday Journal by J. B. Horner, professor of history, Oregon Agricultural college, and author of "Oregon."]

By J. B. Horner

In connection with John P. Gaines' appointment as governor of Oregon, two other men should be considered. One is Abraham Lincoln, the greatest American of his time. The other is Kintzing Pritchett, the least known governor of Oregon. In fact not one in a hundred Oregonians now living ever heard of Kintzing Pritchett; and very few know that the appointment of governor had been offered to Abraham Lincoln.

To Kintzing Pritchett belongs the distinction of being governor of Oregon for 60 days. He was appointed secretary of the territory by President Polk, upon its creation by congress, and served in that capacity until the resignation of Governor Joseph Lane on June 18, 1850. John P. Gaines had been appointed governor, but did not arrive in Oregon until August, taking the oath of office on the 18th of that month. During this interim Mr. Pritchett served as governor.

In connection with the appointment of Governor Gaines it will be recalled that the office was first offered to Abraham Lincoln, whose term in congress had just expired. Mr. Lincoln had taken an active part in the campaign which resulted in Taylor's election to the presidency, and made a special trip to Washington city to support his application for the appointment as commissioner of the general land office; but that position had already been promised to another. President Taylor, however, offered to appoint him governor of Oregon territory, but Mrs. Lincoln objected to going to a section so distant, and she never declined. It is interesting to surmise what the effect would have been on the history of the United States if Lincoln had become governor of Oregon territory.

**APPOINTED BY TAYLOR**  
John P. Gaines received his appointment from President Zachary Taylor, and assumed the duties of his office August 18, 1850. He served as governor of Oregon until May 16, 1853. In 1855 he was the Whig nominee for congress, but was defeated by Joseph Lane. He died at his home in Marion county, in 1857, aged 55 years.

John P. Gaines was born in Augusta, Va., in September, 1795, removing to Boone county, Kentucky, in early youth. He volunteered in the War of 1812, being in the battle of the Thames and several other engagements. He was subsequently sent to congress from 1847 to 1849. He was elected major of the Kentucky cavalry, and served in the Mexican war until taken prisoner at Encarnacion. After some months of captivity he escaped, and, joining the army, served to the end of the war. On his return from Mexico Taylor appointed him governor of Oregon. When his term expired he retired upon a farm in Marion county, where he resided till his death in December, 1857.

**CONTEST OVER CAPITAL**  
A bitter contest was waged against the proposed removal of the territorial capital from Oregon City to some point farther south. Governor Lane had by proclamation declared Oregon City to be the capital, but the session of 1850 passed an act locating the seat of government at Salem. Governor Gaines refused to recognize the constitutionality of the act, and was sustained by two of the supreme judges, and while the judges remained at Oregon City the legislature met in Salem. On May 14, 1852, congress settled the matter by confirming the act of the legislature.

With the settlement of Southern Oregon came the demand for wagon roads. Being at the head of tidewater navigation on the Umpqua river, Scottsburg was, in 1850, selected as a point for commercial operations with the interior, and especially with the gold mines of Northern California. The original Indian trails were widened, temporary ferries were established at crossings over the Umpqua river and abrupt declivities avoided, so that a pack horse could carry a load from the ship's side at Scottsburg to the northern edge of California. But public spirited promoters soon saw the necessity of a suitable wagon way. Through their influence, therefore, the Oregon territorial legislature in 1852-3 was induced to memorialize congress, with the result that \$100,000 was appropriated from the national treasury for a military wagon road from Scottsburg to Stewart Creek in the Rogue River valley. The route for the road was surveyed first by Lieutenant Withers, U. S. A., October, 1854, and after a further appropriation the survey was completed by Major Atwood, U. S. A., assisted by Jesse Applegate. The survey practically followed the old Southern Oregon trail. The construction of the road was superintended by Colonel Joseph Hooker, detailed by the war department for that purpose. The road was completed in 1858. The Southern Oregon military road answered the purposes of the people of the Umpqua valley until the completion of the railroad to Roseburg.

**WHITES PARTLY TO BLAME**  
The Rogue River Indian war was the second Indian war in Oregon, it having been preceded by the Cayuse war, which has already been mentioned. The cause that led up to wars with Indians may be summarized as follows: First, the natural objection to the invasion of the whites and their conquest of the Indian domains, and trespass upon their hunting and fishing rights. To the missionary and the trader, who laid no claim to the country, the Indian never seriously objected. Second, the disregard of the whites as to Indian rights and privileges. The Indians were too often regarded as intruders, were forced from their favorite camping grounds and driven farther and farther back to the bleak, barren and inferior lands. Third, the Indians feared that they would never be compensated by the government for relinquished lands. This fear was confirmed by the delays of the government in the execution of treaty agreements.

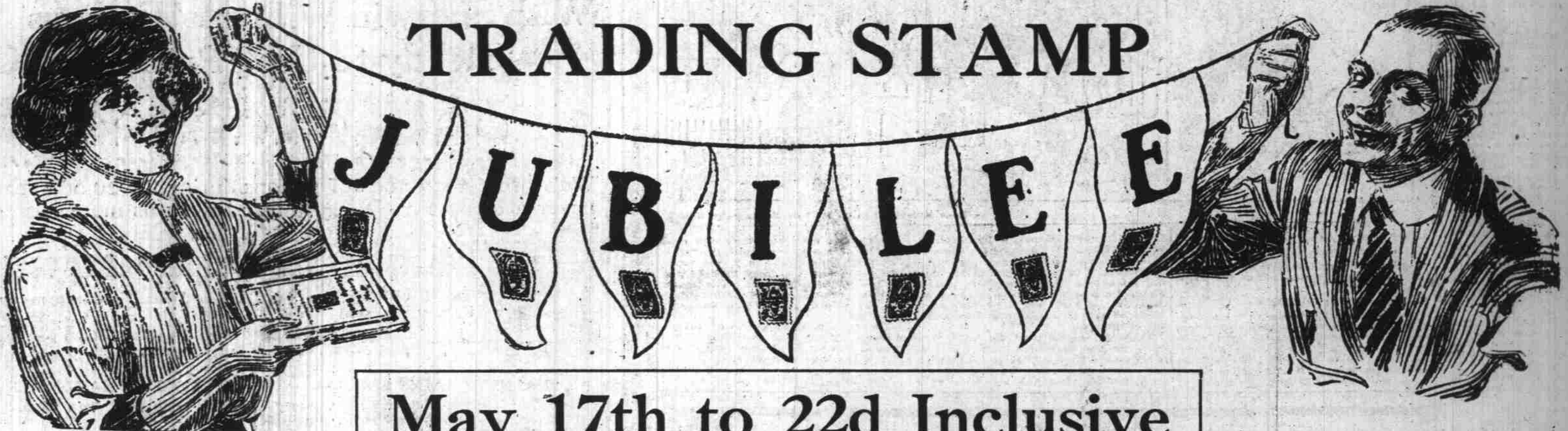


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