

Fight Made to Get Capital Here

Oregon City, Then Corvallis and Finally Salem Had Seat of Territorial Government; Statesman Played Big Part in Bringing Government Center Here; Old Capitol Fired

THE location of the capital of Oregon territory was being fought over, 80 years ago when The Statesman began its career. The first seat of the government was at Oregon City under the order of the provisional government. This was continued under the territorial government, but on January 13, 1851 the legislature voted to remove the capital to Salem, as the new settlement on Chemeketa plain was called. Judge Nelson and Strong of the supreme court and Governor Gaines the Whig appointee, declared this act unconstitutional and refused to remove to Salem. Judge Pratt, the third

member of the court, upheld the act. The legislature of December, 1851, however, met in Salem in rooms furnished by the Oregon Institute (Williamette university).

Through the efforts of Gen. Lane, delegate to congress from the territory, congress passed a law in May, 1852, ratifying the act of the territorial legislature in fixing the capital at Salem, and the executive offices were moved from Oregon City.

The building used for a state house in Oregon City in 1851 was located on the southeast corner of Sixth and Main streets, a site now occupied by a market. The governor's office is thought to have been there also.

The sessions of 1852-3 and 1853-4 were held downtown. The house met in the Nesmith building at Front and Trade, and the council met in the Rector building which also housed the library.

Rector's hall was located on the west side of Commercial street, between Trade and Ferry streets. It was the principal assembly hall of the '50's. It was a two-story, frame structure.

Congress, Territory Put up Capitol Fund

The organic act of the territory had provided \$5000 for territorial capital and congress had appropriated \$20,000 for public buildings. Construction of the new capitol authorized by the legislature, January, 1853, begun in that year and the legislative session of 1854 was held in this uncompleted structure. The foundation was of stone, the super-structure of lumber. In 1855 congress appropriated another \$27,000, but this was not sufficient to complete the structure.

In January, 1855, the legislature through the influence of J. C. Avery representative of Benton county, who was interested in the townsite of Corvallis, fixed the capital at Corvallis and the university,

previously allotted to Corvallis, at Jacksonville.

The secretary of the federal treasury considered the act void and instructed the territorial secretary to contract no debt nor to pay the per diem of legislators. Gov. Curry and Secretary Harding accordingly remained in Salem. The legislature met in Corvallis in December of 1855, occupying rooms furnished by Corvallis citizens, in a building on the corner of Second and Adams streets. L. F. Grover, member from Marion county, at the opening of the session introduced a resolution to move the capital back to Salem. Efforts were made to delay the motion pending arrival of Jackson country members, but without avail.

Debates Reported In Full in Statesman

The debates were reported very fully in The Statesman, which was being printed in Corvallis. Those supporting Salem denounced the deal of the previous session as a rotten political bargain. The Polk county members, F. A. Waymire and R. P. Boise, Sr., opposed moving back to Salem. Finally after adding an amendment submitting the matter to the people for a vote, Grover's resolution prevailed and the legislature moved back to Salem. It took up quarters in the still uncompleted capitol building, in the middle of the month. On Dec. 28, 1855, the new building was completely destroyed by fire. There was much talk that the fire was incendiary and suspicions were directed at the Corvallis partisans. It became something of a political issue, and the reaction destroyed the chances of Corvallis winning at an election.

The question of locating the capital was submitted to the voters in the election held January, 1856, but there was comparatively little interest in the question. The Statesman and the Salem inter-

ests took the position that the attitude of the federal authorities made the election futile. The vote gave Eugene City a majority but the legislature of the territorial officers ignored the result of the election.

Salem won Capital Vote in 1864

The state constitution called for submitting the question of location to a vote of the people. In the election of 1862 no city had a majority. In 1864 Salem had a majority of 79 over the other competitors, the principal ones being Eugene and Portland.

After the burning of the territorial capital in 1855, the legislature resumed its sittings in the building owned by J. W. Nesmith near the steamboat landing. This was the same building, a two-story house, which had previously been occupied by the Statesman prior to its removal to Corvallis. The council met in Rector's building.

In September, 1860, the legislature met in Holman's brick, northwest corner, Commercial and Ferry and met there until the capitol was built.

The city directories of 1871 and 1872 give the location of governor's office, the state library,

CORNERSTONE LAYING FOR CAPITOL



OCTOBER 8, 1878. PICTURE TAKEN FROM CORNER SUMMER AND COURT STREETS. IN THE REAR IS THE DE LUXE EXCURSION TRAIN RUN BY THE OREGON & CALIFORNIA FOR THE EVENT. THE WHITE HOUSE IN THE BACKGROUND WAS THE BLIND SCHOOL ON TWELFTH STREET.

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First Almanac Came Out in '48 At Oregon City

The first almanac published on the western coast in the English language was the "Oregon Almanac" of 1848, printed at the Spectator office in Oregon City by W. P. Hudson. A copy is in the S. A. Clarke collection of Mrs. Sally Dyer. It was well printed on white paper of excellent quality. In the "Table of Important Scientific Discoveries and Inventions" the last entries are:

"1825. Rail-road locomotion by the power of steam invented in England.

"1844. Magnetic telegraph invented in America."

IN THE NEWS OF '57

"Illness of Dr. McLoughlin — We learn that Dr. McLoughlin of Oregon City has been quite ill recently, and on Thursday of last week, it was thought could not survive. He however revived, and at last advices was a little better. He is about eighty years of age. He has acted a prominent part in the settlement of Oregon and we should deeply regret to hear of his demise."—Statesman, July 21, 1857.

Role Unique

BY P. R. FINLAY
Publisher, LaGrande
Evening Observer

"THERE are few newspapers in this part of the country that have had the opportunity of such a long period of service as has been the privilege of The Oregon Statesman, and we wish to extend congratulations to all who have had a part in the attainment of the present record.

"In connection with the celebration of your 80th anniversary please accept for yourself and your associates our good wishes and the hope that you may continually increase in helpfulness to all within the circle of your influence."

STALLION SHOW IN EARLY '80'S



TAKEN FROM SOUTHWEST CORNER STATE AND COMMERCIAL. NOTE CONDITION OF STREETS, BUILDING AT LEFT IS PRESENT ADOLPH & WATERS BUILDING. THE BRICK IN MIDDLE OF BLOCK IS STEWART BLOCK WHICH HOUSED THE STATESMAN; PRINTERS ARE STANDING ON DECK OF PORCH TO VIEW PARADE.

—Copyright; courtesy Cronise Studio.

the supreme court in Grover & Miller's brick, southwest corner of Commercial and Ferry streets. This is the structure owned and occupied at present by The Statesman and the Salem W. C. T. U. The secretary of state, the state treasurer had offices in Holman's brick.

\$100,000 Appropriated For Capitol in 1872

The legislature of 1872 appropriated \$100,000 for a new capitol. Ground was broken in May, 1873, and the cornerstone laid October 8, 1873. It was accepted as partially completed August 8, 1876 and subsequent legislatures have met there; and the major state offices have been located there.

The supreme court building was erected in 1914 and the state office building in 1929, completed in 1930.

LUMBER \$70 PER M.

Oregon City Prices: "Lumber is worth \$70 per thousand feet at the mills. Flour commands \$15 per hundred pounds, and sales brisk. A considerable quantity has been bought since the arrival of the last steamer for the California market. Wheat sells for \$4 and \$5 per bushel and scarce. You who are raising it in the states for sixty or seventy cents per bushel think of that, and then pack up your traps and come to Oregon. Your sixty or seventy cents you are obliged to take in promises or truck, while here you get gold slugs on delivery."—Statesman, (Oregon City), Nov. 20, 1852.

JULY 4, 1860, AT SALEM

The glorious Fourth was ushered in at Salem by a national salute of thirty-three guns, and the hoisting of the stars and stripes upon the tall liberty pole which had been erected in the Court house square the previous evening. . . . The procession marched through the principal streets, and finally halted in the oak grove near Commercial street, where . . . an eloquent and soul-stirring oration was delivered by Col. E. D. Baker to an audience of near two thousand."—Statesman July 10, 1860.

COLORADO GOLD STRIKE

"Kansas Gold Mines—The gold diggings near Pike's Peak in Western Kansas, are exciting considerable attention in the eastern States. The probability is that there is a small quantity of gold in Kansas, but not enough to justify the excitement it has created."—Statesman, Nov. 16, 1858.