

16 Houses in Salem in 1851

First Territorial Legislature to Gather in Salem Used Basement of Oregon Institute; Statesman Moved Here in 1853; Joseph A. Baker Tells of Dwellings He Remembers

MARCH 28, 1851, when the first issue of The Statesman was off the press, Salem had a few more than 10 families and 75 to 100 people, and 16 houses, which was a reliable census or estimate made for the embryo city in September, 1849. When The Statesman was removed from the capital at Oregon City to the capital at Salem, where the first Salem issue was published June 21, 1853, the number of houses had increased somewhat, and also the number of families, and the total population — but not very much as progress is considered. A large covered wagon train immigration had come across the plains in 1851, and the largest of all, carrying around 20,000 people, in 1852. The town, having been named and platted in 1850 and 1851, and having secured the capital by a vote of the second territorial legislature that met in regular session at Oregon City in 1850, had enjoyed its first "boom," but up to March 28, 1851, that boom had gathered but small momentum.

When the first territorial legislature to meet in Salem had assembled, December 3, 1851, there was no place suitable for its sessions, except a room for each branch in the basement of the Oregon Institute (that by change of name became Willamette university), and so arrangements were made for these rooms, with a couple of desks and some spittoons furnished. It appears that the sessions of 1853 and 1854 met at Rector's hall down town. The 1854-55 session was held in completed rooms of the territorial capitol; the almost completed building that was burned December 28, 1855, leaving the territory and state, for about 20 years, with only rented rooms in down town Salem.

Baker, Though 90, Would Pass for 60

There is some question about the exact meeting place of the sessions of 1852-3 and 1853-4.

The "reliable census or estimate" mentioned above was made in 1913 by Joseph A. Baker, the oldest citizen of Salem in point of continuous residence. He is in the 92nd year of his age; though he would pass for 60, in physical and mental attributes. Mr. Baker saw, in September, 1849, as he remembered, 16 houses. He said 17; but he counted the mission mills as two, whereas the saw and grist mill were under one roof. The other buildings are thus listed:

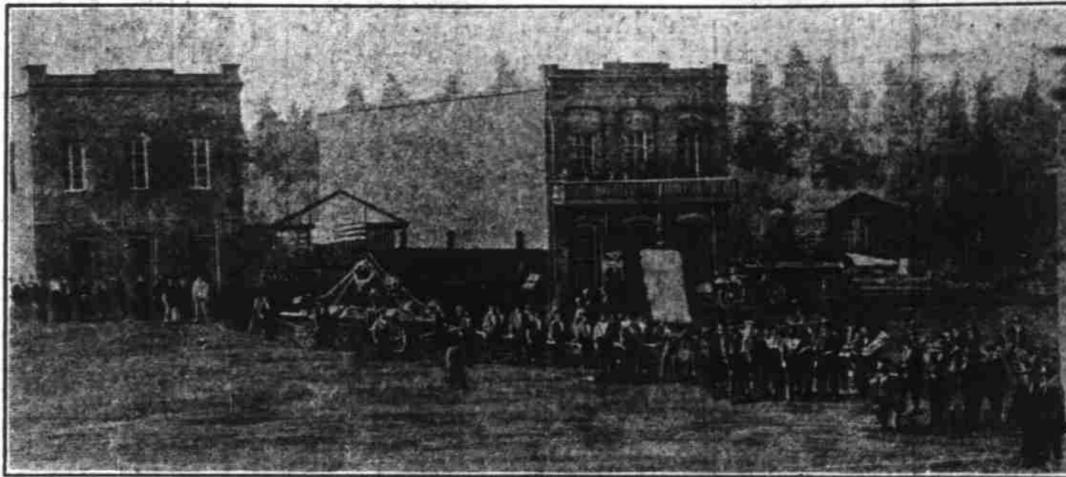
1. The Jason Lee mission house at what is now 960 Broadway, the first residence in what became Salem, still standing and almost as it was when first erected in 1840-41, except for the L on the southwest corner.

2. Small building or shed on west side of Liberty street on the south bank of North Mill street, unoccupied.

3. Residence in course of construction on the northeast corner of Liberty and Union streets.

4. A house standing about the center of the block east of Commercial and north of Court street then occupied by Samuel Parker and family. It had been the home of the Rev. L. H. Judson family. The Pacific Christian Advocate was afterwards published in this building. It was later moved up to face Court street and a store front added, and in the old days it was the famous "North Star" saloon of "Sandy" Burns. It was torn down only a year or two ago. It is now occupied by the

SITE OF U. S. BANK IN 1861



NORTHWEST CORNER STATE AND COMMERCIAL STREETS. THE FIRST BRICK IS MOORES' BLOCK; SECOND BRICK WAS THEN McCULLY-STARKEY CO. STORE. THE BUILDING IS NOW OCCUPIED BY BUSTER BROWN SHOE STORE. THE LOGHOUSE AT EDGE OF TIMBER WAS MOVED FROM MARION AND CHEMEKETA WHERE IT WAS FIRST SCHOOLHOUSE IN SALEM. CELEBRATION SEEMS TO BE FIREMEN'S EXHIBITION.

Dr. Steeves two-story brick.

"The Mills" Earliest Name of This City

5. A residence in the same vicinity and a little southeast of the southeast corner of the present Ladd & Bush Bank building, occupied by James Turner Crump and family, Salem's first (provisional government) postmaster; before Salem was named but the place was then called "The Institute," as it had before been called "The Mills," the original Indian name having been Chemeketa, meaning place of meeting, probably indicating that it was an Indian city of refuge. Mr. Crump was a partner in the first established store in Salem, succeeding, with the son William Cox, Thomas Cox, who brought his goods across the plains in 15 four-yoke ox wagons in 1847. Thus the first regular post office was in the first store.

6. A small house just west of where the Masonic building now stands, occupied by Mrs. Brown and family; she was a daughter of Thomas Cox and mother of J. Henry Brown, the historian. The father had died on the plains.

7. A two-story residence on the site of William Brown's house, Church and State streets, occupied by Mr. Carter and family; a missionary family.

8. A small house on the northwest corner of Church and Ferry streets (where E. M. Croisan's place is now), occupied by Wiley Chapman and family. Mr. Chapman was the builder of Marion county's first court house.

9. The Oregon Institute, the finest building at the time on the Pacific coast; barring the California Spanish mission buildings.

The "Parsonage" Stood On Kay Mill Tower Site

10. The "parsonage." It stood about where the Kay Woolen mill water tower now stands; was occupied by Rev. William Roberts and family. He had come to finish winding up the business of the Methodist missions in the

Oregon country, and remained the balance of his life; one of the able early day preachers.

11. The Parrish place on the west side of Capitol street, near North Mill Creek. The house was built by Rev. J. L. Parrish. It was partly burned in Mr. Parrish's life time, and was reconstructed as it now is.

12. The residence of Rev. A. F. Waller, north side of East State street about opposite Sixteenth street.

13. The Cox store, northeast corner of Commercial and Ferry streets. First store and post office in Salem, as related above.

14. A dwelling where the back part of the main machinery room of the paper mill is now. It was the family residence of W. H. Willson, who platted the main Salem townsite, and Mrs. Willson was the first teacher in the Oregon Institute. They had both been early Methodist missionaries.

July 4 Celebrated In "Bush's" Pasture

15. Rev. David Leslie, who named Salem, had a home on his donation land claim at the south end of Church street. The house was about where the Sallie Bush house now stands. There is where the first Fourth of July celebration was held in Salem.

16. The mission mills, across from the Jason Lee home (the site now occupied by the Larmer warehouse). The mills were built in 1840, after the coming of the Lausanne, Mayflower of the Pacific. Their construction started the town that became Salem.

After March, 1851, there was a good deal of building in Salem; for gold dust in large quantities had been coming from the California mines, brought by the Oregon settlers who were among the first gold rushers, as some of them were the discoverers of gold near Sutter's Fort. The two main and rival sections of the town were then, first, near the mission mills, and second, near South Mill Creek—the present Commer-

cial and Front and Ferry streets. The famous Island House was built in the period between September, 1849, and March, 1851, on "the island," near the mission mills, as were saloons, blacksmith shops, etc. That section was the main business center in that earliest period, but soon the men returning with their gold dust from the California mines started steamboating on the Willamette, and as the main landings were near the foot of Trade street, the south end of the town boomed, and the central downtown district before long had an increasing number of dwellings scattered among the firs and oaks.

But there was no church building until January 23, 1853, when the original First Methodist church was dedicated. Church services had theretofore been held in the Oregon Institute chapel. Even the first courts were held in that building, as well as the sessions of the legislature and other meetings of a public nature including Methodist mission conferences.

The missionary days, up to the '50's make the business center close to where Liberty, Broadway and High streets meet. The returning gold rushers and early steamboating transferred it in the '50's to near where The Statesman building is now. The stage days of the '60's kept it there—though the original center was lively in that period because of the old Willamette woolen mills that stood on the site of the mission mills. The railroad days of the '70's, and other activities, drew and spread Salem's business center to where it is now. It will ere long expand so as to include the pioneer centers.

Trap and Net Men War in Columbia Old, Old Affair

The fight over fishing on the Columbia is not of recent origin. Here is an item from The Statesman, May 27, 1885:

"For some time trouble has been brewing between two classes of fishermen at Ilwaco, near the mouth of the Columbia, one party being those who fish with nets and the other those who use traps."

They had a lot of fighting, \$10,000 worth of property was destroyed, and a party of guards fired by mistake on a group of their friends, killing one and wounding another.

Black Rules in Statesman When Webster Goes on

"Daniel Webster. The last Atlantic mail brings us the mournful intelligence that Daniel Webster is no more. America's greatest statesman, the Defender and Expounder of her Constitution the Massive Genius, the Mightiest of the Mighty, has fallen, and the nation bewails her loss. The last of the Giant Trio has gone. A few short years ago and the county put on mourning at the fall of the great Calhoun. A few brief months have passed since the death of her noble Clay again clad her in the habiliments of woe; and now the startling announcement is made that the towering Webster has too gone hence."—Statesman, Dec. 4, 1852.

Webster died October 24, 1852. The issue of the Statesman announcing his death used pica column rules of solid black as a sign of its mourning.

Steamer Romps Up River in '51 In Speedy Trip

"The Lot Whitcomb—This steamer arrived at our landing on Monday, making the trip from Milwaukie in 50 minutes. This being her first appearance here, she created considerable excitement, and was visited during her stay by many of our citizens. She passed over the rapids each way without difficulty and she will continue to run here until the high water recedes. She is a noble specimen of Oregon enterprise, is provided with gentlemanly and skillful officers, and deserves a liberal patronage."—Statesman, (Oregon City), May 16, 1851.

"The Steamer Willamette made a trial trip to Astoria on Sunday, returning on Tuesday with the mail from the states. She will be at our landing about the 20th inst."—Statesman (Oregon City), May 16, 1851.

140 Pounds Was Weight of Bell For M. E. Church

"Bells. A large church bell weighing 520 pounds was received at this place on Tuesday. It was purchased in New York by Governor Abernathy for the M. E. church of this city. This is the first bell of any considerable size ever received in Oregon.

"Governor Abernathy also purchased three other bells which are also here, one weighing 190 pounds is designed for the M. E. church at Portland; one weighing 140 pounds for Salem; and one weighing 130 pounds for the Clackamas Female Seminary in this city."—Statesman, (Oregon City), July 4, 1851.

IN THE NEWS OF '60

News of the presidential election of 1860 came to the Statesman by telegraph to Yreka:

"Fort Churchill, Nov. 14th
"The Pony Express with dates from St. Louis to Nov. 7th has arrived. Lincoln is elected president—Statesman, Nov. 19, 1860.

Career One of Achievement

BY CHARLES L. McNARY
United States Senator from Oregon

"AN active career of eighty years is an achievement for man or newspaper. I congratulate The Statesman on this long period of continuous service to Oregon. Its sturdy competition attests to its pioneer inception. The years have improved its circulation, broadened its outlook, and heightened its news-gathering facilities.

"Its devoted friends confidently prophesy a future of sound progress and achievement in which Salem, and The Statesman, shall continue each to contribute to the growth and expansion of the other."