

WILLAMETTE FARMER.

VOL. XVIII.

SALEM, OREGON, FRIDAY, JANUARY 21, 1887.

NO. 50.

OREGON PIONEER HISTORY

SKETCHES OF EARLY DAYS.—MEN AND TIMES IN THE FORTIES

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Joseph Watt's Experience Crossing the Plains—Some Early Episodes

I find that my essay, describing the journey of Mr. Joseph Watt to Oregon, left my worthy friend afoot at Fort Walla Walla—as Wallula was then called—and the worthy Archibald McKinley, who represented the Hudson Bay company then at that point, had uttered his evident truism: "Ye're young and strong, and ye're well able to walk," because Joseph Watt had not the cash in hand to pay for a horse. Wallula was as desolate then as now, and it was a poor place to leave an old friend waiting for a month, so I will hasten to his relief and narrate the "mooving accidents by field and flood" that he encountered before reaching that haven of rest, the Willamette valley.

Mr. Watt was in company with a man who had agreed to pack his provisions but who was suddenly required to return to Lapiwa to render an account of his conduct towards another man's wife. Mr. Watt was bound for dangers and threatenings and "chimeras dire" that stripped him even of the dear bought grub for which he traded off his beloved cow. He could have traded for a horse had he been willing to have parted with his gun, but the rifle was an old friend, and not the sort of a friend to abandon in an Indian country. So, though his impoverished friend, H. H. Lee, had induced the Scotch warden of the fort to make a trade, Watt stuck by his trusty weapon.

In this juncture Lee stood by him and agreed to pack his supplies on his spare horse. It was arranged that Watt should start ahead, very early in the day, and with earliest dawn push on and make as good time as possible. This he did and reached the Umatilla river where Lee was to wait for him. The river was booming, but a young Indian who happened to be at the ford, carried him across and gave him his best wishes in his native tongue. Watt saw nothing of Mr. Lee, who had gone on beyond there, and being fearful that in some way that personage had missed him, passing on some other trail than he had travelled, he kept on all day and into the night. He was so apprehensive that he kept on until 10 o'clock the second day, when he took the back track awhile. When he had gone eastward for an hour he met two Indians, who gave him some salmon they had and helped themselves in return to a bar of lead and a pair of socks. As they reached to take these articles they managed to give him an overturn, but he righted himself instantly and cocked his rifle. A big fellow grabbed that, and holding it with one hand, with the other Watt drew his butcher knife. The savage then grasped the wrist that held the knife, and the situation was laughable in the extreme, only for the fact of danger that beset it. Watt grasped his cocked gun with one hand and the handle of his butcher knife with the other. While the savage also grasped the gun and with the other hand clasped the wrist that controlled the knife. But the "gentle savage" was considerably in the majority, for a little fellow of his kind was operating on Joe's flank, and skirmishing in his rear. Watt was alive to all considerations and attempted by a subtle double movement to rout his foe in front and rear. He was a lover of the weed, and had his mouth well charged with ambler. His simultaneous movement was to kick behind, which was so well timed as to send the juvenile savage to grass with a rolling motion as sudden as it was effective. All this while his look was into the eye of the aggressive Siwash and he never winked when he became "a kicker," and at the same instant his foot went out rearward

he sent a swift stream of ambient fluid into the optics of his older foe. The fun thickened furiously when the Indian responded in kind so quickly, that it was hard to tell who "got first water." And there they stood, unwinking in gaze, sinews nerved to the highest tension, and disgusting saliva running down each face.

Just in the nick of time there came over a roll of the prairie close at hand a very motley group that all supposed to be but the vanguard of a larger company. It came upon them so suddenly that Mr. Siwash let go of Jo Watt, who drew back and got his gun and knife in readiness for a better defence, and then drew to a safer distance. The newcomer proved to be Alde Neal, who led a sore-back pony that carried his three motherless children. Anyone but a savage of barbarous tendencies in the extreme would have felt interest and sympathy for poor Neal, who had buried his wife on the plains and was trying to get through with his little children. The Indians stopped him and bantered him in honeyed tones for a trade of some sort. Watt told him to come on with him and not to parley with them; that they were a bad lot and would rob him. And rob him they did, for he paid no attention to the friendly admonition. When they had got through with him he possessed an old cuitan not so valuable as his own, and they had appropriated all his iotas. He poked on down to The Dalles a sadder and a much wiser man. The thorough badness of the Columbia river tribes surprised the emigrants who, like Neal and Watt, had crossed the plains and supposed they were within safe and almost civilized limits, to find that their hardest experience was when they were within the bounds of Oregon.

Just at this moment there came riding up an Indian with a loose horse, who gave Watt a letter from Lee. It said he was to mount the spare horse and come on to where he was. It seems that Lee had given this Indian a shirt to find Watt and bring him to his camp. As Watt had feared, Lee had passed him on the various trails and river crossings, but was kind and generous enough to take this pains to recover his company. He reached Lee on the emigrant road, six miles from The Dalles, which must have been near the Deschutes river, where he had reached a train of wagons. By this time Watt was very sick and wanted to ride in one of the wagons, but they would not permit him to ride, except to cross rivers. His only chance to get across the Deschutes was to keep with this train. So walking and vomiting, while the unfeeling train boys laughed and jeered at him, he managed to hold the gait of the cattle train until they crossed the Deschutes. It must be confessed that Watt's experience along the valley of the Columbia was decidedly varied and not altogether agreeable, taken from Whitman's to the M. E. mission at The Dalles.

I have alluded to the fact that Mr. Watt's father borrowed \$2 50 in coin to give his son a suitable send-off. He says he gave \$2 for the boots and the balance for a bottle of brandy that he fixed for medical uses and made serviceable as a cure for bowel complaints; in many instances working many recoveries. With some other small change he purchased fish hooks such items, that were very serviceable in many instances when trading for needed articles of the Indians. After arriving in Oregon, Watt was offered \$25 for the boots, for shoe leather was in great demand here then.

When Watt rejoined Mr. Lee that gentleman told him he was astonished to see him come up with his gun and boots. "He said the Indians had attacked him at the Umatilla and he had to ride all night to get away from them, and that was the reason he was so far in advance of where he told me he should camp. Overtaking the company I found him with, all of whom were well known to me, he sent an Indian on

horseback to see what had become of me. I had been about forty-five hours fasting and broke it with cold coffee, bacon and flap-jacks, left over from supper. It made me sick, of course, but I walked on all night to The Dalles."

But one important fact of the journeying down the Columbia to The Dalles remains to be told: Mr. Lee had packed the \$9 95 worth of victuals that Watt owned, on his spare pony, and the beast and his cow's worth of cargo had become lost on the start, so that Watt never realized a single meal from his trade. Further tracing back the same cow trade I learned that the cow died before reaching the perennial pastures she had crossed the continent to feed. She did not reach the Willamette and proved a bad speculation to all concerned.

A Methodist mission was located at The Dalles in charge of Rev. A. F. Waller, who was so well known in after years in connection with that church at Salem. There was no good farming land near the mission—or, at least, it was so thought at that time—no crops were grown and they had nothing to sell the emigrants in the way of fruit or vegetables, but Father Waller had plenty of beef to trade, and no cash being obtainable, trade was conducted by exchanging the fat beeves of the mission for the poor cattle of the emigrants, at the rate of two for one. When we arrived, said Mr. Watt's journal, there were several families waiting at The Dalles for boats to come up the river and take them there. The second day one of the Hudson Bay company's bateaux came up. Some of the boys who came over the year before had got boats of Dr. McLaughlin, who let them have them free of charge, provided that they would not overcharge the emigrants. The boat that came up, as mentioned, was manned by a Mr. Mosie and John Cox, two rollicking, fun-loving youngsters, who bargained to take all the emigrants down, with their plunder and provisions. They knew I had nothing from my previous talk with them. After the others were all on the boat and they were ready to push off, I standing on the sand beach, looking on, Mosie and Cox stood talking together. I noticed a nod towards me, and directly Mosie came to me and said, "Well, how are you going to get down?" "I don't know." "You've got nothing we want, and we don't want your help; if we did, you could do nothing. Have you got any provisions?" "No, none." "How are you going to live?" "Can't tell; live as long as I can, somehow." "Well, I suppose. Can you sing and tell yarns?" "Yes; can do both." "Well, get on the bow of that boat. You must take your chance for eating and sleeping."

Mcnamouth Correspondence.

MONMOUTH, JAN. 11, 1887.

Editor Willamette Farmer:

Most of the students have returned from their holiday vacation. Quite a number of new students have joined our ranks this week, among them we notice Messrs. Pearl Blackerby and F. Davis, Silverton, and Mr. Louis Jones, of Jefferson.

On the 22d the Athletic club, with the assistance of some of the ladies, and the band, will give an entertainment. The principal feature will be the "colledge song."

The method class are using a text book on Theory and Practice by Raub. Mr. N. Butler bought Mr. Davis' bankrupt stock of goods at sheriff sale and the drug store is once more in running order.

The class in Literature celebrated Whittier's birthday by giving a class exercise which consisted of declamations and songs, the music of which was composed, by Professors Powell and Stanley. The former were quite interesting, the latter good for amusements.

The holidays of '86 are a thing of the past. The happy greetings said, the good bye's given.

The old year past mid flowers, sunshine, and gentle showers, while 1887 continues equally fair.

May the happy greeting of sunshine and song continue. May the labors of 1887 be blest, and the harvest be plentiful.

C. A. H.

Get a bottle of Keck's Catarrh Cure and be cured of that terrible disease.

Correspondence.

From Wasco County.

GRANTS, JAN. 13, 1887.

Editor Willamette Farmer:

As we have commenced with a new year, and so far an open winter and scarcely any snow, the ground has not been frozen any to speak of, the farmers are still plowing and putting in their grain, and the grain already put in this fall looks very well, and the prospect for a large yield this coming year is all that can be desired, hence the farmer and all depending on them are happy. Grant's is 23 miles east of The Dalles on the O. R. & N. Co. railroad, and about half way between the the DeSchutes and John Day Rivers in Wasco county, situated on a flat bottom about two and a half miles long, by about half to three quarters of a mile wide, and the bluff which lays behind this flat, stands a lake supplied with spring water at an elevation of about 700 to 800 feet, we understand this water is to be brought into town by water pipe, at present we are supplied with water from wells, besides we have the assistance of a wind mill and water tank, but we need the water on the hill or bluff for irrigating and orchard purposes.

There are two large orchards laid out this fall by Wm. Grant and G. W. Presley, we understand each are to put out this year 4000 trees and vines, and at the same ratio annually, and at the same ratio until the full capacity of the water is exhausted. Mr. Presley informs us that he expects in fruit season to ship a car load of green fruit daily from his Columbus and Grant orchard, he has already established a good market for his fruit in Montana and Dakota, and other eastern markets. The tract of agricultural land south of us produce as well, fully equal to California's best wheat land, the land is partially held from market by the N. P. R. R. Co. grant and other land schemes, which are very injurious to our best local interest. This tract of agricultural land about 30 miles wide by about 60 miles long, is quite large enough for a county whenever the Northern Pacific plaster is raised off the land.

Corn can be raised with very little trouble in this belt of country. Mr. Peabody is feeding about 100 head of beef steers, reports the experiment so far is a success, within a period of three to five years we expect to live to see from 4000 to 5000 corn fed beves shipped from this section every spring, and five times as many weathers, all of which can be made profitable to our farmers, stock raisers and merchants. Shall write more fully on this subject of corn feeding at another time. One thing is certain, that wheat raising has not so far proven lucrative to producers, on account of being entirely at the mercy of transportation companies.

Scott & McCoy are the leading merchants here and handle general merchandise, in other words from an needle to an anchor, who sell at Dalles prices. The O. R. & N. Co. depot is about 1000 feet from the Columbus ferry on the road to Goldendale. The O. R. & N. Co. and citizens of this place are to put an incline here to the ferry early in the spring, with a telephone line to Goldendale.

H. M. MOREY.

Assess Property in Whose Hands Found.

NEW ERA, JAN. 5, 1887.

Editor Willamette Farmer:

I would like to ask your correspondent in the FARMER of Dec. 31 from Junction, if he ever knew a \$10,000 farm to be assessed at \$10,000? If that is the case in his part of the State, Clackamas county falls very far short of doing the fair thing, but I will take it for granted that it is not the case, and that a \$10,000 farm is assessed at less than \$5,000 and an indebtedness of \$5,000 would free it from all taxes, and in case of sale as A. C. J. supposes and the \$5,000 is loaned on another \$10,000 farm, it is more than likely that it would

clear it from all taxes, and the man holding the notes would pay the taxes on both places. This is no supposed situation, it is only a fair statement of the law as it exists at the present time. I have no doubt but it will be answered that the assessors do not do their duty, and perhaps they do not, but I will confess that as long as I have lived, and in all the different places I have resided, I have never seen it much different, and I have never met the man who was so conscientious as to ask the assessor to raise his assessment. The cry of honest taxation from the man who is using another man's money to perhaps one-third the amount of his own property, and thereby escaping all taxes on his own part, sounds a little like trying to call the dogs off the track. In attempting to tinker at the assessment laws, I would advise assessing property to the party in whose possession it is found. If he has not paid for it yet that is a matter betwixt him and the other man, and the State should not bother with it. Interest would accommodate itself to the changed conditions as natural as water would seek its level. It is just as honorable to loan money as it is to borrow it, and the man who has taken some other man's money to use is in no more need of sympathy than the man who furnished the money. It is admitted by all that it should pay its share of the taxes, and the question brings in who is to pay the taxes? It is claimed that monied men dodge their share of the taxes to a great extent, and it will also have to be acknowledged on the other hand. A great deal of property is settled in behind the evidences of indebtedness so far that it never puts in any appearance on the tax books. Which is the farther from the line of honesty is a doubtful question, though one claims the sanction of law, while the other simply dodges the law.

There is a great deal of land held by speculators that is capable of a high state of cultivation, and might be raising large crops of fruit, grain, or grass, but it is now growing up in brush. I would have men appointed to appraise land at what would be known as its assessable value. That value should remain fixed at least five years, and they should be governed in determining the value by what the land is capable of, so that land that is being held to have its value enhanced by the industry of a neighbor would have to bear its proportion of taxes. This committee would have to use judgement in regard to the possibility and probability of any improvements being made, but in settled parts of the country I would make no difference between improved and unimproved, other things being equal.

THOMAS BUCKMAN.

A Pleasant Event.

PLEASANT HOME, JAN. 13, 1887.

Editor Willamette Farmer:

One of the most social events of the season was the entertainment at the church, given for the benefit of the Pleasant Home Brass Band. The evening hour was occupied with recital literary and music, which deserve great credit to all the participants, whose talent, and culture, and love for music cannot be surpassed.

The band at present is under the supervision of Prof. Johnson, of Taylor, who is an efficient band teacher. By invitation, the Alto Columbia Brass Band, of Taylor, came and took part in the entertainment, they are of very recent origin and are also under training of Prof. Johnson, who will bring them to the standard. They play well and render valuable assistance in making the programme first-class. The ladies gave the boys a grand supper, for which the boys offered as a prize to the lady who had the best cake—a cut-glass cake stand—there were nineteen cakes entered for the prize, many very fine cakes. Mrs. P. Cleggett got the prize. This was the first entertainment given publicly that can reflect with many pleasant remembrance to all who attended.

PLAIN JUANA.