

# WILLAMETTE FARMER.

VOL. XIX.

SALEM, OREGON, FRIDAY, JUNE 3, 1887.

NO. 17.

## OREGON PIONEER HISTORY.

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

BY S. A. CLARKE

Copyright applied for. All rights reserved.

Successful Formation of the Provisional Government of Oregon.

I am not writing strict history in these sketches so much as I am trying to pen-picture the times and the people of pioneer days. It will have answered this purpose when we trace the provisional government to its ultimate completion and show it finally equipped and organized as it was in 1845 and remained until the tardy action of Congress raised the national standard over a Legislature of its own creation. But this faithful people had long before organized a government as effective as need be. They had created no new emblem of sovereignty to designate it, but had always governed themselves, made laws, and executed them as well, under the same flag that was the emblem of power and liberty in the far east where they were born. It is touching to the heart of any American to-day to look back upon the patient waiting of three sons of America. They continually memorialized Congress for some action, for some recognition, some protection, but could say that through all those long years when they asked this parent for bread it gave them a stone. The few who were here in 1840 had arrived by devious routes; some came down from the mountains because they had killed off the beaver and could earn no more money trapping; some strayed northward, overland, from California, and others drifted off the ocean to this far-away land. Then there were the missionaries, who were really the only ones with families, and the only ones that came hither with a purpose, unless we count the people who came with Astor's expedition. The several expeditions of Bonneville, Lewis and Clarke, Wyeth and Hall, J. Kelly, as well as vessels that came here to trade, led occasionally one or more to increase the American force. When almost imperceptibly they became a hundred, they grew homesick for some recognition that they were American citizens, on American soil, and entitled to protection by the American government. They saw the British ensign flaunt the western breeze at Vancouver; they heard the sound of cannon doing it honor, and knew that the British parliament had formally recognized British subjects in Oregon entitled to protection. As early as 1840 they petitioned Congress, and continually thereafter they memorialized and petitioned Congress and the presidents, but they had only broken promises sent them in return.

Yet all the while with unquestioning fidelity they hoisted the stars and stripes and worshipped where they seemed forgotten. It was in 1848 at last that Congress found it of sufficient importance to extend the protection of the nation to Oregon pioneers. It was when they had well demonstrated that they were able to walk alone that our government claimed them as its children. It was none to soon, for the infant settlement was then waging war against combined savage power. They had demonstrated, by five years of home rule under a provisional government, that its people were amenable to no one for their safety, but could compel the savage hordes that surrounded them to prefer peace to war. All the nation had read and heard of Oregon; American pride was aroused that the distant colony had proved so true and had done so well, but that was poor recompense for the suffering and hardships that these colonists endured because their own government refused the protection they needed and demanded. Yes, the story of our provisional government is one that Oregon can point to and the sons and daughters of those pioneers

can be proud of and justly celebrate and pay honors to. Some may question if patriotic motives brought the weary pilgrims of the '40's the long and dreary journey from the western prairies to the western sea, but no true man can deny that the purest patriotism animated those who patiently waited and carried Oregon through those earliest years.

The first session of the provisional Legislature was commenced June 18, 1844. It took very decided action relative to slavery and liquor, prohibiting the ownership of slaves in the Territory and the sale or use of ardent spirits which last was a necessary safeguard against a fearful possibility of evil. While whites are mean enough when they get liquor "aboard," Indians become insatiate fiends when they can procure alcohol. So it was necessary, to insure safety for the lives of their families, that liquor should not be permitted to exist in any shape that it could come into general use. I have before told of "Dick McCary" and Dr. White and how the stills that Dick made were broken up until he hid one away in the mountains and there manufactured "blue ruin" for the poker club. When I did so I supposed that Richard was comfortably and years ago gathered to his father's, but I learn that he resides east of the Cascades and his dusky spouse also, each of them weighing a trifle less than 300 pounds. People are very long lived east of the Cascades and the manufacture of blue ruin did not necessarily shorten life.

A failure of the act to prohibit slavery seems very obnoxious, though we have the satisfaction to know that it never was enforced. The master of any vessel that brought a negro into the country was obliged to take him away again; any negro found here was to be arrested by the sheriff and have forty lashes every once in a while until he concluded to leave. If this act had ever been enforced Oregon would have equaled Rhode Island's treatment of Quakers, but it fortunately was not. How such a measure ever became a law is very strange. The people were not in favor of it and no officer could be found to enforce it, so it was a nullity, though it disgraces the statute books. The two votes against the bill were Looney and Hill, and their objection may have been to this feature.

The new legislature met at Oregon City. The convention was held at Champoeg, but now there is nothing of consequence left where Champoeg was. In the terrible winter of the winter of 1861-2 all that was Champoeg (and no doubt including the warehouse where the people met) was swept down the raging waters with nothing to hinder their reaching the distant sea. Oregon City was also badly wrecked at that time, and I cannot say if the building where the first legislature met went with the rest or no. Perhaps it was built on a rock the waters did not reach. It was so unique in style of architecture that we will see it a moment and then "move on." Thornton says it consisted of posts set in the ground, grooved on two sides so that poles reaching from post to post were frames to be let into these grooves, and made the sides and ends—or walls. These poles, or split timbers, were somewhat like fence rails. Timbers were framed on top of the posts, and thus the building was walled in. The roof was of cedar bark laid on horizontal poles, as shakes are laid. It was 20x40 feet in area. He does not say if it had a dirt floor or one of puncheons, but a platform of puncheons at one end served as a platform for Mr. Speaker; so the probability is that the remainder was not floored. Around the room were slabs, bark side down, lying on a framework of poles, that served as seats for the dear people. In the center three boards twelve inches wide, laid on a similar framework of poles, made the table for the use of legislators, clerks and

reporters—supposing there were any of the latter. Such buildings are sometimes found in Indian villages, but rude and primitive as it was, wanting in style and even comfort, with stools or benches to match, the pioneer legislature of Oregon met there and gravely, with as much dignity as the continental congress manifested in older times when it met in Liberty hall, they discharged the duty confided to them rather than imposed upon them. And where, since the time when other pilgrims landed at Plymouth, is there a record of more earnest and competent action by those who framed the statehood of any portion of this Union? Where have plain men shown greater wisdom in founding a commonwealth and in framing its constitution and laws, then did this body that early represented the pioneers of Oregon? We who reap the benefits can be justly proud of the men who hewed out of the rough mountain quarries our great state and laid its foundations deep and strong for all the ages.

The executive committee of three was a cumbersome sort of government, and Oregon soon outgrew that idea. While the convention of July, 1843, was being held Dr. Whitman was piloting across the plains about a thousand emigrants, who were destined to swell the population of Oregon and decide the ownership for the United States. Some deny that Whitman had any active interest in the emigration, but at the proper time I can both prove that he did so and that he canvassed the frontier for that purpose. It was this large emigration that gave strength to the provisional government and made it measurably independent of all opposing forces. Before 1844 the missionary party was a power that had to be placated, and the Hudson Bay company was something to dread and make terms with, but the advent in the fall of twice as many Americans as were here in the spring, made the Americans three times as numerous and placed them independent of missions and corporations. Here was a change indeed, thanks to Whitman more than to any other influence. In the report or message of the executive committee, rendered December, 1844, it was recommended that changes be made and a convention of the people held to say what they should be. The legislature that also met at that time, passed a law to call such a convention. Elections were held and delegates elected, and the changes suggested were all provided for. At a popular convention held at Champoeg A. L. Lovejoy was nominated for governor, but the friends of the candidates that were defeated made common cause to beat him, and George Abernethy was elected at the general election.

The voters of Oregon in June, 1845, amounted to 800. A new organic law was framed that year by a committee of five—Lee, Newell, Applegate, Smith and McClure—which was endorsed by the popular vote, and is now incorporated in the laws of Oregon.

George Abernethy was in the Sandwich islands when elected governor, and as he could not return for some time the executive committee retained power until he came back. The seat of government was located at The Falls, as the place was called until 1845, when it was styled Oregon City. It is probable that they had secured more agreeable quarters by that time. There is a record that when the legislature met the first act was to have a committee provide a suitable room, and one was secured for \$2 a day, fuel and lights included. So the day of slab seats, puncheon platforms and earthen floors was gone to return no more. M. M. McCarver was speaker. A law against dueling was passed one day under great pressure; done, as it is turned out, to prevent a duel between Holderness and Dr. Elijah White. Holderness was mad enough to shoot with deadly intent, and that was the measure taken to get Dr. White out of this rather uncomfortable scrape.

## Correspondence.

Notes of upon a Trip from the Willamette to the Ohio.

SALEM, Or., May 29, 1887.

Editor Willamette Farmer:

Leaving Salem on April 21st of course we left flowers in bloom, as, though the season was rather late than early, the cherry and plum were shedding their blossoms and apple and pear were in full blow. Leaving Portland at 4 P. M. the run was made in the night up to near Pendleton where daylight showed the orchard trees in bloom also and the cattle near the line as having barely got through the winter. Stock had much the same appearance as seen from the cars as we passed through Grande Ronde, Powder river, Burnt river and upper Snake river valleys, but dead cattle were not noticed from the cars until near the head of the Portneuf above Pocotello. Up to that point the grass in the valleys and foothills was fairly started, though there was yet plenty of snow in sight upon the mountains. As we crossed the divide into Bear river valley we began to see evidences of the severe winter, and about Montpelier we could see men removing the evidences of its destruction. Grass was starting and stock was being turned out to get the benefit of it. On many farms there seemed to be great attention given to cattle and the remains of straw stacks showed that the hay knife was used as an aid to feeding even straw with the greatest economy. The trimness of the fencing and the fields indicated an industrious careful community and we had been noting various signs of a difference from the range methods management of the stock before the thought came to us that we were actually looking at some of the industrial life of Mormonism. It had a foreign look about it somehow, the cattle feeding closer together than range cattle commonly do. A few flocks of sheep (coarse woolled) were seen and it was noted that the herders outfit was in a wagon near which the horses, presumably those used to haul the wagon, were either grazing free or staked near by. We passed quite near one wagon which was covered apparently with light ducking and the horses were clothed with the same kind of cloth. The number herded in one band was not believed to be more than 1000 head.

Passing from the Bear river valley into that of Colorado, we see more abundant signs of loss of range cattle with very little evidence that any attempt to help them through the winter by feeding had been made. There was yet considerable live cattle in sight as the train rolled down towards Granger. At that point a slight fall of fresh snow had fallen and it increased as we went down to Green river. From the crossing of Green river down to Cheyenne snow was on the ground and but little stock of any kind was seen from the road, indeed the range was so bare of either green or dry grass that only very few animals could have lived on the range. Below North Platte things began to look much better; more stock was seen and some ranches showed haystacks yet unconsumed, herds of stock cattle were seen feeding close together as they had been observed on Bear river, which I concluded was one of the good results of careful winter feeding. Further down toward Omaha we saw herds of young cattle that were just being turned out of the cars for summering on the range. They were being fed hay as a help to young grass which was yet hardly a full bite. Still nearer to Omaha feeding stations were seen where long corn sheds still containing large supplies of corn on the cob, formed one side of the feed yard, making it as easy as possible to give the fattening bees their regular rations. East of Omaha growth was more for-

ward and in passing through Iowa I could but admire the, to me, great numbers of well bred cattle feeding so close together in such small fields, closely set with nutritious blue grass and white clover. Iowa has her long winters, the contentment of which is repellent to an Oregonian, but on inquiry of some of the most careful farmers in a rich state full of such, I learned that an acre of her good pasturage would carry a 3-year old steer from early spring until the frost came (about six months) and the gain on the steer would be about 300 pounds. The acre of land giving such results being valued at \$50. It is a state of good land, and good farms, the most neatly kept of any I saw while away. I say so much for Iowa with a clear recollection that as much may be said of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and steady sturdy old Pennsylvania and with the admission that perhaps more time and closer examination might cause me to place one of these last first, but I give the result of a mere glance at each. As just a slight indication mention is made of the very general care that has been given to planting timber belts of Iowa homesteads located on what was once open prairie. In some districts, notably in the vicinity of Tipton, the pine and fir intermixed with the maple and elm add greatly to the beauty as well as the shelter of the homesteads.

Twenty to thirty years ago the white willow and osage orange were largely planted as hedge plants, but now wire fencing is beginning to supersede both, and 25 years hence Iowa farms and farmers will be fenced with steel and housed in brick or stone respectively.

J. M.

## LANE COUNTY ITEMS.

SPRINGFIELD Or., May 30, 1887.

Editor Willamette Farmer:

Fruit in Lane county will not be a full crop by any means. Baldwin, Spitzenberg, Newtown Pippin and some other kinds of apples are bearing a good crop, but the earlier blooming trees are generally light. The same is true with regard to Plums, while the German and Italian Prunes will bear a fair crop. The Peach Plum seems to set fuller and succumb quicker to cold weather than most other kinds. Cherries will only yield a partial crop, while Pears seem to hold their own. Peaches all killed as also blackberries. Grain and grass is looking well and promise a good yield. Farmers are learning to go slow in contracting debts for store bills, and also to demand goods at a cheaper price than formerly. Many of the farmers in this county are loaded with mortgages and eventually will be sold for barely enough to pay the mortgage, interest and costs and thus leave the farm without a home. More interest is being taken in fruit growing, and some large orchards are being set. A great desideratum now is what varieties to set to meet the demands of climate, and of market. Shall we have canneries or shall we have to set kinds suitable for drying only?

J. S. CHURCHILL.

The Master of the Indiana State Grange has appointed Saturday, June 4th, as "Children's Day" among the Patrons of that State. In the young folks are centered the hopes of the family, the Grange and the nation; none too soon can they now receive lessons that tend to develop a higher and better manhood and womanhood that will help them "in loving the good, the beautiful, the true; the home, the farm, the Grange and their native land." Yes, we open the doors and bid them welcome; welcome to our Grange halls, welcome to our social gatherings, welcome to all our hopes and efforts for the better life, welcome "for the good of our Order, our country and mankind."

At Jersey an aged couple, over 90 years old, committed suicide. He had been a professor of chemistry but in his old age was feeble and destitute. A very pitiful case.