

# WILLAMETTE FARMER

VOL. XIX.

SALEM, OREGON, FRIDAY, JUNE 17, 1887.

NO. 19.

## OREGON PIONEER HISTORY.

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

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Boyhood and Youth of Nesmith—Other Interesting Items.

The Nesmiths came originally from Scotland and moved to the north of Ireland, making their home in the valley of the river Bann near the city of Londonderry, and in 1832 crossed the Atlantic and became part of a colony that established Derry, New Hampshire. In behalf of our faith in heredity we say that the Nesmiths and Nasmyths are of the same stock, and James Nasmyth, the great inventor who made the early decades of the present century illustrious by his creation of the trip hammer run by steam, who improved telescopes and invented ordnance, was of the same English stock that furnished James W. Nesmith of Oregon.

James Willis Nesmith was born about 1820 in the border land between the United States and New Brunswick, the disputed title of which region almost led to open war. He was the son of William Morrison Nesmith and great-grandson of Deacon Nesmith, whose father came in 1832 from the valley of the river Bann, New Londonderry, in Ireland, and became one of the founders of the colony that settled at Derry, New Hampshire, and who was very prominent in the annals of early colonial times.

Nesmith's father had a sawmill near the British and Maine boundary lines, but he was an American citizen and never resided or claimed to reside on British soil. When the future Senator was a babe nine months old a tragedy occurred that changed the whole current of his life. It was winter, and the family was in a sleigh crossing a frozen river, when the ice gave way and sleigh and team and the helpless mother were swept under the ice. In an instant the treacherous covering of the swift running stream gave way. For a moment there was a frantic struggle ere the doomed animals and the conscious woman disappeared forever, and then there was only a babe left wandering on the frozen river, where mother-love and strength had thrown it, and a wretched man who battled awhile for life and finally was victorious. All besides had been swept to inevitable doom. The mother's last thought and act was for her boy.

Nesmith took his child to his relative, in New Hampshire, at Derry, and left him there while he continued work at his mill. It was doubtless a desolate country district, where schools were not frequent and chances for education slim. "Jim" only remembered that when a dozen or so years of age he had six months of schooling, when he learned to read, figure and write, after a fashion. His great love of reading and remarkable memory were worth more to him than better opportunity for education have proved to others. He studied what he could, and read what he could get hold of. When twelve years old he was apprenticed to a silversmith. It was a New England village, where a public green and a town pump were the chief objects of interest. Jim's knowledge of the trade was chiefly confined to running errands, and one staple duty was to carry the silversmith's stone jug to the pump for a refill. One warm summer day he was thus dispatched, and met obstruction. A much bigger boy finding a long line of boys between his jug and the pump's nose, chose "Jim" as the easiest subject, so he pushed him rudely from his place in the line and took the position himself, but not long; Jim's stoneware swung round a limited circle of space that interfered with the bigger boy's skull, and then there was a vacancy in the line. See-

ing his assailant laid suddenly low and a pool of blood by his head, Jimmy was too fearful to stay. He quietly went to the shop and deposited his empty jug and struck for the woods. After a few days he ventured back by night, and, learning from the boys that his victim had recovered and was back in school, "Nes" went back to his silversmith.

So time passed until he was nineteen years old. It does not appear that he stuck to his apprenticeship, for he is said to have devoted some years to working on a New Hampshire farm, and many of us have heard him tell how he had to scratch around among the New Hampshire rocks to get dirt enough to plant a hill of corn or potatoes.

His father went West to Ohio and after a while sent back for James, taking him to near Cincinnati, to the home of his relative, Mrs. Sally Wilson, mother of Joseph G. Wilson, congressman-elect, who died in 1873, to be succeeded by his relative who lived in his mother's family thirty-four years before. Theophilus Wilson, the oldest son, was a student and took pains to improve the mind of his young relative. He was successful in thus developing a remarkable love of knowledge, and no doubt this kind treatment laid the groundwork of much of the success Nesmith afterwards attained. In 1840 his father took him to the frontier, where he had a small store near Fort Leavenworth. The father's death left him at twenty-one a waif of fortune, friendless and with little means to meet the certainties and the uncertainties of life.

It is only necessary to fill in the blanks left in the notice of last week. After he was disappointed in reaching the rendezvous to accompany Elijah White's party in 1842, he found work and occupation at Fort Leavenworth, where he engaged with Quartermaster Swords (now Gen. Swords of the same department) to do rough carpenter work about the fort. In this capacity he continued during the year that elapsed, until another emigration started for Oregon. After settling his father's affairs and squaring accounts with Uncle Sam at the fort, Nesmith had enough means to bring him through in good shape, and a little was left to re-furnish his person.

He went at his carpenter work when he reached Oregon City, and combined the reading of law with hard labor. The record of his career in Oregon will be left to some future time, when better able to do it justice.

Nesmith was always noted for his wit and humor, and sometimes for biting sarcasm. No doubt his acquaintances can recall such incidents, and if they would do so, it would enable his biographer to illustrate his wit by many happy incidents. One instance of his success at repartee we can give now: When crossing the plains, his mate and companion was Hensley, afterwards so well known in California. Many a night Sam Hensley borrowed Jim Nesmith's overcoat to stand his guard in, and the cool nights of early spring made it a necessity to be warmly clad. Time's changes brought the two friends together again, after almost twenty years of separation, in a singular way. While Nesmith kept the road to Oregon, Hensley left the train at Fort Hall, and, with a few others, went the Southern route to California. Some lucky turn brought wealth to the old pioneer of 1843. He became a rich man, and when Nesmith was on his way East to take his seat in the Senate of the Nation, he found his messmate on the plains converted into a California millionaire, who owned steamships running to Panama. Nothing would do but for Nesmith and his family to accept passage on his ship, and when fairly under way the two old cronies engaged in a familiar review of the olden time. They talked about the plains, Hensley telling of the comfort and warmth of Nesmith's overcoat. After many a hearty laugh the Califor-

nian went into a state of reverie, and waked to say: "Well, Nesmith, how little you and I thought, when we were mates and bedfellows on the plains so many years ago, that the time was to come when you would be a Senator of the United States." "Not a bit of it," said Nesmith. "I always knew I was to go to the Senate, Sam, but had no idea I should go on your steamboat."

It will be seen that the plain account we give of his life in Missouri disproves the malice that during his lifetime asserted that he had been an enlisted man and deserted from Fort Leavenworth. All efforts made to injure him but more firmly established his record as an honorable man.

We have shown that when Nesmith reached Oregon, he went to carpentering at Oregon City. His working with more experienced mechanics at Leavenworth gave him an insight into the trade and it offered the best means of support here. His tutelage under Theophilus Wilson had instilled not only learning, but higher ambition, so that he spent the leisure time he could command from carpenter work in reading law. While thus occupied, he met with a case he felt competent to conduct. A fellow had loafed, or worse, about that incipient burg—for Oregon City was then about as much of a town as Nesmith was of a lawyer—until the local authorities found him out and reported him as a nuisance. He was arrested as a vagrant, and laid his case before Nesmith, who thought it a good place to begin his career as a lawyer. He asked the man what property he possessed, and found that while he had no visible means of support, he owned a horse. "Nes" agreed to take the horse for his services, and thought he could clear the vagrant. To make assurance doubly sure, he turned over to his client \$7.50 in silver, that constituted his own cash capital, and told him when the Court demanded to know what means of support he had, to pull out his handful of change and say that he lived on that. The fellow played his part to perfection; when interrogated as to his "means of support," he leaned over to one side, so as to get easily into his trousers pocket, and brought up a handful of silver, letting a few pieces fall back, as if there were plenty more where that came from. The Court apologized for the "mistake," said it was not supposed the defendant was a "capitalist," and the prisoner stepped down and out. Nesmith was "snowed under" with congratulations, and even the Judge from the bench flatteringly told him if he kept on as he had begun he would live to be a senator of the United States. The crowd of sympathizing and admiring friends had to be treated hospitably, which made an inroad into the young carpenter's exchequer; but then he reckoned on the horse to make up deficiencies in the cash account. The same jurist who presided there and so warmly congratulated the embryo attorney-at-law, relates the story with infinite zest, and concludes it thus: "The young attorney lived to see himself a senator of the United States, but he never saw his client, his horse, or his silver coin, lent the prisoner to splurge on. While 'Nes' was receiving the congratulations of the crowd and treating his friends, his client was riding 'over the hills and far away,' and 'Nes' had no horse to follow."

It is not easy to over-estimate the great value of the various missions to the community struggling into life on the far Pacific coast. It is true that they came here to establish missions among the Indians, and that in a great measure they failed to civilize or christianize the nations they came to teach. But they were here, and took an active and important part in organizing the early society and establishing order and civilization, as well as in founding schools for the education of the rising generation. It is very easy to criticize

and condemn, so it is well enough for those to sneer at the failure of missions to save and redeem the native tribes to remember that Christian missionaries were only men, and would be tempted as other men to try to acquire something for themselves in the growth of a new country. The gold epoch demoralized the world, and it would not be strange if missionaries yielded to the impulse of the hour and tried to provide for their families when the flow of gold was so universal.

Several coincident circumstances existed to help the American settler: For one, the chief factor of the Hudson Bay Company was, fortunately, a man of truly Christian nature—a man who could meet the prime questions of humanity fully and broadly, and could make the claims of trade, and even of nationality, secondary to the warm dictates of humanity. Dr. John McLaughlin had every great and generous attribute. I cannot pass him by with mere words of good will and ordinary acknowledgement. He comes first as the chief factor in American settlement, and the friend and savior of the early immigrants who found no homes, no society or settlement to welcome, and must have greatly suffered; and many might have perished had not this man of great and good instincts held out to them a helping hand.

Next to this wonderful and benign provision and actual providence, came the missionaries. They had some means at their command, and occasionally used their financial strength to forward enterprises that, without their help, would not have prospered. The early settlers, as their story, already told, illustrates, labored under almost insuperable difficulties, and they would have proved unsurmountable only for the assistance of Dr. McLoughlin and the missionaries.

Coming down from the Blue Mountains, they reached Dr. Whitman's mission and received needed assistance. Rev. A. F. Waller was at The Dalles, and gave them further aid, if needed. Below The Dalles and Cascades they found Dr. McLoughlin able and willing to afford them supplies of a still more important character. After awhile, when the settlement grew and the settlers could employ immigrant labor, the offices of the Hudson Bay Company were not needed, but in the earliest years the benevolence of Dr. McLoughlin was a providence that made it possible to settle Oregon with Americans.

When Judge Boise landed in Oregon he went from St. Helens to Forest Grove, by a mountain road, to see Mr. Eells, lately a missionary, who had become a settler. Judge Boise says Mr. Eells remarked then (about 1850) that though "he regarded his mission to the Indians as a practical failure, so far as gathering them from barbarism to Christianity was concerned, he thought God had guided here the feet of missionaries as the forerunners of American civilization. Had they not been here and advised the United States government of the value of the country, it would have passed under the sway of the British crown and the flag of the Union never floated over it."

The means these missions had at command formed a small capital for the infant settlements. The emigrant came, usually, with no means—no money in hand. He put up his log house and made his broadax and rough tools do the work. The missions put up more permanent edifices and paid out money that became the capital they needed. To trace all the enterprises that were successful would be very interesting. The schooner built by Joseph Gale and others proved a bonanza to the builders, for they traded it off in California for over three hundred cows; those cattle gave them a greatly needed start, and as they increased became distributed through all this region. The money

Joseph Watt earned, invested in sheep, became the means, ultimately, of stocking the country with fine fleeced Merinoes. As we trace the progress of this community, we see that gradually and providentially the people acquired means and possessed domestic animals, and so became independent of circumstances when it seemed impossible for progress to be achieved here.

### Questions and Answers About Fruit.

Mr. L. F. Thompson, of Umpqua Ferry, writes as follows: Which prune do you think the most valuable for drying? Some recommend the Italians on account of its size; is it better than the French, and if so, why? Will it pay to dry pears; and what kinds are the best for drying? Have you fruit trees for sale? I have three orchards, and want to enlarge one of them, that is in a very favorable locality. What kind of a dryer do you think is the best; and what is it sold at? Please inform me through the mail or otherwise.

We recommend to plant both the French, or Petite Prune d'Agen, and the Italian, or Fellenberg, as the two most reliable varieties for drying. The Petite is small, as its name signifies, but is very hardy and a reliable bearer. The same is true of the Italian. This year, when fruit is such a failure, these varieties are bearing well. Other fruits of the plum species make choice dried fruit but they are very tender, not regular bearers, and between trees dying and fruit failing are not near so profitable for drying as the Petite and Italian. We are planting more of them and are changing varieties we do not like into Italians as fast as we can.

For shipping fruits, to be eaten in the ripe stage, we grow the peach plum, the Bradshaw and the Hungarian. The peach is very hard to raise, and dies early. The other two are more hardy and better bearers. But for prunes, we consider the French and Italian varieties as all the kinds that will furnish reliable returns. These are fruits for canning, but in case you cannot sell to canners, you had best grow prunes and dry them yourself.

We do perfect work with the Acme Drier, which can be made any size. The Oregon Drier, invented and made by Mr. H. S. Joy, of South Salem, is an excellent evaporator, and those who use it are experienced men, who recommend it highly.

Pears are very good dried, and the Bartlett is king of all pears for canning or drying. We once dried our Bartletts—got 17c per pound for the dried fruit.

After mature consideration and twelve years experience at prune growing, we recommend the two varieties we have named in this. The Petite d'Agen and the Italian, as very profitable when grown on favorable locations. Trees that are now seven years old, paid over \$200 an acre, and can double that when full grown. Western Oregon has the natural soil and climate and actually beats the world with its prunes.

At the present time we have no fruit trees for sale, unless it would be to spare some pears of the 2,000 we have budded and grafted of the best varieties. We intend to let them make good growth in the nursery and then plant them out as fast as we can get ground cleared. Eventually the mining county to the east of us, will afford a great demand for such fruits, and we don't like to "carry all our eggs in one basket." So we have already about a thousand of Bartletts growing, and are getting 2,000 more of winter pears ready. Our pears are Fall Butter, Clapp's Favorite, Winter Nellis, Duchess d'Angoulême, and d'Alencoln, and some others.

It is reported that the government intends to prosecute Michael Davitt and Joseph Richard Cox, nationalist members of parliament for their conduct in inciting the Bodyke tenants to resist eviction.