

Pioneer Found Fellowship In Religious Camp Meeting

MISSIONARY ASSAULTS ON "SALVAGE INDIANS" FIZZLED; WHITE EMIGRANTS EMBRACED THEM

By Hervey S. Robinson

Any reader who has additional information on names, places or events covered by Mr. Robinson are invited to write the newspaper. In this way, a more complete historical series will be possible.

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(Continued from last week)

Under the conditions of a vast wooded wilderness and a scanty population the camp-meeting was involved in the Middle West as the typical religious festival. The fiery zeal of the Methodists made them leaders in a great wave of religious fervor that swept over the United States in the 1830's and '40's.

Missionaries and emigrants coming to the Oregon country had witnessed many such gatherings under the leadership of indomitable men like Peter Cartwright, who went about the country, riding circuit, holding camp-meetings, arousing the impenitent, comforting the seeker for salvation, and thrashing the rowdies who came to disturb the meetings.

Remembering the success of these meetings on the middle western frontier, the Methodist missionaries at The Dalles of the Columbia, in 1840, finding the benighted condition of the Indians beyond their powers of enlightenment in the usual way, resolved to try the effect of this type of evangelism upon the untutored savage.

In the spring of 1840, Jason Lee came up from his mission on the Willamette and pitched his tent at the foot of the rocks about six miles below The Dalles and three miles from The Dalles mission, where he was surrounded by dozens of the wigwags of the natives.

About 1200 Indians were present from the villages along the Cascades and from the neighboring Walla Walla and Klamath. It was resolved to hold another meeting in the fall. This was to be a real camp-meeting, like the ones "back yonder."

Upon the face of first returns, this camp-meeting was a brilliant success. Rev. Jason Lee and David Carter arrived at The Dalles early Sunday morning, October 11, and preparations for the meeting began at once. The camp-ground was located, as before, some three miles below the mission.

On Tuesday, the 13th, the meeting commenced under very favorable circumstances. The Wascopam Indians, who had just returned from a berry-picking expedition, erected 30 tents, made of brush,

and about 400 Indians of various neighboring tribes were encamped in teepees about the grounds. The members of the mission came down on horseback, leading a pack horse loaded with provisions for the balance of the week.

The program for each day began with prayer meetings in the tents. Then, after a period for "secret prayer," breakfast was next in order. Breakfast over, all assembled on the prairie plat for public preaching. Then another period for secret prayer followed by more preaching; then the dinner hour. More public preaching and another time for secret prayer filled the time until the hour for supper. The evening was devoted to a prayer meeting and to exhortations in the tents.

Just how much of these services the Indians were able to understand is a question, but they caught the spirit of the occasion, and the tense, emotional atmosphere made a deep impression.

On Saturday the missionaries returned to their station to prepare for a big day on the Sabbath and provide bread and wine for the sacrament.

On Sunday, "the Sabbath of the Lord," after the second discourse, Brother Jason Lee baptized. More than 100 in all were baptized on this occasion. After the third discourse, the sacrament was administered to more than 400 persons.

"A very solemn service to us all," reported one of the mission party. "This evening, as also on previous evenings, the Lord poured out his spirit upon us. We had a shout of the King in the camp."

It was during this Sunday service that a group of travel-weary Mountain Men, with their Indian wives and babies, asking for food and shelter were turned away because "it was Sunday," as we have previously related.

There were no lasting results from these Methodist efforts on behalf of the Indians. Four years later when the Missionary Board sent Rev. George Gary to look into the affairs of the missions, he found "no adult Indians that appeared to lead a religious life."

"A few of the children in the school," he wrote in his diary, "profess religion, but the consistency of their profession depends greatly upon the religious excitement for the time being."

He was told that nearly all the good resulting from the school was "that quite a number had experienced religion here and died when in school and hopefully gone to Heaven." He found, included in the Methodist organization at the four mission points of Willamette

settlement, Willamette Falls, The Dalles and Clatsop, 65 white persons, and eight Indian children, being served by four local preachers.

Having failed in their efforts to save the Indians, the missionaries turned their attention to the spiritual welfare of their white neighbors west of the Willamette river. The Tualatin and Clatsop plains and the Yamhill basin were filling up with white settlers who had drifted in from the Rocky Mountains from California and from the Red River settlement in British Columbia.

Many of them had Indian wives and half-breed families. Here was a field ripe for the harvest. Some Congregational missionaries, Rev. J. S. Griffin, Harvey Clark, Alvin T. Smith and others had come among them, in 1841 and were laboring with considerable success. Their cooperation could be counted upon.

So the first camp-meeting for the benefit of the white population ever held west of the Rocky Mountains began on the Tualatin plains near what is now Hillsboro on Thursday, July 12, 1843. There was only one tent upon the grounds. That was pitched between three trees, two towering firs and a stately oak, "fit emblems," wrote Rev. H. K. Hines, one of the missionaries, "for the majesty and power of the truths proclaimed beneath their wide spreading branches."

On the first day only fourteen were in attendance and Jason Lee preached from the text, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

The next day the congregation had increased by one half. Four sermons were preached on that day, by Jason Lee, H. W. K. Perkins and David Leslie, Methodist missionaries and by Rev. Harvey Clark a Congregational clergyman. All of which deeply interested the hearers. On Saturday, some began to inquire, "What shall I do to be saved?"

On the Sabbath there were about 60 on the grounds, 19 of whom were not professors of religion. Before the exercises were over 16 of these had made a public profession. Among these were several who had been Rocky Mountain trappers and rangers. One of them, who was well known and almost proverbial for his boldness, joyfully exclaimed, "Tell everybody you see that Joseph Meek, that old Rocky Mountain sinner has turned to the Lord."

Rev. Hines, in relating the above incident adds, "If subsequently he did not prove faithful to the purpose and profession of that day, it indicated the hallowed power that rested upon the people."

Mrs. Whitman, who was in the valley, would not willingly have been absent from this gathering. The Mountain Men admired greatly her sweet singing of gospel songs. They were well represented on that eventful day and almost unanimously fell into the spirit of the occasion.

The initial effort proving so successful, the camp-meeting became an established institution. Rev. George H. Gary attended one at Yamhill in July of 1844. He was accompanied by Rev. Perkins of The Dalles mission.

He wrote, "We spent five days very pleasantly in a good meeting." "Eight tents on the ground, some of them very small. Perhaps eighty hearers in the largest congregation—I hope better and larger things will follow."

He records the conversion of "a poor miserable sinner, who had murdered in several places and had been associated with gamblers and every club of the vicious that came within his reach—all crimes—shielded by avowed infidelity. He left the grounds with a humble spirit and a broken heart."

No doubt there were camp-meetings in the territory every year after 1843. The location on Tualatin Plains was a favorite site. Rev. Ezra Fisher, a Baptist minister, attended a camp-meeting of the Congregational Church there in 1846 and two years later, in 1848, Rev. George H. Atkinson, Congregational minister, attended Union services of this type on the plains, near the residence of Rev. Harvey Clark, where apparently they had been held for several preceding summers.

Leslie M. Scott, in the Sunday Oregonian, August 10, 1941 said of these assemblies, "While basically of a religious character, these meetings were perhaps even more a social necessity. It was a time when men and women, hungry for assembling and friendliness, after separation had been their lot all year, united at designated spots. It was there they talked over their problems along a new Oregon frontier."

In a later issue we shall give you a word picture of one of these momentous assemblies as described by a pioneer mother who participated in it.

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Hillsboro, Oregon, January 20, 1950

Dear Friends:

A note to you who we know will enjoy seeing the youth of Washington County perform. The Hillsboro Junior Chamber of Commerce Talent Show Committee auditioned over 60 separate acts for the show and even though they were all excellent, the amount had to be pared down. So, after a good bit of difficulty 24 numbers were selected as tops in entertainment. This group comprises practically every type of talent and with all sincerity may we say they are good — really good.

The winners of the talent show will be chosen by the applause meter method, so we urge you to come, not to get more than your money's worth in fun, but also to give your community candidate a boost toward a share in the \$100.00 in prizes.

We believe our show, which is to be Emcee'd by JOHNNY CARPENTER, popular KOIN announcer, will be thoroughly enjoyable so set aside the evening of January 25th as a night for a good time for all the family. But—hurry—get your tickets now—they are going fast!

Cordially,

The HILLSBORO JUNIOR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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THE BEAVERTON ENTERPRISE
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RED CROSS FIELD DIRECTORS SOLVE SERVICEMEN'S PROBLEMS



Red Cross services to the armed forces are available wherever U. S. servicemen are stationed. Here a Red Cross field director goes right to a young sailor at work on his ship for the facts he needs to help solve a problem.

The sailor was young. He had finished his home leave in a southern coastal city and was heading back to his California base.

He said goodbye to his parents and to an older brother, a marine veteran just returned from service. Then he left by bus.

A few hours later the older brother was killed in an automobile accident. The family appealed to the Red Cross to locate the younger son so he could return home.

Within a short while a Red Cross chapter secretary along the route intercepted the bus, broke the news, and helped the lad get started back home. There the chapter got in touch with the field director at the west coast base and verified the facts for the commanding officer who was being asked to extend the sailor's leave.

Once or more every minute, around the clock last year, the Red Cross performed some service for members of the military forces and their families. Among the nearly three quarters of a million cases handled, a large percentage involved supplying verified information concerning home conditions requiring emergency leave or extension of leave. While the Red Cross cannot grant leave to a serviceman, military authorities depend upon

its post field directors and the network of chapters for reports of conditions underlying such leave requests.

Field directors in 364 military installations and hospitals and 1,059 itinerant- and sub-stations in this country and abroad aid servicemen with personal problems that range from babies and budgets to helping straighten out delays that hold up pay or family allowances.

The serviceman has his family problems, marital difficulties, financial strains, and family illnesses—all disturbing to morale.

Field directors, providing 24-hour service at military installations, are pretty much in the same situation as the family doctor. They are routed out of bed at all hours to face any one of a hundred complicated problems. Sometimes it may be to get a report on the condition of a critically ill member of a soldier's family, or to lend him money for an emergency trip home, or to find housing for a family unexpectedly arriving at the post.

Whatever the problem, the serviceman feels free to turn to the Red Cross for help, knowing that he will find a sympathetic friend in the man wearing the Red Cross uniform.