

Pioneer Oregon Editor T'Vault Was Champion of Free Speech

By Bertha M. Borden
(Continued from Oct. 5)

souri; postage on all eastern of the artisans of the pick and Then said editor T'Vault in his first editorial: "With the present number our sheet is unfurled to the breeze; be it for woe or weal, we confidently and respectfully submit to the ordeal of public opinion."

The pages ran items of human interest, political news, puns and proverbs. A bit of "soft soap" was given the city heads for "doing up business in the right way," but in next paragraph he prodded them with the admonition, "Our advice to

them is, 'Be sure you are right, then go ahead.' Gentlemen, dig up the stumps, grade the streets, tax dogs, prohibit hogs and advertise in the Spectator."

With T'Vault's rising popularity, he was appointed prosecuting attorney for the territory and was holding also the position of postmaster general. Mail was, at that time, sent by water and by horseback to "Fort Vancouver, Twality, Yam Hill, Polk and Champog counties." Eastern mail went by special messenger as far as Weston, Missouri; Postage on all eastern letters of a "single sheet" was fifty cents.

His pressing civic duties caused T'Vault to resign his editorship and later the publication was temporarily suspended when the news of John Marshall's discovery of gold in California reached the town. Printers and legislators, along with the rest of the male population were off to the goldfields and "the diggings." The legislature adjourned for lack of a quorum.

Motivated by his interest in rapid news communication for the territory, T'Vault moved his family from Oregon City to Winchester on the Umpqua in the year 1851. There he established an express line from Winchester to Yreka, California. Over this route he acted as guide to Major Philip Kearney and his company of United States regulars, from Fort Vancouver to Benicia, Cal.

On his return, rumours came over the mountains and along valley trails into the settlements of the Umpqua and Willamette valleys, of a gold "strike" in the Siskiyou foothills and the Rogue river valley.

The story ran that on a winter's day in that year 1851, two men, coming north on the overland trail from Yreka, camped for the night in the lush meadow land where Jacksonville now is located. Their saddle horses wandered off and were found the next day in a rain-washed gully. The two men saw in the pools of water at their feet, pure virgin gold gleaming beneath the surface.

In spite of utmost secrecy, the first month after the discovery saw several thousand men swarming the vicinity of the strike.

With the population of the Umpqua valley on the march to the new Eldorado, "where men could wash out a pint cup of gold daily" the T'Vaults yielded to the contagion of the gold fever and entered the Rogue valley in 1852.

The tents of the gold seekers whitened the hillsides and deep gullies of the Siskiyou. Lumber was "whip-sawed" in the slashed and stricken ravines; the crystal mountain streams were scarred and sullied by the work of the artisans of the pick and pan.

In the newly laid out town-site of Jacksonville traders and packers were peddling their wares. Sharpers and gamblers did a rushing business to the tunes of the "hurdy-gurdy" music of the saloons.

Wm. T'Vault and his family turned away from the town and selecting a site near the present town of Gold Hill, at Rock

Point, took out a donation land claim of 640 acres. With the influx of whites to the valley, friction with the Rogue Indians rapidly developed. The T'Vault homestead became a refuge to outlying settlers and during the frequent Indian raids, the women and children were "forted up" there.

In 1854 the family moved to Jacksonville, and there with two others, Messrs. Taylor and Blakely, Col. T'Vault purchased the printing plant of the Umpqua Gazette at Scottsburg and moved it to Jacksonville.

From this printing plant, the first newspaper, the "Table Rock Sentinel," was published in southern Oregon, the year 1855.

In that same year, 1855, in Oregon City, "The Oregon Spectator," was finally suspended. On the site of that earliest newspaper venture in Oregon, the first paper mill in the Pacific northwest was built in 1867.

The modern concrete buildings of a great paper mill stand there today, backed by a high basalt cliff and wedged into the narrow canyon that is the head of Main street. It is the property of a number of allied companies

supplying newsprint to the northwest and other areas.

At the entrance to the plant's administration office hangs a bronze plaque which commemorates the site and honors the names of Col. T'Vault and the other editors who followed him in presenting Oregon with its first newspaper.

Col. T'Vault's demise occurred in Jacksonville, in 1868, at the time of the smallpox epidemic which played such havoc. His interment is in the beautiful old Jacksonville cemetery, with other early pioneers.

He was survived by his wife and two daughters.

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