

MYTH ACCEPTED BY PRESIDENT

Historians' Long Fight To Discredit Whitman's Legend Held Damaged

EUGENE, Ore., July 27.—President Harding's apparent acceptance, in his address at the opening of the Oregon Trail highway at Meacham, of the discredited legend of Marcus Whitman's "saving Oregon" is likely to damage the historians' long fight against the acceptance of this myth as the truth, in the opinion of Dr. Joseph Schafer, superintendent of the Wisconsin state historical society, who for twenty years was head of the history department of the University of Oregon.

Dr. Schafer, who is the author of several books on northwestern and Pacific coast history, and has conducted researches into the history of the Oregon boundary dispute between the United States and Great Britain, said:

"The thoughtful citizen will not be disposed to find fault with the president for utilizing in his Meacham address the beautiful and dramatic legend of how Whitman 'saved Oregon.' To criticize him for doing so as on historical grounds one would criticize the ordinary lecturer would be to misapprehend the conditions under which such incidental addresses necessarily made by the president, whose time on the trip is engrossed with a multitude of duties that rigorously exclude the preparation of speeches. Addresses on questions of policy, of course, are prepared by him in advance. For such others as seem to be called for by local situations, like the one at Meacham, he is compelled to depend upon others.

"In the present case it is clear that someone who was interested in exploiting as if it were historical the long-exploited myth about Whitman saving Oregon, obtained the president's ear and probably placed the typed manuscript of the address in his hand. By doing this, and persuading the president to read it, that person assuredly scored the season's greatest feat in advertising. For, notwithstanding the president's oral statement that some doubted the truth of the story he was about to present, he did in fact present it as history, and his speech, printed because it was his, will pass with millions of people as a fully authenticated historical narrative. In all probability a new brood of books on western history, carrying the president's Meacham speech by way of restoring in new form the long-discredited Whitman myth, will be one result. Inasmuch as it has required half a century of controversy and a

vast expenditure of effort on the part of defenders and opponents alike, to eradicate the legend from the histories, this, if it should happen, would be an unfortunate circumstance. For it goes without saying that historically-minded men and women will not accept fiction for fact, though all love the memory of Doctor Whitman for his splendid Christian character and for the achievements which can be rightly credited to him.

"The incident suggests that if the president is likely to require other addresses of a local or regional character, the managers of his program ought to single out, for the responsibility of historical advisers, that one of his literary entourage who is best equipped with historical scholarship and who is familiar with the literature of American history. Anyone who has seen the late Edward Gaylord Bourne's 'The Legend of Marcus Whitman' would unhesitatingly have advised against the acceptance by the president of the paper supplied to him for the Meacham occasion."

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PECULIAR NAME IS TAKEN FOR TOWN SO NAME OF THE TOWN IS PECULIAR

WASHINGTON, July 27.—There is a very peculiar story connected with the naming of Peculiar, Missouri—which is also a peculiar name for a town.

The federal government does not name towns and hamlets when they are born or feel the urge for a cognomen, but the Post Office Department does regulate them to the extent of prohibiting duplicating of names within the same state. So when a newly formed community in Missouri suggested a certain name for its post office, the department informed the inhabitants there was already one by that name in their state.

Several other names were chosen by the residents and submitted, but always with the same result. Finally an exasperated official of the department, in refusing the latest choice wrote the city fathers among other things "that it was mighty peculiar they could not find a good name for their town." Whereupon he received the following reply: "Acting on your suggestion we select the name Peculiar." And so Peculiar is on the map of today.

There is only one rule in the naming of new towns, and that is that there shall be but one of the same name in a state. But that does not prohibit other states from boasting towns of the same name. For instance, there are 45 names used more than 26 times each to designate towns and cities. Benjamin Franklin is remembered as an inspiration more than any other person, and Franklin as a town name takes the prize, occurring 31 times in 31 states. The others in point of popularity run: Clinton, 30 times; Chester, 29; Arlington, 29; Washington, 28; Troy, 27; Salem, 27; Marion, 27; Manchester, 27; Clayton, 27; Glenwood, 26; Kingston, 26; Newport, 26; Ashland, 25; Centerville, 25; Cleveland, 25; Auburn, 24; Dover, 24; Hillsboro, 24; Lincoln, 24; Monroe, 24; Oxford, 24; Princeton, 24; Springfield, 24; Warren, 24; Union, 24; Greenville, 23; Wilson, 23; Belmont, 22; Buffalo, 22; Canton, 22; Dayton, 22; Eureka, 22; Liberty, 22; Milford, 22; Plymouth, 22; Burlington, 21; Lebanon, 21; Portland, 20; Lexington, 20; Jamestown, 20; Hudson, 20; and Danville, 20.

Duplicated names are the bane of the postal clerk, and the Yankee reputation for originality rises staggering when confronted by the apparent lack of imagination used to name American communities. There are even two Chicagos, six Philadelphias, seven Detroits, and 14 Denvers.

Similarity in names also causes the postal department considerable trouble. Indistinct penmanship might easily confuse Eldoro, Ia., with Eldorado, Ia., in Pennsylvania alone there are 13 communities whose names begin with the prefix Green: Greens, Greenbriar, Greenburr, Greencastle, Green Land, Greenoch, Greenspark, Greenboro, Greensburg, Greenstone, Greentown, Greenville, and Greenwald. There is a partiality for Bloom as a prefix in New York state, as for example Bloomsburg, Bloomingdale, Blooming Grove, Bloomington and Bloomville.

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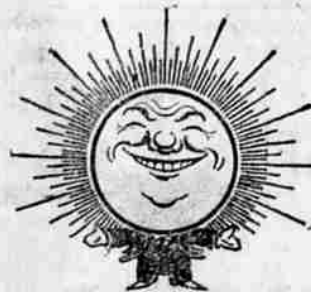
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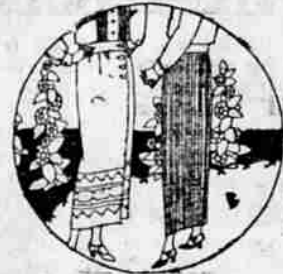
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