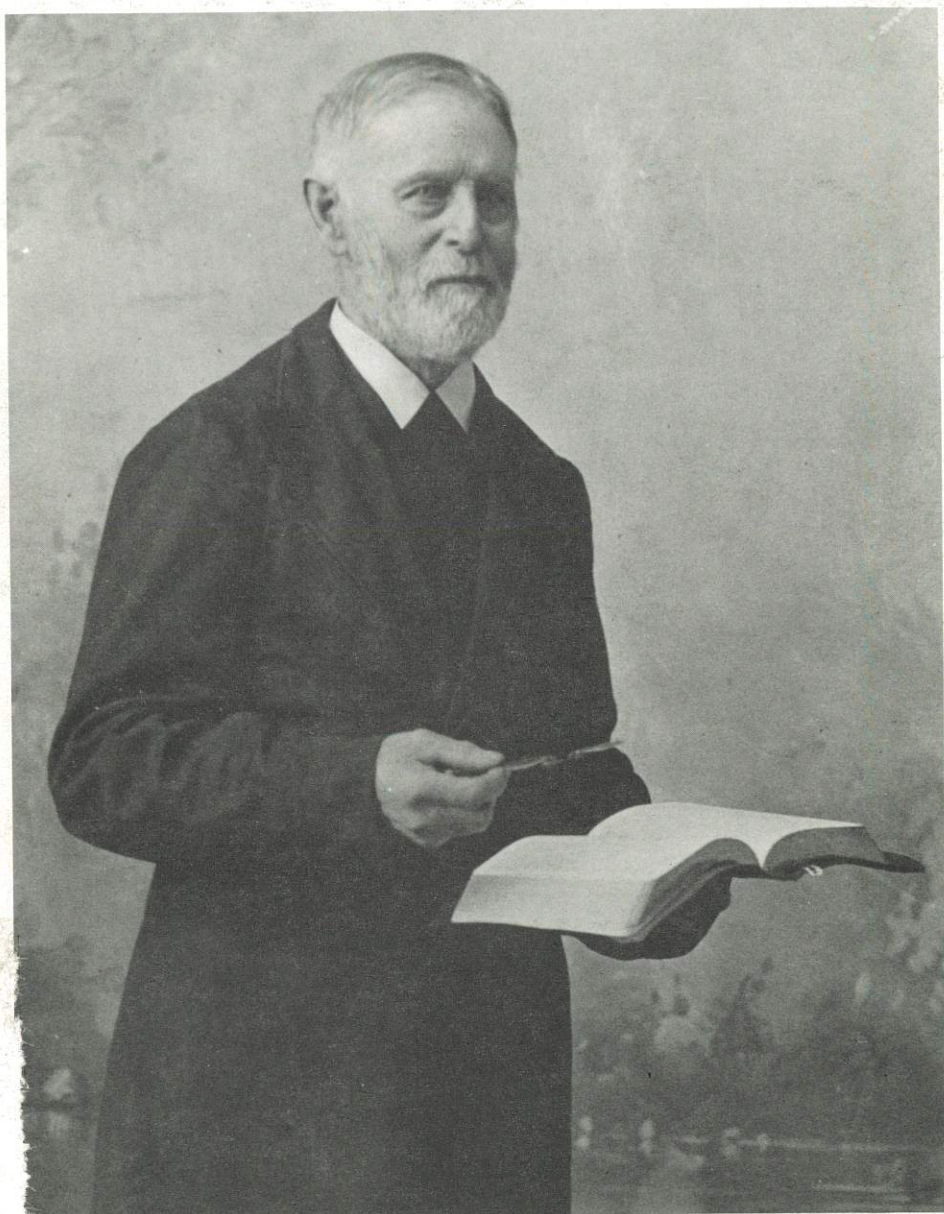


IDAHO YESTERDAYS

Volume 31, Numbers 1-2
Spring/Summer, 1987

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE IDAHO HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Idaho Yesterdays is the quarterly journal of the Idaho State Historical Society, whose headquarters are in the historic U.S. Assay Office, 210 Main Street, Boise. The Society was established in the spring of 1907 to guard Idaho's heritage of history. In the fall of 1956, the Society's rolls were opened to membership. Every person, young or old, who is interested in the past of Idaho and the Pacific Northwest is cordially invited to become a member. Subscription to this journal is included in membership dues. Dues for the various classes of membership are as follows:

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The Society very much wishes to acquire documents, objects, pictures, and information of historical significance for Idaho. Such material will be used for Idaho's good in the coming years.

Contributions to help the Society's efforts are urgently needed and earnestly solicited. Donations for this purpose are under the control of the State Auditor but entirely earmarked for the Society's use. Contributions should be sent directly to the Society and are deductible for income-tax purposes.

EDITORIAL POLICY: *Idaho Yesterdays* carries scholarly articles, edited documents, and other materials that contribute to an understanding of the history and prehistory of Idaho and the Pacific Northwest. Manuscripts dealing with political, social, intellectual, cultural, economic, and institutional history are welcome, as are biographical and historiographical interpretations and studies of archaeology and the built environment. Manuscripts emphasizing visual documentation such as photographs and paintings are also appropriate, as are material-culture studies.

Originality, quality of research, significance, and presentation are among the factors that determine the suitability for publication in the journal. Generally, genealogical studies are not accepted, although exceptionally well done and significant reminiscences or other autobiographical writings will be considered.

Idaho Yesterdays generally follows the thirteenth edition (1982) of the *Chicago Manual of Style*, published by the University of Chicago Press. Inquiries and manuscripts should be addressed to the editor, *Idaho Yesterdays*, Idaho State Historical Society, 610 N. Julia Davis Drive, Boise, Idaho 83702-7695.

IDAHO YESTERDAYS

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Cushing Eells, missionary and educator, in a portrait that seems to capture both roles. Photo courtesy Northwest and Whitman College Archives, Penrose Library, Whitman College (hereafter NWCA).

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The summer of 1986 marked the 150th anniversary of the arrival of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and Henry and Eliza Spalding in the Northwest. They were not the first Christian missionaries to come to the region, and they certainly would not be the last. But their presence was notable for many reasons—some real, some mythic; some short-lived, some that continue to be significant today.

A variety of anniversary activities took place in and around the site of the Whitmans' mission at Waiilatpu, near Walla Walla, Washington, in 1986. Among them was a conference July 24-26 on "Missionary Influences on Northwest History: An Assessment of the Impact of Early Nineteenth-Century Missions on the History of the Northwest." The conference was organized under the leadership of the National Park Service's Seattle office and hosted by Whitman College; support for it was provided by a number of agencies and institutions, private and public.¹

This special double issue of *Idaho Yesterdays* is an outgrowth of that conference and includes many of the papers presented there. Two other papers have been published elsewhere: Fr. Robert I. Burns's keynote address on "The Missionary Syndrome: Crusader and

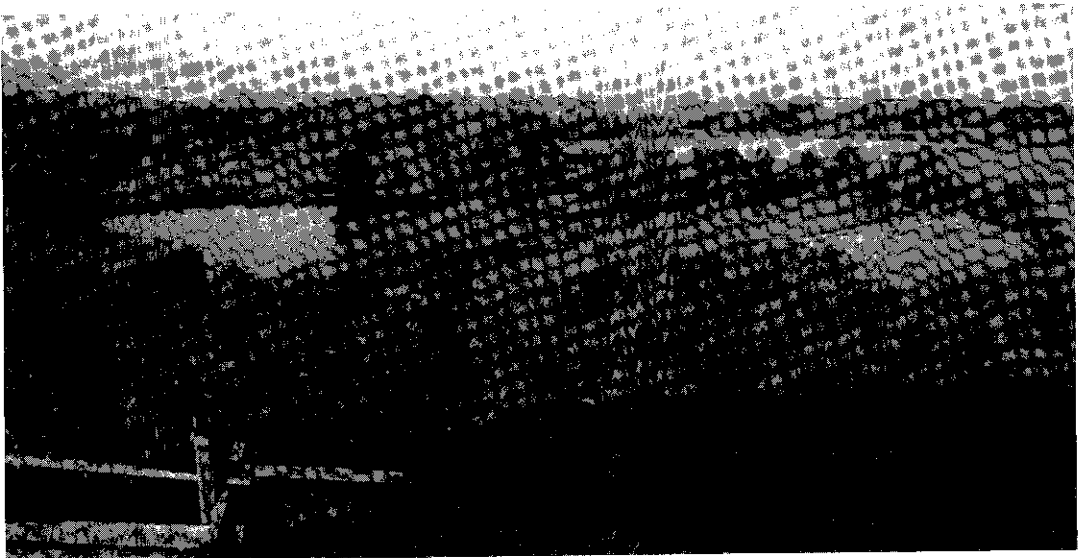
Pacific Northwest Religious Expansionism," in the Fall, 1987, issue of *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, and Patricia Horner's paper on "Missionary Dreams vs. Pioneer Reality: The Life of Mary Richardson Walker," in the Summer, 1982, issue of *Montana the Magazine of Western History*.

The Idaho State Historical Society is grateful to Whitman College and the National Park Service for grants in support of the publication of this special issue. In addition, Lawrence L. Dodd, archivist of the Northwest and Whitman College Archives, Penrose Library, Whitman College, has been most generous with the resources of the archives and with his own knowledge of the area and its history.

Finally, the thanks of all who participated in and have learned from the activities of the conference are owed to Stephanie Toothman, of the Seattle office of the National Park Service, who was the original force behind the conference and deserves much credit for its success.

¹Among them were the Association for the Humanities in Idaho (now the Idaho Humanities Council), the Oregon Committee for the Humanities, and the Washington Commission for the Humanities; the findings and conclusions of the authors in this issue do not necessarily represent the views of those organizations or the National Endowment for the Humanities.

A modern view of the Whitman Mission site from the top of Shaft Hill. Photo by Larry Dodd.



THE BISHOPS BLANCHET AND THEIR ROLE IN THE WHITMAN MASSACRE

by Wilfred P. Schoenberg, S.J.

Father Schoenberg, who opened the conference with this analysis of Catholic and Protestant missionaries' relationships that spared neither side, has long been a scholar of the Oregon Province of the Society of Jesus. He is in residence at Gonzaga University.

DURING THE SECOND World War, three Victory ships were named for three Catholic missionaries in the Pacific Northwest: Peter John DeSmet, Anthony Ravalli, and Francis Xavier Norbert Blanchet.¹ The last of these three received other honors in his own lifetime: he was the first Catholic missionary to remain to the end of his life in the Northwest, from 1838 to 1883; the first bishop in the region, appointed in 1843; and its first archbishop, appointed in 1846. His was the second archdiocesan see in the United States, preceded only by Baltimore and followed by the great eastern archdioceses of St. Louis, New York, Boston, and Philadelphia.

The new archbishop used his episcopal influence to secure the appointment of his brother, a canon in the cathedral at Montreal, as one of his suffragan bishops. Augustin Magliore Alexander, or simply A. M. A., Blanchet was designated as the first (and only) Catholic Bishop of Walla Walla in 1846.² This appears to be something like nepotism, a curse of the medieval church; but the older Blanchet was regarded as an exemplary prelate, so no

criticism of his action in this regard has survived the scrutiny of history. Besides, no one else wanted the job.

The two Blanchets were similar in appearance and disposition. Opinionated, harsh with their subjects, intolerant toward people of other theological persuasions, they personified the worst features of contemporary Canadian Catholics as well as the best. They were hard-working prelates, zealous and willing to deny themselves anything at all for the Gospel message. They tended to be rudely critical of Americans, Catholics included.³ Probably because of their simple farm origins, they manifested a sense of inferiority in comparison with eastern bishops, many of whom were noisy Irishmen who waved American flags whenever they emerged from their chanceries or cathedrals. The younger Blanchet, especially, expressed considerable contempt for American customs: on the Oregon Trail, as a member of a wagon train, he refused to provide Christian burial for deceased Protestants.⁴

Both of the Blanchets were handsome men, but in their pictures they appear to be pouting most of the time—perhaps because they took themselves so seriously. They both opposed the use of alcoholic beverages, which did not endear them to members of their own flock, many of whom were former *voyageurs* accustomed to the periodic *regale*.⁵ Most frontier people of their time tended to be excessively individualistic, which in contemporary literature was generally regarded as a characteristic American—and therefore Protestant—virtue. But Catholic *voyageurs*, their Indian wives, and their children were also excessively individualistic; and this did not set well with the two somewhat despotic church-

¹DeSmet and Ravalli were Jesuits, Blanchet a diocesan priest. Blanchet's full name, Francis Xavier Norbert Blanchet, was shortened in time for general usage to avoid confusion with his nephew, Father Francis Xavier Blanchet, who came to Oregon in 1863. Thus the uncle was known mostly as Francis Norbert Blanchet or simply as F. N. Blanchet.

²The Walla Walla Diocese was established by Pope Gregory XVI on July 24, 1846. It was formally suppressed by the Apostolic Brief *Per Similes Nostras* on July 20, 1853.

³Bishop Blanchet's feelings toward American Catholics were freely expressed in his journal. Edward J. Kowrach, *Journal of a Catholic Bishop on the Oregon Trail: The Overland Crossing of the Rt. Rev. A. M. A. Blanchet, Bishop of Walla Walla, from Montreal to Oregon Territory, March 23, 1847 to January 23, 1851* (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1978).

⁴Blanchet's views on this subject were not shared by other missionaries. Peter DeSmet, Joseph Joset, and others never failed to provide their services when requested by anyone, and Father J. B. A. Brouillet presided at the burial of the Wailatpu massacre victims.

⁵The *regale* or "royal privilege" was a half-pint of rum provided to the *voyageurs* on special occasions.



Archbishop Blanchet, from *History of the Pacific Northwest* (1889).

men, who tended to cover their arbitrary decisions with beguiling religiosity. None of this was lost on the Blanchets' wary Protestant neighbors. Happily for the Catholics, perhaps, the Protestants had their own despots, some of them preachers who threatened their communicants with damnation if they imbibed even a little of the contents of the bottle.

There is something very ironic in the presence of A. M. A. Blanchet at St. Ann's Mission near Umatilla when his vicar general, Father John Baptist Abraham Brouillet, buried the bloody victims at Wailatpu on November 30, 1847.⁶ Blanchet had arrived at Fort Walla Walla just two months earlier to claim his non-existent cathedral.⁷ He had met Dr. Whitman at the fort and, compelled by his isolation as much as anything else, had invited the doctor to his primitive "Episcopal Palace" for dinner. It was this Blanchet and Brouillet who were much maligned in the end by the Rev. Henry Harmon Spalding, the Rev. L. S. Griffin, and William H. Gray.⁸ Brouillet's conduct at the time of the Whitman massacre had been impeccable, if not brilliantly heroic, and he had saved Spalding's life by risking his

own. That was not a comfortable fact for Spalding to live with: saved by a Catholic priest. The priest was in many ways seen by Spalding as his natural enemy, and he could not accept his debt without protest.⁹

Bishop Blanchet's performance was something else. Had the Bishop of Walla Walla acted prudently, or merely pragmatically, when he advised the captured women from the Whitman mission to submit to their Indian captors? He may have had no other options. His conduct in this case, as with the archbishop's in other respects, was doubtlessly determined by conflicting and very complex factors that he and few other recognized. This inquiry regarding Blanchet's baneful influence on later Catholic-Protestant relations is thus of necessity something less than dogma and something more than conjecture.

IT IS CERTAIN that there was bad blood from the very beginning between F. N. Blanchet and the Methodists, who had arrived four years before him.¹⁰ What infuriated the Methodists even more than doctrinal confrontations was the campaign Blanchet waged to "validate" Catholic marriages that had been contracted in the presence of the Protestant ministers before his arrival.¹¹ Blanchet did not even allow couples who had lived together in good faith for many years to occupy the same house until he had "blessed" their marriages. The

⁶Blanchet had arrived at the fort on September 5, 1847, in advance of the wagon train. The massacre occurred on November 29, 1847. The classic work on the subject is J. B. A. Brouillet, *Authentic Account of the Murder of Dr. Whitman and Other Missionaries by the Cayuse Indians of Oregon in 1847, and the Causes Which Led to That Horrible Catastrophe* (Portland, 1869).

⁷Blanchet, accustomed to church practice in eastern Canada, actually expected to find a town of Walla Walla with an established church. What he found—a fur-trading post in the wilderness—dismayed him.

⁸Gray had been associated with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions from 1836 to 1842. His *History of Oregon* first appeared in 1870. Griffin was associated with Spalding in his long campaign to discredit Brouillet's account of the massacre. The best publication on this subject is George N. Belknap, "Account of the Murder of Dr. Whitman: The History of a Pamphlet," which was published in the *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* (1961), 55/4:319-346. It is the definitive piece on the Spalding feud with Brouillet.

⁹*Ibid.*, 320 *et seq.*

¹⁰The Methodist mission party, under the direction of Elder Jason Lee and his nephew Daniel Lee, founded their mission on the Willamette in 1834. George W. Fuller, *A History of the Pacific Northwest* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931), 126. A decade later they offered this mission for a bargain price to Father Peter DeSmet.

¹¹Presumably these marriages, or most of them, would have been regarded as valid by the Catholic Church, due to the use of "the extraordinary form" that was licit in certain cases.

Methodists were outraged, but the French-Canadians and their friends the Indians sided with the autocratic Blanchet.

Both sides in their anathemas were guilty of excess. What is relevant here is the continuing practice of the Indians to favor Blanchet and his missionary companions for very basic reasons, which the Protestants recognized and deplored. Exasperating contrasts existed between the two factions, in style as well as in content; and these were noted by the Indians, who often discussed their preferences among themselves.

For example, the priests' celibacy freed them from the desire and need for occupying great parcels of land that the Indians regarded as their own tribal property held in common. The Hudson's Bay Company had some sense of patronage toward the priests, in part because they were Canadian born—unlike the Protestants, who were American born. There was a vast difference in the style of worship; the Catholic liturgy with its greater appeal to the senses, contrasted with the long, often dreary preachments of the ministers, was more satisfying to the Indians.¹² American Protestants were also identified with the ever increasing number of Americans arriving from the east: a few each year until 1842, a thousand in 1843, and after that a flood, all of whom were threats to Indian survival.

Finally, the priests had the Catholic Ladder. It was a remarkable visual aid that provided Indians with the Catholic version of salvation: an illustrated chart displaying the principal

¹²"The simple liturgy consisted of the Mass with its colorful mysticism and the use of incense at benediction and other solemn occasions. The candles and the practice of singing long hymns, Canadian style, with the men sitting on one side of the church and women on the other side, gustily singing alternate verses, greatly appealed to the Indians, who were long since used to scoldings like the preachers' from their own chiefs.

¹³Spalding insisted on showing the Protestant Ladder to Brouillet, who wrote: "So I told him I would look at his Ladder with pleasure. He unrolled before us a paper 3 to 4 feet long and a bit wider than 2 feet covered with burlesqued figures to ridicule the Catholic religion and its ministers. Everybody regarded that paper with indifference." Rev. J. B. A. Brouillet, *Blackrobe Buries Whitmans*, in Kowrach, *Journal of a Catholic Bishop*, 154.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁵From 1818 until 1846, during the period of "Joint Occupancy" by England and United States, the Pacific Northwest had no other police force than the Hudson's Bay Company. Dr. John McLoughlin, its Chief Factor in Oregon, was so highly respected by all that his presence alone produced peace and order. After his forced retirement in 1846, the troubles began. McLoughlin's confrontation with Oregon City's Protestants is presented in Edwin V. O'Hara, *Pioneer Catholic History of Oregon* (Portland: Catholic Book Company, 1911), 111 *et seq.*



BISHOP BLANCHET

Bishop Blanchet, from History of the Pacific Northwest. doctrines of the church, with two roads, one leading to heaven and a broader one leading to perdition. The Protestants were presented as tortured-looking pilgrims falling helplessly into the flames of Hell. Although Eliza Spalding, in a plucky attempt to disarm this piece in the Catholic arsenal, produced a Protestant version of the ladder with roles reversed—Catholics, including mitred bishops, fell headlong into a flaming Hell—not much came of it. Its appearance was anticlimactic, and until modern times it was neither printed nor circulated.¹³ Prophetically, only one month before his death, Marcus Whitman was heard to say that "he did not love Catholics . . . and that he would oppose their missionaries with all his power. . . . He also spoke against the Catholic Ladder and said he would color it with his blood."¹⁴

All these and more were reasons for Indian partiality toward the priests, who could come and go as they pleased in the wilderness even after the protective strong arm of Dr. John McLoughlin had been cut off.¹⁵ Their preference, more than anything else, convinced Spalding and Gray that the Catholic mission-

aries had entered into some furtive alliance with the villainous natives to dispose of their enemies, the American missionaries.

The Catholic missionaries were not entirely without blame. They had, after all, taught the Indians that Protestants went to Hell. But nineteenth-century Protestants as well as Catholics had been conditioned to think of their opponents as heretics, deserving of death in a bonfire. Gray's charges—in particular, those regarding the role played by the Jesuit "provocateurs"—were so silly that no reasonable person could believe them. The Jesuits in 1847 were a mere handful, most of them two hundred fifty miles distant from Wailatpu and effectively imprisoned by the vast forests and mountains. They were completely harmless. Even after the massacre they were permitted by officials to remain at their posts—much to the chagrin of their Protestant counterparts, who were hastily driven out.¹⁶

The Jesuits' leader in the pre-massacre years had unwittingly confirmed the non-Jesuit archbishop's status with the Indians by being associated with him. Peter John DeSmet, the epitome of the good white man in the eyes of the Indians, took orders from Blanchet in certain matters and represented him as the Great White Father in the church, as Dr. John McLoughlin was the Great White Father in the nearest thing to the state. Since DeSmet's and his colleagues' reputations as champions of Indians' rights were well known in the West, it was not without alleged "evidence" that Gray accused the Blanchets and Brouillet of being members of this "nefarious" order. And the Jesuits, Gray reported knowingly, were the principal conspirators in the tragic climax of Indians killing whites. After all, DeSmet, like Blanchet, had published a Catholic Ladder in his first book, which was widely circulated in eastern America and Europe; and his Protestant heretics met the same fate as Blanchet's.¹⁷

UNFORTUNATELY, THE ALLEGED Jesuit perfidiousness did not evaporate after the Cayuse War began. Like the Blanchets and Brouillet, the Jesuits were still heroes to their followers and thus were bold enough to behave as if they had done nothing wrong. When the

innocent Indian hostages were brought to trial in Oregon City for the murder of Dr. Whitman and the others killed at Wailatpu, it was a foregone conclusion that they would be convicted and hanged. The enraged settlers, thwarted by time and distance and robbed of the presence of the real murderers, felt compelled to take their revenge in any manner still open to them.¹⁸ Goaded on by Spalding, who was safe in his new residence on the lower Columbia—a great patriot to some, a zealot tainted with madness to others—Oregon's white citizens saw their bounden duty and performed it righteously. On their lists for reprisals were not only priests in their immediate area but also the distant Jesuits.

The latter had become more directly involved when the territorial legislature passed a bill forbidding the delivery of all firearms and ammunition to the Indians. The Superior of the Jesuits was then Father Joseph Joset, a gentle, diminutive Swiss whose heart was bigger than his head: a little man of fiery courage when his Indians were threatened. Joset hastened to Oregon City to challenge the bill,

entering a protest against it on the ground of the hardship it would entail on the Catholic Indians, who were peaceably disposed and loyal to the provisional government. These Indians got their livelihood by hunting; moreover, the Flatheads absolutely needed arms to defend themselves against the Blackfeet.¹⁹

One of the legislators was greatly impressed by Joset and pledged himself to seek a repeal of the law. At this point a large consignment of arms for the Jesuit missions arrived at Fort Vancouver, the entire annual shipment for all of the missions in the northern mountains.²⁰ Joset, expecting the repeal of the law, directed

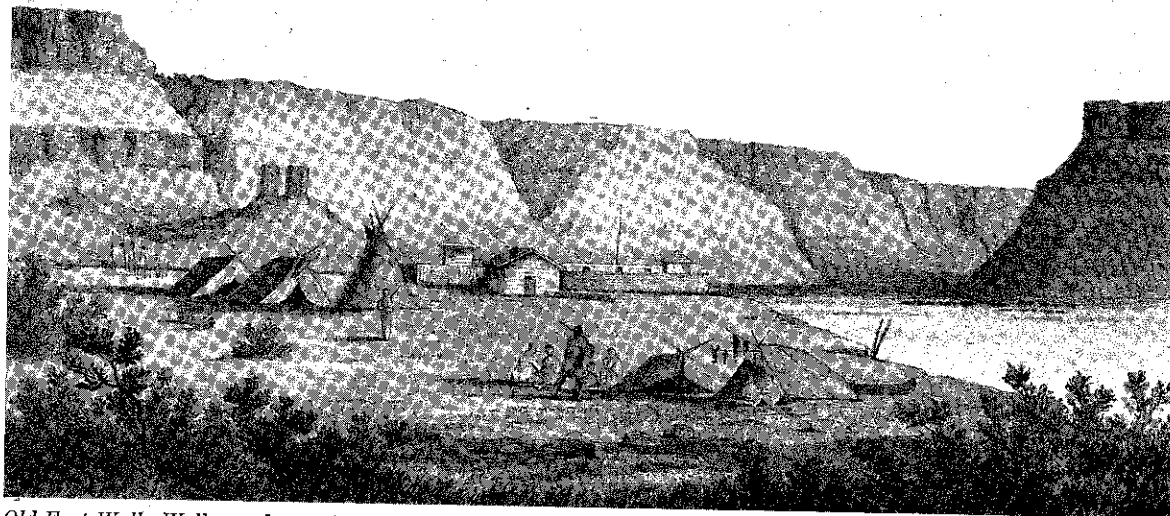
¹⁶Only the distant Jesuits were allowed to remain behind in the war zone. Bishop Blanchet and his priests were ordered out "for their safety." The Dalles was the new frontier on the east.

¹⁷Peter J. DeSmet, S.J., *Letters and Sketches With a Narrative of a Year's Residence Among the Indian Tribes of the Rocky Mountains* (Philadelphia, 1843).

¹⁸The real murderers were all dead.

¹⁹Gilbert J. Garraghan, S.J., *The Jesuits of the Middle United States* (New York: America Press, 1938), 2:345.

²⁰The shipment consisted of "one thousand and eighty pounds of powder, fifteen hundred pounds of balls, three hundred pounds of buckshot, and thirty six guns," scarcely enough to exterminate all the Protestants of the Oregon Country. *Ibid.*, 2:346.



Old Fort Walla Walla, as drawn for the Pacific Railroad Report in 1853. Blanchet's disappointment is understandable.

another Jesuit to forward the consignment to its destination without any attempt to conceal the nature of the shipment. At The Dalles, an officious Lieutenant Rodgers seized the shipment and reported to Oregon City for instructions. Proper authorities ordered it to be returned to Fort Vancouver, after which the whereabouts of the arms was lost in bureaucratic red tape.

The incident, itself [however] was seized upon by prejudicial minds as evidence of an attempt to smuggle arms into the interior to be put into the hands of Catholic Indians for the extermination of Protestants. The preposterous charge was met with widespread credence and anti-Catholic hostility was soon fanned to a white heat. In December, 1848, a petition for the expulsion of all of the Catholic clergy from Oregon was introduced into the territorial legislature but failed of passage.²¹

Meanwhile, the course of white man's justice was zealously pursued. The five Cayuse Indian hostages were convicted of murder with record dispatch. From their dingy cells in Oregon City, more like animal cages to them, they appealed to Archbishop Blanchet for help. Blanchet instructed them in the Catholic faith, baptized them, and accompanied them on June 3, 1850, to the gallows where each one died protesting his innocence. Subsequently, Blanchet vigorously asserted that all five of the Indians were entirely innocent of the

charges for which they had been executed. This priestly intervention enraged some of the settlers even more. If any were willing to admit a mistake, they did not come forward. It seemed, on the contrary, that the priests were to blame after all.

For the next generation a flood of literature vilifying Catholic missionaries, especially the two Blanchets and Brouillet, continued to flow from the pens of Spalding and his supporters. They succeeded in providing the Whitmans with crowns of martyrdom and Spalding with the mantle of Doctor of the Church.

The two bishops Blanchet were granted neither. The humiliations and frustrations they received at the hands of their foes did not seem to make them more mellow or tolerant. The archbishop passed to a less controversial life on June 18, 1883, at the age of eighty-eight. His younger brother, the Bishop of Nesqually since 1850, followed him to the grave four years later in his ninetieth year. Always very pious men, they remained true to their crusty harshness to the bitter end: rigid prelates, somewhat isolated by their intransigent manners and apparently oblivious to the fact that if they had been more understanding and compassionate with their Protestant neighbors, the tragedy of Waiilatpu might have been avoided. ■

²¹*Ibid.*

DIRECT SUCCESSOR TO DESMET

JOSEPH M. CATALDO, S.J., AND STABILIZATION OF THE JESUIT INDIAN MISSIONS OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST, 1877-1893

by Robert C. Carriker

This article originated in a slide presentation on the growth of Jesuit missions in the Pacific Northwest. The author, a member of the history department of Gonzaga University, provided the photo of Father Joseph Cataldo at the right and those on pages 9, 10, 11, and 12.

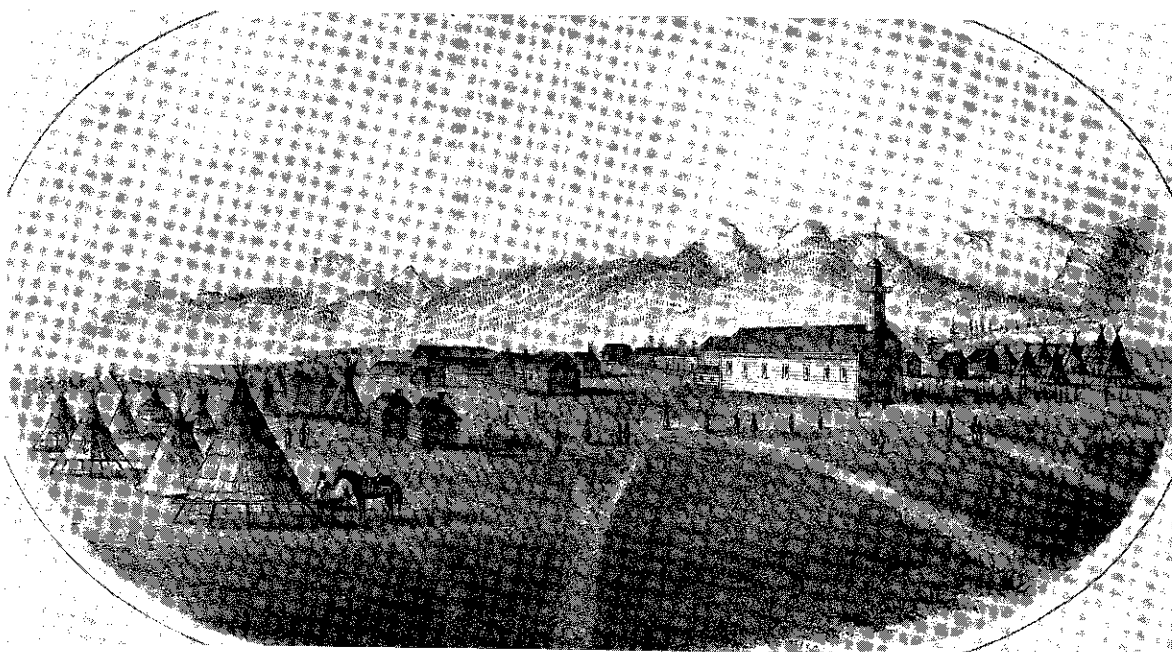


THE MISSIONARY PRESENCE of the Society of Jesus in the Pacific Northwest began on August 21, 1840, with the arrival of Father Peter John DeSmet, S.J., at Three Forks, Montana—the source of the Missouri River. A native of Belgium, DeSmet made his first, hurried, trip to the trans-mountain West of the American frontier at the direct request of a delegation of Flathead and Nez Perce tribesmen who had traveled nearly 2,000 miles to St. Louis in 1839 seeking Jesuits, “Blackrobes.” DeSmet visited nearly a dozen Indian tribes living in the valleys and mountains of the Oregon Country, and he was overwhelmed at the prospect for good that he and his order might achieve among the native population of the region. Before the year was out he returned to the Mississippi Valley, and subsequently Europe, for reinforcements. In 1841, fortified by ecclesiastical recruits, DeSmet return to the Pacific Northwest. He revisited his Indian hosts of the previous year and established the first Catholic mission in

the Pacific Northwest, St. Mary's, near present Stevensville, Montana.

As the Superior of his order's Rocky Mountain Missions, DeSmet had grand plans. Like many other Jesuits of his time, he believed that the missions of the Oregon Country should resemble a successful system, called reductions, that had been used for a century and a half by the Jesuits in South America. Individual missions would be placed at locations sufficiently distant from white men, yet convenient to nearby tribes. A church and school were necessary, as were cabins for priests and Indians, but missions should also develop sawmills, gristmills, infirmaries, and various storage and outbuildings to house the produce from farms. Each reduction would be independent yet linked to others for purposes of purchasing supplies, the sharing of personnel, and mutual protection.

Though his master plan for missionary development in the Oregon Country had wisdom and history behind it, DeSmet's chain



St. Mary's Mission, Stevensville, Montana, as drawn for John Mullan's Wagon Road Report in 1863.

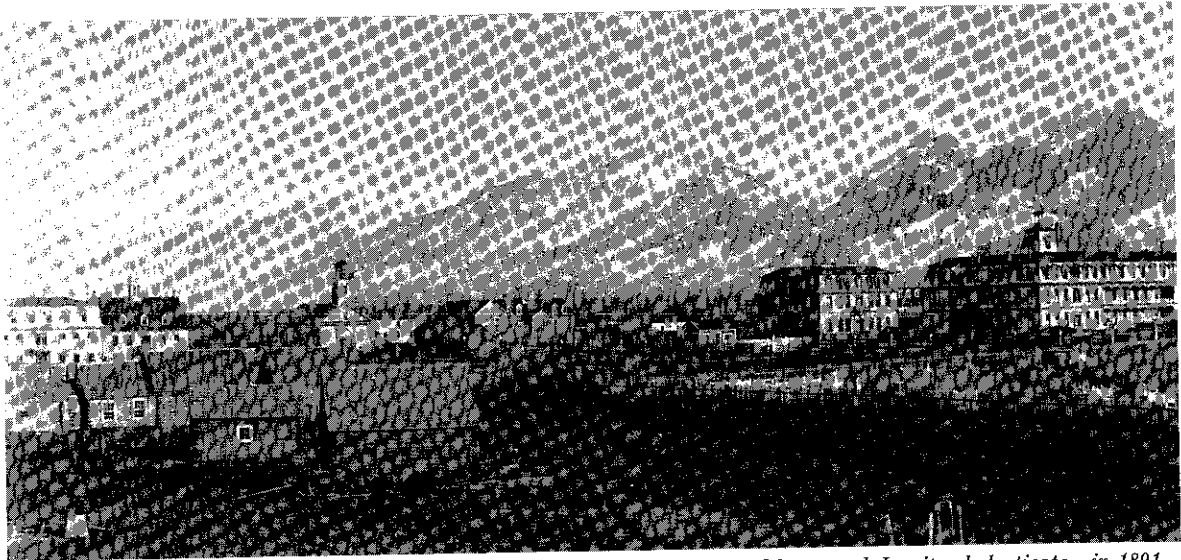
of reductions never achieved the success he anticipated. Perhaps the concept of the commitment was outmoded by the mid-nineteenth century, perhaps the speed with which white civilians followed clerics to the region made the dream impossible; maybe DeSmet's plans were simply too grandiose for an order already strained by worldwide missionary commitments. Whatever the case, only four mission stations were established during DeSmet's tenure as Superior of the Rocky Mountain Missions.

DeSmet's name is so well known that it is easy to forget the brevity of his active missionary work in the Pacific Northwest. In 1846, after only six years, he was replaced as Superior of the Rocky Mountain Missions and appointed Treasurer at Saint Louis College. From that time until his death in 1873, DeSmet remained prominent in American Indian affairs, even serving as a consultant to the United States Government. More important, after 1846 DeSmet assumed the role of supplier and publicizer for the Rocky Mountain Missions. From his office in St. Louis, and in more than 200,000 miles of travel, DeSmet raised money in both America and Europe. It was an exhausting task, but one that was

absolutely essential to the present and future success of Jesuit missions in the Pacific Northwest. DeSmet left his indelible imprint on the Pacific Northwest Indian mission frontier as a province procurator for the missions in Montana, Idaho, and Washington. He was truly the founder, both physically and spiritually, of the Pacific Northwest Jesuit mission system.

IN THE THREE decades after 1846, five experienced mission priests succeeded DeSmet as Superior of the Rocky Mountain Missions. Each of the men administered and maintained the missions in his charge and in fact even managed to strengthen the Jesuit commitment. When Father Joseph M. Cataldo, S.J., was appointed Superior in 1877 there were thirty-nine Jesuits working at nine mission stations in the Pacific Northwest.

Cataldo, a Sicilian by birth, was forty years old in 1877. He entered the Society of Jesus at the age of fifteen and was ordained a priest in 1862 following a decade of rigorous education in Italy and Belgium. Cataldo was assigned to the Rocky Mountain Missions at his own request, and on his ordination he was immediately directed to America.



St. Ignatius Mission, Montana—including the hospital, schools for girls and boys, and Jesuit scholasticate—in 1891.

Cataldo planned to study English for a year in Boston, then proceed west. The blustery New England winter, however, took its toll of his health; in an effort to reverse a condition diagnosed as the final stages of consumption, he was reassigned to the warmer climate of San Francisco. Happily, the location agreed with him and he stayed on in California to finish his philosophy and theology requirements for the Society of Jesus.

During his studies at Santa Clara College, Cataldo met Father Gregory Mengarini, S.J., one of the co-founders with DeSmet of St. Mary's Mission among the Flathead Indians. From Mengarini, Cataldo learned the customs and language of the Salish Indians. As a result, when Father Joseph Giorda, S.J., Superior of the Rocky Mountain Missions, requested additional manpower from the California Jesuits, Cataldo—believing his health now to be sufficiently restored—re-volunteered for service as a missionary.

Upon his arrival in the Pacific Northwest in September of 1865, Cataldo took station at the Coeur d'Alene Mission of the Sacred Heart at present Cataldo, Idaho. In succeeding years "Dried Salmon," as the Indians called the frail, wispy Cataldo, lived among several other tribes of Indians, include the Nez Perce. From his location on the tribal reservation Cataldo was so close to the dramatic events that

transpired between Nez Perce tribesmen and the United States soldiers that he was at one point condemned by the federal Indian agent as a willing accomplice in the Nez Perce War. Thus, by the time he was appointed Superior of the Rocky Mountain Missions, Cataldo had more than a decade of experience as an active missionary among several diverse tribes of Indians; he was an accomplished linguist (eventually mastering more than twenty Indian and European languages); and he was well respected by the Indians, probably second only to DeSmet himself.

It was not in Cataldo's personality merely to maintain a situation. He demanded improvement—constant improvement. There would be no change for the sake of change, but he was determined to make progress as he saw the need. Cataldo had only to look about him to see that the Indians' commitment to Christianity was deteriorating. Their diminishing interest began with the discovery of gold in the Pacific Northwest, it accelerated with the arrival of permanent settlers in the region, and it peaked during the conflict between the federal government and the Indians over reservation lands.

AS AN EXPERIENCED missionary, Cataldo understood the cultural proclivities of tribes in the intermountain region. It was necessary, as



Mission of the Sacred Heart, Desmet, Idaho, in about 1926.

well as traditional, for them to hunt buffalo during one season of the year, dig for camas roots on the prairies at another season, and fish for salmon at the falls in yet a third period. All this took them away from the mission environment for long periods of time. Consequently, improvement—from the Jesuits' standpoint—in such behavior as gambling, superstition, polygamy, and revenge was slow. It is true that by 1877 many tribes were already bound to reservations, no longer free to travel by the seasons, but the damage was already done. In Cataldo's view, the Indian had a greater capacity to learn the sins of Christianity than to learn its blessings, and the rapid arrival of white pioneers in the inland Northwest doomed DeSmet's dream of reductions for the Oregon Country. Training the tribesmen in agriculture and even animal husbandry was necessary, but not sufficient by itself, to withstand the destructive influences of whites.

If the Rocky Mountain Missions were ever going to minister effectively to the Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest, Cataldo believed, they must be reshaped in a more realistic plan. He determined to revitalize the Jesuit Indian missions by reopening closed missions, establishing new ones, and reviving old, decaying stations. In addition, he would see to the building of reservation boarding schools. These schools would become, in time, feeder schools for a projected central boys' college for whites and Indians to be located in Spokane, Washington Territory, and called

Gonzaga College. We must "insist on our schools, and show the Indians that our schools are good not only for them but also for whites," Cataldo stated. The money for Cataldo's college would come from the whites, but the benefits would be felt by both races.

By 1893, the end of his sixteenth and final year as Superior, Cataldo had increased the number of missions under his jurisdiction from nine to fifteen. Most of the missions contained Indian-operated, self-supporting farms, some with large herds of livestock. Several missions also had hospitals, and a few even sponsored orphanages. New, modern schools were considered essential, and by 1890 more than 1,000 Indian children were registered in the Jesuit mission schools of the Pacific Northwest.

Clearly, Cataldo's expansionist directions required many more religious personnel than the thirty-nine Jesuits he had at his disposal in 1877. But he was an effective recruiter, and by 1883 the number of Jesuits in the Rocky Mountain Missions had grown to fifty-three men, twenty-seven of whom were priests. When he relinquished his position in 1893, Cataldo had 136 Jesuits at his command. How did he accomplish this?

In the first place, to increase his "manpower," Cataldo recruited three orders of nuns to the Pacific Northwest. The Sisters of Providence had first come to Montana in 1864, and Cataldo managed to sustain their pledge of assistance. He also persuaded the Ursuline Sisters, the Sisters of the Holy Names, and the



St. Joseph's Mission, near Lapwai, in about 1890. The rectory no longer stands.

Franciscan Sisters of Philadelphia to join his missions as teachers, administrators, and nurses. The nuns, like the priests, lived an isolated life, teaching a sometimes unreceptive audience; but they faithfully stayed, and each one who did made life just that much easier for the Jesuit priests at the mission.

One order of nuns that did not come to the Pacific Northwest, but whose influence was perhaps greater than if it had, was the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. This order was founded by Katherine Drexel, a Philadelphia heiress, who generously funded a number of Cataldo's mission improvements. Mother Katherine contributed \$14,000 to build a school at Holy Family Mission, Montana, and made similar donations to the missions at St. Andrew's, Oregon, and St. Francis Regis, Washington.

To increase his manpower in the more traditional sense, Cataldo enticed other Jesuits to the Pacific Northwest. Twice he made recruiting trips to the East Coast of the United States, and once, in 1884, he toured the Jesuit provinces of Europe, netting thirty-one men for the Rocky Mountain Missions. Cataldo recognized men of like mind, men to whom education was the cornerstone of future Catholic mission success: six of the men he recruited in Europe later became presidents of Gonzaga College.

For future personnel needs of the Rocky Mountain Missions, in 1891 Cataldo established a Jesuit noviate at Sacred Heart Mission, which had moved to Desmet, Idaho. Cataldo's plan to provide American clergy for American Indians flourished, and two years later there were forty-six scholastics in training for missions of the Pacific Northwest.

DURING THE SIXTEEN years Father Joseph M. Cataldo was Superior of the Rocky Mountain Missions, important changes took place. The Indian remained at the center of the Jesuit mission concern, but the method of approach was altered. Instead of seeking the unattainable objective of reductions in the Oregon Country, Cataldo committed his Jesuit missionaries to expansion and education.

Without doubt, Cataldo gave the Jesuit missions the stability they needed to enter the turbulent era of the twentieth century—when federal funding for mission schools would be withdrawn and political, as well as economic, pressures would challenge the missions from all sides. Some Jesuit missions closed after 1900, but those that are still open owe their existence to the firm foundations established by Cataldo. Even as DeSmét was the founder of the Pacific Northwest Jesuit missions, Cataldo was the man who stabilized those missions. ■

WHITMAN COLLEGE AND THE WHITMAN LEGACY

by G. Thomas Edwards

The missionary legacy is a mixed blessing and is at times as much legend as fact. The impact of the Whitman story on the growth of Whitman College is described here by a member of that institution's history department.

THE MARCUS WHITMAN legend, like most legends, has several versions—which generally include certain common and familiar elements:

In 1842, Whitman heard people who passed through his mission site explain that Secretary of State Daniel Webster, who did not appreciate the value of the Oregon Country, was going to trade it to the British for fishing rights off Newfoundland;

in the same year, Hudson's Bay Company personnel and Catholic priests boasted to Whitman that 100 Canadians were on their way to settle Oregon, and as a consequence England would acquire Oregon—which the United States and Great Britain both had rights to occupy;

Whitman dropped his missionary work and rushed to Washington, D.C., where he prevented Webster from completing negotiations for trading Oregon to the British and also convinced President John Tyler that Oregon was too valuable to relinquish;

and Whitman then recruited a thousand immigrants whom he guided from St. Louis to Oregon, thus helping secure Oregon for the United States.

This is a wonderful and heroic story. Former missionaries Henry Spalding and William Gray initiated it in the 1860's; over a long period of time others added embellishments. More probably believed in the myth between the 1890's and 1910 than at any other time, but even today some accept parts of it. One of the best explanations for why Spalding and Gray created the Whitman-Saved-Oregon myth is that they sought to distract attention from the fact that disagreements among the missionaries prompted Whitman's ride. They

may also have realized that they might improve their own status by turning their colleague into a national hero. By 1900 they had succeeded: his career was better known and appreciated than it had been fifty years earlier.

FOR ABOUT 125 years leaders of Whitman College—reflecting and shaping contemporary regional thought—have been enthusiastic, ambivalent, or restrained about Marcus Whitman's career. Although none has openly joined his detractors, some have thought it unfortunate that the school was named for Marcus, not Walt, Whitman. One can speculate about the differences that might have followed had the college been named for a world-class poet, not a regional and controversial missionary. In the 1890's depression, however, the Whitman legacy made a major difference: heroic stories about him and his wife, Narcissa, including the myth that he saved Oregon, helped preserve the struggling college.

For many years Whitman's administrators, faculty, staff, and students have discussed the facts and myth surrounding Marcus Whitman. During his freshman year in 1923, for example, Nard Jones learned much about him; in 1959, a noted Seattle newspaperman and dedicated Whitman College overseer, Jones wrote a readable Whitman biography that included a brief historiographical section. "For fifty years after his death Whitman's admirers sought to build him into an American myth-man akin to Paul Revere, and every reader of Narcissa's letters and journals fell in love with her," Jones noted. Then during the next twenty-five years "detractors ignored Narcissa and hacked away at the legendary figure of her husband." In the following quarter-century there was another shift: "sympathetic sectarian scholars obliquely defended the missionaries."¹

¹Nard Jones, *Marcus Whitman: The Great Command: The Story of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the Oregon Country Pioneers* (Portland, Oregon: Binfords & Mort, 1959), xi-xii.

This general survey of Whitman's reputation between 1847 and 1947 is essentially correct. During the past forty years both critics and supporters have voiced interpretations based upon the old evidence; thus in 1986, the sesquicentennial of the Whitmans' arrival in the Walla Walla Valley, the disagreement continued. But only a few opinion-makers joined in the squabble over Whitman's career. In 1986 state historical societies, regional magazines, newspapers, television and radio stations, ministers, and educators paid scant attention to 1836, a regional benchmark.

While apathy or ambivalence best describes current opinion, Whitman College's leaders have generally expressed some other attitude about the missionary. Their interpretation of Whitman has ranged broadly, as can be seen by reading from its first and most recent catalogs. In 1883 the publication quoted a Walla Walla Congregationalist minister, who mixed facts and the Whitman-Saved-Oregon legend. He emphasized that in 1842 Whitman visited Wallula, where Hudson's Bay Company members derided him by boasting that British leaders were currently in Washington, D.C., bargaining for the acquisition of the Oregon Country and that the missionary could not prevent a deal. While they talked, a Canadian express rider brought the exciting news that additional families were coming to Oregon so as to secure it for England. The catalog text continued:

Dr. Whitman saw, with a statesman's vision, that one of the fairest portions of the country was liable to be lost. His whole nature was aroused, and, mounting his horse, he rode home, twenty-six miles, in great haste. He told his friends of the taunting words of the enemy: "The Americans are too late, and Oregon is ours." . . . Whitman immediately made his daring ride to the nation's capital. He was partly frozen some of the time by his exposure, but on he went, heeding not the cold, or the still more dangerous red men, for the interests of coming generations were at stake. He reaches Washington, and sees Webster, then Secretary of State, and learns that he was thinking favorably of trading off the Northwest.²

For once a college catalog made thrilling reading.

The modern catalog's Whitman biography is much briefer and more subdued, with no

mention of the courageous winter ride. The missionaries' work is briefly summarized: "For eleven years the Whitmans operated a farm, grist mills, a school, and a church. Besides their religious and agricultural work with Indians, they provided important services to immigrants."³

Scholars have also expressed different conclusions about the missionary. In his sympathetic, comprehensive biography, Clifford Drury argues that Marcus and Narcissa have gained fame and that there are rightly more monuments and memorials to them than to any other American Protestant missionaries.⁴ Historian Robert Loewenberg has a different interpretation: "Because of the legend created in part by Gray, Spalding, and others, the collected materials about and by Whitman are relatively out of proportion to his importance."⁵ In the nineteenth century, Pacific Northwest settlers generally considered Whitman to be a significant, not a heroic, pioneer. Perhaps Jesse Applegate's evaluation was typical: "Dr. Whitman was an energetic, intelligent and useful man, and did well his part, but his part was not a high one. He was not one to become a leader of men or a mover in a great enterprise."⁶

Lewis A. McArthur's *Oregon Geographic Names* does not list a single entry under Whitman; in other words, he was not memorialized by grateful Oregonians for saving them from living under the Union Jack. In Washington, residents have named a hamlet, a county, and a college in memory of the missionary. These are all located east of the Cascades; Puget Sound residents have not renamed geographic places for Whitman but have been content to retain those honoring Englishmen who had no direct impact on the region's development. Indeed, late in the nineteenth century there was a futile effort to change the name of Mount Rainier to Mount Whitman because the

²Whitman College Catalogue, 1883, 21-23.

³The Catalog of Whitman College, 1986-87, 13.

⁴Clifford M. Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the Opening of Old Oregon*, 2 vols. (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1973), 2:339.

⁵Robert J. Loewenberg, "Marcus Whitman," in Howard R. Lamar, editor, *The Reader's Encyclopedia of the American West* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1977), 1263.

⁶Samuel A. Clarke Scrapbook 6B, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, 21.

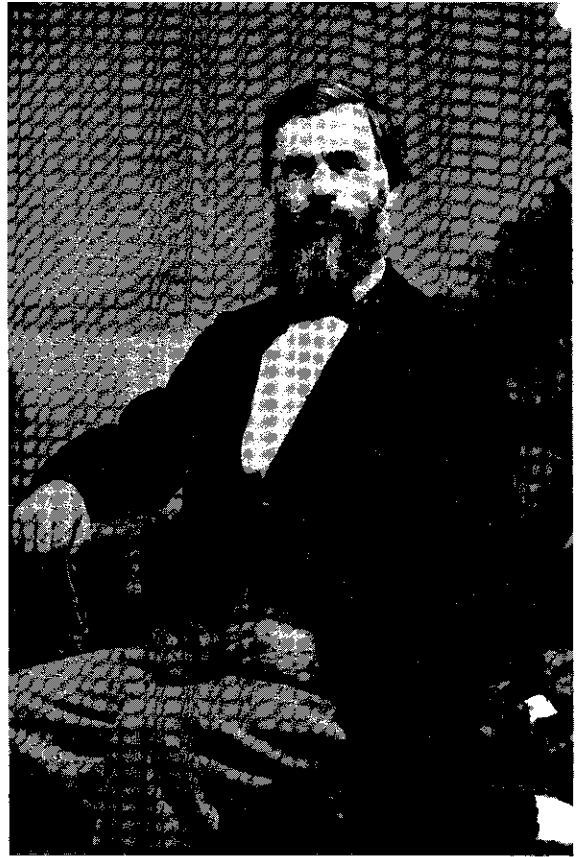
admiral, unlike the missionary, "had rendered no service to mankind."⁷

Perhaps ambivalence rather than hostility best explains why Whitman has not received additional honors, and why it was so difficult to raise funds for his two memorials, the granite shaft dedicated at Waiilatpu in 1897 and the statue dedicated in Statuary Hall of the United States Capitol in 1953. The Pacific Northwest has memorialized Lewis and Clark, Sacajawea, John C. Fremont; Oregonians have even honored the much more obscure John Day. In recent years, federal dams on the Columbia River have been named for John Day and for Senator Charles McNary; Whitman, better known than either, has not been similarly honored.

THOSE WHO FEEL ambivalent about Whitman may readily acknowledge many of his praiseworthy characteristics. He was courageous, especially in undertaking the ride east in the winter of 1842-43. He possessed "Christian fortitude." He worked hard with great energy—indeed, he became ill from his strenuous labors. He had a variety of talents—as farmer, mechanic, horseman, physician; in the 1840's travelers who visited Waiilatpu praised his buildings, mills, and fields. And he was a competent outdoorsman who could ride, use weapons, and guide a wagon train. He offered valuable assistance to exhausted and needy travelers, and—possessing the solid attributes of the rural doctor—he often dropped his mission work to travel great distances to families needing medical help. He was a patriot who spread word of Oregon's promise to his countrymen in the hope that it would become part of the United States. He was a firm believer in education, a devoted husband and father. Above all, he attempted to prepare the Indians with whom he worked for the inevitable intrusion of white settlement. As diverse a group as missionaries, mountain men, trail travelers, and children found much to admire in Whitman. Contemporary writers still emphasize these traits.

⁷Myron Eells Scrapbook, Northwest and Whitman College Archives, Penrose Memorial Library, Whitman College, Walla Walla, Washington, 45-48.

⁸Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman*, 1:265.



William Henry Gray. Photo courtesy Oregon Historical Society (ORHI 11955).

There is a negative side to Whitman's work as well. His missionary activity itself is objectionable to many students of Pacific Northwest history. Sea captains, explorers, mountain men, frontier women, miners, farmers, merchants, and cowboys are appealing and necessary western figures; missionaries and Indian agents, who insisted that Indians reject their culture for a "superior" one, are often denounced.

Even if one views missionary activity itself as positive, Whitman may seem ill suited to missionary endeavors, in part because he was a physician rather than a minister. Critics emphasize that he and Narcissa failed to understand the Cayuse and that their attempt to teach Calvinist doctrines in the Nez Perce language simply could not gratify either them or their students. As Whitman's sympathetic biographer Clifford Drury remarked, "their standards were too difficult."⁸ Whitman also

deserves some of the blame for the frequent and hurtful squabbles among American Board missionaries. And some argue that if he had been a more effective religious leader, the terrible massacre and the ruinous Cayuse War might have been avoided.

The bigotry of many nineteenth-century Christian missionaries is distasteful. The anti-Catholicism of Whitman and other Protestant missionaries as well as the intolerance of the Roman Catholic missionaries marred Oregon's early history. One scholar has aptly commented that the Indians were caught in "a propaganda war between two Christian faiths, each of which used its Indian charges as pawns in a continuing game of sectarian chess."⁹

Finally, after his return from the East, Whitman became less interested in Indians and more concerned about white immigrants. He wrote:

I am fully convinced that when a people refuse or neglect to fill the designs of Providence, they ought not to complain at the results. . . . The Indians have in no case obeyed the command to multiply and replenish the earth, and they cannot stand in the way of others in doing so.¹⁰

From his own time until our own, some have ignored Whitman's strength of character and contributions and have denounced him. This was especially obvious during the Vietnam War; for example, a park ranger at the Whitman Mission National Historic Site observed "a certain cynicism among some of our visitors, a feeling that the Whitmans were meddling where they did not belong and deserved their martyrs' fate."¹¹ In the same time period my late colleague Robert Whitner and I encountered students and colleagues who called the missionary an ethnocentric bigot. Returning from a field trip to the mission site in about 1969, a student, frustrated by the war, insisted that the "Whitmans deserved what they got because they had no business meddling with Indians." Other young women and men, reflecting anti-war sentiment, supported their classmate in what became a memorable discussion. Current students, who are probably more understanding of evangelism and of the Whitmans' conversion experiences, are rarely so critical. But they

also lack the enthusiasm for the missionary couple that earlier student generations expressed. Male Whitman athletes, for example, no longer call themselves the "Sons of Marcus," and periodically students attempt unsuccessfully to change the school's nickname from "Missionaries" to "Shockers" or some other more menacing name.

DURING THE PAST 150 years many who knew Whitman, or who have served the institution honoring him, have offered interpretations of his work. One of the first was Cushing Eells, who between 1838 and 1847 was a missionary associated with Whitman. A graduate of Williams College, Eells taught in Willamette Valley schools after the massacre and in 1850 returned to the Walla Walla Valley resolving to found a school in honor of Marcus Whitman. Eells insisted that a school was the best monument because his colleague had advocated education and talked about the need for an academy and a college in the land he served; furthermore, a school would be a living memorial. Eells purchased the 640-acre Whitman Mission site from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, won the support of Oregon's Congregationalist leaders for a school in the Walla Walla Valley, and obtained a nondenominational charter for Whitman Seminary from the territorial legislature.

Three of Whitman's co-workers—Eells, Elkanah Walker, and Henry Harmon Spalding—were trustees, but only Eells labored for the institution. Walker supported Pacific University; Spalding was much more interested in shaping minds through writings about Whitman than in honoring him with a school. In the 1860's, while Gray and Spalding penned their creative history, the Eells family diligently farmed the mission site, saving money for their proposed school. Nearby the town of Walla Walla emerged; in 1859 county commissioners had chosen that name rather than Wailatpu or Steptoeville. Why was there

⁹Christopher L. Miller, *Prophetic Worlds: Indians and Whites on the Columbia Plateau* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 93.

¹⁰Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman*, 2:109.

¹¹Walla Walla Union Bulletin, February 23, 1975.

little or no sentiment to name it after Marcus Whitman, the valley's most prominent resident?

In the early 1860's Walla Walla became a booming mining center. Saloons, boarding houses, and gambling dens contributed to its boisterous life. Meanwhile, trustees of Whitman Seminary argued over whether their proposed school should be located in such a society. Congregationalist minister Peasley Chamberlain led those trustees insisting that the seminary should be built in town and not on the mission site because potential students lived in Walla Walla and because the community badly needed Christian schooling. Eells protested the move, arguing that the seminary should operate on the historic grounds because faculty and students would be continually reminded of the martyred missionary. He

hoped that a moral and refined community—like Forest Grove, Oregon, the home of Pacific University—would grow up around the seminary.

Eells yielded, however. Banker Dorsey Baker offered Whitman a four-acre site at the town's edge, and the trustees quickly constructed a schoolhouse so that classes might be offered in 1866. In the call for financial support, they emphasized the pressing need for a local school, not the opportunity to erect a monument for Marcus Whitman. Thus from its earliest days trustees have emphasized the educational, not the emotional, side of the institution.

In 1866 Peasley Chamberlain, who became the school's first principal, called Whitman "The noble patriot, the devoted missionary, and the glorified martyr." Because the mission-

Memorial Hall on the Whitman College campus. Photo courtesy NWCA.



ary demonstrated "the element of true manhood, true patriotism, and true Christianity," the teacher urged students to study him and thereby be inspired by his example. Chamberlain then interpreted Spalding's recent writings—and thus became the first school leader to voice the Whitman myth.¹²

Whitman Seminary had a troubled history. Chamberlain resigned suddenly in 1867; Eells reluctantly became principal and served until 1869. He then bought the mission land he had earlier donated to the institution, giving the trustees enough money to pay debts. In 1872 the Eells family home burned and Myra Eells easily convinced her husband that they should leave. She had previously expressed her desire to return to Forest Grove by stating that she would, if necessary, travel the 300 miles "on hands and knees."¹³ Although Eells called the seminary "A Whitman Monument," he lost interest in it. Without leadership Whitman Seminary drifted; in fact, in the 1870's Episcopal schools dominated Walla Walla's education.

Perhaps the sickly institution would have expired had it not been for the Rev. George H. Atkinson, American Home Missionary Superintendent for Oregon and Washington. He wanted to establish Congregational churches and schools in eastern Washington and warned that Episcopalians and Methodists sought to acquire the Whitman seminary building, the best regional schoolhouse. A Whitman trustee, Atkinson argued that the seminary should be expanded into a Christian college. He did not stress the importance of memorializing Whitman; perhaps denominational rivalry in the Pacific Northwest made it a bit awkward for a Congregationalist to glorify a Presbyterian. Atkinson told Eells that the Whitman seminary had little future but that a Whitman College, the only college serving a vast region, had a promising one. Academies scattered about eastern Washington, eastern Oregon, and Idaho would be feeders for Whitman. The home missionary eventually convinced Alexander J. Anderson, who was then the respected but discontented president of the University of Washington, to become Whitman College's first president. Atkinson found

support in Walla Walla for a college and he convinced the American College and Education Society (ACES) in Boston to add Whitman to its list of colleges deserving financial help from eastern Congregationalists.

AS A RESULT of Atkinson's vision and leadership, Whitman College was founded in 1882 with three members of the Anderson family serving as the faculty. President Anderson immediately sought more regional support, emphasizing to Walla Wallans that the institution would aid them educationally and economically because a school would bring money to town. Like Atkinson and other trustees, Anderson made little mention of Marcus Whitman. ACES, however, immediately saw the value of stressing Whitman's career in seeking donations from New England Congregationalists. ACES emphasized that many frontier schools competed for funds from these congregations; by claiming a missionary martyr, Whitman College would enjoy a unique and notable advantage.

While the school's leaders probably had not concluded that the missionary's career might have such an eastern appeal, they quickly saw the opportunity and selected Cushing Eells as their fund-raiser. Although the frail 73-year-old founder had not been east in forty-five years, he accepted this great responsibility and for fourteen months campaigned successfully. He apparently stressed Whitman's character and missionary activity, including the role of his fellow missionaries, not Whitman's "ride that saved Oregon."

Two eastern historians, William Barrows and William Mowry, who believed in the Whitman legend, interviewed Eells. These authors and other easterners pushed the Whitman-Saved-Oregon account without any prompting from Anderson. The president, in fact, played no part as such writers as Myron Eells (Cushing's son) and William Gray advanced the myth in the *Oregonian* against the criticism of

¹²P. B. Chamberlain, "Address at the Opening of Whitman Seminary, October 13, 1866," typed copy, Northwest and Whitman College Archives.

¹³Stephen B. L. Penrose, *Whitman, an Unfinished Story* (Walla Walla, Washington: Whitman Publishing Co., 1935), 68.

historians Francis Fuller Victor and Elwood Evans. Those supporting the myth won the first round: in 1884 the influential *Encyclopedia Britannica* stated that Whitman "hastened to Washington to arouse Government officials to retain their hold of Oregon and care for it." In 1889 and in editions published as late as 1915 the widely used *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography* included the legend and judged that if it had not been for Whitman "the United States might have given up Oregon to England as comparatively worthless." A heroic Whitman had been established in print, and in the 1890's this characterization seemed more assured than the school named for him.

Anderson might have enthusiastically and frequently cited these esteemed eastern reference books as positive proof that Marcus Whitman was a national hero and that the college should be aided financially because it was a monument to him. Instead, the president—who had lived twenty years in the Pacific Northwest and was not thoroughly convinced of the veracity of the Spalding and Gray accounts—removed the lengthy account of the Whitman legend that had appeared in his first catalog and in 1887 simply wrote that Whitman was "A Christian martyr and patriot."¹⁴

Alexander Anderson resigned in 1891 and the Rev. James Eaton replaced him. With impressive credentials from Williams and Oberlin colleges, Eaton was an arrogant easterner who would soon be forced to quit the presidency. He immediately heard about the Whitman legend and repeated it to former students in Massachusetts. But Eaton refused to write effusively about the school's namesake. In seeking eastern funds he emphasized the need to bring quality education to western students rather than to memorial-

ize the Christian martyr. His catalog concluded that the school was "founded in memory of the great pioneer to whom we and the United States owe the possession of this land . . . and whose great services will be appreciated more and more as the years go by."¹⁵ Preferring to summarize what he knew to be historically true, Eaton stressed the Rev. Cushing Eells's solid character and \$10,000 in timely gifts. He and ACES both expressed surprise that Whitman College, named for one missionary and founded and aided by another, had done so poorly in regional fund-raising.

WHITMAN'S THIRD PRESIDENT, Stephen B. L. Penrose, was to be its most important educational leader. A graduate of Williams and the holder of a B.D. from Yale, Penrose served as president from 1894 to 1934. He turned a struggling college into a respectable New England-type institution. To secure it he promoted in 1895 the Whitman-Saved-Oregon story; as Robert Whitner concluded, "the Whitman myth saved the college."¹⁶ In the late 1890's the heroic Marcus Whitman made a tremendous difference in the college's history.

Penrose greatly admired the missionary's character; it seemed to him that accounts, especially by Myron Eells, about a courageous and patriotic Whitman simply must be true. Whitner emphasized "that all those who told the story believed it." As other scholars have stated: "Myth becomes reality precisely when man reacts as if the myth were true and bases his beliefs and conduct upon it";¹⁷ that analysis surely applies to Penrose. Skeptics have, however, accused him (and other college leaders) of repeating the account so as to attract donors—noting that Whitman harvested only a few souls for Christ but that the Whitman myth was used by Congregationalists to bring in several hundred thousand dollars to the college.

When Penrose became president in 1894, many Walla Wallans predicted that his school would soon collapse because of it many financial difficulties resulting from the current economic depression and from public-school competition. Many other private schools had closed their doors or were about to do so. The

¹⁴Whitman College Catalogue, 1887, 28.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 1893-94, 18. Eaton may have believed that westerners were more likely than their eastern counterparts to mix fact and myth, but actually easterners seemed more willing than westerners to believe wholeheartedly in a heroic Marcus Whitman.

¹⁶Robert L. Whitner, "The Myth that Saved the College," in *Two Essays on the History of Whitman College* (Walla Walla, Washington: Whitman College, 1983), 1-6.

¹⁷Nicholas Cords and Patrick Gerster, *Myth and the American Experience*, 2 vols. (New York: Glencoe Press, 1973), 1:x.



Stephen Penrose. Photo courtesy NWCA.

thirty-year-old president needed a compelling message, one that would make Whitman's cause stand out in the east where the school could be saved by donations. Obviously the best way, if not the only way, was to base his appeal for help on the life of Marcus Whitman. In his pamphlet, "The Romance of a College," Penrose credited Whitman with saving Oregon and with leading the 1843 immigration.¹⁸ He wrote that Whitman and Eells were "the incarnation of that spirit of Christian fortitude and of enlightened zeal which has animated the missions of the world." Penrose emphasized that there was great need for western education and that the college was "the true monument of a national hero."

To teach a wide audience about a little-understood period in the region's history, the president published missionary history in his *Whitman Quarterly*. Penrose courted allies, but some regional opinion-makers had already taken his side in the Whitman controversy. Editors in Walla Walla, Spokane, and Seattle and historians such as George Himes of the Oregon Historical Society defended Whitman against such detractors as the *Oregonian* and

prominent pioneers, including Jesse Applegate, James Nesmith, and Matthew Deady.

In the East ill-informed churchmen, historians, and others advanced the Whitman legend; generally they joined the Whitman advocates without Penrose's urging. Respected historians such as John Fiske and John Bach McMaster told the Whitman Myth, but after being rebuked by other scholars both changed their minds. William I. Marshall, a leading critic of the Whitman Myth, found twenty-eight errors in McMaster's short textbook account and wrote a 200-page critique.¹⁹ Chastened, McMaster in subsequent editions gave Whitman only a couple of lines. Most eastern-published public-school history books ignored Whitman; in fact, they provided such extensive detail about the East, including the American Revolution, that they had little space for far western subjects. But Mowry and Allen C. Thomas were two historians who sought to inspire young readers with the Whitman myth. Congregationalist writers, including Josiah Strong (the well-known author of *Our Country*) and Frank Gunsaulus, also endorsed it. Gunsaulus insisted that Whitman was more important to the Pacific Northwest than John Harvard had been to the Northeast and that the missionary ranked with such heroes as Washington and Lincoln. Supreme Court Justice David J. Brewer and Civil War General O. O. Howard publicly accepted the legend.

More important to Penrose's aim to publicize the missionary, an exciting popularization appeared in 1897 in the *Ladies Home Journal* entitled "When Dr. Whitman Added Three Stars to Our Flag."²⁰ Struggling to keep his college afloat in the stormy depression, Penrose in 1895 sought funds in Chicago and sought also to educate the public about his hero. He wrote: "I knew that ninety-nine out of every hundred never heard of Marcus Whit-

¹⁸Stephen Penrose, "Romance of a College" (1894), manuscript in Stephen B. L. Penrose Papers, Northwest and Whitman College Archives; pamphlet in Eells Scrapbook.

¹⁹Eric F. Goldman, *John Bach McMaster: American Historian* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1943), 91.

²⁰George C. Weed, "When Dr. Whitman Added Three Stars to Our Flag," *Ladies Home Journal* (November, 1897), 9-10.

man, nor knew that he was a great national hero, so I decided to conduct an educational campaign and teach a new chapter in American history, the founding of the Northwest."²¹ Because of the enthusiastic response he received in the press and in meetings, the educator boasted that "Chicago has never been as much interested in any cause outside of its own borders as it is now in the movement to make Whitman College the worthy memorial of a national hero."²² The most important pro-Whitman writer, Chicago journalist Oliver W. Nixon, published *How Marcus Whitman Saved Oregon* that same year. With no time for or interest in research, he rushed the book into print so that it might stimulate interest in the missionary and the college. Nixon urged donations to Whitman College so that it might become the Far West's Yale or Harvard.

Even more important to the school's critical fund-raising in the late 1890's were millionaire D. K. Pearsons of Chicago and teacher Virginia Dox of New York. The philanthropist, insisting that Whitman was the grandest figure of the nineteenth century, gave more than \$200,000 to the college so as to cover debts, build an endowment, and construct buildings—especially Memorial Hall. Inspired by Whitman's lofty career, Virginia Dox between 1896 and 1901 collected an astonishing \$100,000 in small donations. She delighted in telling Midwest and New England villagers about the deeds of the missionary martyr.

Perhaps Whitman College, basking in the glow of its namesake, was better known in the late 1890's than at any time since. A poll in 1899 indicated that Marcus Whitman ranked among the fifty greatest Americans.²³ Some scholars expressed surprise that he ranked so high, but Penrose grumbled that many who paid lip service to the missionary would not open their purses for the struggling college honoring him. Many Americans found Marcus

Whitman to be an appealing patriot. Then as now, Americans sought heroes; the reasons why he filled a need and why solid minds accepted a myth on slender evidence are intriguing subjects. Obviously the Whitman legend is grist for those scholars seeking to explain the role of western myths in the development of American nationalism.

EARLY IN THE twentieth century scholars, especially Yale historian Edward Bourne, demolished the Whitman legend; the missionary's fame plummeted. The college's national reputation also declined. Penrose, assisted by churchmen and other allies, fought detractors; in fact, the president's students sought to support his side by seeking evidence from old-timers who had immigrated with the famous 1843 wagon trains. Long after Bourne's critical study, scholars still can dispute some of his findings; others continue to advance all or parts of the myth.²⁴ Perhaps President Warren Harding's version, delivered in 1923 at Meacham, Oregon, was one of the most incredible.²⁵ He revealed that when he entered a certain White House room he visualized a dramatic meeting of President Tyler, Secretary Webster, and Whitman. Harding could even quote their dialogue; for example, the missionary bluntly told Webster, "you would better give all New England for the cod and mackerel fisheries of Newfoundland than to barter away Oregon." Some thirty years later, when I was attending Willamette University, my Oregon history professor noted that Whitman alumnus and Supreme Court justice William O. Douglas would dedicate the Whitman statue in the nation's capital and then deliver a rousing lecture against the Whitman-Saved-Oregon legend. The teacher, like some other Methodists, blamed the myth on Whitman College.

The college's two most important presidents since Penrose—Chester Maxey and Robert Skotheim—have treated Marcus Whitman differently; neither, however, would repeat Penrose's 1935 conclusion that the Whitmans "died as soldiers of Christ at their post of duty, heroic to the end."²⁶ Maxey, a political scientist, gave a speech on "Marcus Whit-

²¹Walla Walla Union, May 26, 1895.

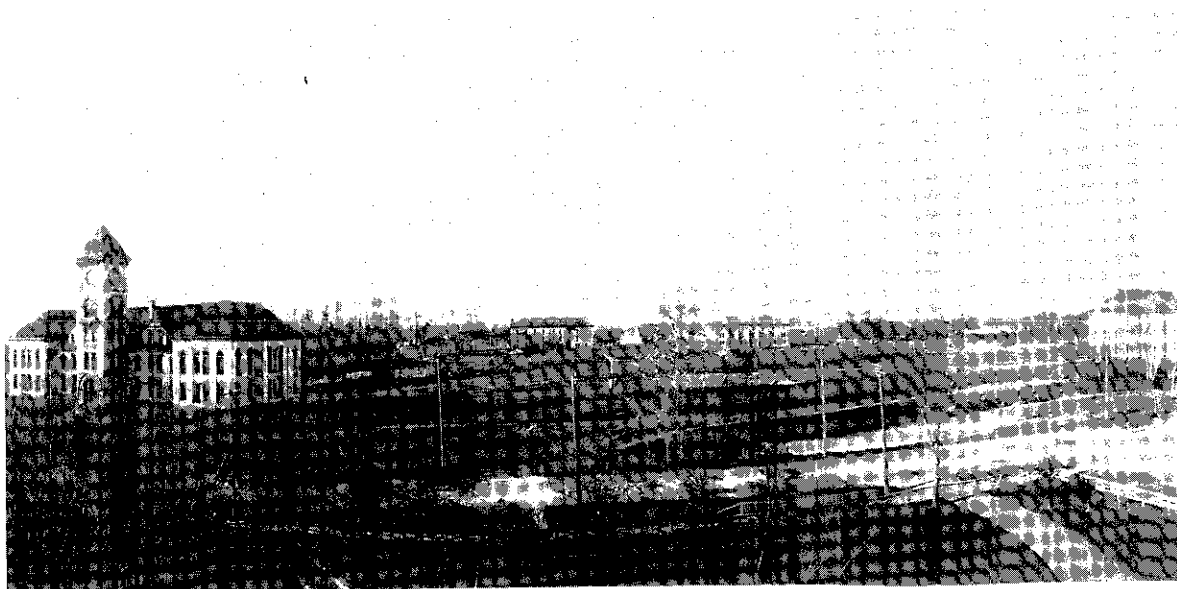
²²Ibid., March 5, 1895.

²³Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman*, 2:385.

²⁴Miller, *Prophetic Worlds*, 142-143.

²⁵Warren G. Harding, *Address of the President of the United States on the Oregon Trail at Meacham, Oregon, July 3, 1923* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1923), 1-5.

²⁶Penrose, *Whitman*, 24.



The Whitman campus in about 1907. From Memorial Hall: Reynolds Hall (girls' dorm), the gym, Billings Hall (boys' dorm). Photo courtesy NWCA.

man—His Courage, His Deeds, and His College” in 1950. In it, he disagreed with Penrose—his former professor—by asserting that Whitman was “born to be a great commander, but was not born to be a missionary to the Indians or the happy associate of other missionaries.” Maxey portrayed the Whitmans as an unusual and interesting couple:

They had qualities that set them apart—not alone qualities of religious fervor, but qualities of human strength and frailty, of human wisdom and folly, of human greatness and pettiness, of human charm and repulsion, of human genius and ineptitude.

Unlike Cushing Eells or Stephen Penrose, Maxey, reflecting majority opinion, saw both sides of the Whitmans. The president put his predecessors into historical context: “Cushing Eells had dreamed of a living memorial for the Whitmans at Waiilatpu; Stephen B. L. Penrose created a Whitman Memorial transcending time and place, a memorial which lives, as Marcus and Narcissa lived, in total dedication to the service of Mankind.”²⁷

Maxey’s analytical 1950 address was unlike his catalogs; for example, the 1958 edition simply concluded: “In the fall of 1842 Dr. Whitman rode across the continent and laid important facts concerning the value of the Oregon Territory before the Government.”²⁸ Like Penrose, Maxey believed that Whitman

had suffered “a martyr’s death” and, using Penrose’s 1905 evaluation, insisted that he was entitled “to a high place among national heroes.” The president also credited Marcus and Narcissa for a “gallant attempt . . . to bring the Christian religion to the western wilderness.”

Louis Perry, an economist and an active Congregationalist, succeeded Maxey and continued to reprint the latter’s interpretation of the missionaries in the college catalog. Then in 1966 Perry stripped away Maxey’s sympathetic sentences and presented a terse biography of the Whitmans, eliminating any vestige of the Whitman legend. This significant change, somewhat similar to President Anderson’s switch in the 1880’s, disappointed the missionary’s admirers.

Catalog interpretations of the missionary period thereafter centered on the Cayuse rather than the Whitmans. Perry’s 1966 catalog, reflecting recent scholarship, now blamed the massacre not on the entire Cayuse tribe but upon “discontented extremists.”²⁹ The next president, Donald Sheehan, who

²⁷Chester Collins Maxey, *Marcus Whitman, 1802-1847: His Courage, His Deeds, and His College* (New York: The Newcomen Society in North America, 1950), 17.

²⁸*Whitman College Catalog*, 1958-1959, 3-4.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 1966-1967, 1967-1968, 2.

served during the difficult period from 1968 to 1974, made two other modifications. An eastern historian with a Ph.D. from Columbia, he acknowledged the growing scholarly and public sympathy for Indians. According to the 1971 catalog, those responsible for the massacre were no longer identified as Cayuse but simply as Indians. Sheehan, disagreeing with many presidential predecessors, did not consider Marcus Whitman to be a martyr. In 1971 this view, which pleased those who sympathized with the Cayuse view of the missionaries, led to fresh catalog-writing. The old version read that Eells "resolved to establish a school to honor the name and to commemorate the hopes and deeds of his martyred colleague."³⁰ Sheehan's administration deleted the word "martyred"; some still quarrel with this revision, for obviously Eells considered Whitman to be a martyr. In any event, for the past fifteen years the catalog's interpretation of Whitman has received only slight modification.

The current president, Robert Skotheim, during the mid-1980's has successfully used Whitman College's long history as a backdrop for lectures delivered during a major financial campaign. An intellectual historian sensitive to popular sentiment, Skotheim is much more comfortable talking about the long and beneficial Penrose administration than about the contributions of the Whitmans; in fact, by paying scant attention to them and by stressing the school's builders, Skotheim in the 1980's took about the same position that Anderson had maintained in the 1880's. The first college president hailed Eells; the current one honors Penrose. One might somewhat cynically argue that Anderson's and Skotheim's reserved views of the missionary can be attributed to the fact that they both came to Whitman from the University of Washington. More likely, however, these two presidents were taking a position typical of college administrators: they emphasized institution-builders.

John Harvard, Elihu Yale and Ephraim Williams—three names important to Penrose—have been praised because all gave money or property for schools that were named for them. Marcus Whitman, however, donated no money, land, or books. His career was his legacy. Unlike these others, he became the subject of a continuing and often bitter historical controversy. Whitman was the only one whose character prompted admirers to name, build, and save a college. In fact, Whitman College is one of the few Pacific Northwest colleges dating from the mid-1800's that was originally named for an individual. The Oregon Methodists wisely chose to name their university after a vital river, not the controversial Rev. Jason Lee, who was recalled from his missionary labors. Congregationalists in Forest Grove topped the Methodists, calling their university Pacific, for an even greater body of water. Baptists and Presbyterians adopted much more modest names, taking those of farm centers, and used the more appropriate term "college," not "university," in establishing McMinnville College (now Linfield) and Albany College (now Lewis and Clark).

It is not clear what future Whitman leaders will write about their controversial namesake, but they can select from several historical versions offered by their predecessors since 1859. Presidents, trustees, deans, and professors who may want to portray the Whitmans in a favorable light—argued by Founder Eells and President Penrose and acknowledged by Overseer Nard Jones—can consult some recent interpretations. The 1984 *Colliers Encyclopedia*, sounding much like the Rev. Henry Spalding in the 1860's, states that Whitman went east in 1842 "to urge the U.S. government to take a strong stand against British ambitions in the Oregon Territory, and to Boston to recruit new settlers." In 1986 *American Heritage* reasserted an old argument long rejected or ignored by Whitman leaders: "innocent of offense, the Whitmans were massacred by the Indians they had come to serve."³¹ Once again a case is being made for the missionary without any assistance from a Whitman president. ■

³⁰*Ibid.*, 1971-1972, 16-18.

³¹*Colliers Encyclopedia*, 1987, "Marcus Whitman"; "Time Machine: 1836: One Hundred and Fifty Years Ago," *American Heritage* (August-September, 1986), 37:108.

THE OREGON MISSION AND THE ABCFM

by Jonathan H. Webster

Not all the problems of Protestant missionaries in the Pacific Northwest stemmed from their neighbors. It often seemed as if their sponsors simply did not understand the circumstances of the region. The author teaches history at Walla Walla Community College; his article was not a part of the conference but was delivered earlier in the sesquicentennial observance.

THE WHITMAN MISSION began one hundred fifty years ago as the offspring of a new age of American Christian evangelism.¹ It was that religious fervor, more than the irresistible westward surge of American nationalism or the wanderlust of youthful pioneer spirits, which brought Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and their colleagues Henry and Eliza Spalding, along with pioneer missionaries of the Methodist and Catholic churches, into the Pacific Northwest. They came to convert Indians to Christianity, the delegates of a missionary nation sent forth to save heathen souls. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, a joint Congregational-Presbyterian agency, in 1836 sent Whitman and Spalding with their wives to establish an outpost of New England's Protestant church in the wilderness of Oregon.

The history of the American Board mission to Oregon is a central part of the story of this nation's origins in the Pacific Northwest. Its missionaries helped introduce American cultural influence in the region and inaugurate the era of American conquest of the Northwest. The success of the mission in those regards should not, however, distract attention from the troubled and conflict-laden history of that evangelical effort.

Two conflicts faced by the Whitmans are well known. Their controversy with the native Cayuse resulting in the terrible massacre of 1847 is familiar to all students of Northwest history. And the dissension among the Oregon missionaries—between Whitman and Spalding, between them and the missionaries who were sent later to join their work, and between the Protestant and Catholic missionaries—is often recounted. But a third conflict swirled around the Oregon missions that is much less

known: the disagreement that existed for years between the Whitmans and Spaldings and their employers on the American Board. Although historians have paid much less attention to that conflict than to other aspects of the Whitmans' struggle, it often must have seemed to the missionaries the most important of the controversies affecting their success.

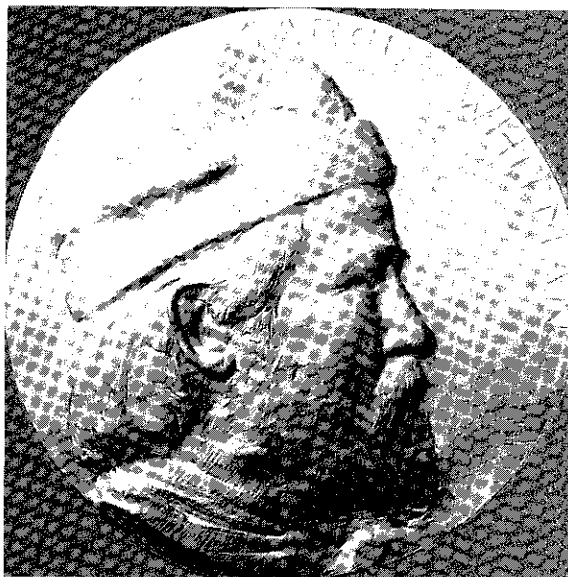
The relationship between the American Board and its workers in the Northwest was marked by prolonged disagreement over both the means and the purpose of the evangelical venture into remote Indian country. When the Whitmans and the Spaldings were recruited for the Northwest they were in agreement with the American Board on the primary goal of converting western Indians to Christianity; but when they arrived in the Oregon Country and confronted the realities of their mission, their position began to change. The ideals of Boston did not often fit the actuality of Wailatpu and Lapwai. Controversy between the missionaries and the Board's directors arose over the amount of non-religious work carried on at the missions, yet that work was necessary to sustain frontier life. The expenses of the Oregon Mission were a subject of repeated dispute, even though the missionaries argued that high cost was inevitable in getting basic supplies to the wilderness. Since they were not paid salaries, these supplies were their only expense to the American Board. The Whitman-Spalding strategy of preaching agriculture first and the gospel second also brought criticism from the Board, despite the fact that the strategy was imple-

¹A version of this paper was presented in the Clifford M. Drury Memorial Lecture Series, Walla Walla, July 11, 1986. The author is grateful for the sponsorship of the Whitman Sesquicentennial Committee and the support of the Washington Commission for the Humanities.

mented to meet the great challenge of bringing Christian instruction to a nomadic people. The very limited evangelical success of the work among the Northwest Indians was a further source of disappointment for the Board, as was the unconcealed strife among its Oregon missionaries after 1838.

These points of disagreement and displeasure provoked an order to close the Whitman and Spalding mission stations in 1842 and impelled Marcus Whitman's historic return east during that winter. In the wake of those controversies, yet another point of dispute would emerge, an even more momentous disagreement over the influence of the American frontier. Should American emigration be welcomed and white settlement encouraged in the Pacific Northwest? On this issue, the idealistic arguments and historic insight of the Board directors in Boston could not deter Whitman from the actions that would seal his greater fame and tragic fate.

THE AMERICAN BOARD of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) was the first organizing force behind Protestant America's early-nineteenth-century effort to carry Christianity to the "pagan" world.² Born in the heart of the New England Congregational and Presbyterian churches, the American Board expressed the missionary fervor of a religious age that produced what historian Martin Marty has called "a Soul Rush that outpaced the Gold Rush."³ Although the first efforts of the ABCFM were directed overseas, to India, the Board's interests from the beginning looked to the conversion of the Indians of North America living outside the then United States. (Indian evangelism within the states was the province of assorted "home mission" organizations.) Early ABCFM mission enterprises to the Cherokees and Choctaws were followed by efforts to convert the tribes



Marcus Whitman medallion. Photo courtesy Oregon Historical Society (ORHI 1504).

along the advancing western frontier, notably the Sioux, Osage, and Chippewa. The mixed success of these missions prompted the wish to reach beyond the frontier into the virgin territory of the Far West, there to minister to the native tribes before the corrupting influences of white settlement complicated the task of saving Indian souls.

When sensational news stories in 1832 reported that Indians from the remote Northwest, generally identified as "flatheads," had walked to St. Louis to ask that the white man's religion be taught in their country, the American Board (along with the Methodist Mission Board) began a search for volunteers. In 1835 in upstate New York an ABCFM agent recruited Dr. Marcus Whitman, Narcissa Prentiss Whitman, the Rev. Henry Spalding, and Eliza Hart Spalding to begin the Board's work in the Pacific Northwest. Even though Whitman, a physician, was best prepared to minister to the medical needs of the Indians, the primary purpose of his going to Oregon was to deliver the gospel message and thus convert the natives to Christianity. The Board's Secretary for Indian Affairs, the Rev. David Greene, instructed the missionaries as they departed for their pioneer trek across the Rockies:

²See Clifton Jackson Phillips, *Protestant America and the Pagan World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969), William Ellsworth Strong, *The Story of the American Board* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1910), and George M. Madsen, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1970).

³Martin E. Marty, *Pilgrims In Their Own Land* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1984), 169.

Let your single aim be seen to be the benefit of the Indians, especially the introduction of Christian knowledge among them and the salvation of their souls. Avoid all secular and political interference with any class of men. . . . Let all your worldly and secular concerns be as limited and compact as your circumstances will permit. . . . Live near to God. Labor for Him, rely on His grace and spirit, and may His promises all be made good to you; and your mission be as life from the dead to the benighted tribes of the remote west.⁴

This charge would provide the Whitmans and the Spaldings with a high calling and a noble ideal for their evangelical work, but also with a nearly impossible challenge to keep their secular activities in balance with their religious work. At their wilderness mission stations the missionaries would have to exhaust themselves in a year-round effort to build a home and farm for themselves and their dependents. Little enough time was available for teaching and preaching.

By every account Whitman excelled at his secular occupations, turning Waiilatpu into what one observer described as "a plantation on the face of that distant wilderness." But here were the seeds of one fundamental dispute between Waiilatpu and Boston, a dispute forced by the basic contradiction in the Board's position. With one voice the ABCFM office called for economy, self-sufficiency, and abjurement of trade and commerce; with another, it called for more concentration upon the fundamental religious purposes of the mission. The contradictory expectations of the American Board put the Whitmans and their associates in a position where it was difficult to satisfy their superiors in Boston. Nevertheless, they strove to fulfill their religious calling to convert the Indians to Christianity.

Their evangelical efforts met with very limited success. In the eleven years of the Oregon Mission, between 1836 and 1847, twenty-one Indians (six adults and fifteen children) were baptized into the Presbyterian church there. Of that number, only one, a leader named Five Crows, was a Cayuse from the Whitmans' Waiilatpu station. The rest were Nez Perce, including the chief Old Joseph, converted at the Spalding's Lapwai station.⁵

The number of baptisms and new memberships in the church is not necessarily a good indication of the number of persons influenced by the faith of the missionaries. Spalding and Whitman held to a very restrictive theology of baptism. Unlike Catholic missionaries in the Northwest, who were at the time reporting impressively large numbers of baptisms on the basis of a simple statement of faith, the Presbyterian missionaries held out baptism rather as a diploma, given after evidence of a good understanding of doctrine and evidence of a real change of heart. Instruction in the faith was the necessary prelude to baptism; the whole laborious educational process of learning the language and giving religious instruction to the Indians had to come first.

Yet the poor showing in evangelizing the Oregon Indians could not easily be explained to the Mission Board. In fact, the Indians, after the early enthusiasm they showed for the Christian message, turned their backs on the evangelists. Certainly in this the Whitmans had misunderstood the Indians' alleged interest in the white man's "Book of Heaven" and their invitation to the missionaries to come among them with their message.⁶ The desire for the gospel message did not reflect, in the main, any general spiritual urge or longing for salvation, as the Whitmans supposed. The Indians sought a religious magic that seemed the secret of the white man's material success. When the Cayuse found that the two were not so directly related and that the missionaries were even opposed to trade in the white man's goods, they lost interest in the missionaries' message.

Furthermore, the uncompromising Calvinism in Whitman's message alienated his Indian

⁴David Greene to Marcus Whitman, March 4, 1836, in Archer Butler Hulbert and Dorothy P. Hulbert, editors, "Marcus Whitman, Crusader," Vols. VI through VIII of *Overland to the Pacific*, 8 vols. (Denver: The Stewart Commission of Colorado College, 1932-1941), 6:196. The complete correspondence between Whitman and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions is published in Hulbert, as is extensive additional correspondence of both Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. A full index of the Whitman letters is contained in Clifford M. Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the Opening of Old Oregon*, 2 vols. (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1973), 2: appendix 1.

⁵Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman*, 1:367, 2:108.

⁶Chester Collins Maxey, *Marcus Whitman, 1802-1847: His Courage, His Deeds, and His College* (New York: The Newcomen Society in North America, 1950), 19.

audience. In a letter home in 1840, Narcissa described the unhappiness of the Cayuse:

Husband tells them that none of them are Christians, that they are all on the broad road to destruction, and that worship will not save them. . . . They try to persuade him not to talk such bad talk to them, as they say, talk good talk, or tell some story. . . . Some threaten to whip him and to destroy our crops, and for a long time their cattle were turned into our potato field every night to see if they could not compel him to change his course of instruction to them.⁷

Perhaps Whitman's failure as an evangelist, despite his efforts, was in some part a product of his dislike for that role. In 1840, when the future of the mission was in question, he wrote the American Board that if they closed the Wailatpu mission, "you will be at liberty to send me to any field where I may be needed as a physician but not as here to fill the place of a minister, a thing I have [tried] in vain to avoid."⁸

A MORE OBVIOUS impediment to the success of the missionaries was the nomadic lifestyle of the Indians. The Cayuse ranged in season from the Columbia River fishing grounds, to Montana for the buffalo hunt, to the Oregon and Washington mountains for digging camas roots. How could the missionaries hope to follow this life-on-the-move and thus reach the Indians for a long enough period to educate and convert them? Whitman and Spalding believed that agriculture was the answer, so farming became a means to their religious objectives. Whitman wanted to teach farming to the Indians in order to transform their lives. Agriculture would give them a reliable basis for survival, ending the cycle of famine that had so weakened the tribe. Moreover, both Whitman and Spalding believed that the acquisition of agriculture was the vital first step in encouraging the Nez Perce and Cayuse to settle down, end their nomadic existence, and thus be more available for the influence of

school and church. Whitman explained this in a letter to the Boston office in 1838:

This field is emphatically white [sic] for the harvest. . . . Although we bring the gospel as the first object, we cannot gain an assurance unless they are attracted and retained by the plough and hoe, and in this way even before the language is acquired, you may have the people drawn around you and ready to hear your every instruction. And why should this not be our method of proceeding? Is it not what Paul meant when he said "I become all things unto all men"?⁹

Asking for more agricultural equipment from the mission board, Whitman wrote:

If the Board cannot approve of such an expense, I do not see how they can afford to proceed without it, for it seems evident that without them we shall not see the Indians at our station for any considerable time. On the contrary, if we had them it would not be long before we should see them located around us with houses, fields, gardens, hogs and cows and their children enjoying the benefit of constant instruction.¹⁰

Such requests for equipment and supplies were matched in the early years of the mission by requests for workers to help harvest the fields of heathen souls. One assistant, William Gray, had joined them belatedly on the historic journey to Oregon in 1836. Gray returned to Boston in 1837 with a request for more assistance to the Oregon Mission; the American Board responded by recruiting seven more workers for the Northwest, three Congregational clergymen and their wives (Elkanah and Mary Walker, Cushing and Myra Eells, and Asa B. and Sarah Smith) and another laborer. This reinforcement arrived in 1838, thereafter assisted at both the Wailatpu and the Lapwai station, and enabled the founding of a new station ministering to the Flathead Indians at Tshimakain.

Discord among the missionary couples, variously produced by Henry Spalding's authoritarian personality, conflicting evangelical ambitions, and the close, primitive living conditions at the stations, led the mission workers to prefer separate, albeit more lonely and laborious, existences. Thus the 1838 reinforcements tended to multiply and diffuse the missionary work rather than ease the chores for the Whitmans and Spaldings. From time to

⁷Narcissa to her father, Stephen Prentiss, October 10, 1840, in *Transactions of the Twenty-first Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1893* (Portland, 1894), 128. Most of the extant correspondence of Narcissa Whitman is published in the *Transactions* for the years 1891 and 1893.

⁸Whitman to Greene, October 29, 1840, Hulbert, "Marcus Whitman," 7:195.

⁹Whitman to Greene, May 8, 1838, *ibid.*, 6:311.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

time the Oregon missions also gained assistance from Hawaiian laborers sent from the Sandwich Island Mission. Two such laborers helped Marcus Whitman with his first building and farming chores between 1836 and 1838.

The need for more assistance seemed constant, however, and Whitman and Spalding believed, as they complained to the ABCFM, that they would have to be given massive aid if the Oregon Mission were to succeed. They wrote to Boston in April, 1838, asking the Board to promptly dispatch thirty ordained missionaries, thirty farmers, thirty school teachers, ten physicians, and ten mechanics—all with wives—to help. Emphasizing their need to promote agriculture as well as the gospel, Spalding and Whitman also presented a long list of needed supplies, including 100 ploughs and 600 hoes as well as iron works and milling machinery.¹¹

THIS EXORBITANT REQUEST to Boston was prompted in no small part by news of Methodist plans for expansion in Oregon. The Rev. Jason Lee and five others had founded a Methodist mission enterprise in the Willamette Valley the year before the Whitmans and Spaldings came to Oregon. In 1838 Lee stopped for a visit at Waiilatpu while returning to New York with an appeal to his mission board for scores of new workers and a plea for American political dominion over Oregon. Inspired by Lee's vision of rapidly expanding religious challenges in the Northwest, the prospects of future American dominion, and an urge to keep up with the Methodists, Spalding (with Whitman's agreement) wrote the request for the American Board's Oregon Mission for vast manpower and material assistance. Lee carried this appeal east.¹² The cost of the assistance they were requesting was not calculated, but Spalding challenged the mission board simply to broadcast its need. "You have only to make the request known, and the men and money are at your command at once."¹³

Such appeals for additional financial support were always a cause of controversy. The ABCFM did not have a predictable income; its

financial resources were based wholly upon voluntary contributions annually solicited by the Board's agents from thousands of eastern congregations. Its annual income often showed wild swings, depending upon economic conditions and the effectiveness of its fund-raising, and its ambitious programs of support to over 400 missionaries by 1840 almost always strained its income beyond its limits. The debt of the American Board of over \$40,000 in 1837 represented over ten times the total costs for the first two years of the Oregon missions. The ABCFM's persistent poverty was a major factor in all of its decisions affecting Oregon.¹⁴

Often the Board wrote to Spalding or Whitman cautioning them to cut costs, noting, as one communique put it: "We are much embarrassed for want of funds, and the expenses of your missions are very great."¹⁵ In July of 1837, Greene warned:

You must permit me here to say that the expenses of your mission hitherto have much exceeded our anticipations, and we cannot but fear that you have not in all cases reflected with what difficulty money is obtained by the Board for its several missions, or how urgent are the claims of other fields. My opinion is that your mission must be sustained hereafter at a less comparative expense than it has been hitherto, or the committee will feel obliged to discontinue it. If the Indians of this continent are all of them ever to receive the gospel, it must be by small economical missions.¹⁶

In many ways the disputes over financial support to the Oregon Mission reflected the deeper dispute between the Board and the missionaries over evangelical strategy. Where Whitman and Spalding sought to establish a broad mission complex based on agricultural instruction, a mission that as Spalding said "points with one hand to the Lamb of God . . . and with the other to the hoe,"¹⁷ the

¹¹Spalding and Whitman to Greene, April 21, 1838, Hulbert, "Marcus Whitman," 6:306.

¹²Nard Jones, *Marcus Whitman: The Great Command: The Story of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the Oregon Country Pioneers* (Portland, Oregon: Binfords & Mort, 1959), 165-171.

¹³Spalding and Whitman to Greene, April 21, 1838.

¹⁴The financial reports of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions are available in Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman*, 2: appendix 2. See also Hulbert, "Marcus Whitman," 6:20-27.

¹⁵Greene to Whitman and Spalding, January 7, 1837, Hulbert, "Marcus Whitman," 6:261.

¹⁶Greene to Spalding et al., July 6, 1837, *ibid.*, 6:285.

¹⁷Spalding and Whitman to Greene, April 21, 1838.

Board preferred a simple emphasis on evangelism—mission that pointed only to the Lamb of God. As a consequence of this difference in philosophy, the Boston office was increasingly irritable about the requests from the Oregon Mission for financial support for its extensive agricultural operation.

Greene expressed the Board's economic and philosophical objections in response to Whitman's April, 1838, request for massive aid:

Of reinforcements, I would say that your expectations are too high for the means of the Board or for the spirit of the Christian community, or, as it seems to me, for the good of the cause of Christ in your region.

In the first place, he noted, "if the Board should attempt all that you request, it would be equivalent to about doubling the present number of laborers under its patronage, and of course, doubling the expenditures." In the second place, that commitment to agricultural development and other secular activities would be a distraction from the true spiritual purpose of the mission:

To one who witnesses the deplorable condition of the Indians, their miseries, their rapid progress to the grave, and their unfitness for heaven, any delay to make immediate proclamation of the gospel to them all seems criminal and inhuman.

Moreover, Greene counseled, experience in other missions had taught that the less the missionaries did for the Indians in meeting their physical needs, the better:

To a certain extent they need assistance before the spirit of industry and enterprise and self-dependence can be awakened in them and lead them on to provide for themselves; but go one step too far in taking care for them, and you begin to undo what you were aiming to do; they grow inefficient, look to your skill and your abundance for all, and soon become soured if you will not do all.¹⁸

THE FINAL FACTOR in the American Board's loss of confidence in its Oregon project was the strife among the mission staff. Whitman and Spalding had never had cordial relations from the time of their westward trip. Only separation of their chores and their stations

made their affiliation workable. Whitman and Spalding had managed to keep their personal differences from crippling the mission endeavor, but the introduction of the new workers in 1838 threw the Oregon mission field into disarray. Poorly prepared for the nature of their work among the Indians, some of the newcomers fell to bickering about assignments and attacking the methods and the authority of the more experienced missionaries. Henry Spalding was the subject of numerous criticisms addressed to the Boston office by William Gray and Asa Smith during 1840 and 1841.

Appalled by the discord among its missionary agents in Oregon and displeased by the expense of their mission (at the end of the previous fiscal year the Board's debt had reached a record high of nearly \$58,000, forcing a cut of forty-seven mission positions worldwide), the American Board decided in February of 1842 to reduce drastically its work in the Northwest. The agricultural preoccupations and limited spiritual success of the Oregon Mission must also have been considerations in the decision. The order was sent out to close both Waiilatpu and Lapwai. Spalding, Gray, and Smith were to be recalled; Whitman was to be reassigned to the station at Tshimakain. Greene wrote the Oregon missionaries:

It is a cause of much grief and disappointment [to the Board], as you may well suppose, that a mission which seemed to promise so great and speedy results, as did yours four years ago, should so soon be brought to such a close. . . . The Christian community, when the catastrophe [sic] becomes known, will also be grieved and disappointed. And we fear that in the eyes of many . . . the missionary work will be dishonored and prejudiced.¹⁹

This communication was delivered to Waiilatpu by Elijah White, who was traveling through to the Willamette Valley to take his position as the U.S. government's first Indian agent in Oregon, seven months after it was written. In the meantime many elements of the strife in the American Board's Oregon missions had been overcome. Whitman and Spalding had met and resolved their differences in what proved to be a permanent reconciliation. The discontented new associates, the Smiths and

¹⁸Greene to Whitman, March 21, 1839, Hulbert, "Marcus Whitman," 7:136-137.

¹⁹Greene to Oregon Mission personnel, February 25, 1842, *ibid.*, 7:257.



Henry Harmon Spalding. ISHS 42.

the Grays, had already decided to move to the Willamette Valley or leave Oregon. Therefore Whitman and Spalding were determined to persuade the American Board to change its order. And so Marcus Whitman made his epic journey east to Boston through the winter of 1842-43 seeking to convince the ABCFM that conditions had changed and that the Wailatpu and Lapwai missions should be maintained.

Whitman had a second purpose to his trip: to help lead American settlers back to Oregon. He and his colleagues had come to hope that an immigration of godly settlers would provide the best solution to the problems that had limited their effectiveness. New settlers farming the land near the missions would relieve the missionaries of some of the burden of their non-religious chores, making available a supply of food and providing the services that would allow the missionary families to concentrate more on their religious vocation. Moreover it was hoped that Christian settlers would provide a good influence on the Cayuse, showing them how to live sober, hard-working, God-fearing lives.

Protestant emigrants were also wanted to help secure Oregon against the advance of

Roman Catholicism. The surge of Protestant revivalism that gave birth to the American Board and was the setting for the life and work of the Whitmans produced on its dark side an extreme prejudice against Catholicism. The Whitmans and their colleagues all showed an intense hostility toward Catholicism, even though they knew little of it. On their trip west in 1836 the pioneer missionaries had an introduction to Catholicism at the new cathedral in St. Louis, of which Eliza Spalding wrote in her diary: "the unpleasant sensations we experienced on witnessing their heartless forms and ceremonies induced us soon to leave, rejoicing that we had never been left to embrace such delusions."²⁰

The extension of Catholic mission activity into the Oregon Country after 1838 filled the missionaries with apprehension and loathing. Narcissa wrote home in 1842: "Romanism stalks abroad on our right hand and on our left, and with daring affrontery boasts that she is to possess the land. I ask, must it be so?"²¹ The Catholic work that they feared was greatly accelerated after 1840 by the energetic activity in the Columbia Basin of Father Peter John DeSmet, the pioneer Jesuit missionary. After reading the Catholic ambitions in DeSmet's *Letters and Sketches*, Whitman warned the American Board:

I think after a careful consideration of this book . . . you will realize our feeling that we must look with much interest upon this the only spot on the Pacific coast left where Protestants have a present hope of a foothold. It is requisite that more good, pious men and Ministers go to Oregon without delay as citizens or our hope there is greatly clouded if not destroyed.²²

Letters written from Marcus to his mother and other New York State friends reflect his displeasure that the Board was not doing more to counteract the Catholic threat.²³

²⁰Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman*, 1:187. See also Hulbert, "Marcus Whitman," 7:74-84, for other examples.

²¹Narcissa Whitman to the Rev. and Mrs. A. S. Allen, August 23, 1842, *Transactions*, 1893, 162.

²²Whitman to Greene, May 12, 1843, Hulbert, "Marcus Whitman," 7:303. There is considerable irony in the fact that after their murders the Whitmans were given a Christian burial by a Catholic priest who was the first clergyman on the scene.

²³Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman*, 2:70-71.

Catholicism in the Northwest seemed to be allied with the political interests of the Hudson's Bay Company and Great Britain, so the anti-Catholicism of the Protestant missionaries was also a form of American nationalism. In 1842 Great Britain and the United States still had not resolved their twenty-five-year-old dispute over control of the Northwest. In the Whitmans' view the choice lay between a Protestant victory and a Catholic, British-Canadian future for Oregon.

In the autumn of 1843, Whitman wrote the American Board:

There can be no doubt but settlers will soon settle in this upper country and what we very much want is good men to settle 2, 3, or 4 in a place and secure a good location and hold a good influence over the Indians, and sustain religious institutions as a nucleus for society and keep back papacy; . . . I do not regret having visited the states for I feel that this country must either be American or else foreign and mostly papal. If I never do more than to have been one of the first to take white women across the mountain and prevent the disaster and reaction which would have occurred by the breaking up of the present emigration & establishing the first wagon road across to the border of the Columbia River, I am satisfied. I cannot feel that we can look on and see papal and foreign influence making its great effort, & we hold ourselves as expatriated and neutral.²⁴

ONE OF THE most remarkable aspects of the missionaries' new plan to "save" Oregon by encouraging an influx of American settlers was the total change that it represented in their attitudes toward white emigration and the moral influence of the frontier. In the early years, their object had been to save the Indians of Oregon before they were contaminated by the influence of the frontier settlements bringing lawlessness, sin, commerce, and whiskey. The Whitmans had expressed pleasure upon their arrival that the Oregon Country had not yet been polluted by those manifestations of white civilization.²⁵ Now the advancing frontier was not a curse, but rather a potential blessing. The only probable explanation for this reversal of opinion was the perception of an even greater evil in the eyes of the Protestant missionaries, the possible



Samuel Parker, from History of the Pacific Northwest.

triumph of Catholicism and the loss of Oregon to Great Britain.

Whitman would have to convert the American Board if his views were to prevail as mission policy. From the beginning of its involvement in the Oregon Mission venture, the Board had been resolved to reach the Indians of the Northwest before the arrival of white settlements. It had also been clear about its understanding of the baleful influence of the American frontier on native Americans. The Board's annual report of 1835 expressed this fundamental challenge for Oregon:

The missions heretofore undertaken by the Board on this continent have been principally among those tribes which were near the white settlements, and where the gospel had to contend not only with obstacles found in the savage character and habits, but also with the still greater obstacles originating in the corrupting and counteracting influences of the border population. The tribes adjacent to our frontiers are rapidly retiring before the advancing whites, or are melting away under their influence. Shall we, then, in our efforts for the Indians, merely keep up with that tide which is overwhelming them, so that we have scarcely time to open the treasures of the gospel to them before they are consumed; or shall we press forward in advance of this tide, and preach Christ to those tribes which are exposed to a less debasing foreign influence, and where

²⁴Whitman to Greene, November 1, 1843, Hulbert, "Marcus Whitman," 7:325.

²⁵Narcissa Whitman to the Rev. and Mrs. Leverett Hull, October 25, 1836, *ibid.*, 6:244.

we may have more time to try the power of the truth upon them before all opportunity for benefitting them shall depart?²⁶

The Rev. Samuel Parker, the Board's pioneer explorer of mission possibilities in the Northwest, put it even more directly in his 1836 report:

The importance of establishing missions beyond the Rocky Mountains is plain, very plain, and if we ever intend to do anything that promises permanency, the Oregon territory is an important field—away from the influence of frontier settlers and away from whiskey.²⁷

The expansion of American economic and political interests into the Oregon Country during the late 1830's led to an increased sense of urgency in the American Board's concern about "saving" the Indians before it was too late. Hearing rumors of American interest in acquiring political control over the disputed Columbia country through negotiations with Great Britain in 1838, the Board expressed its concern:

What we most fear is that, should the country come under the control of the US, there will immediately be a rush towards it by speculators and adventurers, making it a theatre for all kinds of wickedness, leading to the corruption and oppression of the Indian tribes beyond anything that has yet been seen on our borders.²⁸

The American Board's attitude showed more historical understanding than Whitman had of the devastating impact of white frontier settlement on American Indian culture. Unfortunate experiences in earlier ABCFM mission work with Indians gave perspective and insight. The Brainerd mission project in Tennessee with the Cherokee nation had been laid waste by the pressure of white expansion and the forced removal of those Indians from their homeland during the 1830's. Missions to the Choctaws were similarly disrupted, as were subsequent efforts to convert the Osage of Kansas when American settlement overran the missionaries' efforts to reach the pristine American "savage."²⁹

Nevertheless, Whitman's agenda as he appeared before the Prudential Committee of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions on April 4, 1843, included an

appeal for support for American emigration into the Oregon country as well as an appeal for a reversal of the order to close Waiilatpu and Lapwai. His description of the effective work at the mission stations and the new harmony among the workers moved the Board to rescind its order recalling Spalding and closing the stations. Whitman was overjoyed. But he was much less pleased with its reaction to his appeal for support in recruiting emigrants to Oregon. The records of the Prudential Committee meeting state:

Dr. Whitman had a brief interview with the committee. A plan which he proposed for taking with him on his return to the mission a small company of intelligent and pious laymen to settle at or near the mission stations but without expense to the Board or any connection with it was so far approved that he was authorized to take such men, if those of a suitable character can be found. . . .³⁰

Whitman was free to act, but there would be no Board expenditure or endorsement of the effort.

The American Board's refusal to act on the matter makes it clear that in his attempt to get the ABCFM to promote Protestant emigration to Oregon, Marcus Whitman failed. In a later communique responding to Whitman's continued urging that the Board encourage emigrants to head for Oregon, the Board secretary snapped: "I must say that I cannot regard it as my duty to make any efforts at all [to encourage emigrants] in any form."³¹ Even when Whitman minimized his request by saying that he did not expect the Board "to become the patron of the emigration to Oregon" but only to use its "influence that in connection with all the influx into the country there may be a fair proportion of good men of our own denomination,"³² there was no response from the ABCFM. The mission gover-

²⁶Annual Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1835 (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1836), 100.

²⁷Hulbert, "Marcus Whitman," 6:128.

²⁸Greene to Whitman, October 17, 1838, *ibid.*, 6:329. Negotiations were not concluded until 1846.

²⁹Phillips, *Protestant America and the Pagan World*, 20-38.

³⁰Hulbert, "Marcus Whitman," 7:293.

³¹Greene to Whitman, March 17, 1848, *ibid.*, 8:252.

³²Whitman to Greene, May 30, 1843, *ibid.*, 7:252.

nors in Boston accurately sensed the consequences for the Indians of emigration. As the Board's 1844 annual report stated:

The increasing number of immigrants to their [Nez Perce and Cayuse] country, together with reports carried by the wandering Indians from this side of the mountains, respecting the encroachment of the white population on the Indian lands, seems to have awakened apprehensions as to what may be their destiny. And much reason, probably, have they to fear that their history is to be brief and calamitous.³³

AFTER HIS MEETING with the ABCFM governors in Boston, Marcus Whitman returned to St. Louis; from there he helped guide an emigrant wagon train of nearly 1,000 people across the Rockies to Oregon. He is well remembered for that role in the history of the Pacific Northwest—enshrined in the United States Capitol for his work in opening the way west for the American people. Whitman did not have to create interest in Oregon; it was already growing wildly with the news of available land and the advance of American political dominion in the region. Nor could Whitman have controlled that emigration, as ever greater waves of American settlers poured through the mission lands in the years after 1843 and changed the Oregon Country forever.

In the last years of the Whitman mission its future was out of the hands of the ABCFM, out of the hands of the Whitmans, swept along by the forces of extensive migration into Oregon. The collision of that aggressive American culture with the Cayuse Indians revealed the tragic error of Whitman's 1843 belief in the benefits of encouraging the emigration of settlers—emigration that brought on the final disaster for the ABCFM mission effort in the Northwest. The waves of white people coming into their lands alarmed the Indians and brought them to suspect that Whitman had invited the movement. The Cayuse foresaw the loss of their homeland, the destruction of their

culture, and the end of their way of life. The emigrants brought diseases that the Indians could not resist and which ravaged their tribe, despite Whitman's medical efforts. In the great measles epidemic of 1847, the Cayuse became convinced that the doctor's magic was the cause, not the cure, of the disease. These circumstances led directly to the terrible end to the Wailatpu Mission with the murder of the Whitmans and twelve others in the massacre of November 1847. All the American Board stations in the Northwest were subsequently closed.

Nor had the flood of immigrants into Oregon brought relief for the mission so that more time could be devoted to religious occupations. Just the opposite occurred, for the great physical needs of the immigrant trains, the onslaught of poor people and orphans to care for, robbed the Whitmans of the time they had to attend to their spiritual work with the Indians. The Whitmans had come to feel, in fact, that their work among the immigrants, both temporal and spiritual, was the most important part of their "mission" to Oregon; as Marcus wrote his parents in May of 1844, "no doubt our greatest work is to be to aid the white settlement of this country and help to found its religious institutions."³⁴

With the Whitmans' increased attention to the needs of the immigrant trains, the criticism from the American Board mounted. Whitman should not spend so much time caring for and feeding the immigrants, making his station "a great restaurant for the weary pilgrims; . . . such a work is very humane and good work, but the work of guiding men to Christ is a better one and coincides better with the vocation of a missionary laborer."³⁵

This was, in its way, true: a we-told-you-so rebuke from Boston. But it was also unfair, for the Whitmans' central goal had always been to guide men to Christ. The demands of their mission among the Cayuse led them to pursue that goal in unique ways, but their policies were shaped by their spiritual objective of saving Indian souls.

In his last letter to the American Board, written on October 18, 1847, a month before his murder, Marcus Whitman wrote:

³³*Annual Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, 1844 (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1845), 213.

³⁴Marcus Whitman to his parents, May 16, 1844, Hulbert, "Marcus Whitman," 7:98-99.

³⁵Greene to Whitman, April 6, 1846, Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman*, 2:124.

I cannot blame myself that the plan I laid down when I was in Boston was not carried out. If we could have had good families, say 2 or 3 together to have placed in select spots among the Indians, the present crisis which I feared would not have come.³⁶

Perhaps he was right. The Whitmans are not to blame for the fact that emigration did not have the good effects they had hoped for. But to have hoped it would be different would have been to deny all the forces and the history of ultimately incompatible cultures in conflict.

In the last letter that the American Board wrote to Whitman, written in ignorance of his letter and of the massacre that followed, *The irrigation ditch at Wailatpu, in a modern picture taken at the Whitman Mission National Historic Site. Photo courtesy Larry Dodd.*

Greene noted Whitman's new burdens at Wailatpu:

You are known to be a missionary man in your relations and profession, and the people expect you to be mainly occupied in that which is peculiarly missionary work. . . . Do not feel that all Oregon is in your hands, and that the planning, providing, and laboring for all its interests are devolved on you.³⁷

But it was too late for Whitman. A new Oregon that was part of the American nation had descended upon the old mission field, bringing an end to his work and his life. ■

³⁶Whitman to Greene, October 18, 1847, Hulbert, "Marcus Whitman," 8:244.

³⁷Greene to Whitman, March 17, 1848, *ibid.*, 8:256.

The irrigation ditch at Wailatpu, in a modern picture taken at the Whitman Mission National Historic Site. Photo courtesy Larry Dodd.



THE NEZ PERCE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE MISSIONARY EXPERIENCE

by Allen P. Slickpoo, Sr.

Allen Slickpoo has long been concerned with making possible a better understanding of his people's history and culture by non-Nez Perce and non-Indians. He was project director for preparation of Noon Nee Me Poo: "We, the Nez Perces," Culture and History of the Nez Perce People.

FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL and prior to the coming of the white man, our native religious beliefs and practices focused on the Great Spirit, "the Maker." We interpreted those beliefs through our ceremonial songs that related to a God and a better land of light.

We expressed our religious beliefs with the Waala'set ceremonies or the Weyekin (spiritual quest). Events were foretold or prophesied by the dreamer religion long before "Wavoka" came into being—referred to by the white man as "Smohalla."

We knew of a day of worship as being an important part of our religion. A sacred song was sung at dawn to give thanks and greet the new day. We gave thanks to the Great Spirit and the "Mother Earth" at each meal. We expressed words of worship upon retiring. We kept ourselves clean in body and mind, and our surroundings neat and orderly. We practiced the use of our right side first, because someday the Great Spirit will ask when we die, "which is your right?"

It was through these religious practices we were told that the "coming of people with light skin" to our country was imminent. Our prophets predicted much trouble to come, with a disease that we would not be immune to, causing much destruction to our people.

We always expressed our religious beliefs freely and openly according to our feelings and contact with those beliefs. We did not rely on any book of laws, regulations, or guidelines to

tell us how we should worship the Maker, the Great Spirit, as the missionaries wanted us to.

Because our ways to worship the Great Spirit did not conform to the methods of the white man's written rules of worship or religious practices we were called "savages" and "heathens"; thus we had to be "civilized" in accordance with the white man's denomination or mechanics of worship.

The first known white missionary to arrive in the Nez Perce Country was Henry Harmon Spalding, who with his wife, Eliza, established in 1836 a mission at what is known as Lapwai Valley, "the valley of butterflies."

According to Clifford Drury in his book about Chief Lawyer of the Nez Perces: "During the eleven year mission period, 1836-47, only twenty-one natives joined the mission church."¹ Asa Smith verified this in a letter by condemning what he called "supreme selfishness" of the Nez Perce. His letter also indicated that even though they (the Nez Perce converts) labored hard for the church, there was some reluctance to fully accept God, by stating: "but their hearts are enmity against God."²

Perhaps this can be attributed to the treatment displayed against the Nez Perce by the Reverend Henry Spalding. Many of our elderly people have related stories about Spalding using Nez Perce labor to perform hard chores without any compensation except being told that they were "doing it for the Lord." Related stories were also told of Spalding tying a person to a flogging tree and giving him twenty lashes for being disobedient. To many of us this is an act of slavery, whether it was for "the Lord" or not.

The white man's religion and his missionaries will have to be looked upon according to

¹Clifford M. Drury *Chief Lawyer of the Nez Perce Indians, 1796-1876* (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1979), 53.

²Smith to the Rev. David Greene, February 25, 1840, in *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith relating to the Nez Perce Mission, 1838-1842*, with Introductions and Editorial Notes by Clifford Merrill Drury (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1958), 146.

what side of the fence you are on. There were those who accepted the white man's way to worship and there were those who rejected it. The majority of the Nez Perce people were apprehensive about changing their ways. We were showered with "gifts" of trinkets and beads by the explorers and fur traders. We were showered with promises of "heavenly gifts" by missionaries that followed.

All of a sudden we were told that our buckskin clothing, the tools we used, and the use of the eagle feather were evil according to the white man's God. Those of us that became influenced, or more precisely "brainwashed," to accept the white man's way to worship were promised a higher social status and recognition

by the white man as having a prestige and a leader in our tribe. "Give up your native values."

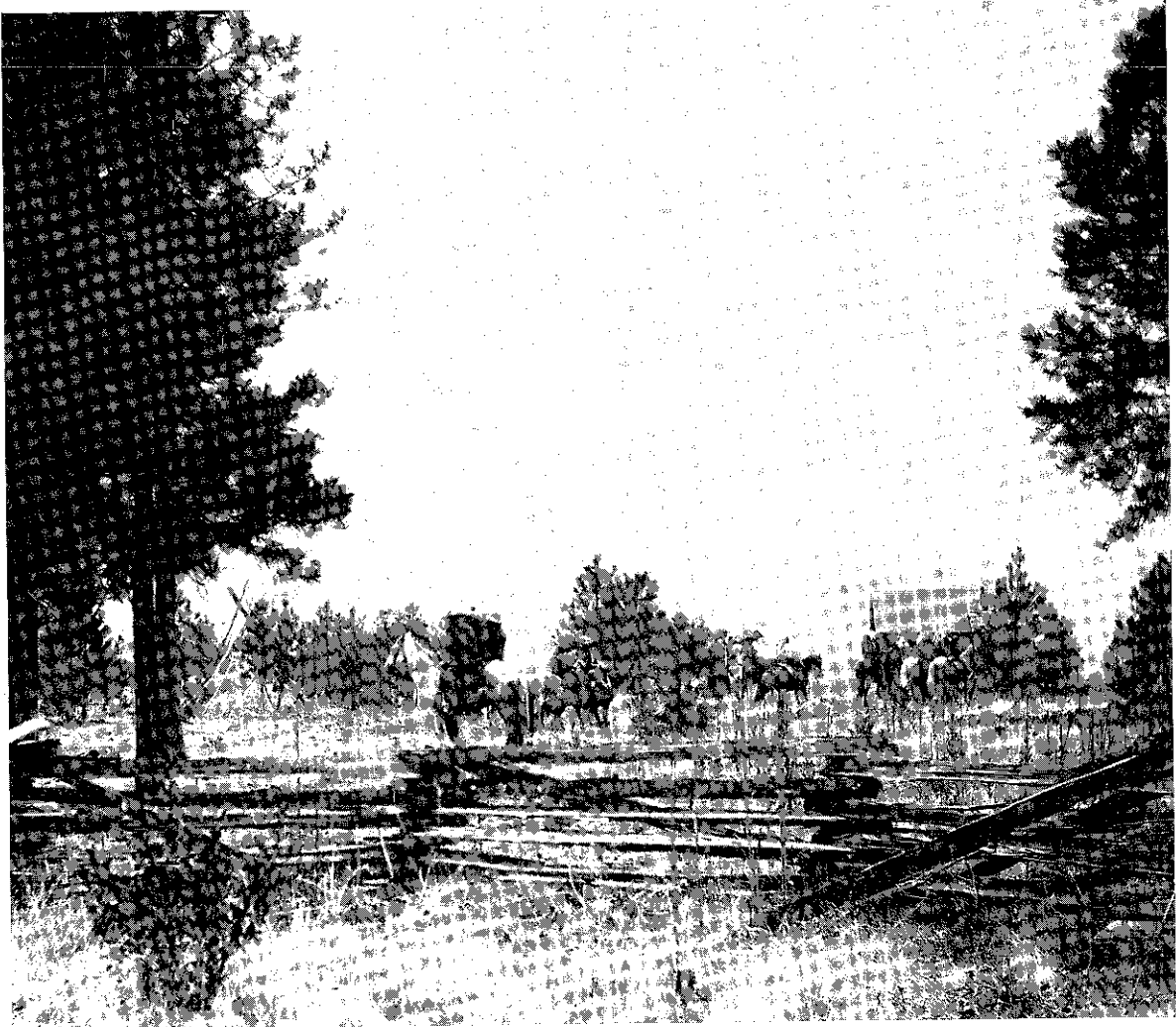
This again is supported by Drury in describing Chief Lawyer in his book: "Throughout his life, he was firmly convinced that the destiny of his people could best be served through friendship with the whites."³

The missionaries' efforts and goals were to settle and civilize the Indians. Before we could fully realize it, the missionaries were the advance agents of the white man's civilization.

The books have always focused on those of us who accepted the white man's religion, but

³Drury, *Chief Lawyer*, 20.

Nez Perce on their way to the Kamiah church in the mid-1890's. Photo by Jane Gay. ISHS 63-221.67b.



very little is said about those who rejected his philosophy about worshipping God.

Drury says in his book about Lawyer that "the te-wats, who found their beliefs, and possibly their livelihood threatened, became anti-Christian, even as the missionaries became anti-te-wat."⁴ A "te-wat" is a medicine man and leader.

According to the white missionaries, our way of life and our civilization were not good enough to conform to the white man's purpose and to complement his real intent.

While our attention was given to the missionary works, little attention was given to the fact that we were being pushed out of the path of the Euro-American expansion. Thus, with the help of the missionaries to "settle and civilize the Indians," the land that was attracting hordes of fortune-seeking immigrants was opened up for the taking.

The use of force and power was to persuade us in becoming assimilated into the white culture. The missionaries and the government agents referred to those that were converts to the white man's religion as the "progressives," and those that did not accept the new way of worship were called the "heathens."

The work of the early-day missionary paid off for some, but not others. To obtain good employment and monetary compensation you had to be a "progressive." If you had a status of being a "heathen," your chances were less.

Thus, the almighty dollar came into power in dictating the terms of the destiny of the Nez Perce tribe. White man's religion offered a status symbol to those who were willing to accept the terms which were to completely give up native ways, or Indianness. As my grandfather used to say: "The white man is handing you a bible with his right hand, but his left hand is behind his back, clutching twenty-dollar gold pieces."

Along with the Protestant (Presbyterian) missionaries came the Catholics, who were faced with great opposition from people like Spalding. When the Catholics were finally able to establish a mission in Nez Perce Country, then the Methodists came, and both the Pres-

byterians and Catholics joined forces to keep them out. Again, we were being told "my way of religion is better than their way." To this Chief Joseph said: "We may argue about things of this earth, but we never argue about the Great Spirit."

Presbyterian laws strongly prohibited the practice of native culture. The federal government supported this concept by enforcing rules against the use of the language and native cultural values—an act of cultural genocide. This made many of our kinship divided. This was well illustrated in the Nez Perce War of 1877, when a brother, cousin, or uncle had to bear arms against a fellow tribesman. Orders of the day were "divide and conquer."

Our beliefs in cultural values were so altered that they became alienated from many, because of these Christian teachings. We became extensively hybridized by intermarriage with the formerly old-world population. This also created much confusion about religion.

Those that managed to survive the onslaughts of assimilation into the European culture or so-called "white civilization" are now faced with the task of re-interpretation of our own culture.

Over the more recent years in contrast to the early missionary era, the majority of our people involved with the white man's religion have begun to take an active part in our native cultural activities. This tells us that our language and native culture did have an important part in our daily lifestyle and, at the same time, believing in the same God.

As a "grass roots" native Nez Perce, one cannot help but think that the role of the missionary was to utilize, or manipulate, our people into being the ears, mouth, and pen for something that was more than just believing in his God.

One cannot discredit the tool of the Bible to worship the Almighty Maker, but we must also accept the fact of who benefited from the use of such a tool, only to profit. Based on those principles of missionary teachings we still had to live with broken promises of his government. In summary: One hundred fifty years of oppression. ■

⁴*Ibid.*, 49.

THE SPALDING-WHITMAN AND LEMHI MISSIONS

A COMPARISON

by Lawrence G. Coates

Early Protestant missionary efforts and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sprang from many of the same impulses—and indeed from the same geographical area. Mormon missionary efforts to the Indians took forms similar to those of mainstream Protestant churches. The author is a member of the history department at Ricks College.

MORE THAN TWENTY years before the Mormons planted Fort Lemhi in the Salmon River country of what is now Idaho, Protestants had become intrigued with the natives of the Pacific Northwest. Their interest was prompted by accounts of Jonathan Green's 1830 tour of the West in the *Missionary Herald* and by learning from the *Christian Advocate* that the Nez Perce were seeking the white man's religion. In 1834, Methodists Jason and Daniel Lee went west to the Willamette Valley. The next year, Presbyterians Samuel Parker and Marcus Whitman joined a caravan of fur traders going to a rendezvous on the Green River. Charmed by the Nez Perce and their interest in missionaries, Parker went on to Oregon while Whitman returned east, recruited William Gray and Henry and Eliza Spalding, and married Narcissa Prentiss. The next summer, the five made an arduous journey across a continent with few marked trails in order to establish missions at Waiilatpu, the place of rye grass, and Lapwai, the valley of the butterflies.

In 1847, the year the Whitman Massacre closed the Oregon Mission, Mormon refugees entered the Great Basin. Competing with Indians for resources, the Saints requested federal funds for Indian reservations and farms. They got little aid, so church president Brigham Young—driven by religious idealism—founded several missions to convert the natives to a new lifestyle. The Lemhi Mission, established in 1855, was one of these.

Even though the Waiilatpu and Lapwai and the Lemhi missions were founded nearly two decades apart, there were some remarkable similarities in their origins, goals, and methods—as well as some important

differences between the two ventures. Their outcomes were, however, essentially the same.

FOUNDERS OF THE Oregon Mission shared common geographic and ancestral roots with the Mormons. Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and Henry Spalding all came from the Finger Lakes area of upstate New York, not far from Mormon founder Joseph Smith's home in Palmyra, and Samuel Parker served churches in the area; William Gray came from Utica and Eliza Hart Spalding from Holland Patent, ten miles away. Narcissa Whitman was born and Henry Spalding lived in Prattsburg—originally settled in 1800 by Joel Pratt, an uncle to Jared Pratt, the father of Mormon apostles Parley P. and Orson Pratt.¹ The Spaldings and Whitmans shared another common heritage with the Pratts, Joseph Smith, Heber C. Kimball, and many other early Mormons: they were descendants of Puritans who migrated from England early in the 1600's.²

The Whitman-Spalding and Lemhi missions also had common roots in early-nineteenth-century revivalism, which perceived Deism's rational attack on the divinity of Jesus as a threat to all revealed religion. In 1806, students at Williams College in Massachusetts declared that they were going to stop this "atheism" by taking Christianity to all the world. Needing funds for such an endeavor, the Congregational Church formed the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, or ABCFM—the first foreign mission board in

¹Clifford M. Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the Opening of Old Oregon*, 2 vols. (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1973), 1:61, 98.

²For ancestral data on early Mormons, see Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 9-34; Stanley B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 3-7; Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986) 7-15.

the United States—to support missionaries in far-off lands. The Presbyterian and other Protestant churches soon joined the Board, which by 1816 was sending missionaries to the Cherokee in the southeastern United States. By the 1830's, it was sponsoring the Oregon Mission.³

By the 1820's, the Spaldings and Whitmans had been caught up in revivalism. Marcus Whitman said that in 1819 he "was awakened to a sense of sin and danger and brought by Divine grace to rely on the Lord Jesus for pardon and salvation."⁴ In February, 1819, Narcissa Prentiss felt tears trickle down her cheeks as she renounced her sins, gave her heart to God, stood, and made a public confession of her faith.⁵ Henry Spalding said "God in his great mercy rescued me from the depths of sin and brought me, as I hope, into his kingdom."⁶ He read a tract claiming that if every one hundred Protestants sent one missionary every seven years to an estimated six

³The Congregational Association for Massachusetts formed the ABCFM in 1810. Two years later it became interdenominational, adding eight Presbyterians—including Elias Boudinot, who in 1816 became a key spokesman for converting Indians with his book *A Star in the West: Or a Humble Attempt to Discover the Long Lost Ten Tribes of Israel, Preparatory to their Return to their Beloved City, Jerusalem* (Trenton, New Jersey: W. Fenton, S. Hutchinson, and J. Dunham, with George Sherman, 1816). Also in 1816, the Board sent its first missionaries among the Cherokee; in the mid-1830's, it sponsored the Spalding-Whitman mission to the Indians in Oregon.

⁴Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman*, 1:61, 69.

⁵James H. Hotchkiss, *A History of the Purchase and Settlement of Western New York and of the Rise, Progress, and Present State of the Presbyterian Church in That Section* (New York: M. Dodd, 1848), 465; Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman*, 104.

⁶Clifford M. Drury, *Henry Harmon Spalding* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1936), 29.

⁷Drury, *Spalding*, 34. A copy of this tract is found in *Tracts*, General Series, Volume IV, of the American Tract Society.

⁸Spalding went to college on a scholarship for indigent students provided by the American Education Society, which was founded in 1815 to help such students study for the ministry. The Presbyterian counterpart was founded in 1818, and the two groups joined forces in 1827. At his graduation, Spalding spoke on "Claims of the Heathen on the American Churches." Drury, *Spalding*, 32, 35, 37, 41-71.

⁹Joseph Smith, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, edited by Dean Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1984), 5.

¹⁰See Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 5, 53, 205. Although baptized in 1803, Lucy did not join the Presbyterians until 1820. However, the Smiths moved to Palmyra in 1816, and for a short time while they lived there the Presbyterian pastor was Daniel S. Butrick—who not only served as a missionary among the Cherokee until sometime in the 1840's but advocated the theory that the Indians were Israelites. See James H. Hotchkiss, *Purchase and Settlement of Western New York*, 376-378. Ethan Smith cites Butrick as an authority for this view in his *View of the Hebrews: Or the Tribes of Israel in America* (2nd edition; Poultney, Vermont: Smith and Shute, 1825).

¹¹Joseph Smith, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 5.

¹²Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (2nd edition, revised; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1953), 12.



The printing building at Lapwai, from History of the Pacific Northwest.

hundred million unconverted "heathens," then the world would become Christian within twenty-one years.⁷ Spalding prepared himself to join the effort by going to college and seminary.⁸

In the same decade, Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, was also affected by the revivalism whose fires swept across the "Burned-over District" of upstate New York. He recalled: "my mind became exceedingly distressed for I became convicted of my Sins... and I felt to mourn for my own Sins and for the Sins of the world."⁹ However, he did not join a church even though his mother, a sister, and two of his brothers joined the Western Presbyterian Church in Palmyra.¹⁰ Troubled by denominational conflict, folk magic, and natural religion, Joseph Smith searched the scriptures and decided that "mankind did not come unto the Lord but... had apostatised... [T]here was no society or denomination that built upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the new testament."¹¹ Subsequently, Joseph Smith said, a divine messenger gave him an ancient record on golden plates.¹²

Founders of the Lemhi Mission believed that Joseph Smith translated these plates into the Book of Mormon, and they accepted it as a history of the Indians whose Hebrew ancestors had migrated to the American shores centuries before Columbus. The main story was of the Nephites, who lived the law of Moses and were generally more civilized than their relatives

the Lamanites. For nearly 600 years, according to the Book of Mormon, the Nephites lived the Old Testament, but after Jesus' ministry in Palestine he came to the New World and taught his message to inhabitants of this continent. The Mormons believed it their duty to share this book with the Indians and help them build a temple in New Jerusalem, in Jackson County, Missouri, before Jesus should begin his millennial reign on earth.

ALTHOUGH THE WHITMANS and Spaldings rejected this story, they probably accepted the predominant view in the 1830's that the Indians were Hebrew.¹³ Certainly they knew about the ideas of the prominent Presbyterian Elias Boudinot, who countered the Deism of Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason* with his work *The Age of Revelation: The Age of Reason Shewn to be an Age of Infidelity*. Years later, Boudinot published *The Second Advent*, his twenty-five-year study on the Second Coming of Christ. In 1816, the same year the ABCFM began sending missionaries to Indians, he linked the Second Coming to converting the Indians in his book *A Star in the West: Or a Humble Attempt to Discover the Long Lost Ten Tribes of Israel, Preparatory to Their Return to their Beloved City, Jerusalem*.¹⁴

Boudinot quoted scriptures and such historians as Josephus to show that Judah and Benjamin had scattered "among the nations the world" and the ten lost tribes had migrated "over the waters...into another land... where never mankind dwelt."¹⁵ Citing numerous authors beginning in the sixteenth century, Boudinot claimed that similarities in language, traditions, customs, habits, religious opinions, rites, ceremonies, and worship between the Indians and the Hebrews proved the natives were the lost ten tribes.

Old Testament prophecies make it clear, Boudinot declared, "that in the latter day, the house of Israel shall be discovered, and brought from the land of their captivity a far off, to the city of God, the new Jerusalem." Missionaries must convert these native Americans who are the lost tribes of Israel "to the faith of Christ," and instruct them in their

prophetic promises, and help them return "to their own land and their ancient city, even the city of Zion." "Let not our unbelief, or irreligious conduct," he added, be "a stumbling block to these outcasts of Israel." "Who knows but God has raised up these United States," Boudinot concluded, "for the very purpose of accomplishing his will in bringing his beloved people to their own land."¹⁶

Obviously Boudinot influenced a large network of people in various circles with his ideas during his lifetime. He not only served in many government posts but was the first president of the American Bible Society, a member of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, and the first president of the American Society for Ameliorating the Condition of the Jews.¹⁷

¹³Josiah Priest said "although the opinion that the American Indians are the descendants of the lost Ten Tribes, is now a popular one, and generally believed, yet there are some who totally discard this opinion." As an example, Priest cited a Professor Rafinesque, who rejected this theory and accepted the notion that Indian ancestry was linked to Noah and the Flood. Priest said that Rafinesque "alleges that the Ten Tribes were never lost, but are still in the countries of the east about the region of ancient Syria, in Asia. He ridicules all those authors who have attempted to find in the customs of the Indians, traits of the Jews, and stamps them with being egregiously ignorant of the origin of things pertaining to this subject." On this point, Priest quoted Rafinesque as ridiculing the Mormons by saying: "a new sect of religion has arisen, namely, the Mormonites, who pretend to have discovered a book with golden leaves, in which is the history of the American Jews, and their leader, *Mormon*, who came hither more than 2,000 years ago. This work is ridiculous enough, it is true; as the whole book of Mormon bears the stamp of folly, and is a poor attempt at an imitation of the Old Testament Scriptures, and is without connection, object, or aim; showing every where language and phrases of too late a construction to accord with the Asiatic manner of composition, which highly characterises the style of the Bible, and how can it be otherwise as it was written in Ontario county, New York." See Priest, *American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West: Being an Exhibition of the Evidence That an Ancient Population of Present Indians Peopled America Many Centuries before it Was Discovered by Columbus, and Inquiries into Their Origin, with a Copious Description of Many of their Stupendous Works, Now in Ruins, with Conjectures Concerning What May Be Come of Them* (3rd edition, revised; Albany, New York: Hoffman & White, 1833), 72-73.

¹⁴George Adams Boyd, *Elias Boudinot: Patriot and Statesman, 1740-1821* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), 253-254.

¹⁵Boudinot, *Star in the West*, 69.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 297.

¹⁷After the American Revolution, bible societies began to spring up in all the states. As president of the New Jersey Bible Society, Boudinot pushed for a National Bible Association: after considerable effort, sixty-six persons—including a number of prominent laymen and clergy such as Lyman Beecher, James Fenimore Cooper, Valentine and Eliphalet Nott, and Alexander Proudfit—from thirty-five societies in ten states met in New York, established a board for the American Bible Society, and named Boudinot its first president.

The French Revolution had rekindled speculation among millennialists that the Hebrews would soon return to the Holy Land. When Napoleon convened a Sanhedrin in Paris in 1807, Boudinot and others in the United States and England interpreted this move as the alliance mentioned in the Old Testament between the Antichrist and the Jews. Two years later, Joseph S. F. C. Frey, a convert to Christianity from Judaism, formed the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews. After he migrated to New York, he

This legacy survived Boudinot's death in 1821. His last will and testament left a large inheritance to fulfill his dream of converting Indians and Jews.¹⁸ One Cherokee, Galgina, came to a school endowed by Boudinot, adopted the name Elias Boudinot, and became a prominent leader—editing a weekly news-

read *Star in the West* and asked Boudinot to support his cause. Boudinot evidently introduced Frey to Ethan Smith. See J. J. Boudinot, editor, *The Life, Public Services, Addresses, and Letters of Elias Boudinot*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1896; reprinted, New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), vol. 2.

Boudinot also served as George Washington's commissary general of prisoners and was a member and at one time president of the Second Continental Congress. After the war, he was elected to the first three sessions of the House of Representatives from New Jersey. He completed his public career as director of the United States Mint. For details see Boyd, *Elias Boudinot*.

¹⁸Boudinot left 50 acres to the Jews and 4,542 acres in Pennsylvania to the ABCFM for the Indians, gave the Moravians \$2,000 to teach Christianity to natives, and left \$500 to the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut, for instructing "heathens." See J. J. Boudinot, *Life, Public Services*, vol. 2.

¹⁹In 1833, only five of the thirty-five mission stations sponsored by the ABCFM were named for men who in some way had been associated with the Indians. They were Brainerd (1819), Dwight (1820), Elliot (1820), Mayhew (1827), and Boudinot (1830). See *The Missionary Herald* (January, 1833), 29:11-14; Ralph Henry Gabriel, *Elias Boudinot, Cherokee, and His America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1941); Morris L. Wardell, *A Political History of the Cherokee Nation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1938); and Rachel C. Eaton, *John Ross and the Cherokee Indians* (Muskogee, Oklahoma: Star Printery, 1921).

²⁰For additional contemporary books on this topic, see William Apes, *A Son of the Forest* (New York, 1829); Epaphoras Jones, *On the Ten Tribes of Israel, and the Aborigines of America* (New Albany, Indiana, 1831); and Mordecai Noah, *Discourse on the Evidences of the American Indians Being the Descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel* (New York, 1837). Josiah Priest, in *American Antiquities* (72-73), said the most prevalent view in this period was a Hebrew origin for the Indians. Priest reported other possible origins such as Noah's Ark, Polynesians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Scandinavians, Welsh, Scots, and Chinese. For recent books on this topic, see Robert Silverberg, *Mound Builders of Ancient America: The Archaeology of a Myth* (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, 1968), 83; Robert Hallinger, *Mormon Answers to Skepticism: Why Joseph Smith Wrote the Book of Mormon* (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, 1980), 48-64; Robert Wauchope, *Lost Tribes and Sunken Continents: Myth and Method in the Study of the American Indians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 97-102. Wauchope said the clergy was mainly responsible for propagating this notion.

²¹See recommendations in Smith, *View of the Hebrews*. Some clergy as early as the sixteenth century suggested that the Native Americans fulfilled such scriptures as Romans 11, Revelation 16:12, and certain verses in Isaiah and Ezekiel. Some seventeenth-century Puritans pointed to the similarity of the racial characteristics between Jews and Indians and compared Hebrew and Indian languages, customs, and religious rites. See a reprint of *Manasseh Ben Israel's Hope of Israel* with an essay on "Indians or Jews?" and Introduction by Lynn Glaser (Gilroy, California: Roy V. Boswell, 1973). Boudinot and other authors quoted religious leaders in their books.

²²See *Evening and Morning Star* (June, 1832, February and June 1833), 6, 71, 99, respectively. Similarities between the *Book of Mormon* and the ideas in *View of the Hebrews* were so numerous that some critics claimed Joseph Smith used it to write the *Book of Mormon*.

²³Charles Thompson, *Evidences in Proof of the Book of Mormon, being a Divinely Inspired Record, Written by the Forefathers of the Natives Whom We Call Indians, (Who are a Remnant of the Tribe of Joseph,) and Hid Up in the Earth, but Come Forth in Fulfillment of Prophecy for the Gathering of Israel and the Re-Establishing of the Kingdom of God Upon the Earth. Together with All the Objections Commonly Urged Against it, Answered and Refuted—To Which is Added a Proclamation and Warning to the Gentiles Who Inhabit America* (Batavia, New York: D. D. White, 1841).

paper, writing a book, and translating portions of the New Testament into his native tongue.¹⁹ In 1836, the Spalding-Whitman party, en route to Oregon, visited the Osage mission station that the American Board had recently named Boudinot.

The ideas Boudinot held were perpetuated by many people.²⁰ Ethan Smith wrote two editions of *View of the Hebrews or the Tribes of Israel in America* and used Boudinot more than any other source, citing him fifty-two times and quoting thirty of his references. Smith printed numerous testimonials to authenticate his work. The *Boston Recorder*, the *Christian Advocate*, the *Christian Watchman*, and the Pawlet Association were among those endorsing the book. The Rev. Jabez B. Hyde, of Eden, New York, approved this book not only because it agreed with Boudinot's *Star in the West* but because he himself had witnessed some of the Indian ceremonies. The Rev. Alexander Proudfit, a founder of the American Bible Society, said that Smith's book created excitement for the missionary work in extending the Kingdom, gathering the Jews, and "hastening the progress of the millennial glory . . . of Jesus."²¹

Mormons used the same popular interpretive tradition. In the *Morning and Evening Star*, they quoted the same scriptures as proof for the Book of Mormon that Elias Boudinot, Ethan Smith, and others had cited to show the Indians were Hebrews, and they also described some of the same ruins in ancient America as evidence independent of the Bible. For example, in June of 1833 the editor quoted Boudinot's *Star in the West* as "good proof to those that want evidence, that the Book of Mormon, IS TRUE."²² In 1841, a Mormon writer cited Boudinot and others to "prove" this same point.²³ And in the first fifteen volumes of the *Millennial Star*, the editors devoted more than one hundred articles to the Indians, archaeology, and the Book of Mormon.

WITH THIS COMMON heritage, its not surprising the Presbyterian and Mormon missionaries received similar instructions. The American Board told Whitman:

Let your conduct be unblameable, exemplary & free from the appearance of evil. . . remembering that your business is almost exclusively with the Indians. . . You must introduce the Sabbath, explain its meaning, design & use. You must fix the standard of its sacredness. . . Engage in no trading not absolutely necessary. . . Let all yr worldly and secular concerns be as limited and compact as yr circumstances will permit. . . Live near to God. . . May. . . yr mission be as life from the dead to the benighted tribes of the remote west.²⁴

In a similar vein, Brigham Young told his missionaries to convert the natives to Christianity, teach them to farm, and tell them "to cease their savage customs" of attacking the emigrants and fighting their Indian neighbors. If the missionaries would take sufficient provisions to avoid being a burden to them and always kept the Indians' welfare at heart, he promised, "God would bless them and crown their labors with success."²⁵

Notes for a Nez Perce primer, c. 1845, from the Walker Collection, Henry E. Huntington Library. Photo courtesy the Huntington Library.

Tam nauh • kweks kolen- tu tlu ta stem akl in cavam tlu ets a hail ca stem tlu insicimaskat inawist; tlu in stulu citelishot tli tlu in saulk tlu in citelishot stulu Taks kwetasinsutistu tlu in anawi in sinilts Taks noninhwanunutu tlu in sinilts Nathli Koyiz ilimihum kin an kolensutin kinets Kla kla mulo kolensu- tin cekspilcimaksamist tlu skwaukixots tlapl Popohoit tlap soxhwilts	elw in celes tlu misht cinapavustin in sinilts tlu emkoets cistanist opin she tlu ets in kanam minaru tlu opilikst stekan in sinilts u tlu ko ets kamauks ern she ko ets shitakstan tlu is Kitsahwapela Taks inpasutemtu tlu skwest tlu ilimihum an kolensutin Nathli ets inkaunistamoets in ~~pasam~~ pasamsu- tams tlu skwest tlu ilimihum
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69.52.11.111

²⁴Drury, Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, 1:169-170.

²⁵John V. Bluth, "The Salmon River Mission," *Improvement Era* (September, 1900), 803. For other accounts, see Merrill D. Beal, "The Salmon River Mission" (master's thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1934); Brigham D. Madsen, *The Bannock of Idaho* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1958); Kate Carter, editor, *The Salmon River Mission* (Salt Lake City, 1963). Carter's pamphlet reprints Bluth's account and includes quotations from several journals. For the most recent article, see John D. Nash, "Salmon River Mission of 1855: Reappraisal," *Idaho Yesterdays* (Spring, 1967), 11/1:22-31.

²⁶All the people in the Oregon Mission had some advanced education, with the possible exception of Sarah Smith and Cornelius Rogers. The National Park Service and Lawrence L. Dodd, head of the Northwest and Whitman College Archives, Penrose Memorial Library, Whitman College, provided data on educational background of the missionaries as well as on books printed on the Oregon press.

result, the Oregon Mission had no more than thirteen professional men and women in the field at one time during its eleven-year history—and this was typical of other missions sponsored by the Board.²⁷

By comparison, in 1855 the Mormons had no separate, professionally trained clergy. They sent twenty-seven laymen to settle among the Bannock and Shoshoni and added twelve women and children later in the summer. Twenty-six new missionaries were added in 1856 and another 32 in 1857, bringing the total to some 136 people. Nor was this pattern unique within the Mormon missionary effort.²⁸

Nevertheless, the Whitmans' and Spaldings' methods for converting the natives were remarkably similar to those of the Mormons. Whitman told the ABCFM,

although we bring the gospel as the first object, we cannot gain an assurance unless they are attracted & retained by the plough & hoe, & in this way even before the language is acquired you may have the people drawn around you & ready to hear your every instruction. . . . Why then should

²⁷The report of the Board for January, 1836, listed thirteen Indian missions staffed by 104 men and women and two independent Indian schools with 10 staff. There were twenty-seven missionaries and seventy-seven others assigned as teachers, farmers, mechanics, assistants, native preachers, physicians, catechists, printers, and stewards. See *The Missionary Herald* (January, 1836), 32:21-29.

²⁸Names of those sent to the Lemhi mission are found in Daughters of Utah Pioneers articles compiled in Carter, *Salmon River Mission*, 4, 11, 14, 23. For the names in the other missions, see Lawrence G. Coates, "A History of Indian Education by the Mormons, 1830-1900" (Ed.D. dissertation, Ball State University, 1969), 181-182, 194, 198, 282-283. In 1855 alone the Mormons sponsored four other missions and sent forty-one missionaries to Elk Mountain, twelve men to the White Mountains, twenty-nine to Las Vegas Springs, and nine to the Indian Territory.

²⁹Whitman to Greene, May 8, 1838, quoted in Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman*, 1:254-255.

³⁰Two additional stations were founded besides Lapwai and Waiilatpu. Tshimakain site was selected in 1838. Elkanah and Mary Walker and Cushing and Myra Eells went to the location in the Spokane country in September of that year, and it was abandoned after the Whitmans died. Following approval at the annual meeting of the Oregon Mission in September, 1839, Asa B. Smith opened the Kamiah station; the next year he abandoned it. In addition, the Oregon missionaries continued pressing the ABCFM for more people to expand their operations among the natives.

³¹"The Salmon River Mission: Extracts from the Journal of L. W. Shurtliff as Edited by W. W. Henderson," *Utah Historical Quarterly* (January, 1932), 5:20-21. See also Pleasant Green Taylor's journal in Carter, *Salmon River Mission*, 36.

³²Spalding devised an alphabet, using some consonant letters of the Roman alphabet, but it proved to be too inaccurate. ABCFM secretary David Greene sent John Pickering's essay, "The Adoption of a Uniform Orthography for the Indian Languages of North America," which helped the Oregon missionaries prepare an alphabet. Whitman, Spalding, Edwin O. Hall, and Asa B. Smith also agreed to use a twelve-letter alphabet that had been used in Hawaii—with some modifications, such as adding the letters "s" and "t" and using letters "b," "d," "l," "g," "r," "v," and "z" for foreign words. See Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman*, 2:356.

³³Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman*, 1:239, 247, 262, 337, 355, 401; 2:146.

we not take the best, & may I not say, the only way to win them to Christ?²⁹

This view was similar to the instructions Brigham Young gave to Mormon missionaries.

The Mormon and Oregon missionaries followed these plans and built agricultural complexes. Irrigated plots of land, gristmills, barns, corrals, and grazing cattle, hogs, horses, and sheep all became part of the mission experience. Both thought their agricultural communities would serve as a model for the Indians to learn not only religion but an "improved" lifestyle. And both missions conceived plans to expand their operations. The Oregon Mission began with stations at Waiilatpu and Lapwai and expanded to include stations at Tshimakain and Kamiah.³⁰ The Mormons considered expanding their mission work by adding more settlements. They tried purchasing Fort Hall, and in the summer of 1857 a company of Mormons explored some 500 miles of the Bitterroot Valley, Deer Lodge, and the Flathead country in search of future locations for settlements.³¹

Likewise, the Whitmans, Spaldings, and Mormons believed it was important to learn the native languages. Whitman had a difficult time learning Cayuse: it was complex and of course unwritten. What is more, he was unable to convince the Cayuse to teach him their language without pay. Meanwhile, by the fall of 1837 Henry Spalding had learned Nez Perce and prepared a seventy-two-page primer on the language—although it was not printed because it had so many errors, and only a few proof sheets were made.³² However, learning Nez Perce did not make communication complete; many concepts the missionaries wanted to teach had no equivalent meaning in Nez Perce. In 1846, Whitman concluded that the best solution was to forget the older generation and concentrate on teaching the children English in a boarding school; but his would be an expensive proposition.³³

Like their Presbyterian counterparts, the Mormons had trouble communicating with the Indians. However, the Mormons made no attempt to produce a written native language. Instead they simply tried to learn the

languages by talking with the Indians. For example, George W. Hill, who had begun studying Shoshoni during his brief stay at Fort Supply in 1854, became friends with an Indian named Clark (supposedly the son of William Clark of the Lewis and Clark expedition). This relationship made it possible for him to learn some Nez Perce.³⁴ Hill's conversations helped him preach to the Nez Perce, Bannock, and Shoshoni. Early in the summer, he began telling stories from the Book of Mormon in native languages, but few joined the faith even though the Saints required little from the Indians to become members.

The Presbyterians, by comparison, insisted that the Indians make significant changes in their lives before they could become church members. Consequently, the First Presbyterian Church of Oregon, organized August 18, 1838, by the Whitmans and Spaldings, added only twenty-one native members before the Whitman massacre in 1847. One reason for so few converts was requiring the Indians to understand Calvinism. Speaking of Chief Umtippe, Narcissa said: "we are not yet satisfied how much he understands of the atonement, or whether he has any correct views of salvation through Jesus Christ." Reporting how difficult it was for the natives, Narcissa said, in telling them "that their sins bore a part in crucifying the Lord of Glory; they say, It is another saying; we never heard it before; we do not understand it."³⁵

By contrast, the Mormons baptized the natives into their faith without teaching them much doctrine. For example, while making their first expedition to establish the Lemhi mission, the Mormons met some Indians on the Portneuf River. George W. Hill, understanding some Shoshoni, told them about the mission. Hill said he was going to baptize some of these Indians soon and to his surprise some Indians asked to join the Mormons on their trek. On May 30, Hill took three of them into the river and baptized them.³⁶

Another difference between the Mormons and the Presbyterians was over marriage. Presbyterian missionaries vigorously enforced rules against mixed or plural marriages. On at least one occasion an eastern publication

criticized the mission in Oregon for accepting polygamists into the church. Spalding replied: "there is no person now in the church and never has been who has had two wives." On another occasion a Nez Perce man asked if it was necessary to get rid of his domineering second wife before he was baptized. Spalding replied "absolutely . . . polygamy is a sin. You will have to send your second wife away." After a lengthy pause, the Indian said: "you tell her then."³⁷

Mormon leaders, however, promoted polygamous marriages with the natives. In the spring of 1857, Brigham Young brought a company of 115 men, 22 women, and 5 boys to the Lemhi Mission and spoke to the missionaries and some five hundred Indians. He advised missionaries to form "strong ties of matrimony with the Lamanites" to preserve peace.³⁸ Nevertheless, the missionaries were reluctant to marry natives. One missionary named Gilbert Belnap told his plural wives, Adaline and Henrietta, that Brigham Young had imposed a heavy task

that seems hard to bear. And unless we take to ourselves wives of the Daughters of Laman that we should be removed from this mission and our present wives taken from us and others sent here that would do the will of the Lord.

He added, "for the latterday Saints and the lamanites were to become one Nation on the Mountain of Israel." Belnap re-emphasized this point by saying: "our failing to comply with this injunction, which I never View[ed] to be a command before. Was one of the causes of Bringing him to this place."³⁹

³⁴See Israel Justis Clark journal for August 28 in Carter, *Salmon River Mission*. Clark said on September 3: "this day threshed out four bushels of oats, all of the fall grain I harvested for fourteen and one-half acres of land" (25).

³⁵Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman*, 1:264.

³⁶Clark journal, May 30, 1855, and George Washington Hill narrative, reprinted in Carter, *Salmon River Mission*, 24, 29-34. Near a ford on the Blackfoot, the company knelt in prayer and sang a hymn, and then George W. Hill baptized Warra hoop, Tockick, and Chu mi (Spwan not wishing to be baptized) and blessed Tonish, a little boy twelve to fourteen months old.

³⁷Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman*, 2:107-108.

³⁸Joseph Smith had evidently mentioned plural marriage with the Indians as early as 1831, and Brigham Young held a lengthy discussion on this topic with church leaders during the Walker Indian War of 1853.

³⁹Belnap to Adaline and Henrietta, May 12, 1857. Copies of this and other letters were provided by Kight B. Kerr. The originals are owned by Della Belnap.

At first, missionaries did not follow these instructions. "To identify ourselves with the Lamanites," President Smith said, he did not think meant "to take the Lamanite women for wives." Soon after founding the Lemhi mission, Pleasant Green Taylor said some Indian "fathers...brought their daughters and desired us to marry them," but they rejected marriage because the Mormons did not understand the meaning of "identify." However, Young left no doubt that "identify" meant to "take their daughters" as wives. Once this clarification was made, nine men tried to get some Indians to marry them, but they said no.⁴⁰ In time, however, several Mormon men took Indian wives.⁴¹

THERE WERE OTHER differences between these missions; for example, the Mormons were more inclined to use religious ritual to heal the sick than were the Presbyterians. Marcus Whitman, as a physician, was much better trained to give medical advice to the Indians than were the Mormons at Fort Lemhi. The Mormons were more like Narcissa Whitman's family—Thomasonians, who relied on herbs rather than drugs. In addition, the Mormons "administered to the sick with consecrated oil." Although few Indians joined the Mormon faith, many began wintering among the Saints. An Indian girl became extremely ill and the natives asked the missionaries to heal her. Hill explained that the Mormons heal their sick by sacred oil, but usually only perform this rite for members. The Indians, however, insisted they use their "medicine" to heal the girl. Hill replied that if the girl were healed, the Mormons would

expect the Indians to be baptized. Hill anointed the girl and she recovered. The following Sunday, many Indians attended services and heard Hill proclaimed this healing as a divine manifestation. Following the services, the missionaries took them to a nearby stream and baptized fifty-six of them.⁴² Many more Indian baptisms were recorded on subsequent occasions, and their success inspired the Mormons to study the native languages by listening carefully and mimicking the sounds they heard.

Mormon successes faltered in the fall of 1857, when trouble surfaced among the Nez Perce, the Shoshoni, and the Bannock as roving bands began taking horses. These natives smoked the peace pipe, but they continued stealing horses; the Mormons were drawn into the controversy because they protected horses for the Nez Perce. The Shoshoni demanded E. Barnard return his Indian wife,⁴³ and one Bannock chief "complained of being angry with the Mormons for not giving him some white wives." For these and other reasons, on February 25, 1858, 250 Bannock and Shoshoni struck, killing George McBride and James Miller, wounding 5 others, and taking more than 200 oxen and cows and 35 horses.⁴⁴

The Mormons believed that this uprising was part of the conflict over President James Buchanan's sending 2,500 troops to Utah. The Saints blamed J. H. Powell, a mountaineer, for convincing the Indians to attack Fort Lemhi and take their livestock for the federal troops stationed within one hundred miles of Lemhi.⁴⁵ They further charged that B. F. Ficklin, an army volunteer, was responsible for hiring Powell to terrorize the Mormon colony. However, Ficklin denied the charges and said that he had "adhered strictly to his orders...merely to buy horses and beef, and that he had cautioned all Indians to remain at peace."⁴⁶

While Barnard and E. H. Watts returned to Salt Lake for instructions, the missionaries wondered what they should do with their native members. Since they all seemed to be implicated in raid, the Saints excommunicated all of the natives. Late in March, Barnard and Watts returned with instructions to close the

⁴⁰The journal of Pleasant Green Taylor, reprinted in Carter, *Salmon River Mission*, 35-37. See also the journal of Jacob Miller, Sunday, May 10, 1857, in *ibid.*, 47. Miller recorded Young as saying that "we should so live that we could be guided aright and not take to wife any that would be a disgrace to us, etc.; gave more leniency [than Heber C. Kimball on this topic]."

⁴¹Bluth, "Salmon River Mission," 813.

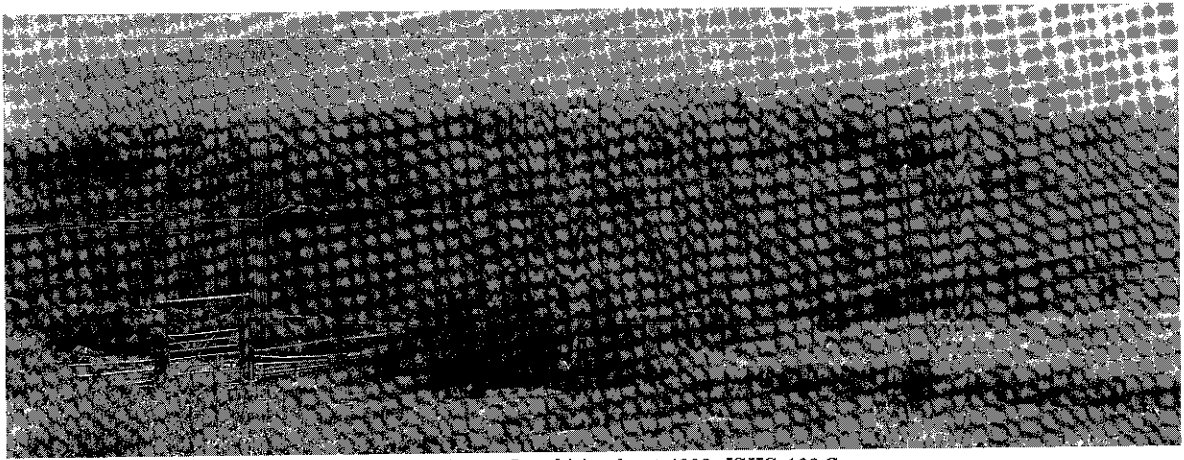
⁴²Hill's and Clark's journals.

⁴³*Ibid.*

⁴⁴Affidavit of Thomas S. Smith, July 25, 1858, Thomas S. Smith Papers, Church Historical Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. The copy of Smith's testimony was certified by Probate Judge Elias Smith, in Salt Lake County.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶Norman Furniss, *Mormon Conflict* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 160.



The site of Fort Lemhi in about 1903. ISHS 166-C.

mission; on March 28, 1858, the Mormons began returning home.⁴⁷

The Whitman mission and thus the whole Oregon Mission of the American Board also had a tragic ending that has been the subject of many speeches, articles, and books. It was not linked to intertribal politics nor to the larger stage of history on which a president sent troops to replace a territorial governor without telling him. Instead, the death of fourteen men, women, and children at Wailapu was a local affair. Although increasing emigration along the Oregon Trail and rising tensions over land and water rights helped set the stage, this tragic affair was primarily linked to a Cayuse tradition; if the medicine man or *te-wat* practiced witchcraft and killed his patients, then the relatives of the deceased assumed the right to kill him. Reviewing the loss of many loved ones during the eleven years of Whitman's stay, some Cayuse found enough "evidence" to prove that he was not only a "bad medicine man" but on occasion had tried killing them by drugging watermelons. In contrast to the outcome at the Lemhi mission, the militia in Oregon punished the Cayuse for the massacre.⁴⁸ Furthermore, unlike the tragedy on the Lemhi, relics of the Whitmans have been preserved, monuments erected, celebrations held, and historic sites reconstructed to memorialize those who died on that fateful November day of 1847.⁴⁹

The Whitman and Lemhi missions did not realize their dreams of converting many

natives in the northwest to become Christians and to return to either Zion in Jackson County, Missouri, or the Holy Land across the ocean. It made little or no difference whether the Presbyterians taught the natives monogamy, Calvinism, or other doctrines from the Bible or the Mormons taught them polygamy, the gathering to Zion, or stories from the Book of Mormon; the results were the same. These missions to the Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest created bitterness and strife rather than humanitarianism, love, and harmony as taught in sacred writ—an outcome largely the result of serious cultural conflicts between the natives and the missionaries. The natives did not share the dreams and hopes for a millennial era with these Presbyterian or Mormon ambassadors; they preferred a lifestyle they had enjoyed for generations. The tragic endings of the Lemhi and Whitman missions would not be the last chapter in this human drama of carrying Christianity to the Cayuse, Nez Perce, Shoshoni, Bannock, and other natives of the American West; the Mormon and Presbyterian survivors, and their fellow missionaries both Catholic and Protestant, would continue proclaiming their message to the natives of America during the ensuing decades. ■

⁴⁷Carter, *Salmon River Mission*, 22.

⁴⁸Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, *The Cayuse Indians: Imperial Tribesmen of Old Oregon* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 84-108.

⁴⁹Clifford Drury said "no Protestant missionaries in the United States have been honored by so many monuments and memorials as Marcus and Narcissa Whitman." See *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman*, 2:339-352.

A MORMON APOSTLE VISITS THE UMATILLA AND NEZ PERCE IN 1885

by Leonard J. Arrington

An interesting and perceptive account of the impact of Protestant missions on Northwest Indians was provided by a Mormon leader seeking further mission fields for his own church. The author is a distinguished historian of the Intermountain West.

THE ROMAN CATHOLICS and Protestants have a long tradition of trying to Christianize and "civilize" Native Americans. By means of missions, model communities, and schools, they have sought to teach American Indians to read and write, to farm, to avoid intoxicating beverages and profanity, and to participate in religious services. The Mormons or Latter-day Saints continued this tradition, but with a claim that they had been given a special charge by the Deity to cultivate and educate the Indians. The unique Latter-day Saint scripture, the Book of Mormon—which was introduced in 1830 as a history of at least some of the Indians—declared the three groups it discussed to be part of God's chosen people, descendants of the ancient Hebrews, and indicated their eventual high destiny. The Mormons had a special obligation to revitalize the Indians, to remind them of their noble heritage, and to help them become a more "pure and delightful people."¹

From the very year of their organization the Latter-day Saints sought to be valiant in this endeavor by sending missionaries—at first to the Catteraugus nation in western New York, the Wyandot in western Ohio, and the Shawnee and Delaware in eastern Kansas. In subsequent years they visited and had dealings

with the Fox, Potawatomi, Omaha, and Blackfoot.

After they reached the Great Basin in 1847, the Mormons worked with a variety of culture types: the Shoshoni and Ute nations in the Wasatch Mountain and Uinta Basin areas, who practiced a modified Great Plains culture based partly on the buffalo; the Hopi of northern Arizona, with a settled agricultural economy of corn, beans, squash, and small game; the nomadic Navajo and Apache of the Southwest, with their herds of sheep and goats and their skills in silverwork and the making of rugs; and the Gosiute and Paiute of the western desert, who eked out a precarious existence from roots, berries, insects, and an occasional rabbit or antelope. With each of these cultures the Mormons tried missions, demonstration farms, schools, and welfare assistance.

One band of Shoshoni, who continued to pass through southern Idaho, northern Utah, and southwestern Wyoming after the establishment of reservations, accepted Mormon offers of friendship and support. They settled on a church-provided site some thirty-five miles north of Brigham City, Utah, and established a village called Washakie. They farmed several thousand acres of land and built a canal system, sawmill, chapel, schoolhouses, mission home, and houses for about 250 Shoshoni. Other nonreservation Indians were placed on farming sites in Sanpete Valley, Deep Creek, and Grass Valley, Utah.²

IN THE 1870's and 1880's a group of Mormon men and women conscientiously devoted themselves to the task of understanding and educating each of the Indian groups on their periphery. They worked with the Paiute in southern Utah and Hopi and Moqui in northern Arizona, and later with the Navajo, Zuni, and

¹On the historic relationship of Mormons to the Indians, see especially "Mormons and Native Americans," in Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 145-160; Dean L. Larsen, *You and the Destiny of the Indian* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1966); Juanita Brooks, "Indian Relations on the Mormon Frontier," *Utah Historical Quarterly* (January-April 1944), 12:1-48; Leonard J. Arrington, "The Mormons and the Indians: A Review and Evaluation," *The Record* [Washington State University] (1970), 5-30; Beverly Beeton, "Teach Them to Kill the Soil: An Experiment with Indian Farms, 1850-1862," *American Indian Quarterly* (Winter 1977-1978), 3:299-319; and Lawrence G. Coates, "A History of Indian Education by the Mormons, 1830-1900" (Ed.D. dissertation, Ball State University, 1969).

²Lawrence G. Coates, "Mormons and Social Change Among the Shoshoni, 1853-1900," *Idaho Yesterdays* (Winter 1972), 15/4:2-11; Charles E. Dibble, "The Mormon Mission to the Shoshone Indians," *Utah Humanities Review* (January, April, July 1947), 1:53-73, 166-177, 279-293.

Pima.³ They undertook to work with the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole in the Great Plains, and with the Shoshoni on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming and the Bannock at the Fort Hall Reservation in Idaho.⁴ Prominent in this work was Lorenzo Snow, one of the Church's Twelve Apostles and leader of the Latter-day Saint community of Brigham City in northern Utah from 1853 to 1898.

Born in 1814 in Mantua, Portage County, Ohio, of New England ancestry, Snow spent his youth on his father's farm but manifested a desire for learning and, after graduating from the public schools, entered Oberlin College.⁵ He became acquainted with Mormonism when he was twenty-two, was converted, and served as a missionary and teacher in Mormon and other settlements in Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and Great Britain. He went to the Salt Lake Valley in 1848. Ordained an apostle in 1849 at the age of 34, he served as a missionary in Italy, Malta, England, and Switzerland. As the spiritual and temporal leader of Brigham City after 1853, Snow inaugurated a system of cooperatives that ultimately was adopted in many Mormon settlements and is usually referred to as the United Order. In 1872-1873 Snow joined leading Mormon authorities in a mission to Europe, the Middle East, and Palestine that extended over nine months. A person of spare build and short stature (he was under 5 feet 6 inches tall and weighed 140 pounds), Snow was an intellectual person, cultured, diplomatic, and articulate, and friendly but reserved. With a full beard after 1871, he was the picture of dignity and refinement.

In November of 1882 the president of the Mormon Church, John Taylor, told his closest associates, the members of the Council of Twelve Apostles, that he had received divine instructions that the church must renew its determination to educate and convert the Native Americans in the region. Assignments were made to various apostles to supervise the work among the Indian nations in various western territories. Not surprisingly, Lorenzo Snow was instructed to strengthen the work with Indian groups in northern Utah, southern

Idaho, and western Wyoming and indeed throughout the Pacific Northwest. He was given assurance of church organizational and tithing resources. As a part of his response, he visited Bannock tribesmen at Fort Hall, Idaho, and Shoshoni groups at the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming. He arranged for the purchase of land for the planting of farms and villages, appointed experienced local church leaders who were fluent in Indian languages to live with them, and provided implements, seed, and provisions necessary to make the various colonies successful.

In the same year that President Taylor initiated this renewed endeavor, the Congress of the United States passed the Edmunds Act, which was designed to diminish the power and alter the practices of the Mormon Church. Among other things, the act provided for vigorous prosecution of antipolygamy laws. Mormon leaders, most of whom had plural wives, went into hiding to avoid prosecution. President Taylor, though remaining in northern Utah, moved quickly from the home of one trusted person to another. His counselor, Joseph F. Smith, went to Hawaii; others went to Arizona, Mexico, Canada, and England. Lorenzo Snow, by then a senior member of the apostles and much sought after by federal deputy marshals, went to California—specifically, to San Francisco.

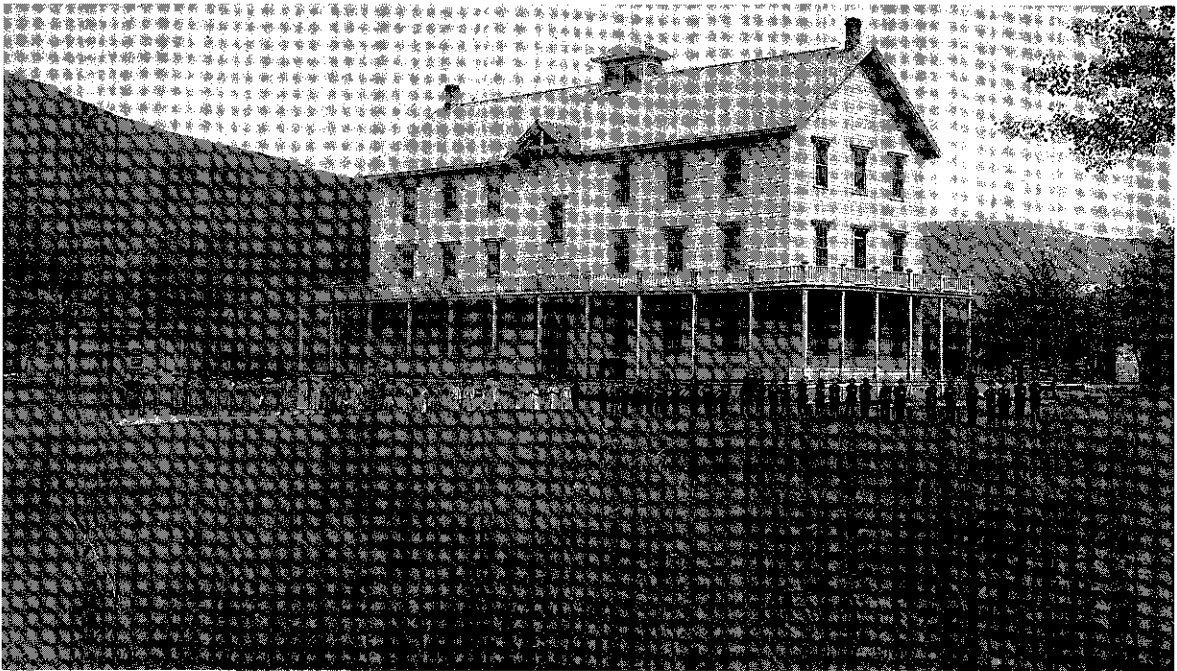
While in the Bay Area Snow did some writing—he was a literary person—and then in the latter part of July, 1882, he received a confidential instruction to help “redeem” the scattered host of Israel:

While you are keeping out of the way of your enemies [they suggested] visit the various tribes to which you can get access. . . . The Indians desire your counsel. The Lord is visiting them. He gives unto them visions and dreams. They are preparing for the truth, and we should, as His Ministers, do our part in lifting them up. . . . We must try and do everything in our power and the Lord will no doubt open our path. . . . Indians must be taught as others are

³Coates, “History of Indian Education,” 222-279.

⁴*Ibid.*, 280-321.

⁵Biographies of Lorenzo Snow include Eliza R. Snow Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (Salt Lake City: S.U.P. Memorial Foundation, 1955), and Francis M. Gibbons, *Lorenzo Snow: Spiritual Giant, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982).



The agency school at Lapwai. ISHS 61-159.5.

taught, and cared for as the Lord requires us to care for all who embrace this Gospel.⁶

Immediately after receipt of the letter, Snow responded to Presidents Taylor and Cannon as follows:

For some time I have felt an anxiety to visit the Nez Perce Indians in the northwestern part of Idaho Territory. They are the most intelligent tribe on the Pacific Coast, a fine, noble race of Indians. Some of them, I understand, have been educated in schools and colleges in the East. Many of them live in comfortable houses, [are] very industrious, farm extensively, have good schools, &c.

Snow suggested a three-week journey and said that he would go alone and would cover the cost himself.⁷ The First Presidency, by return mail, indicated their "cordial approval" of the suggested trip and prayed that he would be "preserved from every danger," be successful in all his endeavors, and "be able to rejoin the

Saints in the possession of undiminished bodily and spiritual vigor."⁸

Snow's mission has never been reported in historical journals, so his reports are quoted here in some detail. They open a fascinating window on the condition and status of the Umatilla and Nez Perce in 1885, done by a sympathetic outsider—one not connected with government agencies.⁹

On Saturday, August 8, Snow left San Francisco by steamer and journeyed the seven hundred miles north to Portland. There he took train and traveled the 240 miles to Pendleton. A town of about 1,600 persons, Pendleton was near the Umatilla Indian Reservation that Snow intended to visit. The reservation comprised about 326,000 acres of land, a fourth of which consisted of mountain and timber land and the remainder of rolling hills, well watered and adapted to grazing and the production of crops. Snow reported his visit as follows:

There are about 1,000 Indians living on the reservation, nearly all self-sustaining. They have some 13,000 acres of land under cultivation, and expect to have this season 40,000 bushels of wheat, 20,000 bushels of oats, 15,000

⁶John Taylor and George Q. Cannon to Lorenzo Snow, July 2, 1885, Lorenzo Snow Papers, Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

⁷Lorenzo Snow to John Taylor and George Q. Cannon, July 20, 1885, Snow Papers.

⁸John Taylor and George Q. Cannon to Lorenzo Snow, July 27, 1885, Snow Papers.

⁹The report is reproduced in Orson F. Whitney, "Later Leaves in the Life of Lorenzo Snow," 24-27, typescript (1890) in Snow Papers.

of barley and rye, 5,000 bushels of corn, 900 tons of hay, about 6,000 lbs. of wool, and 5,000 bushels of potatoes. They own 450 hogs, 6,000 horses, and 1,000 head of cattle. The Indians nearly all dress like the whites, as regards clothing and style. I noticed some driving carriages and buggies, accompanied by their wives and children, I met one of their doctors; he has an English education, and has acquired a considerable reputation in his profession, and is often employed by the whites.

I remained several days, and traveled over a considerable portion of the reservation, enjoying opportunities of seeing, shaking hands and talking with many of the natives, and gathering information, making observations on the spirit and disposition of the people, perfectly satisfying myself in regard to the propriety of establishing a mission among the Umatillas, and also in regard to what I considered the best policy to be adopted in effecting this object. I saw the agent, Mr. Sommerville, but formed of him a very unfavorable opinion, and felt no desire to cultivate much of his acquaintance. He is a young man, perhaps thirty years of age, and was a saloon-keeper previous to occupying his present position. The Agency is about two miles from Pendleton. There is a Catholic Mission, but of no great importance, established on the reservation; a small school is kept, but, it being vacation, I did not consider worth while to visit the mission. Some two weeks before my arrival, a fight had occurred between the agent and the Catholic priest, the priest being worsted, knocked down and ordered off the reservation.

AFTER HIS STAY with the Umatillas, Snow went by stagecoach a distance of some twenty-four miles to Walla Walla. There he boarded a train for Riparia, a location on the Snake River from which he took steamboat the remaining eighty miles to Lewiston. He made the following report on his trip to Lewiston and the Nez Perce:

Lewiston is six miles from the reservation, and twelve miles from Lapwai, where the agency is established, and all the way a good

carriage road runs over a lovely and beautiful country. This reservation is considered the very richest portion of Idaho. I obtained an introduction to Mr. Whitman [Perrin Whitman, Marcus Whitman's nephew] the most popular Indian Interpreter on the Western coast and one of the few who has preserved honesty, integrity, freedom from low habits in intercourse with the Indians. He has been the Interpreter for some forty years a portion of the time receiving a high salary from the Government. I succeeded in impressing him favorably in the promotion of my wishes, and to my surprise he proffered to accompany me to the Agency on the following Sunday and introduce me to his son-in-law Mr. [Charles E.] Monteith [the husband of Frances Whitman] the Government Agent. I thanked him and gladly accepted his proposal. He asked me to call on his wife, she having been a teacher and matron over seven years at the Nez Perce school—would take pleasure, he said, in giving me such information as opportunity and long experience had afforded.

I found Mrs. Whitman very communicative quite pleasing and interesting. She gave me valuable information regarding the habits, morals, spirit and disposition of the Nez Percés and some interesting circumstances connected with their present condition and past history. I started accompanied by Mr. Whitman Sunday morning [August 23] at seven o'clock and drove over to the Agency in a couple of hours. Mr. Monteith received me cordially. Said he had heard of my coming, therefore was expecting me. This and other circumstances which occurred at the Umatilla Reservation convinced me in my suspicions that I was regarded in the light of a Government Officer engaged in a secret mission, in fact I was once asked this question and was after treated with marked respect and honors.

This locality presents scenery quite pleasant, romantic and picturesque. It is a small valley, through which the Clear Water River passes, which, in high water is navigable up to this point from Lewiston where it empties into Snake River. Fifty miles above here, on this river, is a large Indian settlement of the Nez Perce [Kamiah], where one Indian

school has been taught by teachers employed by the Government.

The Lapwai River also passes through this valley emptying into the Clear Water about 150 yds. from Mr. Montieth's residence.

There are numerous small farms bordering on this stream cultivated and owned by the Indians, extending up towards its source some 18 or 20 miles.

Mr. Montieth conversed with freedom and gave information on every subject of Enquiry. He showed me his official report to the Secretary of Indian affairs and one he had

prepared not yet published, also spoke of his plans in reference to the future, yet appeared a little tremulous lest he might be superseded by a Democrat and fail in carrying them into effect. Mr. Montieth seemed ambitious to accomplish in his own way, some great good in the interests of the Indians, but I think is not popular or much loved by them. His idea is that to be successful in managing the Indians one should make them fear him—that they are naturally ungrateful of favors and do not appreciate kindness. Therefore his rule is severe and arbitrary which he admitted, but



Those who were served by missionaries sometimes became missionaries themselves. The Revs. James Dickson and E. J. Conner, both Nez Perce, served at the Presbyterian mission at Fort Hall in 1899. ISHS 78-97.16.

believed it to be the best course to promote their interests. He has a hired police which does his bidding, and judges that give decisions under his own influence.

The Indians are fined for trifling offenses and some time his hair sheared; which is an abomination especially to an uncivilized Indian.

Many Indians, for practicing plural marriage, have been fined this year the fines paid amounting in the aggregate to \$200.00. The Indians are not insensible to the arbitrary rules enforced against what they feel to be their just rights, but cannot help themselves. Mr. Montieth told me that he visited the Indian families and selected the finest and most intelligent looking boys and girls for pupils to supply his school, and if the parents object, he refuses them further favors from Government, such as farm tools, hoes, shovels, cradles, axes, plows, harrows, &c. &c.

He allowed such a course might seem severe, but he insisted it was the only successful method he could adopt. Accompanied by Mr. Whitman, I attended a meeting, of the Nez Perces held in a building about 300 yds. from the Agents dwelling. Some 200 Indians were assembled, the meeting was opened in the usual manner, after which a very earnest and eloquent address was delivered by an Indian Minister, in the Nez Perce language, the hymns and tunes were English—the appearance of the audience, neatly dressed, intelligent looking, devout and sincere in their worship; the spirited and energetic discourse altogether were very impressive.

The meeting concluded by singing the Doxology in English. The Minister came and shook hands with us at the close of the services. A Sunday School followed which was well attended and interesting. I visited their celebrated Seminary, a building 36 x 80 ft. and three stories high. The Matron an intelligent and accomplished lady, very courteously conducted me through the departments giving interesting details regarding the discipline and management of the School. The Government has an Indian Industrial school established at Salem, capitol [sic] of Oregon, with about four hundred students supplied

from the various Reservations, ranging in ages from 15 to 21. When Indian scholars at the different schools have made certain advances in the common branches they are admitted into the Industrial School and there kept from 2 to 5 years, at Government expense. The Nez Perces Agency has between 30 and 40 at that school. To acquire a practical knowledge of some branch of industry is the object of the Institution. The Nez Perce Reservation, the same as the Fort Hall is under the Presbyterian influence and rule. A Presbyterian Minister is established at the Agency. The agent is of the same persuasion and his father-in-law Mr. Whitman is a Deacon of the same church.

Ninety per cent of the heads of families on the Reservation own and cultivate farms. The Nez Perces and Umatilla languages are one and the same. Their Reservations are only about one hundred miles apart by direct line, and therefore are enabled to keep up an intercourse with one another. These two Tribes are considered the most inclined to improve and to accept civilization of any others on the Pacific Coast.

Snow then copied into his report a statement concerning the Nez Perce made to him by Charles Montieth.

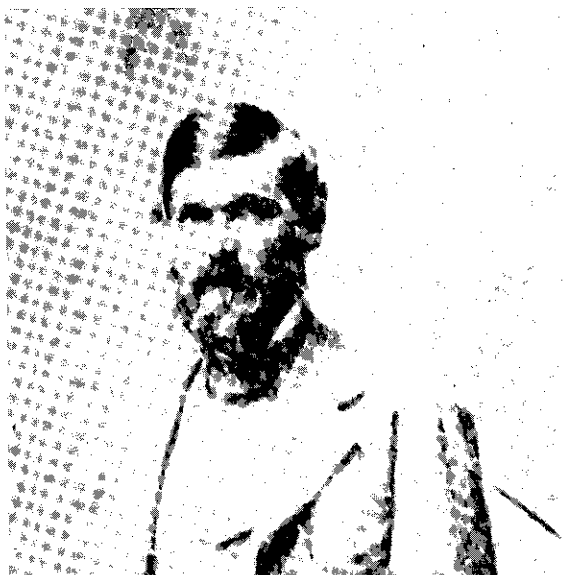
It is claimed for the Nez Perces that they are further advanced in civilization than any other tribe of Indians on the Pacific Coast, and in fact compare favorably with any of the five civilized tribes of the Indian Territory. They number about 1430 souls, own about 17,000 head of horses and 7,000 head of cattle. As to the season crops they have harvested about 35,000 bushels of wheat, 18,000 bushels of oats, 5,000 bushels of corn and vegetables in large quantities; cut 1500 tons of hay, Cultivate about 6,500 acres of land. The introduction of law and order among this tribe in the way of the Court of Indian Officers, is working wonders. This Court is presided over by three Native Judges, who dispense justice in a way that would do credit to our white judiciary.

During the first 18 months said Judges have passed upon 25 cases, the offenders have been

fined and paid into the Court Treasury on account of said fines \$395.00. What is supposed to be an intelligent Congress (the best one) refuses to grant any support for said Judges, expecting them to render such service without compensation. The police received only \$8.00 per month and one suit of clothes for the year. Could a community of Whites be cited who are thirsty for the law and order to an extent that would cause men to render service as above stated, without compensation in one instance, and comparatively speaking, no compensation, as in the case of the police? These Indians have delivered 45,000 ft. of logs and subscribed about \$800.00 for a new Church Edifice to be erected this fall. The tribe is self supporting with the exception of the few agricultural implements furnished by the Government and subsistence furnished during the winter to about 40 old men widows and orphans [sic]. About 90% wear citizens dress. About 800 are members of the Presbyterian Church. We have a boarding and industrial school building which will accommodate 80 children—average attendance during the year about 50.

AFTER FILING A report of his visit, Snow forwarded to the Church Presidency a proposed plan of procedure. It was sent from Walla Walla, Washington Territory, on August 28, 1885:

From my reflections on the subject of introducing the Gospel [this would include both doctrine and way of life] among the Indians on the reservations, I consider there is but one way that would be politic to pursue: the one you suggested in your communication to me July 2nd, viz: Establish an agency in the vicinity of these reservations. And I will suggest that a piece of land, or farm, be purchased, of 40, 80 or 160 acres, near the Nez Perces and somewhere between the two reservations. The country is settled, and land must be bought at second hand, but there will be no difficulty in finding parties willing to sell. Let a suitable person with a proper assistant start at once with wagon, good hardy team, an extra animal, small tent, &c. and proceed to the Nez Perces Reservation, spending one, two, or



Perrin Whitman in 1863. ISHS 77-60.20.

more weeks if necessary, before purchasing. The object of this undertaking should be understood, and this idea carried out, that this business is their own—they make this purchase for themselves. The farm should be worked and improved—made a pleasant and delightful home and self-sustaining. The Indians have homes of their own and these could be visited and instructed, and return those visits as they pleased without hindrance.

A successful mission here will enable us to reach those tribes in the North-West, along the Pacific Coast, Washington and Oregon; therefore [I] think that too much importance cannot be attached to these endeavors.

I would suggest Elder Abraham Zundel as a suitable person to select, make purchase and take the charge and responsibility of this mission. He is first Counselor to Bp. Facer of Willard City, wise, prudent, industrious, a good financier, has cultivated an interest in the Indians, and will engage in the work with life and energy. He will need an assistant but I would not wish to suggest any one without consulting Bro. Zundel. I will furnish the brethren appointed with maps of the country, and various information and suggestions that may assist them in their labors.

The two brethren should go prepared to stay, communications, or freight can be got through any time without difficulty.

Snow left Walla Walla on September 10 and rode the train the five hundred miles to Neeleyville, a small agricultural settlement a few miles west of the Fort Hall Reservation where the Bannocks or northern Paiutes were located. On the basis of what he learned at Fort Hall, he addressed a communication to the First Presidency recommending a comprehensive program for Fort Hall Indians, of whom 150 or 200 had become Mormons. Snow then went to Brigham City, one hundred miles further, where he quietly organized a company to go to the Wind River Reservation in west-central Wyoming. In addition to Snow as leader, the expedition consisted of four bishops and two counselors to bishops—including one Shoshoni, James Brown. They left on September 24, 1885, with two wagons, one carriage, three spans of horses, and two riding animals. The 600-mile round trip occupied twenty-one days, including two and one-half days at the reservation in council meetings with chiefs and other persons.

UPON HIS RETURN to Brigham City on October 22, Snow busied himself organizing to put the Indian program into motion. He wrote letters of appointment and instruction and arranged for outfits for traveling, for supplies and implements and provisions—all the while trying to avoid discovery by the federal deputy marshals attempting to arrest him for violation of the Edmunds Act. A month later, on November 20, deputies did in fact locate him and arrest him on a charge of lascivious cohabitation—meaning that he lived as spouse with one or more women who were his plural wives, almost a compliment to someone seventy-one years of age. Trial was held in late December of 1885 and early January 1886. He was found guilty, of course, and sentenced to eighteen months in jail and fines of \$900. In discussing the possibility of appeal, he learned that his appeal, regarded as a test of the law's constitutionality, would be delayed unless he were to go to jail. He therefore entered the Utah territorial penitentiary at the mouth of Parley's Canyon southeast of Salt Lake City on March 12, 1886. In consideration of his advanced age—he was now seventy-two—and

his "delicate condition," authorities permitted him to retain his hair and beard. His case finally reached the United States Supreme Court and on February 7, 1887, the court granted his habeas corpus petition for release. On February 8, 1887, after eleven months of incarceration, he was given his freedom.

In the months that followed, having served his term, Snow was free to openly resume his ecclesiastical duties. As the senior apostle "in circulation," he presided over general conferences of the church, directed much of its business, and dedicated the Manti Temple, which was completed in May of 1888. The next year he was sustained as president of the Council of Twelve Apostles, putting him in line to become president of the church. With the death of Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow succeeded to that position on September 13, 1898, at age eighty-four. After three years as president, he died in 1901.

THE COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMS that Snow suggested for assisting Indian Latter-day Saints were not fully applied until 1943, under the direction of George Albert Smith and Spencer W. Kimball. Those programs, which are still being carried out, include:

- the establishment of a kind of Mormon Peace Corps, in which several hundred young LDS men and women have engaged in a voluntary ministry among Native Americans, helping them with their farming, cooperative enterprises, small businesses, and recreational and educational programs;

- the Indian Seminary Program, in which thousands of Indian boys and girls attend after-school or before-school classes in religion and participate in various kinds of organized activities;

- the provision of scholarships and special programs at Brigham Young University to assist several hundred Native American students to study and receive advanced degrees.

- the voluntary Indian Placement Program, in which many LDS Indian children are temporarily placed during the school year in homes of families in communities where they can go to school. ■

PLATEAU SHAMANISM AND MARCUS WHITMAN

by Roderick Sprague

Among the myths and misunderstandings surrounding Marcus and Narcissa Whitman is the motivation for their killing in 1847. This survey of tribal views on killing shamans was prepared by an anthropologist at the University of Idaho. The Nez Perce beadwork shown on page 56 was photographed by Jane Gay in the early 1890's (ISHS 63-221.170).

IT IS VIRTUALLY an article of faith among Northwest historians that the "excuse" for the Cayuse killing Marcus Whitman and other whites at Waiilatpu was the fact that if an Indian doctor failed to cure a patient his family could kill the doctor: "among . . . the Cayuse, killing medicine men for failing to cure patients" was accepted.¹ Whitman himself was, according to his chief biographer, well aware of the practice:

Whitman noted that when a Cayuse medicine man was unable to cure a patient, the relatives of the deceased would often kill him. Whitman in a letter to Greene dated April 7, 1843, wrote: "The number & horror of the deaths of this kind that have come under by observation have been great."²

Narcissa Whitman held the same view: "when one dies in your care they will hold you responsible for his life, and you are in great danger of being killed."³

¹Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, *The Cayuse Indians: Imperial Tribesmen of Old Oregon* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 100.

²Clifford M. Drury [editor], *Nine Years with the Spokane Indians: The Diary, 1838-1848, of Elkanah Walker* (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1976), 389n.

³Narcissa Whitman to parents, brothers and sisters, March 30, 1837, in *Transactions of the Nineteenth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1891* (Portland, Oregon, 1893), 95-96.

⁴Verne F. Ray, "Culture Element Distributions: XXII, Plateau," *Anthropological Records* (1942), 8/2:241.

⁵James A. Teit, "The Shuswap," *Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History* (1909), 4/7:612-613; Teit, "The Lillooet Indians," *ibid.* (1906), 4/5:288; Teit, "The Thompson Indians of British Columbia," *ibid.* (1900), 2/4:361; Ray, "Culture Element Distributions," 241.

⁶Walter Cline, et al., *The Sinkaieth or Southern Okanogan of Washington*, General Series in Anthropology, No. 6 (Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Co., 1938), 163.

⁷Ray, "Cultural Element Distributions," 241; Ray, *The Sanpoil and Nespelem: Salishan Peoples of Northeastern Washington*, University of Washington, Publications in Anthropology, 5 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1933), 210.

⁸Allan Smith, personal communication with the author, 1986.

⁹Drury, *Nine Years*, 382.

¹⁰James A. Teit, "The Salishan Tribes of the Western Plateaus," in *Forty-fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology for 1927-28* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1930), 195-196.

How accurate is this view of the Plateau shaman? A quick review of the classic ethnographic literature, starting in the far north and moving south around the Sahaptan territory and then back to the Cayuse, reveals a startlingly different view concerning the killing of shamans. The exceptions present even more moderate positions.

Among the Carrier, malignant shamans were killed without recourse.⁴ This means that a shaman could be killed for practicing witchcraft against a person but not for simply failing to cure someone who died. Among the Shuswap a "bewitching" shaman could be killed; among the Lillooet "shamans were sometimes killed for bewitching or causing the death of people," and the same is also true for the Thompson.⁵

The only justification for killing a shaman among the Southern Okanogan was for refusing to attend a patient because of malice. After due warning the shaman might be killed by the "chiefs and the people."⁶ The killing of a shaman who had killed through witchcraft was accepted among the Sanpoil and Nespelem, and among the Wenatchi and Kalispel killing a malignant shaman was accepted.⁷ On the other hand, in 1936 ethnologist Allan Smith's oldest informant (born 1854) "stated categorically that Kalispel shamans who failed to cure were never killed."⁸ No information is available for the Spokane, but missionary Elkanah Walker implied that the killing of shamans was practiced.⁹

As for the Coeur d'Alene shamans: "If the person they treated died, they received no payment. Some [shamans] could bewitch people and in this way cause their death. Occasionally they were killed for doing this."¹⁰

One major exception in the Plateau involved the Kutenai. "There was no provision for the

punishment of a medicine-man who exerted evil power, for there could be no proof of his guilt." The only observation on the Flathead is that malignant shamans were killed.¹¹

The Klamath practice was like that of the Coeur d'Alene: no payment if no cure and death if guilty of bewitching. One early ethnologist presents the popular interpretation; but a reading of the Klamath text itself shows that bewitching must be involved before killing of a shaman is permitted. The Wasco-Wishram follow the general Plateau pattern of killing a bewitching shaman, but not for the failure to cure.¹²

The Tenino, Kittitas, and Klickitat are all in the classification of groups who kill malignant shamans. The Yakima shamans "were much feared because of their ability to produce sickness and even death, and the killing of a medicine-man for a deed of this kind was not rare." Nez Perce shamans could be killed for sorcery.¹³

The Umatilla too are classified in one study as one of the groups who kill malignant shamans.¹⁴ Otherwise, from the classical anthropological sources on the Umatilla, Cayuse, and Wallawalla we have no information. However, considering the usual uniformity of Plateau culture and the widespread practice of killing shamans engaging in witchcraft or sorcery but the universal denial or lack of mention of killing for failure to cure, it is safe to assume that such distinctions were made by those at Waiilatpu.

The apparent feelings of those at the mission are found in an account by a Nez Perce who was called Yellow Bull by the whites. The important part of this account as reported by Edward H. Curtis is as follows:

A Nez Perce named Kulkulshmulshmul, my mother's brother, went to Waiilatpu, where he had a wife. When he came back he gave an account of what was going on there. He was crying because his wife had died of the sickness: she had taken some of the Doctor's medicine, and spots came

out on her face. Two hundred people had died. An employe at the mission, a man who had many wives, told the Indians that Doctor Whitman was putting poison in their medicine and killing them. One of the Indians made himself sick in order to test the Doctor, saying that if the Doctor's medicine killed him they would know that he was the cause of the death of the others. He took the medicine and died. Then the head-men met in council and made an agreement that the Doctor should be killed because two hundred of the people had died after taking his medicine.¹⁵

THUS IT WOULD appear from a review of the literature and from Yellow Bull's testimony that Whitman was killed not because he failed to cure the sick who died but rather because he was perceived as killing local Indians through witchcraft. The time had come to protect the population from this evil person, as was the accepted Plateau practice. The case was unusual and called for unusual measures including the killing of Narcissa—who, according to Yellow Bull, at the time of the killing was carrying down the stairs a bundle that "contained something which would be death to all those outside."¹⁶ The others killed were mature males, a prudent move under the conditions and not unusual in a typical Plateau feud.

It is time to view the Waiilatpu debacle not as a vengeful act but as an overdue protective act, well within the accepted procedures of the culture. ■

¹¹Edward H. Curtis, *The North American Indian*, 20 vols. (Norwood, Massachusetts: Plimpton Press, 1911), 7:130; Ray, "Culture Element Distributions," 241.

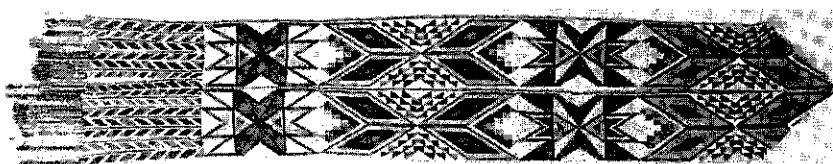
¹²Leslie Spier, *Klamath Ethnography*, University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology, 30 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1930), 127-128; Albert Samuel Gatschet, "The Klamath Indians of Southwestern Oregon," in *Contributions to North American Indian Ethnology*, U.S. Department of the Interior, Geographical and Geological Survey of the Rocky Mountain Region, Vol. 2, Part 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1890), 69; Leslie Spier and Edward Sapir, *Wishram Ethnography*, University of Washington, Publications in Anthropology, 3:3 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1930), 247.

¹³Ray, "Culture Element Distributions," 241; Curtis, *North American Indian*, 7:12; Deward E. Walker, "Sorcery among the Nez Perce," in *Systems of North American Witchcraft and Sorcery*, Deward E. Walker, editor (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1970), 275.

¹⁴Ray, "Culture Element Distributions," 241.

¹⁵Curtis, *North American Indian*, 7:81.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 82.



THE CAYUSE INDIAN WAR

by Terence O'Donnell

A very different tone of voice can be applied to a discussion of quasi-military efforts to gain control of white-Indian relations after the Whitmans' deaths. The author is an historian on the staff of the Oregon Historical Society.

S NOW HAD BEGUN to fall; and so the men left off their game of horse-billiards, which was a kind of shuffle-board, and walked back to the small, green-shuttered building by the waterfall that was the place of their assemblage. The time was two o'clock on the afternoon of December 8, 1847. The place was the Methodist meeting house in Oregon City and the men were the elected representatives of the Provisional Government of Oregon, now in session.

Stomping the snow from their feet, the men went into the little building, warmed themselves at the fire, and then sat down to business. It was then, in that muffled silence which snow brings, that they heard the terrible news. Dr. Marcus Whitman; his wife, Narcissa; and twelve of their associates had been murdered by the Cayuse Indians. Fifty-three other persons of the mission community, mainly women and children, were in captivity.

Looking back from the different circumstances of the present, it is difficult to imagine the thoughts and emotions of these men gathered in the little lamp-lit church on that darkening, snow-silent December afternoon. Fear there surely was, sickening fear deep in the gut. The Willamette Valley Indians might be debilitated and few in number; but east of the mountains, where the murders had occurred, there were large tribes of mounted warriors who were not in the least debilitated. This is what struck fear, well-founded fear—that these tribes would confederate and pour down through the mountain passes to flood the valley with the settlers' blood.

Then there was the outrage, almost as difficult for us to comprehend. To the settlers the Indians were an inferior race, to be bettered, or banished or butchered; at any rate, inferior. And thus the outrage, that a barbaric horde should wreak offense on a civilized community.

And here, perhaps, the outrage centered not so much on the murders, over and done with, the victims with their God in heaven, as with the fact that the captive white women were subject to the defilement of the savage redman's lascivious embrace. This was the horror, this the fate that, as the nineteenth century put it, was a fate far worse than death. So the rage and fear as the day darkened into night around the little church.

With morning came a vigorous resolve that took four forms: to rescue the captives; to punish the murderers; to prevent a coalition of the tribes; and finally to seek help from the United States.

The first step was a call for fifty volunteers under the command of the gallant H. A. G. Lee, who were to depart for The Dalles immediately to protect the property of the missionaries and immigrants and to establish a military base there at the gateway of the plateau and the region of the conflict. That afternoon forty-six volunteers showed up at Moss's Main Street Hotel, where Judge James W. Nesmith presented Lee with a flag hastily sewn by the ladies of the town. Then all proceeded in the rain to the riverbank, where the little force boarded a bateau, stuck the flag in the bow, and cast off to the cheers of the assembled. Thus the curtain rises on the first act of that five-part tragedy called the Indian wars of Oregon.

Lee and his stalwarts on their way, the next act of the provisional legislature was to make a formal call for a major volunteer force of 500 men to serve for ten months. The prospects were poor. Those first forty-six volunteers were mainly single men, newly arrived, game for the lark of battle. Further recruitment, however, would depend mainly on the willingness of settled farmers to leave their families and their fields. The second problem



Joel Palmer, from History of the Pacific Northwest.

was how to equip such a force, assuming it could be raised, since the treasury of the Provisional Government of Oregon contained at this time \$43.72. In other words, those two basic requirements for any war, men and money, might well be hard to come by.

Nonetheless, by hook and by crook, a little army of 240 men was finally assembled under the command of Colonel Cornelius Gilliam—a veteran of the Black Hawk War, famed tracker of runaway slaves, hardshell Baptist preacher, and a man of whom it has been said that he preferred the smoke of gunpowder to that of the peace pipe. Also, the Provisional Government of Oregon had finally been obliged to go to the detested British at the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Vancouver and there, dining on a very large platter of crow, beg for money that in an unofficial manner the British gave them.

Thus then with this little army, and a bit of money for supplies, did the government hope to accomplish the first two of its objectives: to rescue the captives and punish the murderers. Next on the agenda was the prevention of a coalition of the tribes. With this in mind, two peace commissioners were appointed to travel with the army—Joel Palmer and Robert Newell, both estimable men, neither of them scalawags like a number of their associates. Finally, the colorfully persuasive Joe Meek

was chosen to go to Washington and plead for help from his shirttail relative President James K. Polk.

There were, however, problems with all of this. Meek could not depart because it was the middle of winter. So far as the army was concerned there were cross purposes, to say the least, for Gilliam wanted war whereas Palmer and Newell wanted peace. Also, there was question whether sufficient supplies could be obtained, and if so, the horrendous problem of transport up the Columbia to the battlefield. Finally, no one was very certain how long the soldiers would stay in the field and not desert.

MEANWHILE, WHAT HAD happened to the captives and what were the Cayuse themselves about? On the morning of December 20 their chiefs assembled at the house of Bishop A. M. A. Blanchet on the Umatilla and there drew up a petition that the bishop promised to dispatch to Governor George Abernethy. The petition began with a statement of the chiefs' conviction that the Whitmans intended to exterminate the Cayuse so that the whole of their lands might fall to the whites. Thus the massacre. Next the chiefs proposed that the Americans forgive the murders as they, the Cayuse, had forgiven the Americans the murder of certain Indians; then that peace commissioners be sent, into whose hands they would commit the captives unharmed; and finally that Americans no longer travel in their country, since their young braves might do them harm.

Three days later that tough little Hudson's Bay trader Peter Skene Ogden arrived among the Cayuse. Calling their chiefs a set of hermaphrodites for not having controlled their young men, he demanded the release of the captives and pledged a ransom in return. The Cayuse agreed. On the morning of January 10, 1848, the cannon mounted on Portland's waterfront fired a salvo into the winter air. It was a salute to the passing flotilla of huddled figures and the little man who stood in the bow of the lead boat—Peter Skene Ogden and the survivors of the Whitman massacre. Cannon were discharged again at Oregon City, where the survivors disembarked and fell into the arms of the waiting citizens. What all had

feared was found to be true; the women had been ravished. The reaction to this can be gauged from an editorial that appeared in the *Oregon City Oregon Spectator*.

Let the Cayuse be pursued with unremitting hatred and hostility, until their life blood has atoned for their infamous deeds; let them be hunted as beasts of prey; let their name and race be blotted from the face of the earth, and the places that once knew them, know them no more forever.¹

In the eyes of the settlers, however, the Cayuse were not the only enemy. The Hudson's Bay Company too was thought to have had a hand in the massacre, if not directly then by not warning the Whitmans of the Indians' hostility—a charge quite without foundation. Nonetheless, the feeling against the British was so intense that at one point hot-blooded Colonel Gilliam threatened, with much support, to capture the fort and relieve the Company of its powder and shot.

Far more vicious was the conviction that Bishop Blanchet and his priests had directly encouraged the Cayuse to murder the Whitmans. Henry Spalding, arriving in Oregon City with the survivors, was not at pains to discourage the notion. In view of the intense hostility that existed between Protestant and Catholic in this period and place, when—as Frances Fuller Victor put it—"the average Christian was pledged in his own conscience to be a bigot,"² the simple presence of the priests in the Walla Walla country at the time of the massacre was ample evidence to most Protestants of the priests' complicity. Thus when Gilliam's volunteers finally started up the river, some were heard to say that their first shot would be for the bishop and his priests. And by early January the army *was* finally on the move—prepared to blot the Cayuse from the face of the earth, as the *Spectator* had put it.

Who were these Cayuse? Their homeland was the Walla Walla and Grande Ronde valleys. They held their annual summer fairs,

on the banks of the latter's looping river, where they gambled and wrestled, danced and raced—on foot or on their little piebald ponies, fleet as hares. Almost all white commentaries, beginning with Alexander Ross in 1811, found the Cayuse striking in appearance: a beautifully proportioned people, sometimes standing six feet or more. They were vain of their hair, wearing it in great poufs to either side of the head or down the back almost to the ground, and they loved to sparkle it with bits of mirror or of glass. In some instances the septum of the nose was pierced and from it hung a wolf's tooth.

They were vain of their clothes as well, shirts of fringed hide, sashed low on the hips, fringed leggings, moccasins, all "richly garnished," as Ross said. The women, who practiced head flattening, wore ankle-length garments of ornamented skin and little caps of willow twigs and had, according to John Townsend (writing in the 1830's), "a peculiarly sleepy and languishing appearance... as if naturally inclined to lasciviousness";³ he added that in fact they were not promiscuous.

Another object of adornment was their horses. The Cayuse were above all a horse people, the herds of chiefs often in the thousands. In particular, they valued white horses; to them they would attach feathered headpieces, streak their withers with dyes of different hues, and braid their tails with colored ribbons. What a sight, these six-foot bedizened warriors on their equally bedizened mounts.

As for their character, again almost all commentators agree that they did not steal and disdained trade, that in manner they were aloof, impatient of insult, above all proud. The meaning of Cayuse in their own language meant "a superior people." They were.

SO, OFF TO war with them; Colonel Gilliam our commander. Up the north bank of the Columbia to portage the supplies at the Cascades, then along the south bank to The Dalles. It had been a cold trip, mid-January in the Columbia Gorge breasting currents, wind, and ice. They found poor Lee with only thirteen men left; the rest had deserted.

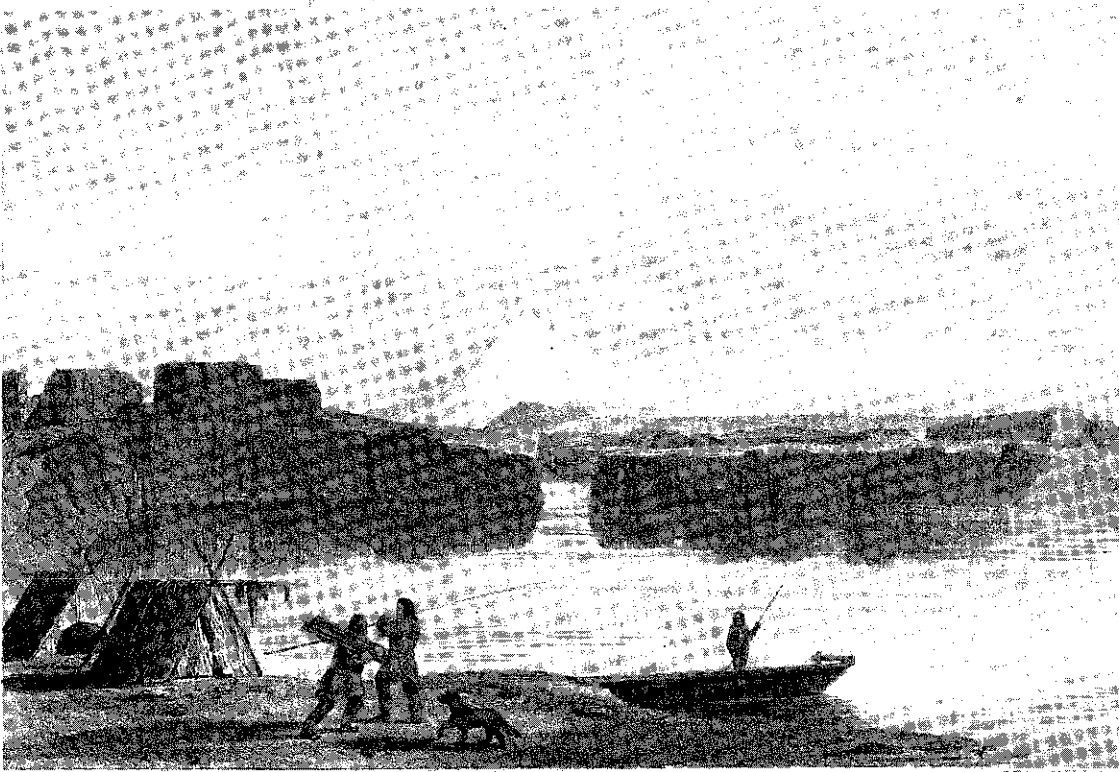
¹*Oregon Spectator*, January 20, 1848.

²Frances Fuller Victor, *The Early Indian Wars of Oregon...* (Salem, 1894), 160.

³John K. Townsend, "Narrative of a Journey across the Rocky Mountains, to the Columbia River," in Reuben Gold Thwaites, *Early Western Travels*, 32 vols. (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1905), 21:350.

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GENERAL REPORT—PLATE XLVII.



DALLIES.

It was now, their first night at The Dalles, that the first casualty of the Cayuse War took place. I will leave its description to Colonel Gilliam in a letter to his wife.

One of the guard shot a squaw in the thy (sic) thinking that she was an Indian man. It appears that she was a-crawling along on the ground for an appointment between her and some of our young men, which I'm sorry to say such things frequently occur at this place.⁴

The first real battle of the war occurred a few days later at a place called Stag Hollow, twenty miles up the east bank of the Deschutes. Deschutes Indians had made off with some of the army's cattle, so Gilliam with 220 men had set off in pursuit—to get, as he wrote his wife, “as many horses and cattle as I can; likewise scalps.”⁵ On the arrival of the troops the Indians skedaddled, the volunteers after them with shots and yells, lots of yells, curses, taunts, for in this war both sides were

fortunately short of powder and so often resorted to what might be called verbal explosives.

At any rate, and finally, the Deschutes, as Gilliam wrote, “fled like wolves and scattered among the hills and canyon.” Four whites were killed, and twenty to thirty Indians, a Deschutes village destroyed, some of the stolen cattle reclaimed, and what Gilliam called “a quantity of peas.”⁶ With regard to the Indians killed it is difficult to know how accurate that figure is. It can be gathered from reading the documents of the Oregon Indian wars that the Indians were often the better marksmen.

⁴Colonel Gilliam to Mrs. Gilliam, January 25, 1848, MSS 2205, Oregon Historical Society, Portland.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Colonel Gilliam to Adjutant Lovejoy, February 7, 1848, MSS 2205, Oregon Historical Society; J. Henry Brown, *Brown's Political History of Oregon* (Portland: Wiley B. Allen, 1892), 357.

So the troops returned to The Dalles and to tragedy and problems. A late-arriving volunteer, up to high jinks, pretended to be an Indian to tease the guard who shot him dead. Now, already, they were seriously short of supplies—wheat in particular but also powder, shot, bridles, saddles, boots, sugar, tea, tobacco, nails, shirts, trousers, cloth for bandages, and finally paper on which to write out requests for all the articles just named. The other problem was Colonel Gilliam, as was so often to be the case. He was anxious to be off for scalps. His instructions were to wait for the peace commissioners, and since they had not arrived he was ready to leave without them.

Indeed, where were Palmer and Newell? The answer is simple; they were trying with the utmost difficulty to gather and transport supplies, for Palmer had been appointed quartermaster general as well as peace commissioner.⁷ However, by February 3 Palmer and Newell were finally on their way, Palmer finding that the wheat they were bringing with them had been badly adulterated—the old game of profiteering side by side as always with the game of war. At the Cascades they were furious to find that Colonel Gilliam and his troops had left the cannon, all 1,500 pounds of it, for them to portage. Somehow they did it, arriving at The Dalles on February 11.

The meeting between the peace commissioners and Colonel Gilliam was an uneasy one indeed, disagreeing as they did on aims, but finally Palmer and Newell convinced Gilliam that the commissioners should proceed ahead into the upper country with flags of peace and only a small escort, the body of the army to stay behind. The following day, however, the colonel withdrew his agreement and ordered the army to march en masse, a show of force that would hardly convince the Indians of the peaceful intentions of the whites. After all, the official policy at this time was not really war

but simply to prevent a coalition of the tribes and to take the murderers themselves into custody. But Gilliam was determined to march and get his scalps, although his troops were hardly in condition to do so.

For one thing, discipline had quite broken down—not that there was much in the beginning. Captain L. N. English shot an Indian, just for diversion it appeared, “a shameful thing” said Robert Newell.⁸ Also, the men were breaking into the belongings the immigrants had stored at The Dalles until they could get them in the spring. Gilliam could not control them: after all, these men had not come to Oregon to be ordered about by anyone. One volunteer threw in the sponge and demoted himself from sergeant to private because as sergeant he got nothing but abuse.

Then, too, almost none of the men were trained. Most, it is true, had probably served in their local militias back in the States. But those militia meetings once or twice a year soon gave up drill for wrestling, getting drunk, playing pranks, competing in violent games.

Finally, and to complicate everything, the volunteers, as soldiers seem to do, found some booze: one part alcohol, three parts water, and then for color and flavor a little tobacco or tea, a bit of red pepper, some ginger and black molasses and who knows what else. It was the water in the booze that caused the real trouble. It was bad, so the tipplers came down with dysentery. What a mess; this undersupplied, untrained, disorderly, drunken, sick army that could not seem to decide whether it wanted war or peace. And in the midst of all this, word came that the tribes of the upper Columbia had gone to join the Cayuse.

THEY STARTED OUT, following the immigrant trail from The Dalles: first Five Mile Creek, then the Deschutes, then the John Day. At Willow Creek, where they camped about fifteen miles south of present-day Heppner Junction, it looked as if Gilliam had mutiny on his hands. One of his men's complaints was the dearth of Indians. Whatever the official policy might have been, the volunteers had come for some sport. They were to have the following day at a place called Sand Hollow.

⁷There is a wonderful letter in the Oregon State Archives at Salem that gives a notion of their problems. It is from a Salem cooper—apparently Salem's one and only—refusing to make another barrel unless he is paid in *cash*, not in scrip. And there was no cash, or at any rate not enough of it, with which to pay him.

⁸Robert Newell, *Robert Newell's Memoranda*, Dorothy O. Johansen, editor ([Portland]: Champoe Press, 1959), 100.

Sand Hollow is ten miles south of modern Interstate 84, near present-day Alpine. It is a place of rugged cuts and washes, hills several hundred feet high bordering it on the east. This was the territory of the Cayuse chief called Five Crows, an interesting and appealing figure. It must have been a curious sight, the (by now) 400 mounted men, some wagons "borrowed" from the immigrants, the cannon, and, riding ahead of all, the peace commissioners with their white flags. An army riding out to war, led by men carrying the white flags of peace.

Suddenly they saw the Indians, streaming down the hills to the east. Palmer and Newell galloped toward them, raising their white flags high, but the Indians motioned them back. Peace had failed as it so often does, and the battle began.

The sides were roughly equal except that about 100 of the Indians were women into whose hands the volunteers prayed they would not fall. The whites quickly formed a circle, *Cayuse and Umatilla Indians performed at Meacham, Oregon, July 4, 1923. ISHS 356-E.*



cattle and supplies in the middle. The Cayuse in turn formed a circle around the whites, taunting them. They would kill them all, they cried, and then go to the Willamette and take their women and their land, and to show their contempt for the whites they first shot a dog. Then Five Crows and Grey Eagle, assured by a medicine man that they were inviolate, rode right up to Tom and Charles McKay. Tom killed Grey Eagle outright, Charles shattered Five Crows' arm. Now, too, the cannon was finally fired. It hit nothing, but its noise scared the daylights out of everyone. Finally, after three hours of battle, the Cayuse retired to the hills, leaving perhaps six volunteers wounded, eight Indians killed. It is difficult to determine the accuracy of these figures.

It is not difficult, however, to determine that this was the pivotal battle of the Cayuse War for the neutrals. The Nez Perce, the Walla Walla, portions of the Cayuse, and others were waiting to see who would win or, in other words, which side to join. That night two half-breed Cayuse, the Findley brothers, defected and came in to talk of peace.

The next day the army marched on, camping the night on the Umatilla, of whose waters the Cayuse had vowed the whites would never drink. The day after, they arrived at the devastated mission to be stunned by the scene it presented: the unearthened bodies, chewed by the wolves, strewn in pieces everywhere; Narcissa's head, a tomahawk buried in it. They cut off a lock of her hair for Joe Meek to take to Polk, for now in March the weather was beginning to turn and Meek was ready to depart.

This scene at the mission did not prompt pacific feelings in the breast of Colonel Gilliam. Palmer and Newell, on the other hand, were heartened by the fact that more and more Nez Perce and Cayuse had come in seeking peace. A council was called, but Gilliam stomped out. He had come to fight and fight he would. Shortly after this, however, William Craig — married to a Nez Perce — arrived to say that 250 Nez Perce and Cayuse were coming in to parley for peace. With such numbers Gilliam had no alternative but to listen. Very soon thereafter the Indians rode in with much pomp

THE EFFECT OF MISSIONARY IDEALS ON FAMILY STRUCTURE AND WOMEN'S ROLES IN PLATEAU INDIAN CULTURE

by Lillian A. Ackerman

An anthropologist's understanding of family and gender structure among the Plateau Indians offers a fresh insight into the impact of missionary activity. The author is a research associate in the department of anthropology at Washington State University.

MANY CHANGES OCCURRED in family structure among the Plateau Indians through nineteenth-century Christian missionization. The Christian missionaries recorded their reactions to certain aspects of Plateau family life, but the Indian perspective on these changes is harder to come by. Sometimes Indian reactions were recorded by the missionaries, but they are largely obtained only through inference: through our understanding of what Plateau culture was like aboriginally, and through the contrast between the family practices of Euro-Americans and contemporary Plateau Indians.

Plateau peoples were accustomed to religious proselytizers before Christian missionaries arrived in their territory. The native Plateau religious tradition of the Prophet Dance welcomed new prophets with visions containing a doctrine for enhancing religious experience and reforming the lives of the new adherents.¹ Thus when Christian missionaries arrived in the Plateau with similar goals of improving religious experience and reforming the lives of their converts, we may speculate that the Indians regarded them as another series of prophets with novel visions, similar to those of their native tradition. Consequently, they were prepared to give the missionaries a sympathetic hearing. While this is a speculation, it suggests an explanation of why most Plateau Indians tolerated the familial disruption and reorganization that were pressed onto them by Christian missionaries.

European and Euro-American concepts of proper family structure centered on monogamous marriage and included the beliefs that males should dominate their wives while wives

should submit to domination; that marriages should be lifelong and stable; and that divorce and polygamy should be forbidden. None of the missionaries had any qualms about imposing on the Indians what was for them a non-functional kind of family structure. Whites failed to recognize that the traditional Indian family structure was well suited for a hunting and gathering group. The Indian form of the family was an extended family, in which an elderly couple lived with their grown children (either sex) and their spouses, their grandchildren, and collateral relatives who were there temporarily or permanently.² Indian women had very different roles from those of Euro-American women. They were equal in status to their husbands, in both the private and public arenas; divorce was easy and instigated by either party; and polygamy (actually polygyny) was taken for granted. The Plateau extended family provided economic security for the individual, children were cared for if their parents died or were absent, marriages were unstable because the individuals in it were autonomous, and sexual equality was probably necessary for the efficient economic functioning of the society.³ Even polygyny may have had its functions, as we shall see. Thus dysfunction within Indian society was unavoidable when the missionaries urged changes on the Indian form of the family.

¹Leslie Spier, *The Prophet Dance of the Northwest and its Derivatives: The Source of the Ghost Dance* (Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Co. 1935), 8, 12, 19.

²May Mandelbaum, "The Individual Life Cycle," in Leslie Spier, editor, *The Sinkaieth or Southern Okanagon of Washington* (Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Co., 1938), 118.

³Lillian A. Ackerman, "Sexual Equality in the Plateau Culture Area" (Ph.D. dissertation, Washington State University, 1982), *passim*.

and circumstance, rearing and whirling their horses, both braves and horses gorgeously attired, and the volunteers cheered and saluted them.

And so the peace council began. The participants were Yellow Serpent of the Walla Walla, eleven Nez Perce chiefs, and one Cayuse, Camaspelo. They were given Governor Abernethy's message, which demanded that they give up the murderers and return all stolen goods. Abernethy's message is in general a document of gentleness, even tenderness, and ends with this moving question: "Will you let us be brothers or will you throw us away?"⁹ Newell, too, spoke to the chiefs with gentleness. "My friends," he said, "I am not angry. I am sorry."¹⁰ Palmer, on the other hand, was stern in manner though moderate and fair in what he had to say.

In reply, the Cayuse chief stated that he had not consented to the murder of the Whitmans and would not protect the murderers. Joseph, speaking for the Nez Perce, pledged that they would not affiliate with those Cayuse who were still disaffected.

By and large, the peace commissioners were pleased with the council, for it had achieved their principal purpose: to prevent a coalition of the tribes of the Columbia plateau. That night the assembled Indians entertained the peace commissioners with a war dance. It was, according to Palmer, first rate. A few days later Palmer and Newell returned to Oregon City.

However, the murderers had still not been handed over. Gilliam continued the war against those Cayuse still disaffected and pursued them to Starbuck, where the Tucannon joins the Snake. Here he found that they had already fled across the Snake to safety. Making the best of a bad job, the volunteers rounded up what they thought were Cayuse cattle left behind. In fact, the cattle belonged to the Palouse—who, enraged, drove the volunteers all the way back to the Touchet River, regaining their cattle, inflicting serious casualties.

Whipped and very, very short of food, the troops returned to the mission, where it was decided that Gilliam and half the force should go to The Dalles for the desperately needed supplies. On route back, the morning of March 20, camping on the Umatilla, Colonel Gilliam, removing his gun from the back of a wagon, shot himself dead. That really was the end of the Cayuse Indian war. Of course, summer now was on its way and soon the wheat would head and the corn would silk and these farmer-soldiers wanted their fields and their women. The war continued in only the most sporadic and half-hearted way, with no appreciable results in the field.

It did, however, have its sad epilogue. Despite the peace commissioners' promise to the Cayuse that the whites wanted not their land but only the murderers, their land was in fact confiscated and opened to white settlement only a few months after the promise was given. It is a tragedy almost Greek in its nature and dimensions. Frances Fuller Victor put it well: "The very thing was about to happen which the Cayuse had killed the Whitmans to prevent, namely, the settlement of their lands by whites."¹¹ And so the terrible malediction of the *Oregon Spectator* had come to pass. Let the places that once knew them, know them no more forever.

There is a final tragic note. In the spring of 1850, two years following the war, the alleged five murderers of the Whitmans were hung at Oregon City; but to this day no one is certain if they in fact were the guilty ones or if instead these five Cayuse had sacrificed themselves so that their tribe might finally find peace.

This is an account rather than an interpretation of this first act in the tragedy of the Oregon Indian wars. Even to give a simple account of what happened is hard enough; to hazard an interpretation is trickier yet. Still, four assertions can be made regarding the significance of the Cayuse War—the first three fairly certain, the fourth indubitably so. Indian-white relations, British-American relations, Protestant-Catholic relations—all were poisoned even more. And finally, in this war as in all others there was only one victor, and that was death. ■

⁹Brown, *Political History*, 391.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 394.

¹¹Victor, *Indian Wars*, 217.

Preceding any attempt to change family structure, however, was a more basic reform, in the missionary view. This was to settle the Indians in sedentary communities and to make them forego "nomadism."

THE "NOMADISM" OF the Indian groups was the overriding issue for the missionaries at first contact, though the Plateau people were not truly nomadic. They had an annual round of predictable movements within a well-established territory, which they followed to exploit the food resources of their area. Thus, in the spring, the men fished for salmon, while the women butchered the fish, dried it, and stored it for winter use. As roots and other vegetal foods became available, the women traveled to the various locations of these plants and gathered them during all seasons of the year except winter. Almost all foods were dried and stored for winter use. In the fall, both men and women traveled to the higher elevations to hunt large mammals, mostly deer. The women assisted in the surround method of hunting by helping to drive the prey towards the hunters. After the animals were killed, the women butchered them and dried the meat for winter use. When winter came, people settled in valleys for their relative warmth and stayed until spring.⁴ Thus their movements consisted for the most part of traveling within their own territory.

One-third to one-half of the Indians' subsistence was derived from the large salmon runs that came up the rivers in the spring and summer, while one-half of their food was derived from plants. Hunting provided a supplement to those sources of food.⁵ To settle such a people in one vicinity was to destroy their economy.

⁴Verne F. Ray, *The Sampoil and Nespelem: Salishan Peoples of Northeastern Washington*, University of Washington, Publications in Anthropology, 5 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1932), 27-28.

⁵Angelo Anastasio, "The Southern Plateau: An Ecological Analysis of Intergroup Relations," *Northwest Anthropological Research Notes* (Fall, 1972), 6:119, 122.

⁶Hiram Martin Chittenden and Alfred Talbot Richardson, editors, *Life, Letters and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean De Smet, S.J., 1801-1873*, 4 vols. (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1906), 337; Folder M, Joseph Joset, S.J., Papers, Oregon Province Archives, Crosby Library, Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington (hereafter OPA).

⁷Saint Joseph's Mission Register, in Etienne de Rouge, S.J., "The Indians of the Northwest," vol. 1, OPA.



Fr. Peter John DeSmet. Photo courtesy Robert C. Carriker.

Many—and perhaps all—missionaries, however, saw no advantage in the way the Indians lived. Indeed, they regarded the lives of Indians as indolent: a life without work. They seemed ignorant of or rejected the fact that strenuous efforts were necessary to fish, hunt, and gather wild plants in sufficient quantities to last the winter. Father Peter John DeSmet believed that the "savages . . . are naturally inclined to idleness," while Father Joseph Joset noted that the Skoyelpi (today known as the Colville tribe) were lazy and addicted to gambling. He also believed that fishing required little work.⁶ Etienne de Rouge summed it up best: he repeated the view that Indians can live without working. "Nature procures for him ample riches." He was later surprised that the Indians were industrious when they took up farming.⁷

The missionaries seemed scandalized that the Indians were not "working." It may be that since hunting and fishing were leisure activities in western culture, they believed the same to be true for Indians. Perhaps they were misled by the holiday atmosphere surrounding

many Indian economic activities. "Work" in Europe and white America was often considered grim and laborious and certainly was not an activity meant to be celebrated.

Perhaps the most basic reason why the annual round was so displeasing to the missionaries was the handicap it presented to the Christian style of making converts. They believed that settling the Indians in one spot was their first task. To make this possible, Protestant and Catholic missionaries alike attempted to teach farming. Henry Harmon Spalding said that the Indians had to be settled before they could be saved; otherwise, he could sermonize only three times a year. He believed that religious training required the Indians' constant presence, so they had to be persuaded to give up hunting for food.⁸ Samuel Parker looked forward to a Christian Nez Perce community so the Indians could stop their "dangerous wanderings"—and stop warring with the Blackfeet. At the same time, he was evaluating the land he passed through in terms of farming suitability.⁹ DeSmet too deplored the Indians' "inclination to a wandering life."¹⁰

The missionaries believed that they had to change the structure of the society and the economy. They saw their task as introducing "domestic over nomadic virtues," introducing agriculture, and even devising a "more serviceable political system" for political and social stability.¹¹ Thus the missionaries were prepared to drastically change a culture and refashion it as they thought necessary.

The Indians did take up agriculture, seemingly with enthusiasm. DeSmet noted that the Kalispel were intent on taking up the plow. The exact historical reasons for this eagerness are lost to us, but hints appear in missionary records. Spalding noted in 1839 that the Indians returned from hunting buffalo with little meat because the animals were becoming scarce—a circumstance that made them more receptive to practicing alternative forms of economy. By the middle of the nineteenth century, with settlers pouring into their territory and being themselves pressured to go onto reservations, the Indians had no choice but to farm or they would have had nothing.¹² Only by working the land and settling down on

it might their claim to it be recognized.

The missionaries planned settled farming communities. Buildings were constructed, among them a few cabins for Indian families. From 1840 to 1880, the Indians farmed but also used foods occurring naturally in the environment as a supplement (it could also be argued that they used cultivated foods as a supplement to their wild native foods, an impression received by this writer from Colville Reservation elders).¹³ In 1876, the Coeur d'Alene, at the urging of the Jesuit missionaries, gave up buffalo hunting forever because the resource was disappearing and turned much of their energy over to farming. They occupied rich agricultural lands for this purpose, at the behest of Fathers Joset and Alexander Diomedi, because the missionaries knew that incoming settlers would compete with the Indians for their own land. At about this time, Diomedi commented that full-time farming was achieved among the Coeur d'Alene and hunting and fishing were regarded as a leisure-time activity.¹⁴

The Kalispel too took to agriculture. DeSmet commented that they benefited from being separated from their hunting and gathering mode of life. He thought that roots and berries contained little nourishment and believed that the Indians were half-starved most of the time—a common Euro-American misconception that is current even today. DeSmet's ambition was to install every family ("family" being undefined) in a house with a patch of ground. Working against his objective was the Indians' fondness for native roots, which were and are nutritionally valuable, and their insistence on having them despite the availability of agricultural products.¹⁵

⁸Clifford M. Drury, *Henry Harmon Spalding* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1936), 167, 168, 292.

⁹Samuel Parker, *Journal of an Exploring Tour beyond the Rocky Mountains* (Ithaca, New York: Andrus, Woodruff, and Gauntlett, 1844), 114, 126.

¹⁰Chittenden, *De Smet*, 125.

¹¹Robert I. Burns, S.J., *The Jesuits and the Indian Wars of the Northwest* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1966), 39-40.

¹²Chittenden, *De Smet*, 480; Drury, *Spalding*, 231; Burns, *Jesuits*, 418.

¹³Burns, *Jesuits*, 49, 52.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 379; Alexander Diomedi, S.J., *Sketches of Indian Life in the Pacific Northwest* (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1978 [1894]), 79.

¹⁵Chittenden, *De Smet*, 1269, 1274; Charlotte Ruth Karr McKee, "Mary Richardson Walker, Her Book," 2 vols., typescript in Holland Library, Washington State University, Pullman, Washington, 432-433.

THE MISSIONARIES DID not restrict their alterations to the economy and the religion. Changing the political structure also was an important objective.¹⁶ They seemed not to like the Indians' political structure and did not understand it. First of all, the individualism of the Indians must have seemed alien. They changed residence as they pleased, they moved around constantly if they wished, and the chief's advice could be safely ignored. The chief was not an office that authority-habituated Europeans and Euro-Americans could approve of. His function was advisory only, and his office consisted mainly of the right to persuade others to correct action. If persuasion was inadequate, disapproval might follow. If disapproval was burdensome to an individual, he could choose to move to another village—thus evading even diluted authority altogether.¹⁷

Coming from a socially stratified society, and not able to understand a polity without social stratification, the Europeans and Euro-Americans hastened to change the autonomy inherent in the political system. They believed the Indians to be as insecure without a hierarchy as they were. Alexander Diomedii felt justified in urging a more authoritative political system, for he believed that the lack of authority was the cause of wars and even of polygamy. He made attempts to persuade a chief to exceed his powers by intervening in an impending feud.¹⁸

Even though they lacked authoritative government, the Indians' equality was a kind of law. Additionally, they had customary rules of behavior and a voice in making decisions.¹⁹ Murder was discouraged within the society by the certain consequences of feuds. This political condition must have seemed bizarre to

the missionaries. They were unaware that the business of social regulation went on in Plateau societies without the necessity of higher authorities.

MISSIONARY PRESSURE AFFECTED Indian family structure in a basic way. The very building of permanent dwellings for the Indians immediately redefined the nature of a family. Whites in the mid-nineteenth century were largely living in nuclear families similar to those current today,²⁰ and apparently they considered no other model when confronted with Plateau Indian society. Thus the cabins the missionaries built that were meant to house an Indian family undoubtedly were not large enough to contain several grown siblings with their spouses and children, elderly parents, aunts, and cousins. In contrast, the native longhouse could be extended indefinitely to contain any number of people. Placing relatives in separate structures must have been the beginning of the attenuation of the extended family, a problem that has a pernicious effect on Indian reservations today. The high incidence of juvenile delinquency and related problems in the present are rooted in the fact that extended families are disappearing.²¹

The weakening of the extended family was probably an unplanned change, since it is little mentioned in missionary writings. However, certain relationships within the family were targeted for elimination—particularly polygamy. Polygamy was to the missionaries the most offensive custom in Plateau culture. They all deplored it and, with few exceptions, did not try to understand it. De-Smet's comments are typical: he spoke of polygamy as "a looser connection." He believed polygamy depressed the birth rate and led to the discarding of wife and children, and he equated the custom in evil to strong drink and "nomadism."²²

Most of the missionaries believed that the practice of polygamy led to the degradation and exploitation of women. Mary Richardson Walker wrote: "Wives are to them what slaves are to the planters as it is their business to provide provisions."²³ These are of course ethno-

¹⁶Burns, *Jesuits*, 339-340.

¹⁷Ray, *Sanpoil*, 109, 111.

¹⁸Diomedii, *Sketches*, 22, 23.

¹⁹Verne F. Ray, *Cultural Relations in the Plateau of Northwestern America*, Publication of the Frederick Webb Hodge Anniversary Publication Fund (Los Angeles: Southwest Museum, 1939), 24; Ray, *Sanpoil*, 109.

²⁰Ann Oakley, *Woman's Work: The Housewife, Past and Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 49.

²¹Lillian Ackerman, "Marital Instability and Juvenile Delinquency among the Nez Perce," *American Anthropologist* (June, 1971), 73:595-603.

²²Chittenden, *De Smet*, 125, 572.

²³McKee, "Mary Richardson Walker," 408.



Moses, from History of the Pacific Northwest.

centric views. Women did indeed provide plant foods to the diet, and a polygynous household would have had more vegetal foods in the house. There might have been a small economic advantage to polygamy—though a relatively unimportant one, as a surplus was usual even in a monogamous household. The small advantage of polygyny would not have been confined to the male; all members of the household benefited. Of course, there were more children to feed, but a reasonable surplus of vegetal foods was possible within such a household.

Chiefs in traditional times almost always had plural wives because they were obligated to feed the entire village during political assemblies, and one wife would have had difficulty providing all of the food for these occasions. Nonetheless, this was not a matter of exploiting the wives, who were hardly drudges. Many chose to enter polygynous marriages for reasons of prestige (marrying a chief) or for love. When one decided she was dissatisfied, she had only to pack her belongings (which were considerable) and return to her natal family or leave to become the wife of another man. Remarriage was always likely, even for older women, since marriages to younger men were relatively common and always acceptable.²⁴

Comments abound in missionaries' writings on how they persuaded or attempted to persuade men and even women to dissolve their

polygynous marriages.²⁵ The "keeping" of plural wives was often seen by the missionaries as raw economic exploitation. Indeed, it is reported that Chief Moses justified keeping his three wives so they could work on his farm and he would not have to pay them.²⁶ In his defense, it should be noted that spouses always play economic roles for each other in any society. The descendants of Chief Moses on the Colville Reservation today have never regarded his polygyny as a vehicle for economic exploitation. They relate that his family was closely knit, with deep friendship among the wives—demonstrated by their continued joint residence after Chief Moses died. It is possible that he made that remark because the missionaries would not have accepted the fact that he was truly fond of all of them.

Admittedly, stable polygynous marriages were rare among Plateau peoples; and if such marriages were stable, they usually consisted of sisters or cousins living as co-wives.²⁷ Polygyny involving unrelated co-wives often led to divorce, or "separation" as some missionaries termed it. But apparently it was not the frequent divorces that offended the missionaries so much as the polygyny itself. They believed it to be degrading because women seemed powerless. The missionaries failed to understand that the ease of divorce prevented exploitation. Even a young girl, married by her parents into a polygynous household, could leave her husband if displeased with him. Her second and subsequent husbands were always chosen by herself, autonomously.²⁸ Thus polygyny was not degrading, nor was it so viewed by either Plateau men or women.

During the mid-nineteenth century, there even might have been a real need for the custom in certain Plateau areas. Asa Bowen Smith commented that many Nez Perce men had died in wars with the Blackfeet and Snake. He noted that there were fewer men than

²⁴Ackerman, "Sexual Equality," 59, 62, 73.

²⁵Maria Ilma Raufer, *Black Robes and Indians on the Last Frontier* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1966), 94, 112, 223, 225, 229, 233, 235; Saint Joseph's Register, 11.

²⁶Raufer, *Black Robes*, 235.

²⁷Mandelbaum, "Individual Life Cycle," 117.

²⁸Ackerman, "Sexual Equality," 62.

women: in one band of 235 people, there were 60 adult men; in another of 143, there were 30 men; out of 125 in a third, 27 men; and so on.²⁹ While Smith's figures are interesting, they do not necessarily reflect a dearth of men; if, for instance, the twenty-seven men in the last example were married monogamously to twenty-seven women, they would have had among them only seventy-one children, an average of less than three children per couple. But if we take Smith's word that there were more adult women than adult men, marriage would not have been possible for the surplus women without the custom of polygyny. The surplus women would have had less access to meat and fish, and fewer children would have been born.

It is recorded that a chief of the Chelans claimed that the priests were trying to destroy them by forbidding polygyny. He complained to Diomedi that men currently had only one wife and few children. "Our hunters and fishermen are disappearing and in the case of war we shall have no soldiers."³⁰ If the male population was reduced through war, as Smith suggested, and a prohibition against polygyny did result in some women being without husbands, the birth rate might have been falling. This is speculation; but if true, it would have been particularly serious because the Plateau tribes had lost and were still losing much of their population to epidemics of European origin.³¹

Diomedi conceded some kind of function to polygyny. He said: "The lack of authority in the government makes the family association stronger than that proper to civilized society, and the want of protection from society is the chief explanation of their polygamy." The Indians needed "the more soldiers...to protect their relatives in case of a collision of



Fr. Joseph Joset. Photo courtesy Robert C. Carriker.

rights; for their strength increases in proportion to their numbers."³²

Diomedi's belief that large families were necessary for security was overstated and caused by a misunderstanding of the political situation in the Plateau. The Plateau area was fairly peaceful internally, and numerous "soldiers" would not ordinarily have been needed for protection. It is true that relatives were necessary in case a feud developed, but feuds were rare and kept in check by social pressure.³³ Thus the existence of polygyny was not the result of a need for warriors.

Only Samuel Parker recognized that the Plateau custom of polygyny was similar to that described in the Bible. His musings on the subject, however, did not dissuade him from preaching against it. And the Indians responded: one chief of the Cayuse told Parker that he disliked the Christian view on polygyny and he intended to keep all of his wives.³⁴

MISSIONARY DISAPPROVAL EXTENDED past polygyny to any marriage contracted through Indian custom. DeSmet wrote:

We hold the principle that, generally speaking, there are no valid marriages among the savages of these countries. . . . We have not found one, even among the best disposed, who after marriage had been contracted in their own fashion, did not believe himself justified in sending

²⁹Clifford M. Drury, *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith Relating to the Nez Perce Mission, 1838-1842* (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1968), 137.

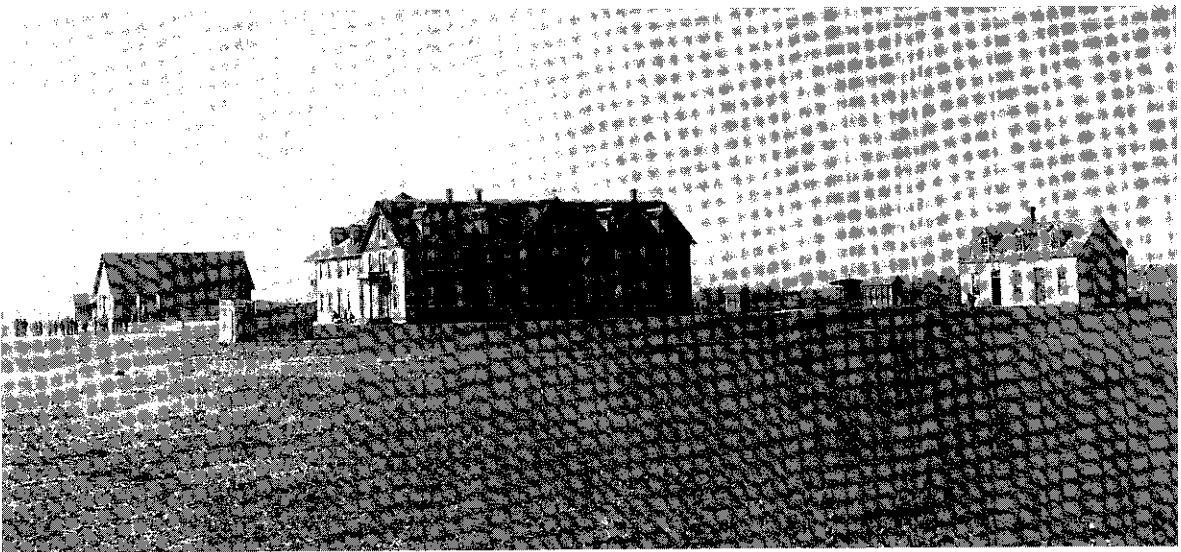
³⁰Raufer, *Black Robes*, 112.

³¹E. Wagner Stearn and Allen E. Stearn, *The Effect of Smallpox on the Destiny of the Amerindian* (Boston: Bruce Humphries, 1945), 76; S. F. Cook, "The Epidemic of 1830-1833 in California and Oregon," in Deward E. Walker, Jr., editor, *The Emergent Native Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1972), 172, 175.

³²Diomedi, *Sketches*, 23.

³³Ray, *Sanpoil*, 113.

³⁴Parker, *Journal*, 196-198, 281.



St. Francis Mission (Montana) and school. Photo courtesy Robert C. Carriker.

away his first wife, whenever he thought fit, and taking another.

He continued that there were no real marriages among the Indians because they were not undertaken seriously. Only marriages performed by the Catholic Church was considered "legal."³⁵ As a consequence, all children born from then on risked the stigma of illegitimacy. The missionaries busied themselves marrying and remarrying couples and recording children as legitimate or not in their records.³⁶

The missionaries regarded the ceremonial exchange of gifts (called the "marriage trade" today) that took place between the parents and relatives of a newly married couple as the buying and selling of a woman. DeSmet believed that a girl was sold for a horse, and he was pleased that he was able to persuade fathers to let their daughters choose their own husbands in the European manner.³⁷ As a result, the custom of the marriage trade, which bound two extended families together in a mutual-aid pact, began to disappear.

The entire subject of marriage was shadowed by the Europeans' and Euro-Americans' concept of adultery, which they confused with polygyny. The Indians also disapproved of adultery, for they valued stable marriages and adultery sometimes led to feuds. However, in the egalitarian Plateau style, adultery could be forgiven if the partners wished the marriage to

continue. DeSmet wrote that "a woman who has been unfaithful or rebellious to her husband will receive pardon the moment she shows sorrow for it." He deplored this easy forgiveness: she must acknowledge a sin. This was an alien belief of Plateau people; even today, they are more forgiving of human weakness.³⁸

As a consequence of adultery, divorce would sometimes occur, or either spouse might elope with another person. Most times, the deserted spouse took the situation philosophically. The primary attachment for Plateau people today is still among their blood relatives; the spouse is a secondary attachment, so many times no great emotional upheaval follows.³⁹

A large minority of people had many marriage partners during their lives. Asa Bowen Smith complained, based on his experience at the Kamiah mission: "The marriage vow is usually not considered at all sacred among this people. Women are taken & put away at pleasure & there is no law to call them to account for it." He failed to note that men were also taken and put away at the pleasure of women, since they too had the right of divorce. DeSmet's lordly phrase, a man "sending away his . . . wife," was just as often a case of the

³⁵Chittenden, *De Smet*, 332.

³⁶Raufer, *Black Robes*, 47.

³⁷Chittenden, *De Smet*, 572.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 1162; Ackerman, "Marital Instability," 599.

³⁹Ackerman, "Sexual Equality," 132.

woman dismantling her tipi around her husband's ears, packing it and all her other goods on her horses, and riding away, leaving him with perhaps a fire.⁴⁰

WOMEN'S ROLE TRADITIONALLY entitled them to equal status with men. That is, they had important and valued economic, domestic, political, and religious roles, some of them identical to the roles of men and others different in nature but balanced in rights. For instance, there were female shamans who were just as powerful as men; while in some groups they were outnumbered by male shamans, in other groups they were about equal in numbers. The women's economic role of gathering vegetal foods, while different from the men's hunting and fishing, was considered just as important an activity as men's, and the food both sexes obtained was considered equally important by both sexes. There were even chieftainesses in some groups, or a "woman of great authority," who had judicial powers that rivaled the chief's. Domestically, women ran their households, owned all the food brought into them, and exerted a great influence on all members of the family, including their husbands. Thus Plateau culture was characterized by an enviable state not only of political democracy, but also of sexual equality.⁴¹

The missionaries recorded some of these qualities in the roles of women. Spalding noted without comment that death could be caused by a medicine man or woman.⁴² Parker noted that a Plateau girl's consent was sought in marriage and he compared her work to that of women in the Bible: she cut and gathered wood, unpacked horses, erected and dismantled lodges, gathered roots and berries, dressed skins, and fashioned them into

garments.⁴³ Unfortunately, he found these activities degrading, unaware that the Plateau woman's work led to her economic advantage. He no doubt was misled by the fact that middle-class Euro-American women did not perform these strenuous tasks in his day. Since the work of Indian men was equally strenuous, if not more so, it could be considered puzzling that the "degrading" label was not fastened onto their work by the missionaries.

Asa Smith too believed that the work that Plateau women performed was degrading. He noted frequent spontaneous abortions and blamed them on the work that women did.⁴⁴ Considering that it was only recently that Euro-Americans had stopped considering a woman as extremely frail during a pregnancy, his attitude can be understood as derived from his own cultural background; the Plateau people would have been extinct if women's hard work truly caused abortions. Smith's observations of frequent abortions may have been quite valid, however, for European diseases were appearing among these groups for the first time and no doubt had a large role in causing complications of pregnancy.⁴⁵

DeSmet noted that the women took an equal interest in the Christian religion with the men, and he referred to "the apparent footing of equality between them and the men, so much unlike their condition in other savage tribes." He recorded that Flathead women were involved in warfare. They served as assistants (retrieving arrows, intervening in a fight if a relative was being overcome by an enemy), and even as warriors in their own right. The women took equal part and prominent roles in the war dances following a successful battle.⁴⁶

Joset wrote that a man was dependent on the "kindness of his wife" because she owned all the foods in the larder, and the lodge belonged to her. She could send her husband "away" if she were displeased. If he helped himself to the provisions in the house without her consent, he would accuse himself of theft. Yet at the same time, without noting the contradiction, Joset commented that the wife was submissive to her husband because she depended on his hunting.⁴⁷ Each sex was dependent on the other for certain kinds of

⁴⁰Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, 137; Chittenden, *De Smet*, 332.

⁴¹Raufer, *Black Robes*, 241; L. V. W. Walters, "Social Structure," in Spier, *Sinkaietk*, 96; Ackerman, "Sexual Equality," *passim*; Ray, *Cultural Relations*, 24.

⁴²Drury, *Spalding*, 323.

⁴³Parker, *Journal*, 196-197.

⁴⁴Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, 137.

⁴⁵Stearn and Stearn, *Effect of Smallpox*, 76; Cook, "Epidemic," 175.

⁴⁶Chittenden, *De Smet*, 578, 580-581, 1271-1272.

⁴⁷Joset Papers, OPA.

food, but submission each to the other was not necessary to get access to the food that each procured. There was equality between them within the home as well as in their public roles.

The missionaries thought this equality ought to change. Joset noted that it was good that a man could not gamble away his wife's property, but he complained:

How difficult to establish Christian subordination. How often a passionate woman would fill the camp or the whole tribe with disorders: when angry she always could drive the man away, for she could always tell him I don't need thee.⁴⁸

Diomed, seeing a woman running a self-binder, reproached her husband for it because he thought the wife should be in the kitchen. The husband defended himself with the observation that his wife was better at running the self-binder than he was.⁴⁹ Today on the Colville Reservation the talent for understanding and running machinery is not sex-based.

The Europeans and Euro-Americans, as in other parts of the world, thought that native women should learn the western woman's role—and that this was the only sort of role proper for women. They actively sought to change the Indian woman's activities to those more "suitable." Mary Richardson Walker used them as household servants: "we have Indians to do our drudgery." She had two women sewing on a shirt and another washing for her. Eliza Spalding taught the girls to sew, and some were taken into her home and trained to do housework. De Smet noted that women had learned to milk cows and to churn butter; they also kept a few hogs and chickens.⁵⁰

Men's roles changed too, from hunters and fishers to farmers. "Some of the Indians jokingly told Spalding that he had converted them into a nation of women, meaning that the men had shared the responsibility of working."⁵¹ Similar comments in many cultures worldwide have been interpreted by western observers as being demeaning to women. But such statements must be interpreted carefully. It appears that, at least in the Plateau, the men were merely commenting that they were using tools similar to the female digging sticks and working in the dirt as the women did in the

aboriginal culture. The comment was not meant to be derogatory to Plateau women.

When Plateau children were gathered into schools, besides the usual school subjects, the girls were taught to "sew and mend, cook and bake, darn stockings, and do fancy work. They learned how to keep house, wash and iron, and plant a garden." At St. Mary's School, they did the laundry for all the school personnel, and only rarely were they allowed to weed or do other light work on the school farm. Men were persuaded to shoulder burdens formerly carried by women. The missionaries believed that by giving an education to girls in this manner, they were helping "to raise the status of family life."⁵² In reality, though unwittingly and with the best of intentions, this kind of education would have undermined the economic and domestic advantages that women enjoyed during aboriginal times, thus actually depressing their social status. Fortunately, this kind of education seems not to have influenced most girls: Plateau women have retained their managerial economic roles and have not lost the equality they have by right with men.⁵³

WITH THE WEAKENING of the extended family, numerous mentions of orphans appear in missionary writings. Neglected orphans would not readily have appeared in the aboriginal culture. There were always uncles, aunts, grandparents, and even elder cousins to raise a child. As the extended family disappeared, however, its economic flexibility disappeared as well. It now became difficult financially to raise a child; and his or her social status and affective hold on non-parental relatives were no longer secure. As more individuals became addicted to alcohol, those relatives who remained were often unable to care for children, their own or their relatives'. Thus orphans without caring relatives

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹Diomed, *Sketches*, 79.

⁵⁰Esther Boserup, *Woman's Role in Economic Development* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970), *passim*; McKee, "Mary Richardson Walker," 385, 421, 434; Drury, *Spalding*, 172; Chittenden, De Smet, 471.

⁵¹Drury, *Spalding*, 301.

⁵²Raufer, *Black Robes*, 283, 289, 377.

⁵³Ackerman, "Sexual Equality," *passim*.

and neglected children existed in Plateau culture for the first time; the Christian schools gladly took them—and educated them and other children in European forms of family and sex roles.⁵⁴

SEVERAL QUESTIONS RECUR when examining the effect of Christianity on the aboriginal Plateau culture. First, why did the Plateau people so enthusiastically embrace the new religion? Second, why did they persist when, as a consequence, their culture was being diluted? And finally, what is the legacy of Christianity among the Plateau peoples today?

Field research on the Colville Reservation shows that the Plateau people were intensely spiritual aboriginally. Whites may consider the guardian-spirit religion, with its large magical component, as none at all; but that is an ethnocentric view. When the Plateau people heard about Christianity, they may have thought it was similar to their own religion, but more powerful. Like ancient Romans adding new deities to their pantheon, the Plateau Indians, left to themselves, might simply have added elements of Christianity to their native religion. Their familiarity with native prophets made Christian missionaries very acceptable to them and led to relatively easy conversion to the new religion. Further, epidemics and white incursions into their territory may have led them to look for new ways to cope with these unprecedented events.

The change to farming required by the missionaries seemed to be gladly accepted, according to missionary records, though this may be inaccurate. That farming had an effect on family organization was not a connection made by the Indians until far too late. When settlers flooded onto their territory, they were left with no options but to concentrate on farming and hope that some of their land would be left to them. Many hoped that going onto reservations would relieve the attrition of their land and culture. It is possible that many of the social changes forced on them might not

have persisted if the Indians' economic base had not been destroyed by Euro-American settlement.

One piece of social organization has survived largely intact despite "missionization": sexual equality has persisted despite the pressures working against it.⁵⁵ Its manifestations are subtle enough so that it escaped sustained notice by early missionaries. The whites and the Indians to this day fail to notice any difference between themselves in this respect, allowing sexual equality some protective anonymity.

Little doubt exists that most missionaries had the welfare of the Indians foremost in their minds. They certainly did not intend a social breakdown of Indian societies, with its attendant problems such as poverty and alcoholism. Certainly government was and is as much to blame as missionaries for these bad effects of contact. However, the legacy of Christianity among Plateau tribes does include such problems.

Today, many Indians are committed to Christianity. Others have kept to a form of their native guardian-spirit religion, and there has been a resurgence of interest in it by younger people. Most interesting of all have been movements such as the Indian Shaker Church, which has recast Christianity into a Plateau Indian form where the Christian God is worshipped in native terms. Thus Christianity in some form is a viable religion for many Plateau people today.

Some missionaries justified cultural changes as a defense against the likelihood of the loss of Indian lands to Euro-American colonists.⁵⁶ It was hoped that if the Indians engaged in subsistence farming and had a society similar to that of the whites, they would be left unmolested on their cultivated land. But the jettisoning of many parts of Indian culture caused more harm than good, and the adoption of European forms of social structure failed to protect Indians from confiscation of their lands and the disorganization of their societies. The forced changes in Plateau culture were drastic in many respects, and the consequences continue to resonate among Plateau Indians today.

⁵⁴Chittenden, *De Smet*, 453.

⁵⁵Ackerman, "Sexual Equality," *passim*.

⁵⁶Diomed, *Sketches*, 63.



THE MAKING OF A MISSIONARY

NARCISSA WHITMAN AND HER VOCATION

by Julie Roy Jeffrey

Many factors led young women—and young men—in the early nineteenth century to choose the mission field for their life's work. The author of this look at Narcissa Whitman's background, a member of the history department at Goucher College, has completed a biography of her subject that will soon be published by the University of Oklahoma Press. The painting reproduced on the facing page, entitled "Lost in the Snow," is of Marcus Whitman struggling east in the winter of 1843; photo courtesy NWCA.

IN FEBRUARY, 1835, Narcissa Prentiss wrote to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions offering "to labour for the conversion of the heathen." Unlike the detailed letter that Mary Walker sent to the Board in 1836 or Eliza Spalding's 1834 letter to her sister explaining her vocation, Narcissa's comments were tantalizingly brief. She gave few details of her early life or of her decision to devote herself to the missionary cause. A letter from Samuel Parker to his family shortly before Narcissa's application reveals only that the young woman came forward to offer herself as a missionary during his canvassing tour of New York state and that she was "talented, pious, with good education."¹ No earlier letters or journal have been discovered to shed light on the particular

motivations and special hopes that nourished Narcissa's vocation.

What little we have suggests that Narcissa's early life conformed to the pattern of other young women who chose a missionary career in the early decades of the nineteenth century. As the eldest daughter of a pious family and a member of the Prattsburg Presbyterian church, Narcissa was converted during her teens.² A few years later, she "consecrate[d]" herself to missionary work. Like many future female missionaries, she attended an academy, taught school, and marked time. Since single women were rarely sent to the mission field, Narcissa could best realize her "vocational fantasy" with marriage to a missionary.³ Finally, in her late 20's, she met and wed Marcus Whitman. Possibly Samuel Parker was responsible for getting the two together, a service that he performed later for William and Mary Gray. Although romance may well have played a part in the courtship, the union was based primarily on the couple's mutual desire to work together as a missionary couple.⁴

The pattern suggests the general forces encouraging young women to contemplate the mission field and the perspective from which they approached their vocation. But it would be useful to know more, especially if we are to understand how Narcissa interpreted her role as a missionary, what she chose to do or to leave undone and why. Even though none of her writing before 1835 seems to have survived, a careful examination of mission correspondence, local records in New York State, and other missionary materials reveals several influences that shaped Narcissa's initial decision and her work. This essay will

¹Archer Butler Hulbert and Dorothy P. Hulbert, editors, "Marcus Whitman, Crusader," Vols. VI through VIII of *Overland to the Pacific*, 8 vols. (Denver: The Stewart Commission of Colorado College, 1932-1941), 6:139-140.

²Originally, the church was Congregational. Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Torchbook Edition; New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 18, discusses the plan of union between the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians.

³See R. Pierce Beaver, *American Protestant Women in World Mission: A History of the First Feminist Movement in North America* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980 ed.), 60, 62, 353; Leonard I. Sweet, *The Minister's Wife: Her Role in Nineteenth-Century American Evangelism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 91; Page Putnam Miller, "The Evolving Role of Women in the Presbyterian Church in the Early Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, 1979), 170-192; Louise Knauer, "Foot Soldiers in the Kingdom of God: Backgrounds, Motivations and Expectations of Female Missionaries" (unpublished paper presented at the Third Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, Bryn Mawr College, June 11, 1976); Janice Cessna Clark, "Women of the Oregon Mission" (unpublished seminar paper, Reed College, 1963), 9, 25. The term "vocational fantasy" is Sweet's.

⁴For a discussion of the attitude of missionary couples towards marriage and their sense of shared purpose, see Jill K. Conway, *The Female Experience in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century America: A Guide to the History of American Women* (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1982), 52; Sweet, *The Minister's Wife*, 93. For a similar pattern later in the century, see Jan Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 203.

explore the influence of Narcissa's mother, her church, and her reading. All three impelled her toward her calling, affected her conception of it, and created expectations that complicated her life's task. There is a certain irony in this: the very forces encouraging Narcissa to become a missionary, in fact, limited her vision and effectiveness in Wailatpu.

BEFORE EXPLORING THESE three forces, however, it is important to understand the larger evangelical setting. During the early decades of the nineteenth century, a wave of revivals called the Second Great Awakening swept through the Protestant churches. Stimulated by charismatic preachers like Charles G. Finney and new, often emotional, religious tactics, many unchurched Americans became convinced of their sinfulness, experienced a usually traumatic new birth or conversion, and became church members.⁵ The estimate that the membership of Protestant churches tripled between 1800 and 1815 gives some sense of the power of the Second Great Awakening.⁶ But the impact of revivalism was not confined to church membership. Preachers told the converted that it was not enough to live moral lives; they must also refashion American society. Thus Finney exhorted reformed sinners to "set out with a determination to aim at being useful in the highest degree possible."⁷ Voluntary societies that provided opportunities for benevolence proliferated. Interest in the missionary movement also grew apace.⁸

While New York State was a hotbed of revivalism, the intimate setting for Narcissa's religious development was her own home. There all the evidence suggests that her mother, like other New York State women, played a critical evangelical role. Clarissa Ward Prentiss was responsible for bringing the rest of her family into the church and, in Narcissa's language, snatching them all from the "jaws of the bottomless pit."⁹ It was Clarissa who would serve as Narcissa's model when she went as a missionary to the heathen.

We do not know very much about Clarissa. An acquaintance described her as "intelligent, gifted in conversation, and possessed [of] great

weight of Christian character. Her influence was potent in her family and the community. She was remarkably sedate...I do not remember...ever seeing her laugh."¹⁰

Chronology substantiates her "potent" Christian commitment and influence. She was the first in the family to join the Prattsburg church—in 1807, only four years after her marriage. At that time, few married women in Prattsburg chose to unite with the church without their husbands, but Clarissa was one of them.¹¹ Her decision was not prompted by the full-blown enthusiasm of a revival. Nor could it be casual, for she had to undergo a thorough examination of her theological views and her conversion experience.

While Stephen Prentiss may have supported his wife's decision and even have attended church with her, we cannot minimize the possible consequences of this independent gesture. Records of the Prattsburg church reveal, for example, that Mrs. Bacon's family disapproved of her church affiliation and "used every endeavor to hinder" it.¹² Men could

⁵William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religious and Social Change in America 1807-1877* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 124-125; Sandra S. Sizer, *Gospel Hymns and Social Religion: The Rhetoric of Nineteenth-Century Revivalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), 66.

⁶Daniel Scott Smith and Michael S. Hindus, "Premarital Pregnancy in America 1640-1971: An Overview and Interpretation," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (Spring, 1975), 5:551.

⁷Quoted in McLoughlin, *Revivals*, 129. See also George M. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience: A Case Study of Thought and Theology in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 3.

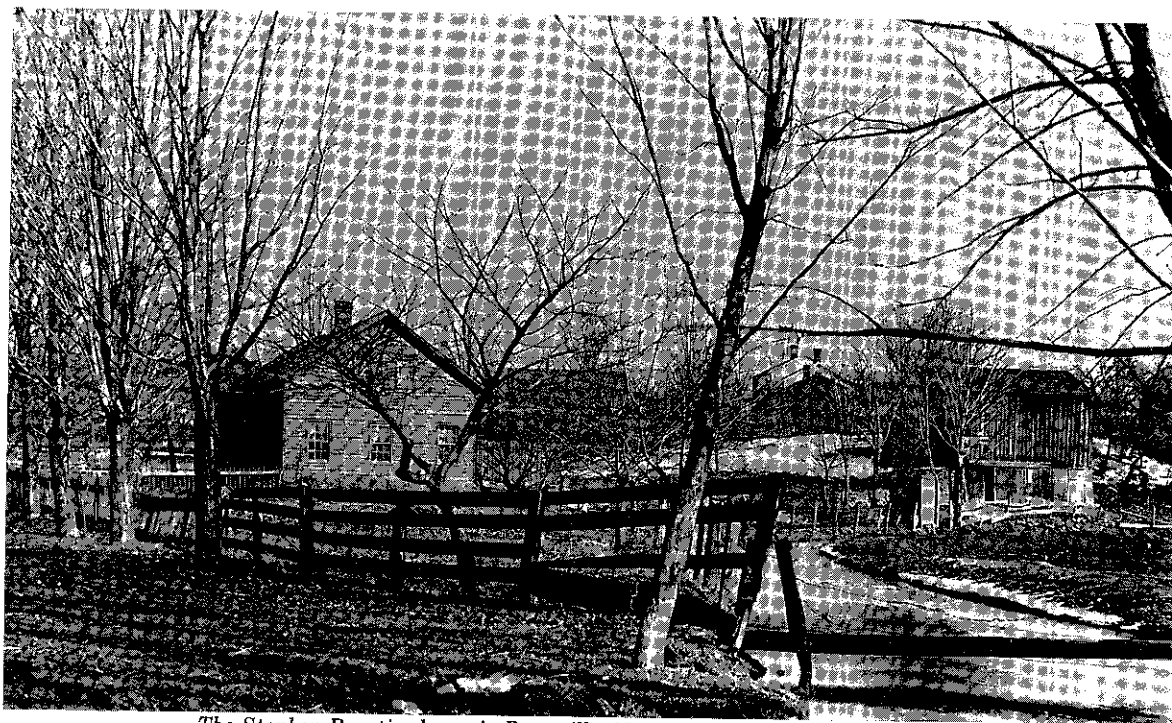
⁸See Cross, *The Burned-Over District*, 9-23, 173-183.

⁹For discussions of the role of New York women in evangelism, see Mary P. Ryan, "A Women's Awakening: Evangelical Religion and The Families of Utica, New York, 1800-1840," in Janet Wilson James, editor, *Women in American Religion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), 89-110; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 146; Nancy A. Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822-1872* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1984). For Narcissa's reference to the bottomless pit, see *Transactions of the Nineteenth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1891* (Portland, 1893), 106.

¹⁰Quoted in Clifford M. Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the Opening of Old Oregon*, 2 vols. (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1973), 1:100-101.

¹¹See Session Minutes, 1804-1823, the Congregational Church of Prattsburg, New York, Records, 1804-1877, microfilm, Department of Manuscripts and University Archives, Cornell University Library (hereafter CCP). As Joanna Bowen Gillespie points out in "The Clear and Leadings of Providence: Pious Memoirs and the Problems of Self-Realization for Women in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Journal of the Early Republic* (Summer, 1985), 5:199, religion was the first place in which women entered the public arena and discovered their own individuality and the power to manage themselves.

¹²See Session Minutes, 1824-1831, CCP, June 23, 1824, for the discussion of Mrs. Bacon's situation.



The Stephen Prentiss home in Prattville, New York. Photo courtesy NWCA.

easily find a wife's religious fervor disruptive. But whatever Stephen's stance towards religion was, Clarissa had grasped the lead in religious matters. As her nine children were born, she consecrated them to God through baptism. Despite the burdens of a growing family, she was active in benevolent affairs and maintained a special interest in missions. In 1812 the Female Home Missionary Society was organized in her home. Several years later she saw to it that her five oldest children, ranging in age from five to twelve, joined the Youth Missionary Society.¹³

¹³S. B. Merritt, *History of the Presbyterian Church, Prattsburg, New York, 1804 to 1964* (Prattsburg: n.p., 1954), 5-6; Florence Hayes, *Daughters of Dorcas* (New York: Board of National Missions, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1952), 142.

¹⁴Research in the Session Minutes revealed this information but no mention was made of Mary Ann Prentiss. Since she later married a minister, she too must have joined the church.

¹⁵Martha Tomhave Blauvelt discusses mother as minister in "Women and Revivalism," in Rosemary Radford Ruether and Rosemary Keller, editors, *Women and Religion in America* (San Francisco: Harper & Row San Francisco, 1981), 1:6. Sweet calls this emphasis on the religiosity of women "a momentous event in the history of American religion." *The Minister's Wife*, 29.

¹⁶Drury, *First White Women*, 1:47; *Transactions*, 1891, 104.

¹⁷*Transactions of the Twenty-first Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1893* (Portland, 1894), 146, 184.

¹⁸Catherine, Elizabeth, and Matilda Sager, *The Whitman Massacre of 1847* (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1981), 90, 92.

Clarissa's theological perspective, which made it plain that the unconverted were damned, highlighted the importance of laboring within her own family. It took ten years before she had the satisfaction of seeing Stephen join the church. Then came the children, often during extended revivals—three (including Narcissa) in 1819, two in 1825, and three in 1831.¹⁴

Chronology reveals the events but not the methods. Hints from Narcissa's letters suggest how Clarissa operated as the household's "female minister."¹⁵ While Clarissa's sedate behavior apparently set an impressive example, she also outlined clear precepts for her children's behavior and enforced them. She promptly pointed out their failings and probably just as promptly punished them for disobedience.¹⁶ Narcissa was doubtless reflecting her own mother's childrearing methods when she wrote about the importance of breaking the will of infants, of curbing children, of using the rod.¹⁷ The Sager children recalled that at Waiilatpu "any deviation from the laid down rules met with instant and severe punishment."¹⁸

Balancing the discipline, however, was an intimacy and interest in each child's religious progress and ultimate commitment to Christ. Later in life Narcissa missed the "sweet relief" she had found in "giving her [mother] . . . [her] history," in allowing her mother "to take a peep into one of the sacred chambers of her daughter's heart."¹⁸ These intimate exchanges clarified Clarissa's hopes for her children and pointed out how the children might please her. This Narcissa recognized when she wrote that their conversations had satisfied "her mother's own soul."²⁰

Clarissa's strategies were calculated to push her children toward the useful, Christian life, not a life devoted to pleasure. Books were carefully chosen to encourage the proper choice. Narcissa recalled how her mother had guided "my youthful mind, directing my reading, and instead of allowing it to be filled with the light and vain trash of novel reading, I was directed to that which was more substantial." Narcissa read aloud to her mother works appropriate for ministerial candidates, "such books as Dwight's Theology, Doddridge's Rise and Progress, Milners Church History."²¹ Inspirational materials about missionary heroines like Harriet Boardman and thankful converts like the Hawaiian Obookiah highlighted for the children one particular kind of useful life.²²

Above all, Clarissa conveyed her spiritual concerns and expectations to her children. It may be that she had special hopes for Narcissa, with whom she had been two months pregnant when she made her own profession of faith. In any case, private and family prayer and informal discussions all heightened consciousness. It was understood that she was willing to give up or "sacrifice" her children to the greater cause.²³ Narcissa's response to two of her brothers' indecisive Christian commitment reflected both Clarissa's perspective and her methods. "I cannot bear the idea that either of them are living for themselves in such a day as this," wrote Narcissa. "The Lord will not prosper them; they are the children of too many prayers and consecration to the work thus to live and be contented with this world's portion and applause." With such an

atmosphere in the family, each child must have known how to provide mother with the "thrill of joy" that Narcissa did. In the end, four of the Prentisses chose religious paths.²⁴

Clarissa's effectiveness as Christ's agent drew its strength from her position as mother. It rested upon the intimacy of family life, the punishments and rewards a mother was authorized to give, the opportunities that existed to make a mother's (and wife's) views known. The growing emphasis in American culture on the moral and pious qualities of women reinforced the power of the maternal role.²⁵ The cultural limits of a mother's influence were not immediately apparent, however.

Clarissa also passed along to her daughter definite notions about women's role in the home. During the years of Narcissa's girlhood, home was increasingly regarded as woman's special sphere. There women were responsible for creating a private haven of rest and happiness for their families. Narcissa's letters carefully detailing all her housekeeping arrangements reflect Clarissa's emphasis on household regulations.²⁶ And while the modest Prentiss house could not have provided a great deal of privacy to the eleven family members who lived there (along with perhaps a servant or helper), other letters from Narcissa suggest how Clarissa emphasized home as a private

¹⁸Drury, *First White Women*, 1:119; *Transactions*, 1891, 170.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²¹*Transactions*, 1891, 147; 1893, 138; Sweet, *The Minister's Wife*, 91.

²²Sweet, *The Minister's Wife*, 91; Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman*, 1:104. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind*, 2, points out the popularity of reading theological works; Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *Mission for Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1980), 67-68, notes the important role reading played in encouraging a missionary vocation.

²³Drury, *First White Women*, 1:73; *Transactions*, 1893, 138. Sizer, *Gospel Hymns*, 52, discusses the ways in which evangelical prayer created a community of feeling.

²⁴*Transactions*, 1891, 115; see also 146. Narcissa thought she would also please her father by her choice. For another treatment of the evangelical mode of childrearing, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "Conscience and Career: Young Abolitionists and Missionaries," in Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher, editors, *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Ansley* (Folkstone: William Dawson & Sons Ltd., 1980), 183-203. Edward Prentiss became a minister and was assisted in his ministerial studies by Jane, who had dreams of becoming a missionary.

²⁵Blauvelt, "Women and Revivalism," 1-6.

²⁶See for example, Drury, *First White Women*, 1:52, 75, 82, 103, 106, 112-113, 125.

retreat for the family.²⁷ Clarissa's lessons and perspective would have a debatable impact on Narcissa's interactions with the Cayuse.

IF HER MOTHER encouraged Narcissa's vocation and offered a model for evangelical behavior, the Prattsburg Presbyterian community reinforced family influences. A wide array of church activities nourished piety and commitment. A diary kept by young William Pratt a few years after Narcissa left Prattsburg suggests the intensive character of Prattsburg Presbyterian life for young people at its peak times. During a one-week period in January of 1843, William attended two Sabbath services, a pastor's prayer meeting on Monday evening followed by a discourse from the minister, daytime and evening meetings on Tuesday, a meeting and youth's prayer meeting with sermon on Wednesday, on Thursday (a day of fasting and prayer) still another youth's prayer meeting, a morning and an evening meeting on Friday, and finally an early-afternoon meeting on Saturday "for prayer and personal conversation"—a grand total of eleven services in six days.²⁸

Benevolent organizations provided further opportunities for piety and services. Prattsburg, a township of 327 families, had numerous associations.²⁹ At sixteen, as a member of the Female Mite Society, Narcissa was visiting

needy families to discover their religious and material needs.³⁰ Missionary societies were popular; indeed, they were a "fad," as one of Prattsburg's residents recalled. "The boy who would not give up a promised sled or book or knife to aid in sending the Gospel to... Africa, or to help convert the heathen in Ouisconsin, was doomed to perdition."³¹

Such a whirl of activities not only fostered religious interests but also provided the focus for a lively social life. It is revealing that Marcus Whitman became socially acquainted with the Prentisses by attending a prayer meeting at their house. Although Narcissa and others may not have realized it, the satisfaction of the religious life came partly from its social nature.³²

Religion also offered excitement and satisfying emotional rewards. The grand community event, the revival, drew in many of the committed Christians.³³ Pratt's diary details the pattern of communal revival activities: the meetings that encouraged anxious explorations of the soul, the provocative sermons on such topics as "who shall dwell with everlasting burnings," the wickedness of the unregenerate heart, and death.³⁴ During public services, feelings ran high.

Individuals were seen trembling in their seats, and silent tears trickling down their cheeks but entire stillness reigned. Nothing was heard but the voice of the speaker, imparting instruction, addressing exhortation to the assembly or lifting up prayer.

As guilty sinners came forward to take the anxious seat, the congregation took "heavenly pleasure in mingling...prayers and tears together" on their behalf.³⁵ Behind the scenes, individuals also labored with those hovering on the brink of conversion. The emotional character of such private meetings and the style of the personal encounter are suggested by Narcissa's references to weeping and prayer.³⁶ Although, in the end, the Holy Spirit had the credit for the sinner's change of heart, those like Narcissa who had "dealt faithfully" with the sinner felt elation and a share in the victory.

All these exercises came to a public climax when new members were admitted to the

²⁷The 1825 Manuscript Census for New York State (Steuben County Clerk's Office, Bath, New York) shows eleven people living in the Prentiss household. Levi Fay Waldo, "The Prentiss Family," *Whitman College Quarterly* (October, 1897), 1:25-26, notes that his mother was a domestic helper for the family at one time. See *Transactions*, 1891, 134, for a description of Clarissa's views of privacy—in this case, not honored.

²⁸William Pratt diary, week of January 22, 1842, in Pratt Family papers, Accession #299, Department of Manuscripts and University Archives, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, New York.

²⁹This is the size of the township as listed in the 1825 census. The associations the town boasted included the Female Home Missionary Society, the Youth Missionary Society, the Female Mite Society, the Prattsburg Laboring Society, and the Sunday School Association.

³⁰Merriitt, *Presbyterian Church, Prattsburg*, 2.

³¹Franklin Butler Van Valkenburgh, *Grandpa's Letter to His Children* (no place: private printing, 1978 edition), 53.

³²*Transactions*, 1893, 143. Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*, 30, makes a related point about a later period.

³³Sweet, *The Minister's Wife*, 31-32 and *passim*, reveals the critical role women played in assisting revivals.

³⁴These are some of the talks William Pratt heard during the week of January 22, 1842.

³⁵*Prattsburg News*, April 10, 1873. The description is of the revival of 1818 during which Narcissa was converted; Hulbert, *Marcus Whitman*, 1:243.

³⁶*Ibid.*; *Transactions*, 1891, 106, 115.

church and took communion. In 1818, the year of Narcissa's admission, she and fifty-eight others professed their faith in a grove near the church. "Such an exhibition was never before presented in the region," wrote an observer. "People from neighboring towns, and persons of every character and grade, were present."³⁷

These religious rituals provided drama and created a community of "feeling."³⁸ They instilled pride in work well done. But just as important, they stimulated behaviors that Narcissa and other identified as essential components of conversion. That these behaviors were part of an American evangelical culture rather than an universal culture did not occur to those setting out to convert the world.

Revivalism and other evangelical activities also drew distinct and public divisions between the saved and damned, the good and the bad. Indeed, the power of the Christian message derived partly from the terrible consequences of ignoring it. Narcissa accepted this polarized

world view and the necessity for conveying it. At Fort Vancouver, she faulted Anglican clergyman Herbert Beaver because he "seldom draws the line of distinction between the righteous and wicked"; when he did so, it was "scarcely perceptible."³⁹ The belief that the missionary must emphasize the doomed state of the unconverted would, not surprisingly, cause tension and bitterness in the field.

FINALLY, HOW DID Narcissa's reading shape her vision of the missionary life? Besides

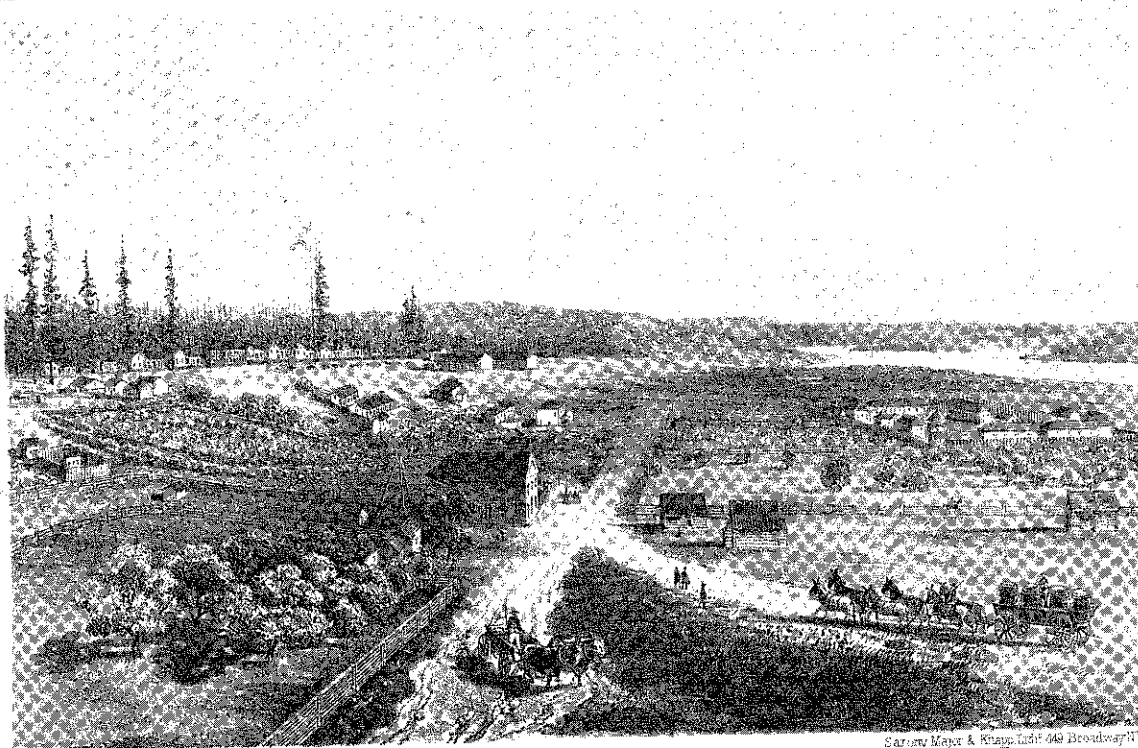
³⁷James H. Hotchkin, *A History of the Purchase and Settlement of Western New York, and of the Rise, Progress, and Present State of the Presbyterian Church in that Section* (New York: M. W. Dodd, 1848), 465-466.

³⁸Sizer, *Gospel Hymns*, p. 52.

³⁹Hurlbert, *Marcus Whitman*, 1:246. The sense that the converted were in the minority must have contributed to the need to draw lines ever more distinctly. Glenn Altschuler found that the membership of all denominations in upper New York State towns did not exceed a quarter of each town's population. Glenn C. Altschuler and Jan M. Saltzgeber, *Revivalism, Social Conscience, and Community in the Burned-Over District: The Trial of Rhoda Bennet* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983), 148.

U.S. P. R. ENCL. SURVEYS - 47° & 49° PARALLELS.

GENERAL REPORT - PLATE XIV



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biographies of missionaries and converted heathens, Narcissa reported that she was a faithful reader of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions' monthly paper, the *Missionary Herald*. Its pages contained frequent pleas for more donations and workers and gave a sense of the eternal importance of the missionary cause. Selected excerpts from journals or letters of missionaries in the Holy Land, India, Ceylon, and Arkansas suggested the exotic and adventurous character of missionary life. And although there were occasional warnings about the frustrations and even dangers facing the missionary, the excerpts and editorial comments pictured the steady progress of the work of conversion. Eventual victory was possible, and the American Indians seemed particularly ripe for conversion. "Very many, if not all the leading superstitions of the world, are comparatively in their dotage," the paper proclaimed in January, 1833. "Our western Indians... have scarcely anything of their ancient superstitions to oppose the gospel."⁴⁰

Although the *Missionary Herald* tended to focus on male missionaries, it included occasional letters from female teachers and articles on missionary wives, usually after their deaths. While the hardships of missionary life for women could not be entirely ignored since many of the women died from illness contracted in the mission field, the articles emphasized the saintly qualities of the women, the glorious death scenes, the triumphant departure for heaven.⁴¹ Descriptions of such heroic holiness hardly prepared women for the drudgery of missionary life or the depressing failures that occurred on a daily basis.

⁴⁰*Missionary Herald*, January, 1833.

⁴¹See, for example, the *Missionary Herald*, December, 1831, July, 1825, January, 1826.

⁴²Hurlbert, *Marcus Whitman*, 1:140. The quote comes from her application to the American Board.

⁴³Drury, *First White Women*, 1:54, 104.

⁴⁴*Transactions*, 1891, 135.

⁴⁵Drury, *First White Women*, 1:123; for negative comments see *Transactions*, 1891, 92-95.

⁴⁶Drury, *First White Women*, 1:123.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 119, 123. It may be revealing that in this letter home, Narcissa writes eight and a half pages about her domestic arrangements and a scant two pages about the Indians.

THE PARTICULARS OF Narcissa's upbringing encouraged her to believe it was "more my privilege than duty to labour for the conversion of the heathen."⁴² The initial decision had been made probably during her early teens and solidified during the revival of 1824-1825 when she was sixteen. She persisted in this commitment, and finally in 1836 she set forth to realize her dreams. Yet the influences of her youth all too often interfered with her missionary usefulness. They certainly increased the psychological stresses of missionary life for her.

The evangelical strategies most familiar to Narcissa were maternal and associational. They drew their strength and emotional power from shared bonds of family and friendship, from well-understood social and gender roles. Not surprisingly, since there was no training for missionaries, Narcissa based her own approach on models that seemed to work at home. One of Narcissa's first diary entries to mention "the dear Indians" discussed her interactions with Richard, the Indian youth whom Marcus had brought back to the East. Narcissa reported that she loved to teach him. She suggested the nature of the relationship and the reason for her satisfaction with it when she noted, "he calls me Mother."⁴³

Once settled in the West, however, Narcissa discovered that the Indians did not view her as mother. Indeed, they did not understand the white family structure or her highly regarded place in it.⁴⁴ Nor did Narcissa feel toward them as a mother feels towards her own children. Her initial culture shock at the foreignness of the Indians explain her critical comments and her sense that she was "in the thick darkness of heathenism."⁴⁵ While these comments were balanced by generalities about the Indians' eager interest in the Christian message, it was clear they were not "kindred souls."⁴⁶ There are hints of reluctance; over three weeks passed before she visited the Indian lodges at Wailatpu.⁴⁷ A sharp contrast is provided by her positive evaluation of the mission's Hawaiian workers. Her reading about Obookiah and the Hawaiians' Christian practices made them familiar. She believed

they had "kind and tender feelings." She wrote that they had her heart.⁴⁸

Eventually, of course, Narcissa started a school for the Cayuse and took on other "public labours."⁴⁹ But how was she to sway her charges? She did not forget the "influence of dear mother's precepts, prayer and example."⁵⁰ But in the new setting, Clarissa's general approach seemed somewhat vague. Exactly how Narcissa's presence and example would have a "silent and gentle influence upon... benighted minds" was unclear.⁵¹ Prayer was straightforward, and Narcissa prayed for and with her charges when they attended family worship and other services.⁵² But what was their understanding of the prayers—in English or translated into Nez Perce, a language that seemed to lack the nuances of English?⁵³ She could and did make some Christian precepts clear. She described reading a chapter from Matthew forbidding adultery to an Indian who practiced polygamy. "I would not ease him any," she noted with satisfaction, "but urged him to do his duty."⁵⁴ But without the emotional power coming from a mother's position and the parental right of discipline, how could she touch the Indian mind or force obedience? Even the children presented a problem; when she wished to set them to useful work, their parents objected.⁵⁵ For reasons never explained, she refused to accept Indian children as boarders in her family as Eliza Spalding did.⁵⁶

Narcissa often wrote that she felt incompetent as a missionary.⁵⁷ Yet her letters do not show her reevaluating her strategies or considering new ones. Indeed, what is most surprising about the letters is how often they say almost nothing about her work with the Indians at all.

IN SHARP CONTRAST, her letters overflow with details of preparing her daughter and the various children whom she eventually took into her household for the Christian commitment. She noted her methods of discipline, the habits of worship she initiated, the songs she taught them.⁵⁸ In the family setting, her mother's example was effective. And it worked equally well with the young men who stayed

with the family from time to time. Conceiving of her relationship with them in familial terms, she described her "tender... watchfulness," the intimate interactions that she hoped marked their steps toward conversion.⁵⁹ She spoke of cherishing Mr. Finley "as I would a little child."⁶⁰ Narcissa never seemed happier than when she was busy overseeing the spiritual progress of members of her own household and spared the baffling task of dealing with the Cayuses.

The feelings of frustration and despair that overcame Narcissa and the fear that her own religious fervor had dried up made her mission life trying. Eliza Spalding realized the problem. The social components of evangelical life were missing, "those helps which christians usually enjoy, such as sanctuary privileges, prayer meetings, and social intercourse with christian friends and neighbors."⁶¹ While the mission women tried to replicate some of the familiar interactions by holding female prayer meetings and establishing a maternal association, the numbers in attendance were few. So vast was the gulf that Narcissa felt between herself and the Indian women, she never seems to have thought of bringing native women into these female

⁴⁸*Transactions*, 1891, 92.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 113.

⁵⁰Narcissa was specially talking about her mother's childrearing methods, which I believe she was using as the basis for her work with the Indians. *Transactions*, 1891, 104.

⁵¹*Transactions*, 1891, 113. A similar hope of the power of example is expressed in the *Missionary Herald*, January, 1831.

⁵²Drury, *First White Women*, 1:124.

⁵³*Transactions*, 1893, 111.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 147.

⁵⁵*Transactions*, 1891, 102.

⁵⁶Drury, *First White Women*, 1:54, 203. Eliza spoke of the children as "our hope of the nation." Narcissa took in children if they could work. *Transactions*, 1891, 102.

⁵⁷*Transactions*, 1891, 102, 146, 237.

⁵⁸*Transactions*, 1893, 75-76, 185-186. See also Sager, *The Whitman Massacre*, 24-25.

⁵⁹*Transactions*, 1893, 193, 206. Hunter, in *The Gospel of Gentility*, 183, discusses the emotional nature of conversion work, the need for eye contact, the sense of personal triumph with conversion. These were the tactics that Narcissa seems to have used with members of her household rather than with the Indians.

⁶⁰*Transactions*, 1893, 171-172. The letter from Narcissa to Mrs. Gilbert, mother of Newton Gilbert, is very revealing. October 15, 1846, and May 3, 1847, Eleona Underwood Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

⁶¹Eliza Spalding to Fanny Allen, March 31, 1846, Henry Harmon Spalding Collection, Oregon Historical Society, Portland.

associations.⁶² The contrast between her behavior in Wailatpu and in New York State, where she was active in establishing female meetings, was striking.⁶³

Just as Narcissa longed for the benefits of associational life, she hungered for its high points: "The tearful eye, the solemn countenance, and the anxious heart bursting forth with the inquiry, 'what must I do to be

⁶²For a very rare reference to a native woman as "friend," see *Transactions*, 1891, 142. The reference suggests that what Narcissa means by friend here is one positive to the Christian cause. The *Missionary Herald* described women missionaries establishing prayer meetings for native women and attending them. See issues of September, 1825, January and May, 1826.

⁶³Waldo says that Narcissa's sister, Harriet, told him of her active role in establishing prayer meetings at home. Levi Fay Waldo, "The Prentiss Family," *Whitman College Quarterly* (March, 1898), 2:37, 39.

⁶⁴*Transactions*, 1891, 116; 1893, 127.

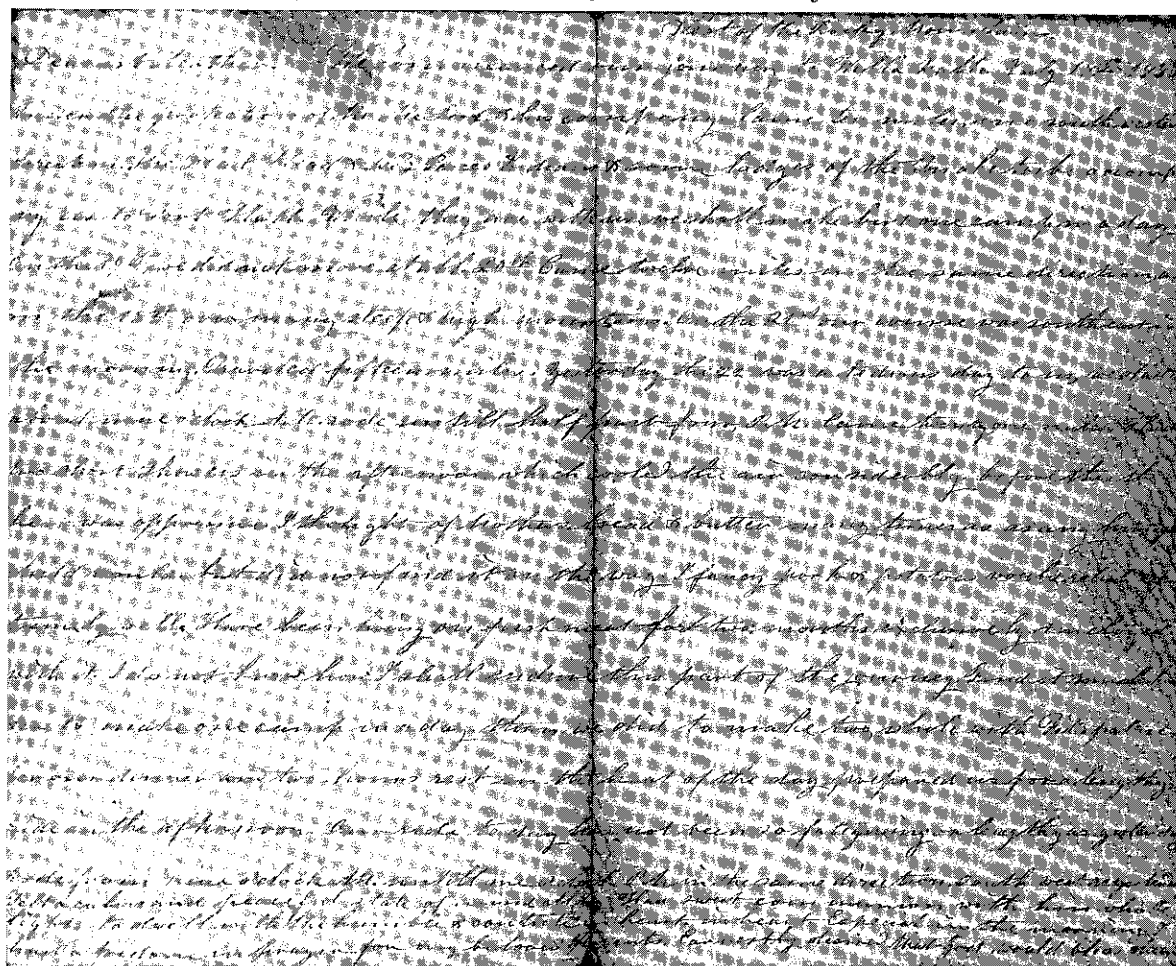
⁶⁵Narcissa did not attend a protracted meeting with the Nez Perce. She compared the Cayuses with the Nez Perce in unfavorable terms. *Transactions*, 1893, 120, 121.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 192-193, 129, 113.

saved?"⁶⁴ These rituals had given her a part to play in both the public and the private drama of salvation.⁶⁵ Mission life was that much emptier and less rewarding without them. Her emotional and religious satisfaction, her sense of the "special tokens of our dear Redeemer's love and mercy" came increasingly from her efforts within her own household. Mr. Finley, Mr. Rogers, and others responded to her ministration appropriately. As immigration increased and precious seasons of prayer and revival became possible, she "almost" forgot "we are on heathen ground."⁶⁶

MORE WAS AT stake than personal satisfaction or frustration, of course. Based on her experience at home, Narcissa, like the other missionaries, had definite expectations about the pattern of conversions. Yet the Indians did

Pages from Narcissa Whitman's journal. Photo courtesy NWCA.



not go through the familiar sequence of behaviors. The fact that the Indians had family prayers and came to mission services was not proof of a change of heart. At times some Indians "manifested deep feeling"; some even appeared greatly altered.⁶⁷ But the emotional components, so well orchestrated at home and so hard to reproduce amongst wandering tribes, were absent.⁶⁸ Lacking the familiar "melting seasons," Narcissa suspected that most of the Indians had the same "depraved" hearts no matter what they claimed. She was ever alert to the danger of deception.⁶⁹ The word itself is revealing. With such a perspective, it was not surprising that the Whitmans never found any of the Cayuse ready for admission to the church.

The experience of membership in a covenanted church reinforced for the missionaries the importance of clarifying the lines between the saved and the depraved. Yet the Cayuse were angry to hear that the changes they had made were not going to save them from the fires of hell. "Some feel almost to blame us for telling them about eternal realities," wrote Narcissa in 1838.⁷⁰ As time passed and all the Cayuse remained "unconverted" while many were angry, the gap between the saved and the damned must have seemed wider and wider. It must have been ever harder to believe that an Indian could have a sincere change of heart and leap over the chasm.

Another problematic legacy Narcissa carried west with her was the vision of home as the center of private family life, overseen by wife and mother. The Cayuses' curiosity about white people's habits and their constant presence in the house irritated her. She could hardly bear having Indian men in her "cooking and eating room . . . especially at meal time." Clarissa would surely understand, Narcissa knew, since she had also disliked having men sitting in her kitchen when she prepared meals.⁷¹ In the early years, Narcissa hoped that a special Indian room would keep the Indians away from family space. But Indian rooms never prevented Indians from wanting to come into the house. Narcissa claimed they were treating her house as a highway and insisted that Indians respect closed doors.⁷²

Housekeeping standards reinforced her coolness. She found the Indians dirty and vermin-ridden. They made her house filthy. Her distaste must have been obvious, for she refused to let one-year-old Alice crawl on the floor.⁷³ It may well be that the outer dirt came to stand for inner depravity. In later years she referred to the "contaminating influence" of heathenism and tried to keep her adopted children entirely away from the mission Indians.⁷⁴ Such attitudes could not have endeared her to those she had come to save.

Women missionaries around the world targeted native women as the special object of their attention. Realizing that women might provide an entree to the rest of their families, female missionaries set up special schools for girls and visited married women in their own homes. Some, including Eliza Spalding, brought native women into their households to teach them the ways of a civilized Christian family.⁷⁵

Although Narcissa did occasionally meet separately with women and claimed to desire "more intercourse with them," she seems not to have made any special effort to work with them.⁷⁶ She rationalized her failure by arguing that Indian "women are not allowed the same privileges with the men."⁷⁷ In fact, family values made it difficult for her to identify with the women. Her negative stereotypes came from the failure of Cayuse women to be nine-

⁶⁷Hulbert, *Marcus Whitman*, 2:269.

⁶⁸*Transactions*, 1891, 151. As Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., puts it in *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Responses, 1787-1862* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), 53, without emotional conviction, full acceptance of Christianity was impossible.

⁶⁹*Transactions*, 1891, 152. The *Missionary Herald*, in an article published in the February, 1825, edition, raised the same caution about conversion among the Arkansas Cherokee.

⁷⁰*Transactions*, 1891, 93, 102, 122, 131. Berkhofer points out in *Salvation and the Savage*, 50, that it was important to convince the sinner of the reality of sin for only then could the idea of Christ's atonement be properly comprehended.

⁷¹*Transactions*, 1891, 134.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 132, 159.

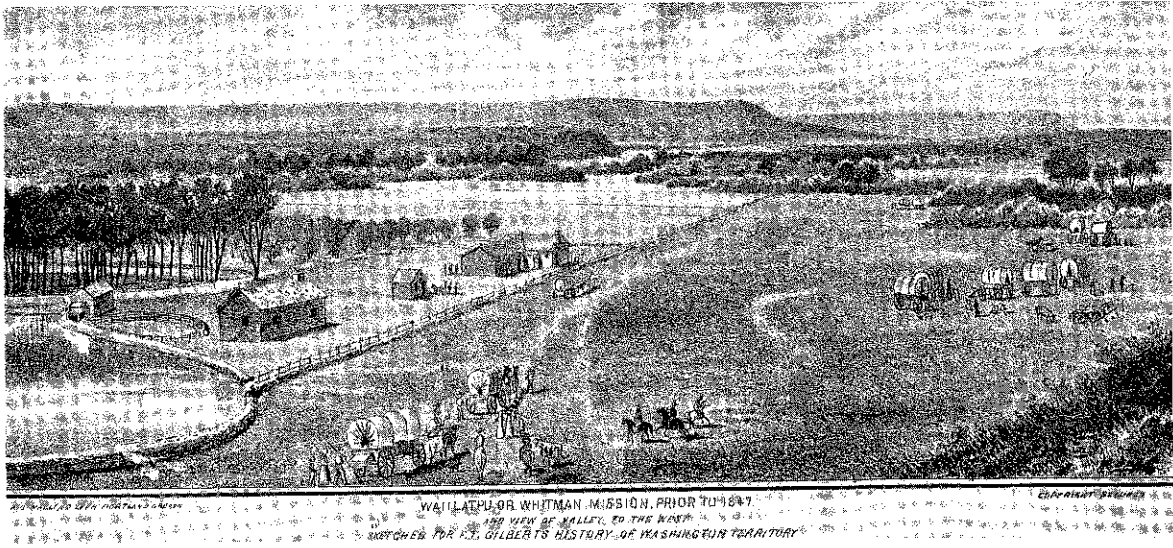
⁷³*Ibid.*, 99-100, 134.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 93, 131, 145. Hunter calls this attitude "defensive domesticity," in *The Gospel of Gentility*, 112.

⁷⁵Lois A. Boyd and R. Douglas Brackenridge, *Presbyterian Women in America: Two Centuries of a Quest for Status* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1983), 160; Hulbert, *Marcus Whitman*, 2:268.

⁷⁶*Transactions*, 1891, 131; 1893, 111, 146.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 111.



A sketch of Waiilatpu published in the 1880's. Courtesy NWCA.

teenth-century white wives and mothers. It seemed that Cayuse women were too proud to work; they neglected their children and were enslaved by their husbands.⁷⁸ An interesting contrast in attitudes is provided by the ways in which Eliza Spalding and Narcissa originally viewed the Maternal Association. While Eliza saw the association as a way for white women to provide an example of Christian motherhood for native women, Narcissa viewed it as the means of working for the salvation of their children and reinforcing white standards.⁷⁹

WHEN NARCISSA RECALLED her youthful reading, she must have felt she had failed to measure up to the challenge of missionary life. Why, Narcissa asked herself, had the mission had so little spiritual success? Although she found many reasons to explain its failure, she often accused herself for her own lack of ardent piety. More ardent piety may have been needed, but perhaps more helpful would have been suggestions for dealing with the daily frustrations and obstacles of the mission field. In today's terms, what Narcissa needed most perhaps was career counseling and a career change. But the example of missionary heroines dying for the cause, the insistence that the world could be won for Christ, made it

difficult if not impossible to give up. Up until the end, Narcissa insisted on the correctness of her choice.

Perhaps this analysis of Narcissa's trials as a missionary seems a bit harsh. The mission women and Narcissa in particular have been popular heroines, praised for their bravery, persistence, and commitment. But these personal characteristics are not at issue. What we have examined here are those particular forces that inspired young women like Narcissa to offer their lives to the work of conversion. What we need to understand are the ways in which these forces affected their missionary endeavors and their sense of self. Male missionaries were also shaped by their culture, but in different ways. For Narcissa, and probably for other women as well, a mother had a powerful impact on the choice of vocation and the understanding of it. In a period in which religion offered the first public forum for women and offered them a new kind of autonomy, religious life seemed, not surprisingly, to offer special satisfactions and challenges to young women. To become a missionary wife, missionary literature suggested, was to answer God's urgent calling. "A generation of heathens lives no longer than a generation of Christians, and time is hurrying both on to the bosom of its mighty tide into eternity."⁸⁰ To become a missionary wife was to give up one's life for this noble cause. ■

⁷⁸Hulbert, *Marcus Whitman*, 2:268; *Transactions*, 1891, 75, 92, 95.

⁷⁹Drury, *First White Women*, 1:205.

⁸⁰*Missionary Herald*, April, 1832.

SUCCESS OR SURVIVAL?

THE PROGRESS AND PROBLEMS OF THE TSHIMAKAIN MISSION

by Jean Murray Cole

The wisdom of sending out committed people who were totally unprepared for life in the Northwest of the 1830's is certainly open to question. The author of this article on the matter, a resident of Indian River, Ontario, Canada, has worked extensively in Pacific Northwest history—especially that of the Hudson's Bay Company.

THEY WERE THREE thousand miles from home in a strange, unknown land. A six-month journey separated them from beloved family and friends. River boats and mule trains, windswept plains, sun-parched desert, and a great barrier of snow-capped mountains lay between their old world and the new.¹

Who were these pilgrims who wandered so far from the security of their New England homes? Simple, upright, well-meaning—innocently they believed they were led by the Lord to do His work. Was their mission fulfilled or were they, in the end, able to count mere survival as their main achievement? Were the isolation and the heartache and the plain backbreaking labor merely a sacrifice, proof of their love of God and their desire to do His will?

Nearly a century and a half ago, in the spring of 1838, this second party of nine Protestant missionaries—four of them women who had never before ventured far from the familiar comforts of their parents' homes—set out for the unknown. Fur traders and Indians were to be their only neighbors, both groups with their way of life and of worship already long established. In fact, in the beginning both fur traders and Indians were more the enlighteners than the enlightened. The missionaries were totally dependent on their help and advice.

In short, these strangers who ventured into the rough world of Old Oregon, naively expecting to impose their faith on the customs and beliefs already in practice there, were quite unprepared to carry out the mission they had set

out to accomplish. Their hearts were in the right place. Their missionary zeal was unchallenged. But the question remains: was there anything in their background, their training, or their personalities that equipped them to succeed in their endeavors? Was it really possible for them to achieve more than minimal results in meeting the expectations of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions who sent them there?

OF THE FOUR men and women who established the Tshimakain Mission, Mary Richardson Walker would seem to have been the one best qualified to take on such a task. The eldest of ten children of a farm family, educated to be a schoolteacher, Mary was a woman of great strength of character and robust constitution who had applied to serve in the mission field even before she met and married Elkanah Walker. Her desire to serve God was founded in her deep religious faith, a faith that never wavered although she frequently chastised herself for what she felt was her unworthiness.

¹Much of the background information in this essay is taken from the books written and missionary diaries and letters edited by Clifford M. Drury for the Northwest Historical Series published by the Arthur H. Clark Company, Glendale, California, notably *First White Women Over the Rockies*, Vols. I and II (1963) and III (1966); *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the Opening of Old Oregon*, Vols. I and II (1973); and *Nine Years with the Spokane Indians: The Diary of Elkanah Walker 1838-1848* (1976). Original sources from which the author has drawn include the forty-seven letters written by Archibald McDonald to Elkanah Walker between April, 1838, and October, 1844, now in the Walker-Whitman Papers, Coe Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut; from the McDonald Papers in the British Columbia Provincial Archives, Victoria, Canada; and from materials in the Hudson's Bay Company archives in Winnipeg, Canada. See also Jean Murray Cole, *Exile in the Wilderness: The Biography of Chief Factor Archibald McDonald, 1790-1852* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979).

Her husband found his way to missionary work by a somewhat more roundabout route. He too was born into a large family, but his early educational opportunities were limited and it was not until he was in his late twenties that he entered the theological seminary at Bangor, Maine. Because of his maturity, he was allowed to take the usual four-year course in two years. Walker was an awkward, taciturn man, given to hypochondria and deep depressions, hardly a likely candidate for a life that demanded vigorous health and a positive approach in overcoming the inevitable obstacles in the mission field.

Elkanah and Mary were introduced to each other by one of their fellow church members. Two days after their meeting they were engaged to be married and to go to the mission field together. At first they expected the field to be Africa, but a combination of circumstances led to the ABCFM's decision to send them, along with seven other neophyte missionaries, to Oregon.

The Rev. Cushing Eells and his bride, Myra Fairbanks Eells, who were to share the mission at Tshimakain with the Walkers for the nine years of its existence, were married on the same day as Elkanah and Mary Walker, March 5, 1838. The two couples met twelve days later in New York and there began their memorable transcontinental journey that was to end nearly six months later at the Whitman Mission at Waiilatpu. With them from New York came two other newlyweds, Asa and Sara Smith. At Cincinnati they were joined by Cornelius Rogers, a bachelor, and when they reached the western frontier at Independence, Missouri, Mary and William H. Gray completed the party.

Eells, at twenty-eight five years younger than his wife, graduated from the Hartford Theological Seminary in 1837. Both Cushing and Myra had a town background, better than average education, and a shared interest in foreign missions. Both had some teaching experience, and Myra had considerable skill as a seamstress that was to stand them all in good stead in the years of isolation at Tshimakain. Unfortunately, Myra's health was not up to the

rigors of the pioneer life in Oregon; many were the days that Mary Walker, with her own growing family making endless demands, was called upon to do Myra's housework as well as her own. It was their good fortune that Mary and Elkanah were able to bring their familiarity with farm life and homemaking skills into play at the mission, where there were none but the most primitive of tools and facilities.

One wonders how the American Board expected these unseasoned young couples to manage in the Far West. Apparently they assumed that they would be able to obtain all their needs from the Hudson's Bay Company, as from the corner store. No thought seemed to be given to the distances to be covered and the cost of transportation that doubled the value of any purchases that had to be brought in from such vast distances, either overland across the continent from Montreal or Hudson Bay or around Cape Horn by ship from Britain or Boston. While the Hudson's Bay Company officers were friendly, helpful, and accommodating, they were not shopkeepers and it was not their role to keep on hand anything more than would fill their own needs and those of the fur trade.

At the same time, the Board made clear that the missionaries would receive no salaries and that the mission stations were expected to operate home farms to produce much of their own food. Bills could be drawn on the Hudson's Bay Company, but so little financial assistance was provided that the total expenses paid by the ABCFM for the entire Oregon Mission from 1839 to 1847 probably averaged only \$2,300 per year.²

ANOTHER DIFFICULTY BECAME apparent almost as soon as the nine missionaries assembled at Independence to begin their two-thousand-mile overland journey: the clash of personalities that plagued the Oregon Mission throughout its existence. It had begun with the deeply rooted problems of the Whitman-Spalding party two years earlier, and this larger group setting forth in 1838 manifested, if anything, even deeper divisions. Friendlier relations, more compatible association, might

²Drury, *Nine Years*, 186n.



Mary Richardson Walker, from the Walker Collection, Henry E. Huntington Library. Photo courtesy the Huntington Library.

have made their journey less arduous or at least provided some relief to balance the hardships they endured. Instead of the missionaries being a comfort and support to each other, their petty differences, the constant criticisms, and the sulky withdrawals only added to the miseries of the long trek.

The missionaries crossing the unpopulated, uncharted plains required an escort. Somewhat grudgingly, the experienced traders of the American Fur Company had allowed the Whitman party to join them at Westport, near Independence, in April of 1836 and travel with their caravan as far as the rendezvous west of the Rocky Mountains where they traded for the furs they brought back east. This was again the plan for the 1838 group, led in the initial stages by Gray, who had traveled the route before with Whitman and had returned east to recruit more missionaries and to bring back a wife.

Gray was at the root of many of the difficulties experienced by the Oregon Mission. Brash, officious, the mechanic-turned-missionary implied to his traveling companions that he was a doctor, although his formal medical education was limited to some lectures he had attended in New York the preceding winter. His behavior on the journey west exacerbated the already simmering problems. Gray was responsible for the arrangements with Captain Andrew Drips of the American Fur Company, who was to be their guide and protector on the 1,100-mile trek from Westport to the mountains. The caravan set off on April 22: two hundred horses and mules, seventeen carts and wagons, sixty men. The missionaries themselves had twenty-four horses, fourteen cattle, and a dog. According to Myra Eells, the procession was half a mile long. It would be two months before they arrived at the rendezvous: two months of misery and toil, of bickering and resentment.

The three ordained clergymen were treated as servants by Gray, who had joined the mission as a layman mechanic-handyman. Not only were they shocked at Gray's attitude, they were astonished to discover that rather than being passengers on the journey, they were expected to tend the animals, hunt for food, raise camp every evening, and dismantle it again next morning before setting off for the eight to ten hours they spent in the saddle each day. Gray had underestimated to the Board the cost of the trip west and, while the fur traders had servants to do the menial tasks, the missionaries themselves had to perform all the unaccustomed manual labor for their party.

The misery did not end when they arrived at the rendezvous on June 21. Gray had arranged to be met at the Green River Rendezvous west of the mountains (now Wyoming) by Francis Ermatinger, a colorful and experienced Hudson's Bay Company officer who had been in the Columbia District since 1825. He had agreed to lead the party on to Fort Hall and, if necessary, to Wailatpu, the Whitman Mission near Fort Walla Walla.³ As it happened, the Americans

³Lois Halliday McDonald, *Fur Trade Letters of Francis Ermatinger 1818-1859* (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1980), 206-207.

decided to rendezvous east of the mountains in 1838, delaying the missionaries' meeting with Ermatinger. During the seventeen uncertain days that elapsed before their guide's welcome appearance, the missionaries were horrified to witness the traditional rowdy drunkenness of the rendezvous and the pagan scalp-dance rites of the Indians gathered there. It was a rude introduction to the ways of the Far West.

On July 12, with Ermatinger in charge and John Sutter and six other American mountain men in the party, the nine missionaries headed west through the mountains, arriving at Fort Hall on the 27th. A pause of four days there gave the women time to do their laundry, with Ermatinger treating them with "great kindness" and providing such luxuries as servants to bring their wood and water. The journey resumed on July 31. By the end of August the newcomers had joined the Whitmans and Spaldings at Waiilatpu, relieved that their journey was over but still very much aware of the divisiveness among them and the difficulties that must be surmounted before they could expect to make a success of their mission.

ONE MIGHT HAVE hoped that after the months of arduous travel these poor people might have found themselves with a modicum of comfort. It was not to be. The Whitmans' modest home was scarcely big enough to accommodate their own household, let alone expand to take in nine additional inhabitants, two of the women (Mary Walker and Mary Gray) by now pregnant. The winter that followed was one of great stress and unhappiness for all members of the Oregon Mission.

However, it had been agreed that before winter set in Walker and Eells would establish a new mission station to the north, while the Grays and Rogers joined the Spaldings at Lapwai and the Smiths remained with the Whitmans at Waiilatpu. Early in September Walker and Eells set off on horseback to explore the possibilities. They followed the oft-traveled path north from Fort Walla Walla and after a week's journey of about 240 miles

arrived at Fort Colville, where they were welcomed by Archibald McDonald, the Hudson's Bay Company officer in charge.

As John McLoughlin at Fort Vancouver, and Pierre Pambrun and his successor Archibald McKinley at Walla Walla, had assisted the Whitmans and Spaldings, McDonald and later John Lee Lewes, who followed him at Colville, were to prove a constant aid and support to the Walkers and Eells. Frank Ermatinger had already demonstrated the friendly and cooperative spirit that the Hudson's Bay Company in general adopted toward the American missionaries, a spirit not entirely motivated by humanitarian feelings. The Hudson's Bay Company governor, Sir George Simpson had ordered that the missionaries be "furnished with such supplies as they might require" primarily because he feared that if they had their provisions shipped from Boston by sea "strange vessels in the river" would "excite the Indians" and interfere with the fur trade.⁴

The fatherly interest McDonald took in the well-being of the missionaries at Tshimakain went far beyond supplying them with provisions and offering them building materials, tools, and manpower to help erect their cabins. The experienced trader guided the two younger men in their dealings with their Indian neighbors, acting as an intermediary with the influential local chief, Big Head (variously known as Cornelius and Old Chief), who was to be their mentor.

Big Head was anxious to have the mission located among his people, a band of about two hundred fifty Lower Spokane Indians who traditionally camped near the Spokane River mouth. The Old Chief believed that his people had much to learn from the white people, and his highly competitive nature led him to feel that attaching himself to the mission would ensure his place of influence over the other bands. Walker and Eells agreed to McDonald's suggestion that the Tshimakain plain, some sixty miles south of the fort and six or eight miles from Big Head's lodges, was a suitable site for their establishment. Accordingly, within a few days the two missionaries set off for Tshimakain, escorted by Big Head and a

⁴Arthur S. Morton, *Sir George Simpson: Overseas Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company* (Toronto: Dent, 1944), 212.

large group of Indians, with supplies and building tools provided by McDonald; and a start was made on their two cabins before the oncoming winter weather sent them back to Waiilatpu.

The Tshimakain plain, about seven miles long and varying from a mile to a mile and a half in width, had a number of advantages. A fresh spring flowed from the bottom of the hill on the east side of the valley, and the surrounding woods provided ample firewood and timber for building. The plains lent themselves to the development of a farm, though the severe winters were later to prove a problem. Big Head's camp was nearby, though not too near, and the site was located just off the main route between the Hudson's Bay posts of Walla Walla to the south and Colville to the north. That the other bands of Spokane Indians were situated some considerable distance away did not at first seem to be a drawback; but throughout their years at Tshimakain the missionaries were to experience difficulty in establishing consistent contact with the natives, who continued their traditional seasonal movements to the salmon weirs and to gather roots at the camas grounds.

Walker and Eells returned to Waiilatpu by mid-October. The realization that it would be impossible to take up residence at Tshimakain until the following spring was a great disappointment—not just to their wives but also to Narcissa Whitman, whose small home would have to accommodate the two extra couples and Mary Walker's baby, expected in early December. While the men could remove themselves from the household and find some relief from the irritations of living in such close quarters, the women had to live with it constantly. Elkanah withdrew and spent long hours writing a report to the Board, explaining his ideas on conducting the new mission. He believed that the Indians should be encouraged to settle down and take up farming, that the missionaries should "use the plough as well as the Bible."

A second cabin was built at Waiilatpu, enabling the Smiths to move into separate quarters, but the tensions continued. There were basic disagreements about Christian be-

havior and observances. Narcissa Whitman was accustomed to "praying aloud" while the others believed that women should remain silent. Some objected to the use of wine for communion while others advocated it. Elkanah Walker's chewing tobacco was another bone of contention. In February, a crucial meeting of all the missionaries was held at Lapwai, but it failed to resolve the differences.

One positive development was the Columbia Maternal Association, formed by the women on September 3, 1838, just after the arrival of the second group, while their husbands were meeting to determine the future of the Oregon Mission. Their meetings kept the women, at least, praying and meditating together through those difficult times. Later, on their separate mission stations, all continued to set aside the second and last Wednesday each month for "conversation, reading and Prayer . . . to assist us in the right performance of our Maternal duties." As time passed the old hurts were assuaged, and not doubt these times of contemplation helped to bring about the reconciliation.

WITH EARLY SPRING came the welcome move. By prior arrangement, Big Head and a party of Indians appeared at the Whitman mission station on February 26, 1839, with thirty-five horses to help the Walkers and Eells transport their belongings to Tshimakain. Whitman rode out with them to wave farewell as they set off for their new station on the first wedding anniversary of both couples, March 5, 1839.

What Mary Walker and Myra Eells found awaiting them when they arrived at the much-vaunted Tshimakain plain must have been a great disappointment. Myra described the two roofless cabins as "log pens." Solomon, one of the Indians who had attached himself to the mission the previous autumn, was sent to Colville for provisions. He returned with an insistent invitation from Archibald McDonald to bring the two women to Colville to stay until their homes were made habitable. By March 29, Mary and Myra were comfortably ensconced at the fort, where they remained as guests until May 2. Mary's diary is eloquent in

her admiration for the "elegantly constructed" fort set amid such a "pleasing and romantic" site. "I never was in a place I liked the looks of better," she wrote.

The two women were delighted to discover that Jane Klyne, McDonald's part-native wife, was a congenial companion. According to Mary, Mrs. McDonald was "nearly white and speaks good English" and the three McDonald children then at Colville (four older boys were away at the academy at the Red River colony and post in Canada) "appear as well I think as any I ever saw in the n.e. [northeast]. Their mother attends to their instruction having been educated by her husband." Jane McDonald was invited to join the Maternal Association and over the years the women's friendship ripened. From time to time in the ensuing years they exchanged visits back and forth between the mission and the fur-trade post, bringing their growing families with them and enjoying the fellowship of the Maternal meetings together.

McDonald provided Mary with an Indian girl to help with the baby Cyrus, freeing her to go off with her hosts on long walks around the neighboring countryside, discussing the geological and botanical features, an interest that Mary and McDonald shared. They were, at last, comfortable, but true to her puritan nature Mary worried that she had "so many conveniences here that I fear that I shall not like to go away and leave them."

Leave them she did, however. May 4, 1839, found the two families back at Tshimakain settling into their fourteen-by-fourteen-foot cabins. There were no doors or windows yet, and the dirt floors were not covered with boards until the following October. The rough homemade furniture consisted of tables made by driving four legs into the earth and attaching three planks together to make a table surface. Beds were platforms nailed into the walls. Seating was provided by boxes and stools, and it was not until April of 1841 that the Walkers had their first chair—a rocker made by Gray, who was visiting them at the time. With all the Spartan surroundings, they

⁹Drury, *Nine Years*, 77.



Elkanah Walker, from History of the Pacific Northwest.

were happy to be established at last on their own station. The women went through the usual pioneer housekeeping routines, cooking over the open hearth, washing clothes in the nearby creek, dipping candles, baking bread and cakes, scrubbing, sewing, and mending. The men had already done the first ploughing in mid-April and crops were planted, fences built, repairs made, and an inordinate amount of time spent by the men riding out to round up the horses and cattle that wandered off in search of greener fields to feed on.

MIDST ALL THIS essential activity, the purpose of the mission was not forgotten. The Indians had long been accustomed to their own forms of worship, gathering for prayers at sunrise and sunset each day. McDonald told Walker that when he first came to the country the natives had "addressed their devotions to the sun" but that he had discouraged them from this practice, explaining to them that "there was one infinitely greater than the sun who was the master of life . . . even the master of the sun."⁸ With the coming of the missionaries, the Indians followed Big Head's lead in gathering for their devotions, appearing to be very devout and attentive. Walker and Eells conducted daily services and regularly tried to convey their message

through "rehearsers" or interpreters, while struggling—Walker in particular—to learn the difficult Spokane Flathead language. It was hard, though, to ascertain whether they were actually being understood. With the passing of time it became apparent that for all the natives' outward acceptance of the missionary presence, they had not in fact abandoned their old ways. More and more as the months and years passed Walker and Eells realized that the medicine men still enjoyed their former influence and the traditional medicine rites continued to be practiced even while the Indians attended Christian schools and services.

Another complication added to the difficulty of gathering converts into their fold. Fathers Francois Blanchet and Modeste Demers, Roman Catholic priests from Montreal, Canada, had arrived on the Columbia in 1838 and had conducted mass baptisms at Colville that year and again in the summer of 1839.⁶ Mary Walker apparently believed that they had even converted McDonald, noting in her diary that "the pious Mr. McDonald is a Catholic now" although there was no truth in this; McDonald and his family had been and remained lifelong Episcopalians. McDonald assured Walker that Big Head remained faithful, saying "he is one of the few not captivated by the showey ceremony of the Roman Catholic divine."⁷ Big Head, in fact, remained ambivalent. He admitted to Walker that he was not willing to "renounce his medicine men" (indeed, he was one himself) and it became evident that a large part of the reason for the natives attaching themselves to the mission was the hope of material advantages and rewards. When the missionaries failed to be forthcoming with provisions and presents interest fell off noticeably. Walker struggled to convince them that without a change of heart they must "all perish." He wrote to the Rev. David Greene, the ABCFM secretary in Boston: "We have labored to impress upon their minds . . . that we are all by nature sinful."⁸

Sin. This was at the core of the missionaries' belief. Poor Mary Walker was constantly searching her soul and finding it wanting. "I

know that I am a wicked wretch,"⁹ she confided to her diary, and her husband did little to encourage her to think otherwise. Repeatedly he chastised her for reading newspapers on Sunday, a day they firmly believed should be devoted entirely to religious thoughts. His own diary records on more than one occasion that he was kept awake on Saturday night by Mary working about the house to get all the chores done before the Sabbath. Apparently it never occurred to him to give her a hand. Elkanah admitted to himself that he had many doubts too. "Think all the time that my motives are not good," he noted in his journal.¹⁰

It is not difficult to understand that the Indians could not comprehend the concepts put forth by the missionaries. They were quite at variance with their own ideas. When Walker had a talk with Big Head about his practice of the medicine rites he was "astonished [to find] that his belief was so strong."¹¹ Teacher, another helpful Indian who spent long hours working with Walker on the Flathead language, admitted to him that the Indians did not feel the least concern about their souls and that he was just like them. "If we had plenty of tobacco, we shall have people enough about us as long as that lasted."¹² When Walker admonished Big Head and told him that the Ten Commandments "utterly condemned his conduct" the Old Chief went off in a rage. "It seems . . . to me that they have no fear of death and hell and that they are wholly insensible to the love of God to them and the compassion of Christ in dying for them."

As time went on, a sense of the futility of it all seemed to come over the mission. Although the Eellses and Walkers were more compatible than some of their fellow missionaries, living on such intimate terms inevitably resulted in some differences. An occasional trip to Colville or Walla Walla was not enough to relieve the

⁶Carl Landerholm, editor, *Notices and Voyages of the Famed Quebec Mission to the Pacific Northwest* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1956), 9, 38.

⁷McDonald to Walker, August 12, 1839, Coe Collection.

⁸Drury, *Nine Years*, 110.

⁹Drury, *First White Women*, 2:210.

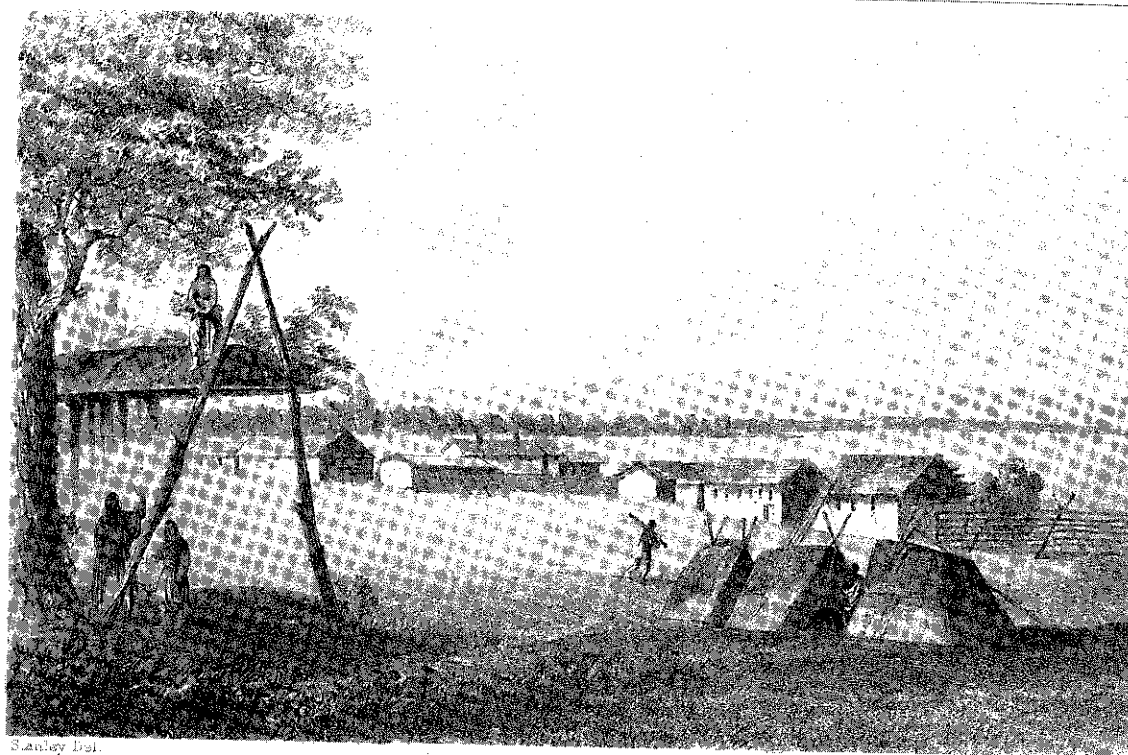
¹⁰Drury, *Nine Years*, 148.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid.*

tensions, and for the men, even riding out to the woods to search for their wandering animals became an excuse to get away by themselves. For the women, the daily drudgery of housework, with only minimal help from the Indian girls or daughters of Hudson's Bay men who lived with them from time to time, left little time for the contemplative life

and the religious teaching they had imagined themselves engaging in when they offered to go to the mission field. Gradually it came to them that for all their efforts little headway was being made. Mary sat down one evening and poured her anguish into her diary; her final sentence summed it up: "Today I have washed and so am all the time busy about something."



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CHEMAKANE MISSION.

at noon [October 24, 1853] we reached the old Chemakane Mission, (see sketch,) so called from a spring of that name near by. The Mission was occupied by Messrs. Walker and Eel; but, in 1849, in consequence of the Cayuse difficulties, it was abandoned. These gentlemen labored ardently for the good of the Indians. Walker was a good farmer and taught them agriculture, and by them his name is now mentioned with great respect. The house occupied by Walker is still standing, but Eel's has been burned down. The site of the Mission is five miles from the Spokane river, in an extensive open valley, well watered and very rich. . . . The route by Walker and Eel's Mission to Colville unites with that taken by us

twelve or fourteen miles from the Mission. It is a better route, affording good grazing during the whole distance. The Colville or Slawntehus and Chemakane valleys have a productive soil, and are from one to three miles wide, and bordered by low hills, covered with larch, pine, and spruce, having also a productive soil, which gradually becomes broken and lower toward the south. . . . in Colville valley there is a line of settlements twenty-eight miles long. The settlers are persons formerly connected with the Hudson Bay Company, and they are anxious to become naturalized, and have the lands they now occupy transferred to themselves.

Pacific Railroad Report, 1853

But is this kind of labor all a missionary has to do?" She wrote "that as yet we have accomplished very little missionary labor, I (think) almost none."¹³ Sunday after Sunday Walker noted in his diary, "Felt dull today." Mary concluded: "I feel that I cannot long continue to labor as I do now."

BUT WERE THEY perhaps too self-critical? Had their accomplishments been greater than they seemed? They had, after all, kept up the regular services and school classes throughout their nine years at Tshimakain. Although the numbers varied and admittedly the natives had not been converted to the strict unbending kind of Christianity practiced by Walker and Eells, it could be said that many of their fellow Congregationalists did not agree with some of the tenets they were attempting to impose on the Spokanes. Although many of the Indians clung to their traditional customs at the same time as they professed some devotion to the Christian forms, they became genuinely fond of the missionaries. Their loyalty was not in question when, some months after the Whitman massacre, the Walker and Eells families were escorted from the Tshimakain Valley by a company of Oregon Volunteers. Rather, the Indians expressed their affection and begged them to come back in more peaceful times.

Echoes of their teaching were to remain with the Spokanes. When Cushing Eells, the only one of the four who returned, visited Tshimakain in 1862 and again in 1875, he was warmly welcomed. More concrete proof of the lasting effects of their ministry came in 1873 when Spokane Garry asked Henry H. Spalding, by then back at Lapwai, to come to minister to his people. Spalding visited the Spokanes and conducted 334 baptisms.

When it came to learning the Indian tongue, they were less successful than they had expected. No doubt they were more than sanguine in assuming that they could master the language without much trouble. In fact it was one of the major difficulties they encountered, and only Elkanah Walker made any real progress. He did produce his tiny Flathead

primer—a meager sixteen pages, it is true, but typeset and printed by his own hand it represented a tremendous effort on his part. He later translated the first four chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel, although this work was not published in his time. In 1851 Walker acted as interpreter for the newly appointed Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Oregon on a tour of the territory around the Upper Columbia River and saw the Old Chief again. Apparently he had lost some of his facility with the dialect. He wrote to Mary that he could no longer speak the language as well as he had when he left the Spokane country.

In later years both Walker and Eells were to play significant roles in the development of educational institutions in Oregon and Washington. On leaving Tshimakain in 1848 they settled in the Willamette Valley, living briefly in Oregon City before both families moved to Forest Grove, some thirty miles west. Both men remained nominally on the list of the ABCFM missions until 1852, but in spite of many entreaties from the Indians for them to return, their work among the Spokanes was done. From then on their ministries were combined with secular duties, Walker as a farmer and preacher and Eells as a teacher. Walker was one of the founders of Tualatin Academy (later Pacific University), of which Eells was the first principal. Later, in 1859, Cushing Eells was responsible for the establishment of Whitman Seminary, later to be known as Whitman College, at Walla Walla. Their legacy was passed on to their children, and sons of both families became prominent churchmen and educators.

Another legacy, perhaps almost as important, is the wonderful chronicle of those early years of the Oregon Mission, captured in diaries and letters. These invaluable documents, along with the peripheral correspondence and records of the fur traders who were their contemporaries, provide the social historian of today and of the future with an incomparable record of a remarkable group of men and women. ■

¹³Drury, *First White Women*, 2:165.



THE MISSIONARY AND IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE AS PORTRAYED IN COMMEMORATIVE WORKS OF ART

by Elisabeth Walton Potter

Commemoration of missionary and other pioneer efforts in the Pacific Northwest began even before such activity was ended. This study of the liveliest era of such commemoration was originally prepared as a slide lecture; the author is coordinator of National Register nominations for the Washington State Historic Preservation Office. The photograph above shows the scene at the dedication of the Whitman Monument at Waiilatpu in 1897; courtesy NWCA.

THE MISSIONARY AND pioneer settlers of the Northwest have been commemorated and memorialized in various ways over the past century and a half, particularly during the fifty years from 1897 to 1947. Acts of commemoration in that period began with exercises marking the tragic massacre of 1847 at Waiilatpu, and other activities at the Whitman Mission site followed. Monuments and ceremonies elsewhere in the region portrayed the experience of missionaries and overland-trail immigrants generally. The examples given here are drawn chiefly from Protestant and nonsectarian history in the state of Oregon, but they are representative of such activities throughout the old Oregon Country.

There were three phases of commemoration in the period under discussion. The first, around the turn of the century, was linked to major anniversary dates and included efforts to mark permanently the locations of pivotal events and the graves of important figures. In the years following the First World War, memorials took on a more complex allegorical and figural character. Their impetus was a mixture of antiquarianism, filial devotion, and

patriotism. The missionary and the Oregon Trail pioneer emerged as heroic figures symbolic of a romantic notion of national destiny. By the end of the Second World War, the idealized figures had developed into stereotypes. Invigorated by the New Deal, Depression-era artists in the West reinterpreted the epic story of the conquering of the frontier in the context of a new national challenge, that of withstanding profound economic crisis. The familiar images were used to evoke the themes of self-reliance, triumph over hardship, and the rewards of industry in a land of plentiful resources.

National Park Service historian Richard West Sellars has provided a useful analysis of commemorative development in the late nineteenth century. He believes that memorials such as those which proliferated on the great Civil War battlefields are in themselves "historical phenomena worthy of . . . attention."¹ Indeed, the most important event to occur at Gettysburg after the three-day engagement of Union and Confederate troops in July, 1863, was an act of commemoration—President Abraham Lincoln's address at the dedication of the battlefield cemetery the following November.

Several factors gave rise to the highly developed sense of monumentation we associ-

¹Richard West Sellars, "Vigil of Silence: The Civil War Memorials," *History News* (July-August, 1986), 41:20.

ate with the Victorian era in America. The Romantic movement in literature and art celebrated the expression of sentiment in the form of tributes and lamentations, or, to use poetic terms, paeans and elegies.

Beginning in the 1860's, American painters, sculptors and architects trained in the academies of Paris and Rome drew inspiration from the historic period of the European Renaissance. Blending classical grandeur with high standards of craftsmanship, they participated in what was thought of at the time as a distinctly American Renaissance. The spirit of the American Renaissance matched the imperialistic attitudes of the nation. The imposing scale and opulence that characterized works of the leading artists in this period of mounting prosperity were emulated in elaborate *objets d'art* designed for mass production. An interest in landscape planning arose at this time as well. Both the new urban parks and rural or "garden" cemeteries on the outskirts of town became ideal settings for sculptural monuments.

Finally, the decades following the Civil War were those in which national patriotic societies such as the Grand Army of the Republic and the Sons of Veterans flourished. The Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution were organized in 1889 and 1890, respectively; in the same era, pioneer associations came into being in the West. Pioneers and their sons and daughters knew they had shared times of exceptional hardship, peril, and heroism. They were, naturally enough, moved to record and memorialize their experiences.

DR. MARCUS WHITMAN'S mission, established among the Cayuse on the Walla Walla in the fall of 1836, served as a crucial place of respite for Oregon Trail immigrants beginning in 1843. Its presence, along with that of the Methodist Mission on the Willamette, hastened settlement of the territorial boundary dispute between the United States and Great Britain in 1846. Eleven years after its establishment the massacre perpetrated by Cayuse agitators made martyrs of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and a dozen men and boys of their mission family. It fell to the survivors to

hastily bury the victims as best as could be done in a common grave, dug to a depth of about three feet. The remains were thus vulnerable to disturbance by wolves. The grave was subsequently made deeper and mounded over with earth as a means of protection.

Some twelve years after the massacre, the Reverend Cushing Eells, a member of the mission's reinforcement of 1838, established a claim upon the ruined mission site. He chose, however, to perpetuate the memory of his former leader not at the gravesite but by founding a seminary at Walla Walla, seven miles to the east.²

Through the 1870's and 1880's, various ideas of suitable monumentation for the Whitmans and their mission were advanced, including the possibility of removing the contents of the Great Grave, as it came to be called, to Whitman College—the institution founded by Eells.³ Catherine Sager Pringle, one of the seven Sager orphans adopted by the Whitmans in 1844, envisioned a children's home at the mission site as the ideal memorial.⁴ William Henry Gray, the former carpenter and mechanic who had accompanied the Whitmans and Spaldings as a member of the original mission party, was persuaded that erecting a monument on top of the hill which historically had afforded a useful prospect of the valley was the best course of action. He spearheaded the fundraising for such a monument until his death in 1889. Meanwhile, in 1884, students at Whitman College enclosed the mounded grave with a sturdy fence of wooden palings.⁵ It was the first act to circumscribe as hallowed ground the last resting place of the martyred missionaries. The substantial but commonplace picket fence would be replaced in cast and wrought iron fourteen years later.

The catalyst for renewed commemorative effort at Wailatpu was the fiftieth anniversary

²Erwin N. Thompson, *Whitman Mission National Historic Site*, National Park Service Historical Handbook Series No. 37 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1964), 74.

³Erwin N. Thompson, *Shallow Grave At Wailatpu: The Sagers' West* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1973), 134.

⁴Thompson, *Shallow Grave*, 133.

⁵Mary Shipman Penrose, "In Perpetual Memory—The Story of the Whitman National Monument," *National Historical Magazine* (January, 1938), 72:35.

of the massacre. Private landholders agreed to set aside eight acres encompassing the grave and adjacent hill as a memorial park or preserve. The anniversary was observed in 1897 with ceremonies held in Walla Walla and at the mission site on November 29 and 30, respectively. The great legacy of the occasion was permanent monumentation.

A granite cenotaph—a memorial marker at a site other than a tomb—was raised by the Whitman Memorial Association on what came to be known as Memorial Shaft Hill (Fig. 1). It was intended to pay homage to the Whitmans, whose remains lay at the base of the hill, and it took the form of an obelisk, among the most popular funerary monuments of the Victorian era.

The archetypes of these tapering, four-sided stone shafts were granite monoliths associated with ancient Egypt's sacred city of the sun god. Such shafts were truly monumental in scale: the tallest of them reached over 100 feet in height and weighed more than 300 tons.⁶ In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, archaeological explorations led to a revival of decoration in the Egyptian style. Because of its association with the Egyptian concept of eternal life beyond the earthly realm, the obelisk became an allegory for the Christian belief in the eternity of the spirit. The form was chosen for George Washington's cenotaph in the nation's capital, carried out between 1848 and 1884, and for Abraham Lincoln's tomb monument in Springfield, Illinois, completed in 1874.⁷

Given the prominence of the obelisk in national shrines and as an enhancement to public landscapes, it was a logical form for the Whitman Monument of 1897. Its base is a traditional cubic pedestal slightly broader than the base of the shaft. The only embellishment, on the uppermost of three stepped plinths with

rock-cut faces, is the Whitman name. Together with its base, the shaft rises to a stately height of twenty-seven feet. The overall effect is one of dignified simplicity.

As for the Great Grave at Waiilatpu, in 1897 its decimated contents were temporarily disinterred in order that a permanent metal vault could be installed and sealed by a ledger—a marble slab inscribed with the names of the fourteen victims of the massacre. The ledger was not ready on November 30, when the fiftieth anniversary was observed at the site with eight survivors of the massacre in attendance, so it was installed during a special burial service conducted on January 29, 1898 (Fig. 2).⁸ A memorial chapel was erected in the preserved area in 1908, following the early Christian tradition of erecting pilgrimage chapels to martyred saints. A late vernacular version of Gothic architecture, it is thought to have been in use until about 1924.⁹

In 1916, the nucleus of the memorial we know today was completed by reinterment of the burial remains of William H. and Mary Gray from a cemetery in Astoria. Gray had settled on Clatsop Plains near the mouth of the Columbia after a brief but eventful sojourn in the Willamette Valley as secular agent for the Methodists' Oregon Institute and one of the organizers of the Provisional Government of Oregon. The Grays' monument at Waiilatpu is a truncated shaft surmounted by a Celtic cross. Gray was among those patriots to be honored by the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1931, when the Multnomah Chapter undertook to affix bronze plaques to the grave-markers of participants in the Champoege convention of 1843 who voted to form the Provisional Government.

In the years leading to the centenary of the founding of the mission at Waiilatpu, the Narcissa Prentiss Chapter, DAR, and the Kiwanis Club of Walla Walla cooperated in betterment projects and beautification of the site. An entrance gate to Whitman Memorial Park was erected and a well for landscape irrigation was dug. The Whitman Centennial Company was incorporated for the purpose of acquiring land and promoting formation of a national park, and in June, 1936, the Congress

⁶"Obelisk," *The New International Encyclopaedia* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1934), 17:332.

⁷For a concise statement concerning the configuration of post-Civil War memorials in America, see David M. Kahn, "The Grant Monument," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (October, 1982), 41:213-215.

⁸Thompson, *Shallow Grave*, 134-137.

⁹Telephone communication with Roger Trick, Whitman Mission National Historic Site, July, 1986. The source of information was the chronology prepared by Erwin Thompson during his years at the National Historic Site.

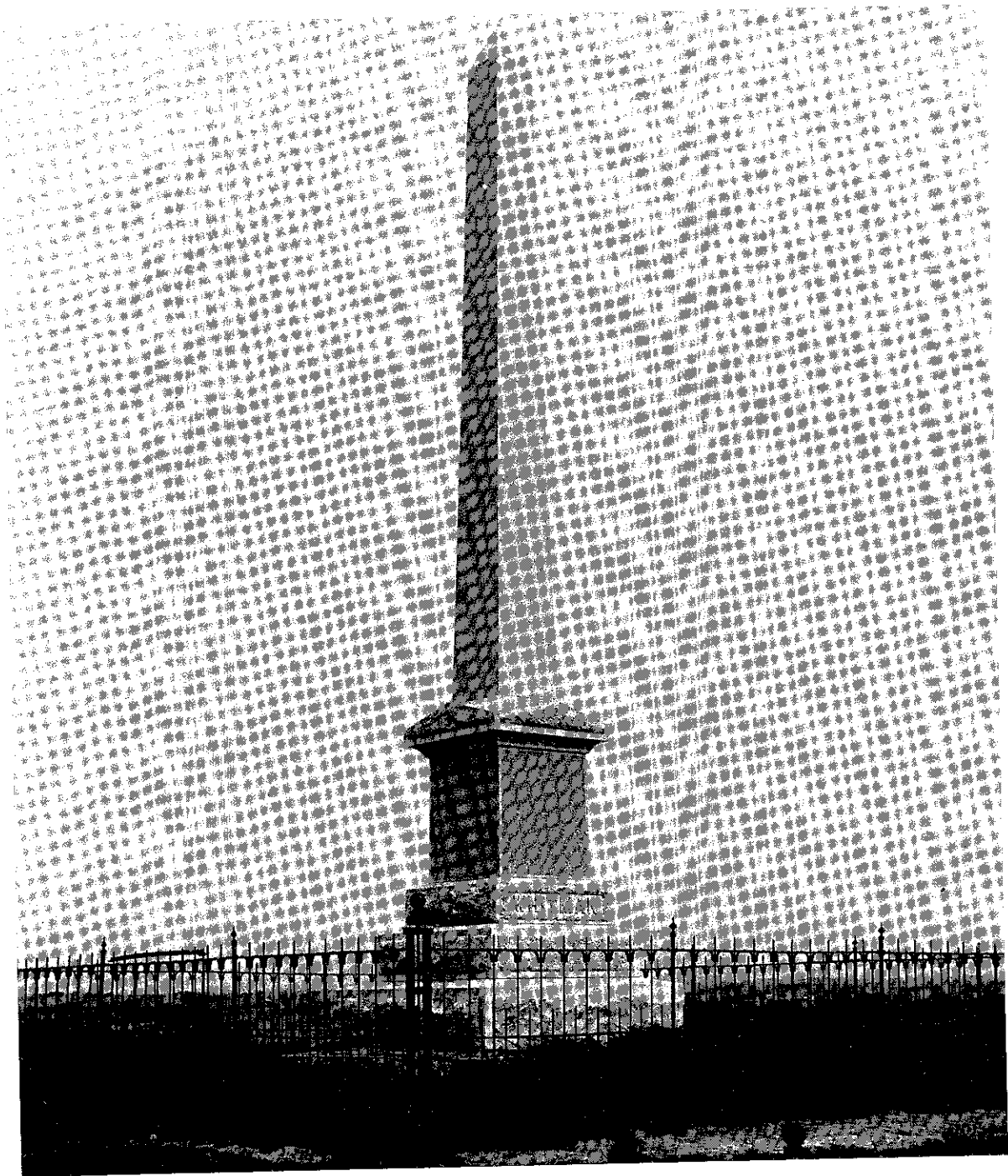
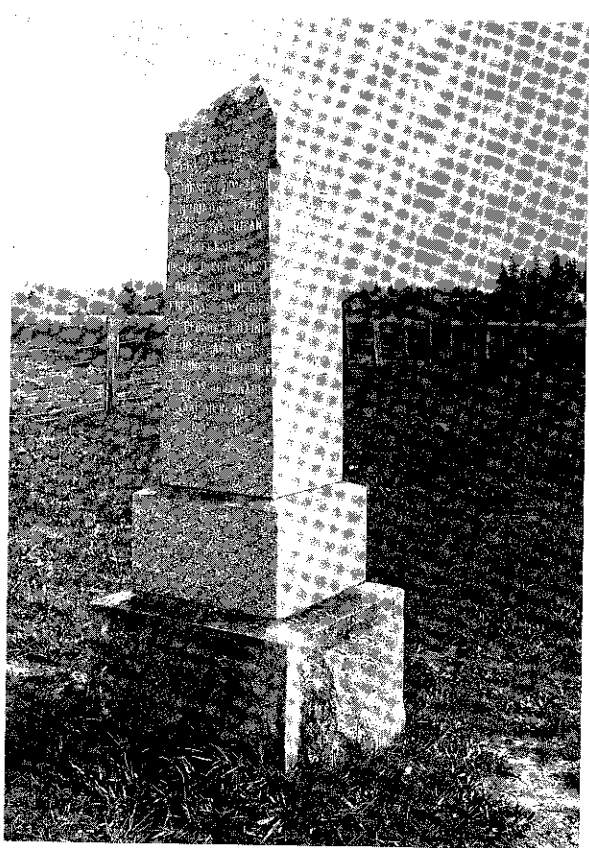
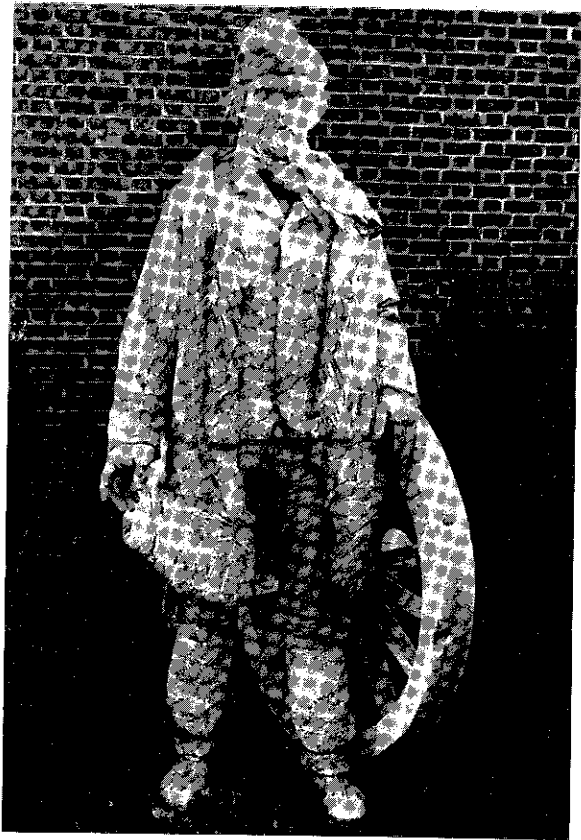
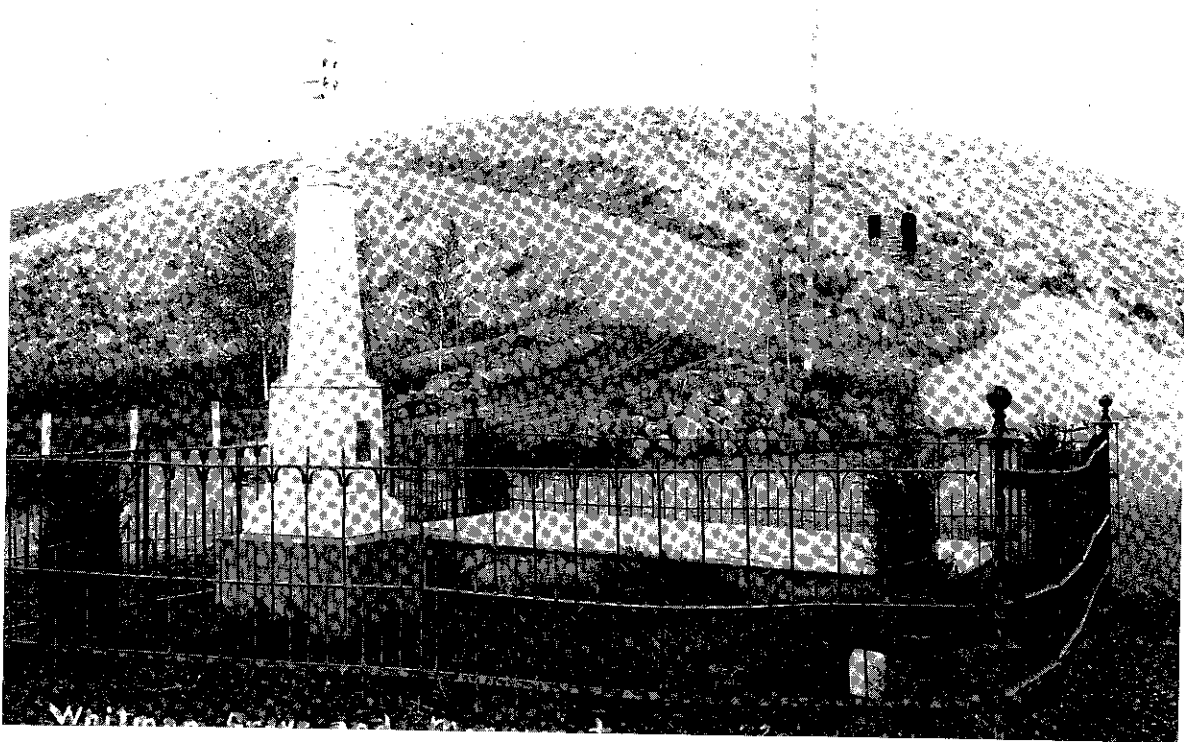


Fig. 1, above: Monument to the Whitmans on Memorial Shaft Hill. Photo courtesy Northwest and Whitman College Archives. Facing page: Fig. 2, top: The Great Grave and monument to William and Mary Gray after their reburial at Waiilatpu. Photo courtesy Oregon Historical Society (ORHI 78949). Fig. 3, bottom left: Alexander Stirling Calder's statue of Marcus Whitman. Photo courtesy Presbyterian Historical Society. Fig. 4, bottom right: The granite obelisk at Champoeig marking the general site of the meeting that led to establishment of Oregon's provisional government. A. M. Prentiss photograph.



of the United States passed an act providing for the establishment of Whitman National Monument.¹⁰ Under auspices of the centennial organization, and through the efforts of the Walla Walla Chamber of Commerce, an additional 37½ acres were added to the memorial to encompass the archaeological site of the mission.¹¹

Clearly, the centenary of the mission's founding was the high point in the continuum of commemorative development at Waiilatpu. The Whitman Centennial Celebration consecrated the monument as a national shrine. The celebration extended over a period of four days, from August 13 to August 16, 1936, and involved nearly every national organization having a ministry perceived as parallel to that of the historic mission. The list of participating organizations included the Oregon Trail Memorial Association, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, The American Association of University Women, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Presbyterian and Congregational churches. The sponsors included also the American Medical Association, which furnished to Whitman College Ernest Ralph Norling's painting of the medical missionary (for whom no likeness from life is known to exist).¹²

Among the earliest figural representations of Marcus Whitman was that produced by A. Stirling Calder, one of a distinguished family of American sculptors. He was engaged to produce six nine-foot statues of prominent historical figures to adorn the Witherspoon Building in Philadelphia, which housed offices of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.¹³ Calder's heroic marble statue (Fig. 3) was thought to have been modeled after the missionary's nephew Perrin Whitman, who reportedly bore a resemblance to his uncle.¹⁴ The figure is necessarily idealized: a commanding, bearded figure whose costume is enriched with articles of frontier dress, including a buckskin coat and leggings, a loose cravat, and a knitted woolen cap reminiscent of the tuque worn by French-Canadian fur-trappers. The figure stands squarely poised with a steady forward gaze. Whitman's part in opening an emigrant route to the Far West is acknowledged by the

wagon wheel at his side. The wheel rim is inscribed with the Latin legend *per ardua surgo*—"I rise through difficulties."¹⁵

Calder's statue appears to have established the conventions for subsequent portrayals, including Norling's painting and a bronze profile bust in bas relief created by New York sculptor E. James. For many years the portrait medallion, approximately sixteen inches in diameter, was displayed in the lobby of the Hotel Marcus Whitman in Walla Walla.¹⁶

Developments at the site of the Whitman Mission were carried forward by the momentum of the Centennial Celebration for a number of years. In accordance with enabling legislation of 1936, the original and newly acquired tracts totalling 45½ acres were donated to the nation, and Whitman National Monument was formally established on January 20, 1940. Archaeological investigations were commenced as a basis for future interpretation. The monument was doubled in area when the federal government acquired another 45 acres in 1961. Finally, in 1962 the monument was redesignated Whitman Mission National Historic Site in conformance with refined National Park Service nomenclature.¹⁷

¹⁰Penrose, "In Perpetual Memory," 35.

¹¹Thompson, *Whitman Mission*, 74.

¹²Penrose, "In Perpetual Memory," 35-36. Norling's portrait of Marcus Whitman is reproduced as an illustration at the opening of the article, page 26. A photographic portrait alleged to be that of Marcus Whitman was acquired by the Presbyterian Historical Society in 1932. According to a notation made at the time of acquisition, the photograph of the seated subject, clean-shaven and wearing a frock coat, was copied from an ambrotype in the possession of a descendant of a first cousin to Whitman. While the attribution is unverified, it must be acknowledged that Whitman's return to the East in the winter of 1842-43 coincided with the introduction of early photographic processes. Information on the provenance of the photographic portrait courtesy of the Presbyterian Historical Society.

¹³Wayne Craven, *Sculpture in America* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968), 571; Peter Hastings Falk, comp., *Who Was Who in American Art, Compiled from the Original 34 Volumes of American Art Annual: Who's Who in Art, Biographies of American Artists Active from 1898-1947* (Madison, Connecticut: Sound View Press, 1985), 96; Clifford M. Drury, *Marcus Whitman, M.D.: Pioneer and Martyr* (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, 1937), 426. In recent years, the headquarters of the United Presbyterian Church were consolidated in New York. When the Witherspoon Building was sold, the Calder statues were removed for exhibition at the entrance to the Presbyterian Historical Society Building, which had been completed and opened for use at Fifth and Lombard Streets in Philadelphia's Society Hill area in 1967. Information on the present location of the Whitman statue courtesy of the Presbyterian Historical Society.

¹⁴Drury, *Marcus Whitman, M.D.*, 426.

¹⁵Translation courtesy of Perry J. Powers, Emeritus Professor of Romance Languages, University of Oregon, Eugene.

¹⁶Telephone communication with Roger Trick, July, 1986.

¹⁷Thompson, *Whitman Mission*, 74.

ALTHOUGH CHAMPOEG WAS NEVER received into the National Park system, the historic farming settlement on the Willamette River is one of the few sites in the state of Oregon having a commemorative history approaching the sanctity of that of the Whitman Mission. At Champoege commemorative history began, in a sense, when the Oregon Historical Society was organized in December, 1898. The Society adopted by-laws providing for a Committee on Memorials, whose purpose was to "select, identify and mark with suitably inscribed permanent monuments . . . places of historical interest. . . ."¹⁸ During the second annual meeting of the Society in December, 1900, the report filed by the committee provided Governor Theodore T. Geer's written evidence that he had determined the "exact spot" at which the vote for organization of the Provisional Government of Oregon took place.¹⁹ Geer had been accompanied in his field inspection by F. X. Matthieu, who verified the location. Matthieu not only had been a participant in the historic meeting; according to tradition, he was one of the two French-Canadian settlers who voted on the side of those who organized.

The convention at Champoege on May 2 was the pivotal meeting in a series of gatherings of male members of the Willamette Valley settlements in 1843. Its object was to decide whether to organize for protection of property through the enforcement of law and order. The resulting civil organization provided an orderly transition to the time when the United States extended its jurisdiction over the Oregon Country.²⁰

¹⁸*Proceedings of the Oregon Historical Society, Including the Meeting for Organization held December 17, 1898, the Quarterly Meetings of the Board of Directors, and the First Annual Meeting of the Members of the Society held December 16, 1899* (Salem: W. H. Leeds, State Printer, 1900). See page 18, special meeting of the board of directors to complete organization of the society, December 31, 1898. Article XI of the bylaws pertains to the Committee on Memorials.

¹⁹*Proceedings of the Oregon Historical Society . . . Including the Second Annual Meeting, December 15, 1900* (Salem, 1901), 18.

²⁰John A. Hussey, *Champoege: Place of Transition* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society in cooperation with the Oregon State Highway Commission and the National Park Service, 1967), 157-158.

²¹*Ibid.*, 254-255.

²²*The Daily Journal* (Salem), April 18, 1903; *Capital Journal* (Salem), June 19, 1965.

The first commemorative effort at what developed as Provisional Government Park was erection of Champoege Monument on a square rod of farm land set aside for the purpose (Fig. 4). The monument was authorized by the Oregon legislative assembly and was carried out under the direction of Governor Geer in cooperation with the Oregon Historical Society's Committee on Memorials.²¹ The granite shaft does, in fact, mark the general location on the Willamette riverbank of the momentous meeting. It was inscribed with the names of those believed at the time to have voted in favor of provisional government. The monument was dedicated in 1901, on the 58th anniversary of the settlers' meeting, at which time F. X. Matthieu (then 83 years of age) performed the unveiling. The dedication event was the beginning of the popular Champoege Day celebrations, which were thereafter held on an annual basis under joint auspices of the Oregon Historical Society and the Oregon Pioneer Association.

WITH SO MANY of those who had participated in the settling of the frontier still living and eager to reminisce about the adventures of their prime, the turn of the century was the heyday of pioneer societies. Many of the groups compiled their proceedings or issued souvenir programs of dedication exercises. In such a climate as this, a movement to honor the anonymous as well as the illustrious began. Salem mercantilist Werner Breyman gave to the capital city in which he had prospered a prefabricated monument of cast iron (Fig. 5). The Breyman Fountain—which was also a lamp standard—graced the west park of Oregon's old Statehouse.²² The basin on the street side was for the use of horses. The bison heads and American eagles were meaningful parts of the decorative program of the piece, as symbols of the westward movement and national identity. The fountain was surmounted by a male pioneer whose musket is at the ready and whose free hand is shielding his eyes from the western sun. While the entire structure rose to a height of fifteen feet, the figure was comparatively diminutive, almost a

statuette. Painted in imitation of bronze, the mass-produced figure appears to have been a popular ornament for memorial fountains elsewhere in the West in this period.²³

One who was most deeply impressed by the epic of westward emigration was himself an Oregon Trail pioneer of 1852 who had settled in Washington Territory. At 75 years of age, Ezra Meeker turned from farming and hop growing in Puyallup, Washington, and dedicated the balance of his life to commemorative marking of the Oregon Trail. Through four different retracings, completed by ox-drawn wagon, automobile, and airplane in 1906, 1910, 1915, and 1924, Meeker focused national attention on the greatest of emigrant trails. At the end of January, 1906, he embarked on his first trek, eastward-bound, with the objective of promoting public interest. His showmanship was immediately effective.²⁴

The text of a monument erected on the high school grounds by citizens of Baker, Oregon, in April of 1906 credited founders of the Provisional Government for their intrepidity and for having "wrested Oregon from British rule" (Fig. 6). The overstatement of the facts reflected the common understanding of the day. Meeker himself was a keen student of Northwest history and harbored few illusions: he was one of the first to respectfully debunk the myth that Marcus Whitman had left Waiilatpu in the winter of 1842 to "save the Oregon Country for the United States" by pleading to President Tyler and by promoting an emigrant train. Politely contradicting Independence Day oratory by President Warren Harding delivered at Meacham, Oregon, in 1923, Meeker, in an interview for the *New York Times*, pointed out that Whitman embarked on his long ride merely with the intention of pleading with the American Board to save his mission among the Cayuse. "No one man," said Meeker, "or no one class of men 'saved Oregon'.... First credit should be given to the home-builders who crossed the trail."²⁵ Meeker's eloquence concerning the rank-and-file immigrant may have helped shape a period of figural commemoration that developed after the First World War.

In the early period, figural representations of pioneer women seldom were used in commemorative monuments. In 1916, H. G. Nickerson, a member of the Wyoming Trails Commission, inscribed a stone tablet at South Pass in the Rocky Mountains to honor Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding, first white women to cross the Continental Divide (Fig. 7). The monument stands in complement to the Oregon Trail marker placed there by Ezra Meeker in 1906.²⁶

Another notable exception to the norm was Alice Cooper's bronze statue of Sacajewea and the infant Pompey, placed in Portland's Washington Park as a legacy of the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition of 1905 (Fig. 8). To be sure, neither the Shoshoni heroine nor the members of the Northwest Corps of Discovery were settlers, but the explorers were appropriately regarded as the vanguard of pioneers; and the exposition in their honor, by sheer scope and extent, was one of the most ambitious acts of commemoration of period. While its purpose was to focus attention on the state of Oregon, its scenic assets and commercial prospects, it also raised the popular consciousness of pioneer history. Days and events were dedicated to the pioneer societies and to historic public figures. By dint of the publicity it received in the planning and execution, the fair prompted many organizations, both religious and secular, to examine their history and attainments in the Northwest.

²³In Ashland, Oregon, on the plaza at the entrance to Lithia Park, the statuette was used as a termination for the lithia water fountain erected in 1910 as a memorial to the parents of local banker E. V. Carter.

²⁴*Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), 12:495-496; James Aldredge, "From Puyallup to Oyster Bay," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer Northwest Magazine* (January 26, 1975), 3-5. A "fine granite shaft" was erected on the high school grounds in Baker City, Oregon and dedicated on April 19, 1906, with Meeker in attendance. Funds for its bronze tablet were contributed by local school children. The success of this early promotion was discussed by Meeker in *The Busy Life of Eighty-five Years*, printed in Seattle in 1916. When the old high school was torn down for construction of a new high school in the 1930's, the monument was removed to the city's Geiser-Pollman Park. Information on the monument's relocation courtesy of Pearl Jones, Baker City Library.

²⁵The text of Meeker's interview for the *New York Times* was reprinted in the *Portland Sunday Journal*, July 22, 1923, Sec. 2, p. 4.

²⁶Telephone communication with Roger Joyce, Wyoming State Archives, Museums and Historical Department, Cheyenne, June, 1987. Among the sources of the information were *The Wyoming State Journal* (Cheyenne), June 16, 1916, 3; Grace Raymond Hebard, *Marking The Oregon Trail, The Bozeman Road and Historical Places in Wyoming 1908-1920* (N.p.: The Daughters of the American Revolution of Wyoming, n.d.), 25-26.

THE METHODIST CHURCH had a particularly long history in the country explored by Lewis and Clark. In the fall of 1834, a small band of Methodist missionaries under the Rev. Jason Lee established on the bank of the Willamette River, about ten miles north of Salem at a location known as Mission Bottom, the first mission to Indians in the Northwest. From the original, central station, the Methodists set up satellite stations throughout the region: at Nisqually on Puget Sound, on Clatsop Plains at the mouth of the Columbia, at the Falls of the Willamette, and at The Dalles of the Columbia, where at the station known as "Wascopam" some tentative success in converting the native population was realized.

Returning temporarily to the United States in 1838, Jason Lee toured the western border states and the eastern conferences to raise support for the mission and to encourage emigration. With a petition from Willamette Valley settlers handed to Senator Lewis F. Linn, he memorialized Congress on the need for government protection of the rights of United States citizens in the far Northwest.²⁷

The mission was bolstered by two successive reinforcements of funds and personnel, and in the spring of 1841, Jason Lee ordered a shift of the mission headquarters from the location on Mission Bottom (which was subject to regular flooding) to present-day Salem, where a natural watercourse allowed the construction of a sawmill and gristmill. The old central station was used for a residual farming operation for about six years before it was abandoned. Except for the distantly located hospital, the mission buildings were washed away in the flood of 1863 that changed the course of the river. A 6½-acre area containing

the location of the original mission station was donated to Willamette University by heirs of the landowner in 1930.²⁸ A bronze plaque affixed to a boulder was for fifty years the only field commemoration of Lee's mission. The focus of remembrance was Willamette University, the institution formed by the Methodist missionaries following their disbanding.

With what came to be seen as the overdevelopment of the secular department, and with dissension among members of the mission family, the enterprise was destined to be dissolved. Neither retrenchment nor his final personal appearance before the Board of Managers of the Missionary Society could forestall Jason Lee's recall in 1844. While the mission superintendent was exonerated of the charges of speculation and maladministration brought against him, his successor was already in the field. Deeply disappointed not to be reassigned to his mission, he headed for his birthplace on the Lower Canada/Vermont border. He died there on March 13, 1845, at 41 years of age.

Lee would eventually be lauded for his part in laying a foundation for United States jurisdiction in the Oregon Country. The 26th Annual Report of the Missionary Society, paying tribute to the missionary pioneer in the year of his death, predicted that "future generations will rise up to call him blessed."²⁹ Indeed, future generations did.

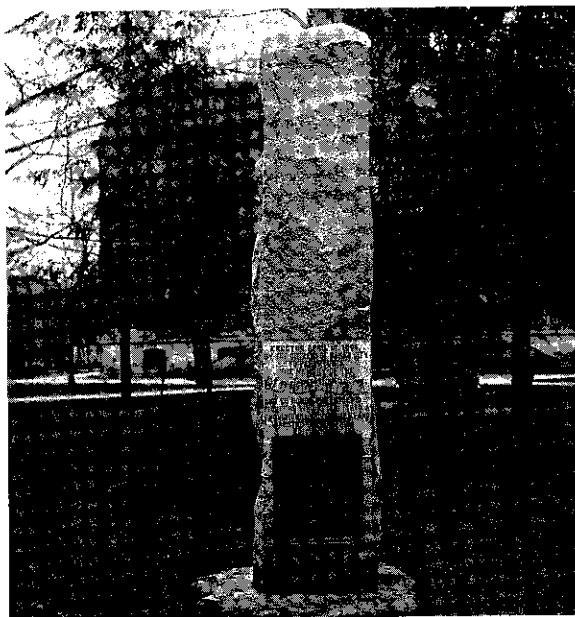
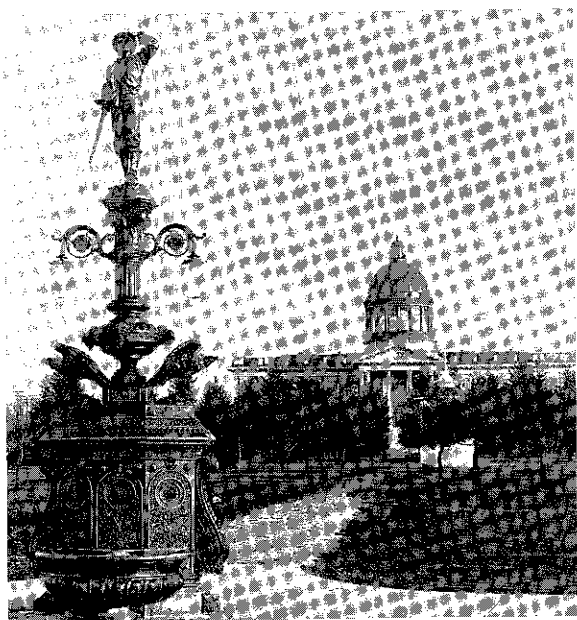
The inspiration for retrieving Lee's remains from Vermont came in 1904 from Mrs. Smith French of The Dalles. Her correspondent, Col. Frederick D. Butterfield of Derby Line, Vermont, generously stood the expense of disinterment and shipping the remains and tombstone to Portland. The Columbia River and Oregon conferences of the Methodist Church appointed a joint committee to receive the ashes and arrange for temporary storage until a suitable occasion could be found for reburial. The chosen occasion was Willamette University's commencement exercises on June 15, 1906. Among others, the Reverend Robert A. Booth of The Dalles and Francis H. Grubbs, widower of Jason Lee's only daughter, made up the committee for arrangements.³⁰

²⁷Cornelius J. Brosnan, *Jason Lee, Prophet of the New Oregon* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932), 220-223; Melvin Clay Jacobs, *Winning Oregon: A Study of an Expansionist Movement* (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, 1938), 115-118.

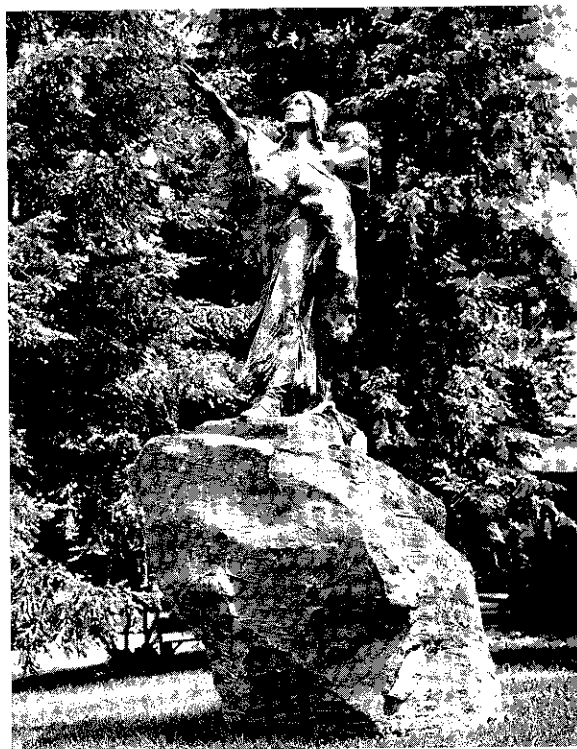
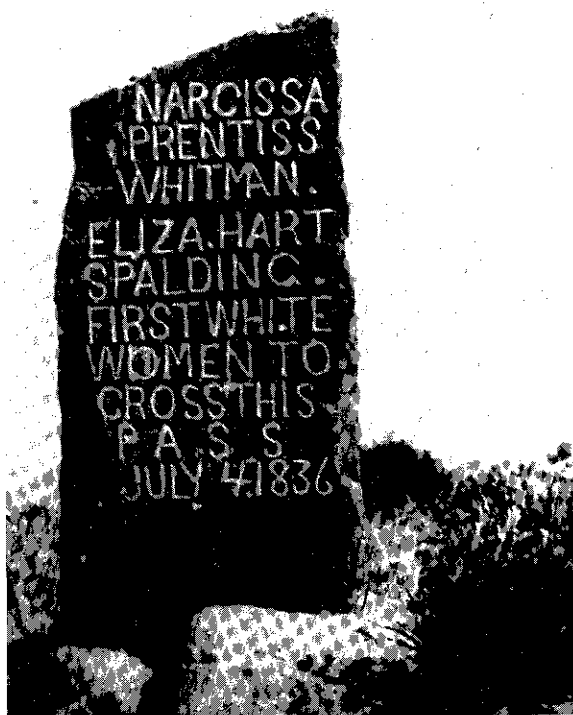
²⁸Marion County Deed Records, Book 207, p. 134; Judith A. Sanders, Mary K. Weber, and David Brauner, "Willamette Mission Archeological Project, Phase III Assessment," Department of Anthropology, Oregon State University, for the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (1938), 36.

²⁹*Twenty-sixth Annual Report of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York, 1845), 14-15.

³⁰*Memorial Services at Re-Interment of Remains of Rev. Jason Lee, Salem, Oregon, Friday, June 15, 1906*, 7.



Above: Fig. 5, left: Drinking fountain—a memorial to pioneers—in front of the old Oregon Statehouse in Salem. Photo courtesy Oregon State Highway Division; original in Oregon State Library. Fig. 6, right: Old Oregon Trail monument, Baker, Oregon. Wesley Andrews photo, courtesy Oregon Historical Society (ORHI 13955). Below: Fig. 7, left: Narcissa Whitman-Eliza Spalding monument, South Pass, Wyoming. Photo courtesy Oregon Historical Society (ORHI 13955). Fig. 8, right: Statue of Sacajawea in Washington Park, Portland. Photo courtesy Oregon Department of Transportation.



The reinterment was marked by three separate services at the First Methodist Church in Salem. At the special afternoon service under auspices of the Oregon Pioneer Association, addresses were delivered by historian and editor of the Portland *Oregonian* Harvey W. Scott and Judge Reuben P. Boise, who made his home in Jason Lee's old house on Mill Creek. Pioneer Oregon newspaper publisher and banker Asahel Bush presided over the evening service. Services at the gravesite brought further tributes of respect and appreciation. There were fourteen honorary pallbearers, all of them Methodist ministers from throughout the region. Among the active pallbearers were former governors Z. F. Moody and Theodore Geer and George H. Himes, executive secretary of the Oregon Historical Society.³¹

Lee Mission Cemetery on D Street in north Salem had been incorporated in 1869 with the donation of 4.77 acres from the land claim of former missionary Josiah Parrish and his wife. Later, it was enlarged by the addition of two tracts making a combined total of 15.22 acres. As is not uncommon, several burials at this place preceded the act of incorporation. After the cemetery was well established, the bodies of many early missionaries were exhumed from burying places on Mission Bottom and elsewhere and reinterred here.³²

While the Lee reinterment in 1906 spurred some clean-up and betterment of the cemetery, the brick and cast stone pylons marking the

entrance apparently date from about 1922. The iron litchgate was fabricated in 1941. The date "1838" punched in the crest alludes to the first fatality among members of the mission—Anna Maria Pittman Lee, first wife of the mission superintendent, who died in childbirth while Lee was en route overland to the East Coast. When Lee returned to the mission, he brought with him Anna Maria's tombstone and his second wife, Lucy Thompson Lee, who died in 1842. Lee's daughter by his second wife, Lucy Anna Maria Lee Grubbs, died at The Dalles in 1881, and her remains were brought to Lee Mission Cemetery to join those of Lee's wives in the "Diamond Square," a diamond-shaped area measuring almost ninety feet in its long axis and set off by a cast-iron railing as the hallowed nucleus of the cemetery.³³

Lee's original tombstone, like that he had chosen for his first wife, was a slab of Vermont marble. It was about 6 feet tall and 2½ feet wide. It was toppled and shattered accidentally in 1967. In 1974, Anna Maria Lee's gravemarker was knocked over and broken by vandals. These, the most immediate relics of the celebrated pair, had been unadorned except by inscription.³⁴

IN THE YEARS following the First World War, the impulse to commemorate was as strong as ever, but the sense of empire that attended the nation's rise to industrial supremacy was now weighted by the responsibility of maintaining the peace achieved at such high cost in 1918. In Oregon, the late teens ushered in the classic period of figural commemoration. The depth of feeling reached in the notable monuments of the 1920's reflected patrons' willingness to engage artists of national stature at a time of rededication to traditional American values.

One who was firmly convinced that the "courage, foresight, endurance and industry" of the pioneer men and women who fought their way across the continent should be held up as an "inspiration to the youth of the country" was Joseph N. Teal, a Portland attorney. Teal's express purpose was to immortalize in bronze the characteristic qualities of the Oregon pioneer.³⁵ Like the mass-produced statuette atop the Breyman

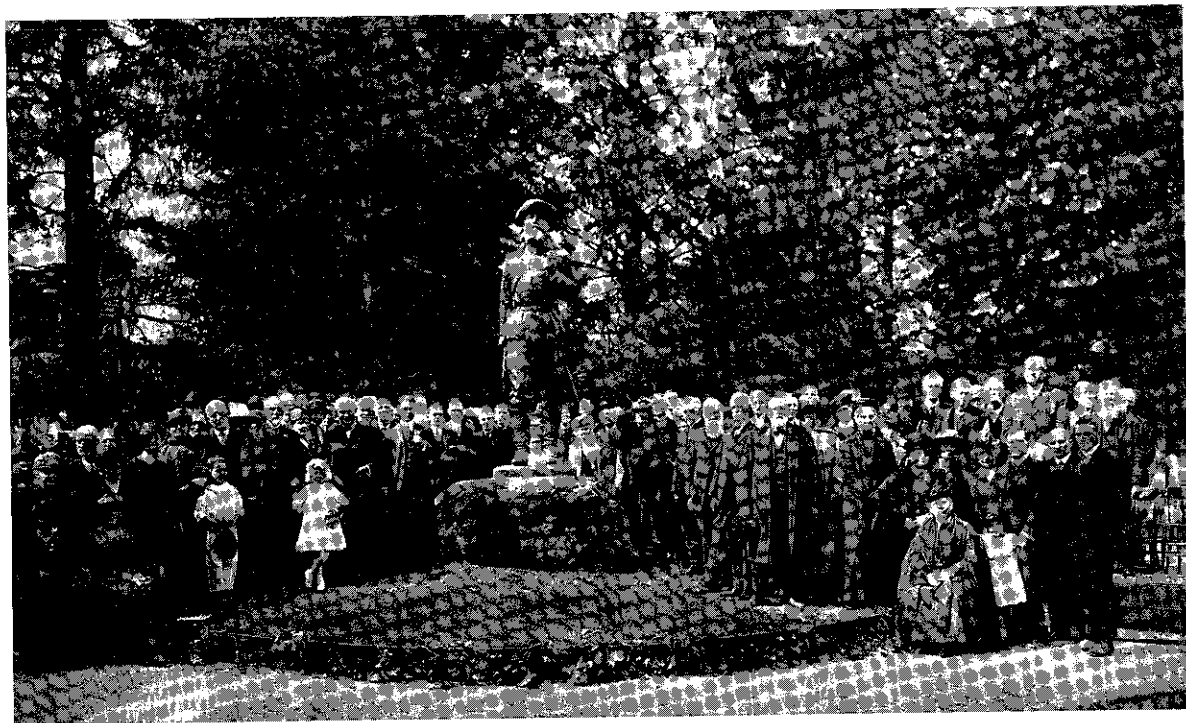
³¹*Ibid.*, 3-6.

³²Lee Mission Cemetery Album, Mrs. Charles C. Holmes, Mrs. Eric C. Horlin, and Mrs. J. Orin Oliphant, compilers, Willamette University Archives, Salem, Oregon, 1, 3, 60.

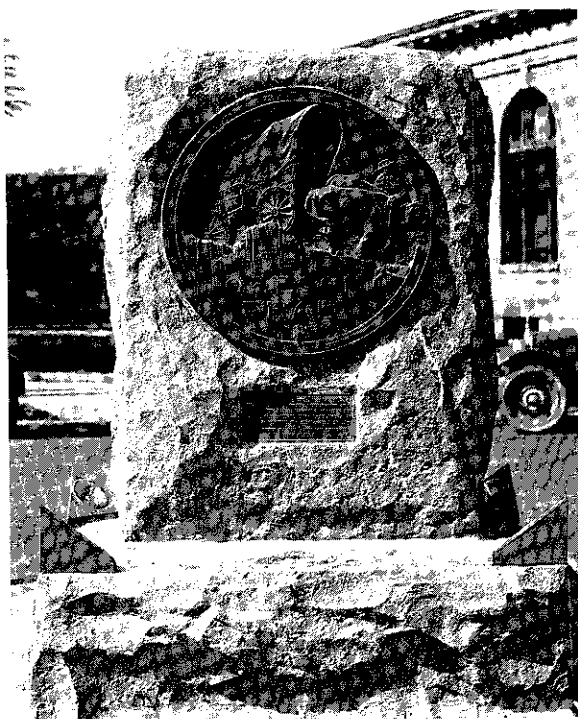
³³*Ibid.*, 46, 23.

³⁴The new gravemarkers subsequently emplaced were dark granite tablets, laid horizontally at ground level in the fashion currently popular as cemetery vandalism grows increasingly rampant. The new markers were dedicated with due ceremony in conjunction with annual conferences in 1974 and 1976, respectively. They were embellished with pictorial representations that, inevitably, are lacking as substitutes for the affecting statements of bereavement and Biblical verse inscribed on the original markers. Mrs. Lee's was taken from the well-known portrait in oil owned by the Oregon Historical Society. As Lee went unportraited in his lifetime, the figure on his modern marker was copied from the pose of the bronze statue unveiled in Statuary Hall in the national Capitol in 1952. *Ibid.*, 10, 156; 148, 155, 172.

³⁵"The Pioneer—A Record of the Ceremony of Unveiling the Memorial Statue Presented to the University of Oregon by Joseph N. Teal, May, 1919," *University of Oregon Bulletin* (January, 1920), 17:4-6. Presentation address by Joseph N. Teal.



Above: Fig. 9: Unveiling of the "Pioneer" statue in Eugene, Oregon, in 1919. Photo courtesy University of Oregon Archives. Below: Fig. 10, left: A. P. Proctor's statue of "The Circuit Rider" in its original location on the west grounds of the old Oregon Statehouse. Photo courtesy Oregon State Library. Fig. 11, right: Old Oregon Trail Association medallion and monument, Baker, Oregon. Wesley Andrews photo, courtesy Oregon Historical Society (ORHI 13928).



Fountain, this figure in no sense represented a particular person or individual. Yet here was "ideal portraiture" of a different kind. Teal evidently had been impressed by "The Puritan," a statue originally cast in 1887 from a model by Augustus Saint-Gaudens, one of the foremost progenitors of the American cultural renaissance. Just as Saint-Gaudens had captured the Puritan character in absorbing detail by imagining a typical veteran deacon, so A. P. Proctor was instructed to produce the quintessential pioneer. Proctor's specialty was western subjects, and he was acclaimed for his naturalistic portrayal of animals. Indeed, for a brief time he worked in association with Saint-Gaudens modeling horses for the equestrian statues of military figures. Proctor applied himself to his project for Teal with enthusiasm, for as a native of the Canadian province of Ontario who had been raised in Denver in 1870's, he had a first-hand knowledge of frontier life and of the American Indians he portrayed in heroic statuary.³⁶

Teal selected the University of Oregon as the recipient of his memorial gift in part because it was located in the Willamette Valley, the mecca of immigrants, but even more because the university's purpose was the education of young men and women. The larger-than-life statue of the pioneer striding toward his goal was unveiled in Eugene on May 22, 1919, in ceremonies laden with oratory and symbolism (Fig. 9). The American flag that draped the statue until the climactic moment had been flown by the battleship *Oregon*, which opposed the Spanish Fleet off the coast of Cuba during the Spanish-American War. The flag was removed by T. G. Hendricks, long-time regent of the university and himself an overland pioneer of 1848. As it "fluttered down," it was gathered up by four university coeds.³⁷

Of the oratory recorded in the souvenir program, the address of Frederick V. Holman, concurrently president of the Oregon Historical Society and the Sons and Daughters

of Oregon Pioneers, was most remarkable, and not only because of its length and the fact that it was delivered on a few hours' notice.³⁸ Holman's peroration rang with phrases recalling devotion to the rights of man, the Great War, and the old expansionist theme of manifest destiny that had first been enunciated in Congress at the time of settlement of the Oregon boundary question.

Among the other speakers at the unveiling in Eugene was Robert A. Booth, prominent businessman and early Oregon State Highway Commissioner. Booth's father, one of the Methodist Episcopal ministers who had facilitated the reburial of Jason Lee in Oregon in 1906, had died in 1917. Seeking to commemorate his father in the noble fashion he had witnessed in Eugene, Booth engaged Proctor to complete what became one of the sculptor's best-known equestrian statues, "The Circuit Rider." It was completed in 1923 and presented to the state of Oregon. It is shown in the accompanying view in its original location at the west front of the 1873-1876 Statehouse (Fig. 10). After the building burned in 1935, the statue was moved to its present location in the east park.

In this work, Proctor's mastery of form and detail is displayed down to the saddlebags and the carpet of ferns on the forest floor. While impressive in size—it weighs three and a half tons—it is restrained, not showily heroic. Captured in a moment of contemplating scripture, the circuit rider embodies the Christian idealism and humanitarianism of his missionary forerunners. The inscription on one of the panels of the marble base tells us that the statue commemorates "the labors and achievements of the ministers of the Gospel, who, as circuit riders, became the friends, counselors and evangelists to the pioneers of every American frontier." The mood captured by the figural work and the inscribed sentiments are in harmonious balance. It is among the most classic of figural monuments of the period.

COMMEMORATIVE MARKING OF the Oregon Trail reached a high point in the 1920's. Devotees were organized nationally when Ezra

³⁶Craven, *Sculpture in America*, 521-522; *Who's Who in American Art, 1938-1939* (Washington, D.C.: The American Federation of Arts, 1937), 423.

³⁷"The Pioneer," 7.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 23-29.

Meeker founded the Oregon Trail Memorial Association in 1926. The national body was formed of local groups such as the Old Oregon Trail Association, whose president, Walter Meacham, resided in Baker. In 1924 the association commissioned the design of an official emblem from University of Oregon professor of sculpture Avard Fairbanks. The resulting bronze medallion, a bas relief of ox team and prairie schooner, was erected as a monument at a prominent intersection near the federal post office in Baker and unveiled with due ceremony the same year (Fig. 11). It was to have been the prototype for hundreds of bronze markers projected for placement along the emigrant route.³⁹

Avard Tennyson Fairbanks (1897-1987), a native of Utah, took personal interest in the subject because of his western heritage. His parents were Mormon Trail pioneers of New England stock.⁴⁰ His official design for the Old Oregon Trail Association became immediately popular, as Walter Meacham had predicted, but the casting of hundreds of medallions in bronze for trail markers proved too costly for realization.

The theme struck by the medallion was intended by the artist to pay tribute to the pioneers as both homebuilders and trail-blazers. Within the center of the composition—the front end of a prairie schooner—is a mother holding her baby. A man on foot restrains the ox team on a downhill slope. While it followed the traditional depiction of emigrant families seen in engravings of the Victorian era, the work was unusually spirited for the medium and conveyed motion and energy, the rise and fall of the trail, far beyond most other emblems of its type.

Perhaps the ultimate trail marker, actually a termination point, was the Astoria Column, erected and dedicated in 1926 on Coxcomb Hill in Astoria, overlooking the Columbia's entrance to the sea (Fig. 12). The column, in the form of a Roman victory monument, rises to a height of 125 feet and is decorated by a spiral pictorial frieze executed in sgraffito, an ancient method of mural painting in relief by modeling and chiseling wet plaster against a painted ground. The seven-foot-high frieze extends 525

feet from the base to the observation deck in imitation of the sculptural frieze of Roman archetypes.

The design for the column was provided by Electus D. Litchfield, a New York architect, and the frieze was painted by Milanese-born New York artist Attilio Pusterla. The sponsor of the monument was the Great Northern Railway, which at one time considered for this spot a monument in the form of an obelisk.⁴¹ The column commemorates historical events on the lower Columbia, beginning with Captain Robert Gray's discovery of the fabled "River of the West" in 1792 and culminating in the coming of the railroad. It was the last in a series of six monuments erected for similar purposes on the route of the Great Northern Railway. This component of the project was largely underwritten by New York financier Vincent Astor, great-grandson of John Jacob Astor, traditionally regarded as the founder of Astoria through settlement of his Pacific Fur Company post in 1811. Thus, while clearly on a grander scale, the Astoria Column may be seen as an act of filial devotion parallel with the many memorial fountains and statues of the period.

WHILE THE WORK of Proctor, Fairbanks, and others may represent the highest artistic expression in this sampling, one of the most ambitious of individual acts of commemoration was carried out by a self-trained artist. Theodore Gegoux, a native of Montreal raised in New York, was a true pilgrim when it came to honoring the founders of Oregon government. He settled in Portland in about 1909. Gegoux learned about the settlers' meeting at Champoege and its significance in Oregon history in a 1915 newspaper account of the

³⁹"Oregon Trail Body Thanks Sculptor," *Oregonian*, February 14, 1924, and related newspaper clippings, Scrapbook series, University of Oregon Archives, Eugene.

⁴⁰*Who's Who in American Art, 1938-1939*, 172; Resume of Work and Career of Avard T. Fairbanks compiled by Eugene Fairbanks, 1981, typescript, manuscripts collections, Oregon Historical Society, Portland; obituary article, *Church News*, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, January 10, 1987, 10.

⁴¹Leonard B. Kimbrell, "Some New Light on the Astoria Column," *Festschrift: A Collection of Essays on Architectural History* (Salem, Oregon: Northern Pacific Coast Chapter, Society of Architectural Historians, 1978), 51-55.

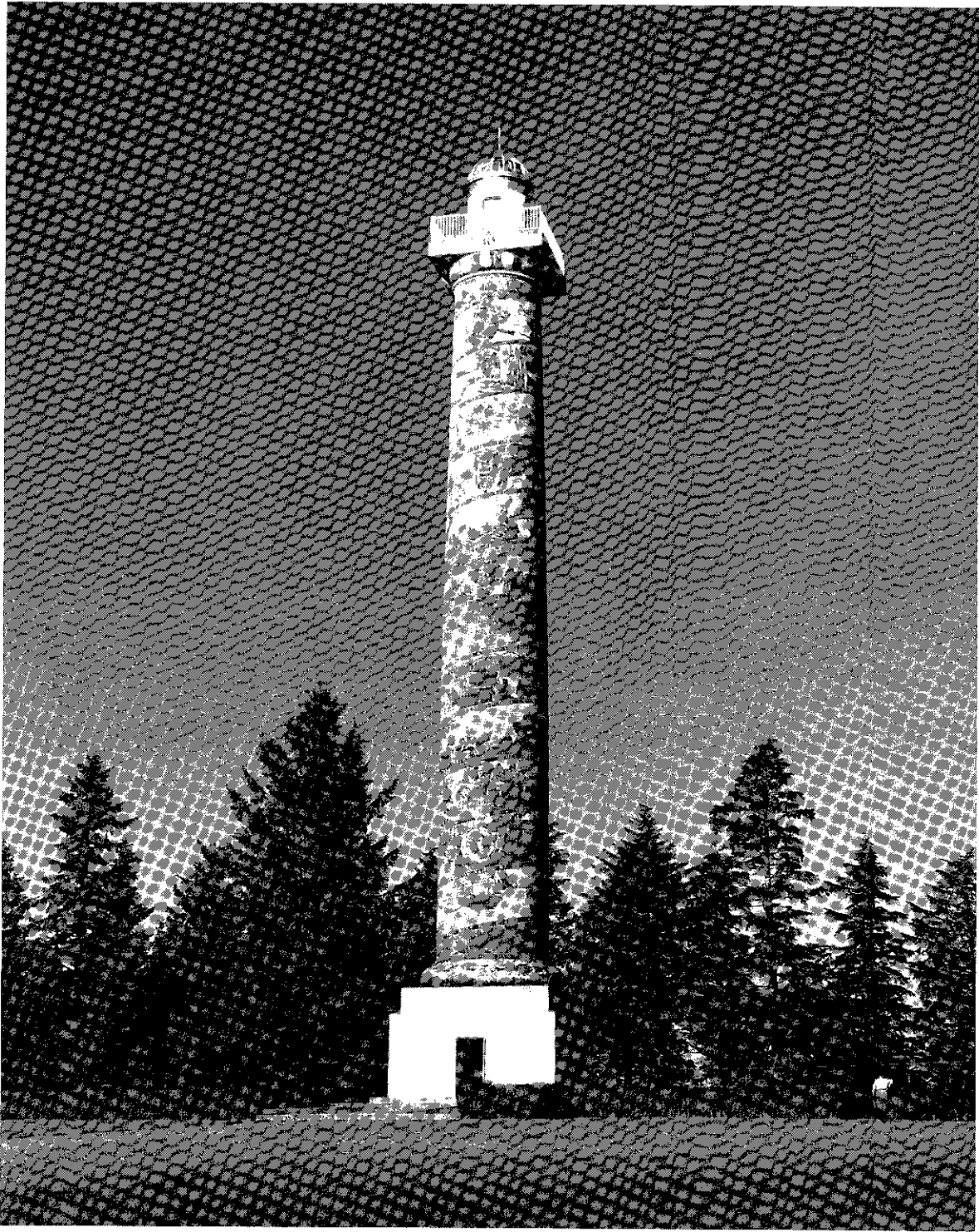
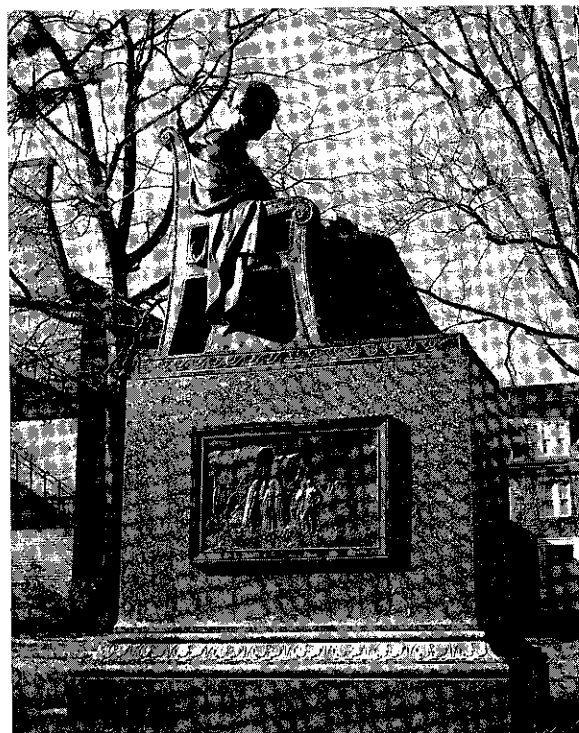


Fig. 12: Astoria Monument. Photo courtesy Oregon Department of Transportation.



Above: Fig. 13: Theodore Gegoux' "The Birth of Oregon." Photo courtesy Oregon Historical Society (ORHI #394). Below: Fig. 14, left: Avard Fairbanks' "Pioneer Mother." Wesley Andrews photo, courtesy Oregon Historical Society (ORHI 31525). Fig. 15, right: "Pioneer Mother" enthroned on the University of Oregon campus. Lyle Winkle photo.



annual Champoege Day celebration at Provisional Government Park. Having made an "exhaustive study" of all available sources of information relating to the 1843 meeting, he became "deeply impressed by it."⁴² In 1918 he moved into the state's newly constructed Pioneer Memorial Building west of the Champoege Monument with the object of producing a grand historical painting. He spent the next six years carrying out his task, acting informally in the capacity of caretaker in exchange for his lodgings. Gegoux took the landscape background for his seven-by-eleven-foot canvas from the historic spot outside his window. He was the first to attempt capturing in pictorial terms the excitement of the convention at Champoege, and it was a painstakingly researched work. Of the 102 settlers thought to have voted during the convention of May 2, 1843, as many as 27 were portrayed in the original and revised versions of Gegoux's history painting. The artist based his work on recorded descriptions and late-in-life likenesses, mostly daguerreotypes and tintypes collected by the Oregon Historical Society.

In the original version of the painting, shown in the accompanying view, Father F. N. Blanchet of the Roman Catholic Mission at St. Paul appeared to the left of Joe Meek, who is at the center front (Fig. 13). It was Meek who, according to legend, called for a "divide," the forming of lines as a means of determining the vote. Blanchet was the spiritual leader of the French-Canadian settlers, many of them retired trappers formerly in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company. Acting more or less as a group, these men generally wished to avoid organizing if it should mean interfering with the interests of their former employer. Because it could not be verified that Blanchet was present on this occasion, Gegoux even-

tually substituted a portrait of Solomon H. Smith.

The painting's frame was designed by the artist and constructed with the help of his son as an integral part of the piece. The extent of the territory encompassed by the earliest Oregon government was acknowledged in the stiles and rails embellished with the state flowers of Oregon (Oregon grape) and Idaho (syringa, or mock orange). Raised and gilded decoration also was used in motifs of the frame's cast metal corner plates, which represented the state flowers of Washington (rhododendron) and Montana (bitterroot). It had been Gegoux' hope that the state of Oregon would buy the painting, or that the canvas would be purchased by a public-spirited patron of the arts who would then present it to the state. When he died, in 1929, the painting was still unsold. It disappeared into storage, but it was belatedly acquired by the state in 1968.

IN THE 1920's and '30's an appreciation of the importance of family life led to the ascendancy of feminine sculptural representations. The "Pioneer Mother" in Esther Short Park in Vancouver, Washington, was the work of Avard Fairbanks (Fig. 14). It was commissioned in accordance with the will of E. G. Crawford, vice-president of the United States National Bank in Portland, the institution for which Fairbanks had earlier produced a set of bronze doors embellished with bas-relief panels depicting key developments in the history of transportation in the Columbia Basin. The memorial fountain honored the mothers of Crawford and his wife, both of whom were Northwest pioneer women. Like Proctor's "Pioneer" in Eugene, Fairbanks' "Pioneer Mother" is a bronze of heroic scale in which the modeling and detail are admirable. The female pioneer was invariably depicted with babies or small children as the nurturing, protective figure who perhaps has just assumed the burden of widowhood but is nonetheless resolved to carry on.⁴³

The idealized pioneer mother reached her ultimate configuration in the 1930's in a com-

⁴²"Inception of the Birth of Oregon by Theodore Gegoux, Artist," undated pamphlet; "The Birth of Civil Government in Oregon" (1920); *Sunday Oregonian*, May 13, 1923, p. 10; "Autobiography of Theodore Gegoux," manuscript dated 1926, University of Oregon Archives.

⁴³"Memorial Fountain to be Placed Soon," *Oregonian*, June 3, 1928, and related newspaper clippings, Scrapbook series, University of Oregon Archives. A later variation of the same theme, "The Guidance of Youth," was dedicated in Salem's Bush's Pasture Park in 1959, Oregon's statehood centenary year. It was commissioned under terms of the bequest of Carroll Moores, who, like Crawford, sought to honor the memory of his parents. In both statuary groups, Fairbanks used variations of his Oregon Trail medallion as focal points on the backs of the substantial bases which serve as backdrops for the figures.

memorative project that once again brought A. P. Proctor together with a patron of exceptional insight and public spirit. The "Pioneer Mother," another bronze statue of heroic proportion, was unveiled on the woman's quadrangle at the heart of the University of Oregon campus in 1932. It was the gift of university vice-president Burt Brown Barker. The artistic concept was, in Barker's poetic words,

to emphasize the peace which came to pioneers after their struggles and hardships were past and they sat on the western slope of their lives reflecting on the results of their labors and contemplating what these results would mean to their children and their children's children.⁴⁴

It was not a sentimental work but one rationally conceived by the donor and sculptor in concert. For the seated figure, which was to be the essence of serene repose, Proctor used a costume that is largely drapery and thus avoids the dated interpretation of period costuming typical of other statues of the genre. The chair, a Greek *klismos* of classical antiquity, lends a universality and timelessness to the piece, and the pioneer mother is thus enthroned in the pantheon of eternal heroes (Fig. 15).

Barker wrote that he had often talked with his mother about pioneering. Elvira Brown Barker had crossed the plains at the age of three with her widowed mother in 1846. Barker believed that the ultimate goal, the home at the end of the trail, was a more fitting subject for memorialization than the episode of immigration that had been the common theme heretofore. However, the bas-relief panels on either side of the statue's granite pedestal are testaments to the sacrifice and sorrows of the overland journey and held personal meaning for the donor: the burial scene represents the burial of Elias Barker, the donor's grandfather, in an unmarked grave on the Oregon Trail.

THE BURNING OF the Oregon Statehouse in 1935 resulted in a national competition for design of a new capitol at Salem. New York architect Francis Keally submitted the winning design in a modern "Stripped Classical" style (Fig. 16). The building was under construction in 1936 and was opened for use in 1938. Just as grand public buildings and

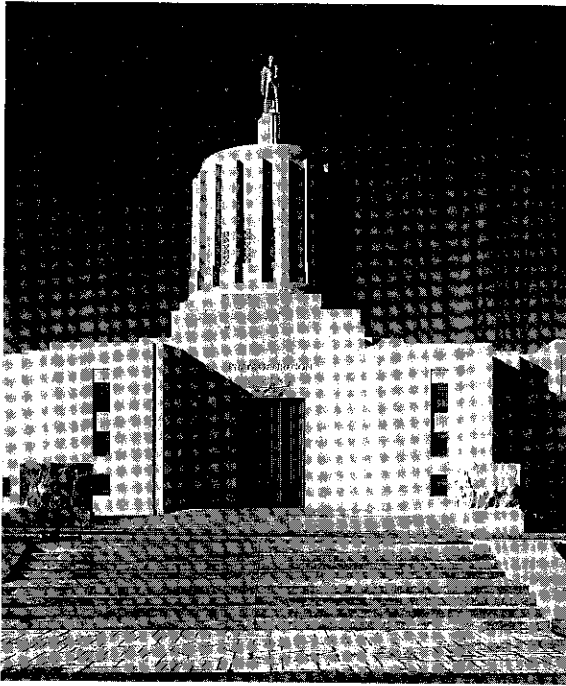
private estates in earlier years had been enriched by ornament of high quality, the Oregon state capitol reconstruction became a focal point of artistic effort under the auspices of the Public Works Administration at the height of the Depression.

The elaborate decorative program for the new capitol made extensive use of the emblems and themes of state history. The angular, unadorned surfaces of the modernistic exterior, all sheathed in marble, made a suitable foil for sculptured slabs or stelae at the ceremonial entrance, one of which shows a pioneer wagon. The terminal feature of the dome is Ulric H. Ellerhusen's colossal "Pioneer," twenty-four feet high, cast in bronze and covered in gold leaf that has been renewed periodically as it has weathered over the years. Ellerhusen's statue is reminiscent of Michelangelo's "David," a masterpiece of Italian Renaissance sculpture. Echoing faintly the attitude of the archetype, who rests a sling over his shoulder, Ellerhusen's pioneer has paused in the process of taking possession of his land. Axe in hand, feet planted near the stump of a freshly felled tree, he has slung a piece of canvas over his shoulder and, as the sculptor put it, is contemplating where to put up his temporary shelter.⁴⁵

At each corner of the Statehouse rotunda, where the walls meet in a curve, there is a mural depicting one of four momentous events in Oregon history: Gray's discovery of the Columbia River, Lewis and Clark with Sacajawea entering the Columbia Basin, the arrival of the emigrant wagon train of 1843 at The Dalles, and the arrival at Fort Vancouver of the first white women to cross the continent (Fig. 17). Artist Barry Faulkner portrayed Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding as they were ideally greeted by Hudson's Bay Company Chief Factor John McLoughlin on September 16, 1836. The figures are arranged in the manner of a frieze, close to the surface of the wall in horizontal array. It is a scene of classic order and clarity.

⁴⁴"Statue to Mothers is Dedicated," *Oregon Daily Journal* (Portland), May 8, 1932; "Origin," in Record of Presentation to the University of Oregon on May 7, 1932, of the Statue Dedicated to the Pioneer Mother (1936).

⁴⁵David C. Duniway, *Salem Guide* (Salem, Oregon: the author, 1959), 3.



Above left: Fig. 16: The north face of the 1936-1938 Oregon State Capitol. Photo by Ralph Gifford. Below: Fig. 17: Barry Faulkner's mural in the Oregon Capitol rotunda depicting the arrival of the Whitmans and Spaldings at Fort Vancouver. Photo courtesy Oregon Department of Transportation. Above right: Fig. 18: Faulkner's mural depicting the "divide" vote at Champoege. Photo courtesy Oregon Department of Transportation.



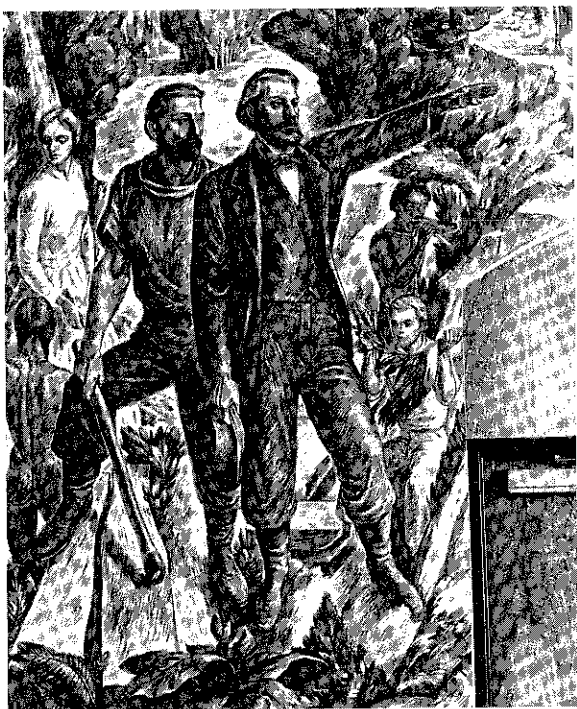


Fig. 19, left: Jason Lee, as depicted in Andrew Vincent's WPA mural in the U.S. Post Office, Salem, Oregon. Alfred Jones photograph. Below: Fig. 20, left: Jason Lee's statue in Statuary Hall, U.S. Capitol. Photo courtesy Oregon Historical Society (ORHI 11120). Fig. 21, right: Marcus Whitman's statue in Statuary Hall, U.S. Capitol. Photo courtesy Washington State Historical Society.



Faulkner produced other decorative features, including the wall painting behind the Speaker's desk in the House chamber (Fig. 18) that depicts the historic meeting of settlers at Champoeg which led to formation of the Provisional Government of Oregon. Faulkner's conjectural version of the convention, based on tradition and legend, portrays the moment when two French-Canadians, Lucier and Mathieu, formed up on the side of those favoring civil organization and thus tipped the balance of the vote. Former Whitman associate William H. Gray, at the farthest left corner of the foreground, was to become first treasurer of the interim government. Former Methodist missionary William H. Willson, at the foreground center, became acting Provisional Government secretary.

During the Depression era, the Roosevelt administration through its work-relief programs fostered a flowering of arts and crafts as craftsmen applied their skills to the finishing of major federal construction projects, most commonly those of the Treasury Department. It is estimated that some 1,500 murals were installed in federal buildings by the beginning of the Second World War. Artists who entered the federally sponsored competitions for murals were, it appears, called upon to be familiar with local history in order to meet the expectations of juries.⁴⁶ Andrew Vincent, a University of Oregon faculty member, won the competition for the Salem Post Office mural in 1939. His painting on canvas affixed to the south lobby wall, completed in 1942, used imagery from the town's founding against a backdrop of idealized landscaping (Fig. 19).⁴⁷

Voids in wall surfaces to be decorated in these projects may have been partly re-

sponsible for the vignette approach to composition that so characterizes WPA post office art of the 1930's and early '40's. In the Salem mural, Vincent painted across the top of the doorway that leads to the outer lobby panels standing for the three divisions of the state: the coast, the Willamette Valley, and the eastern plateau. The painting's focal feature is construction of the Methodist Mission's sawmill and gristmill at Salem in 1840. On the opposite side is a contemporary scene of a family clearing land, signifying that Oregon remained a land of opportunity.

THE FINAL ILLUSTRATIONS in this sampling of commemorative works of art demonstrate the ultimate renown of two of the region's leading missionary figures: Jason Lee and Marcus Whitman, whose bronze figures represent the states of Oregon and Washington, respectively, in National Statuary Hall. While the statues were not unveiled on Capitol Hill until 1952 and 1953, the latter year being Washington's territorial centenary, the respective states' enabling legislation was passed at the end of the period under discussion.

An act of congress in 1864 had provided that American citizens distinguished in history for their humanitarian deeds or military service could be commemorated in Statuary Hall in the nation's Capitol. Each state was entitled to two statues, and the selections were to be determined by state legislatures. Funds for the statuary were obtained through a combination of private subscription and legislative appropriation. In Washington state, it fell to the Marcus Whitman Foundation to raise \$30,000 for Avard Fairbanks' heroic bronze figure of the medical missionary.⁴⁸ Selection commissions were formed to consider proposals for the figures to be honored as well as the artists to perform the work. Historians, professional people, service groups, clergymen, and legislators collaborated in the prestigious business of sending representatives to Statuary Hall. Typically, duplicate statuary was produced for state capitol corridors and grounds.

In 1947 the Oregon Statuary Committee confirmed the earlier legislative selection of Dr. John McLoughlin and the Reverend Jason

⁴⁶Donald Sanders, "WPA Murals Gain Defenders," *Oregon Statesman* (Salem), July 10, 1972. After 1939, the Treasury Section of Fine Arts was taken over by the Work Projects Administration of the Federal Works Agency.

⁴⁷"Vincent to Paint Murals in Salem Postal Building" and related press clippings dated April 4-6, 1939, Scrapbook series, University of Oregon Archives; *Portland Art Museum Bulletin* (March, 1953), Vol. 14, No. 7; exhibition catalogue, *Paintings and Sculptures, The Pacific Northwest, Oregon, Washington, British Columbia* (Portland: The Portland Art Museum, 1959).

⁴⁸*Oregon and the National Statuary Hall, Washington, D.C.* (Salem: Oregon Statuary Committee, 1947), 4; "The Statue of Marcus Whitman," undated promotional brochure printed by Marcus Whitman Foundation: "A Statue of Martyred Dr. Marcus Whitman to be in Statuary Hall," *Seattle Times*, March 8, 1951.

Lee as the state's illustrious citizens to be represented in Statuary Hall. Funds were raised through appropriations by the legislature in 1947 and 1951 when it was found the cost of two seven-foot bronzes and their duplicates could not be raised by subscription despite the support of school children and active campaigning through the Territorial Centennial year of 1949.⁴⁹ Burt Brown Barker headed the Statuary Committee and was instrumental in the selection of his former collaborator, A. P. Proctor, as sculptor for the project. Then nearing the end of his studio career, Proctor was working in association with his son, Gifford MacGregor Proctor, who completed the terms of the contract when the elder Proctor died in 1950.⁵⁰ At the time of Proctor's death, only the models were complete.

The original statues of McLoughlin and Lee were placed in their permanent locations in Statuary Hall in 1952. The duplicates were unveiled in Salem with appropriate exercises the following year. The figure of John McLoughlin, with billowing cape and sword cane, was rendered in full stride, and it was somewhat derivative of Saint-Gaudens' "Puritan." The figure of Lee (Fig. 20) portrays the missionary's finest moment in the eyes of patriots, when in December of 1838 he handed over the settlers' petition for United States government protection so that it might be delivered to Congress. Lee carries the obligatory Bible in the other hand so that he may be recognized as a Christian minister. The bearded features and broad-shouldered build of the figure are based on the descriptive references of Lee's contemporaries and the best-known of posthumous portraits, a three-quarter-length portrait in oil by Vesper Lincoln George that had hung in the Statehouse until it was destroyed in the fire of 1935.

Avard Fairbanks, winner of the Washington state competition authorized by legislation of 1949, was able to infuse into his nine-foot bronze of Marcus Whitman a quality of movement conveyed in the play of wind on buckskin fringe, the flow of background draperies, and a slight torsion resulting from

the figure's stance with one knee raised forward for the purpose of gaining a vantage point (Fig. 21). Thus, the missionary, famous for his long ride to the East coast in the winter of 1842, was immortalized as a man of action—one who, like Calder's figure for the Witherspoon Building in Philadelphia, appeared capable of meeting the challenges of the frontier head on.⁵¹

THIS ESSAY HAS sought to characterize some of the more prominent commemorative undertakings of the period 1897-1947. Throughout this time the memorials were reverent acts, however straightforward they may have been. Sometimes, as in the case of the Whitman Monument, they achieved a solemn grandeur. Jason Lee's reinterment in 1906 was almost an atonement, a belated fulfillment of the missionary's fondest hope of returning to Oregon. Each of the memorials that had a structural or figural presence was intended to stir feelings of empathy, appreciation, or awe or to reaffirm higher principles. Naturally enough, the motives and shortcomings of the heroes were not questioned, nor were the consequences of the evangelical ministry to native populations. Explicit details of the immigrants' hardships and suffering seldom were portrayed.

The vivid experience of taming the frontier left its imprint on the consciousness of the region. From Ashland to Bellingham, from Walla Walla to Astoria, nearly every town of some age or distinction has its memorial statuary, its pioneer park, or its WPA mural including a settlement-era vignette. Thanks to those who sought to perpetuate the memory of it, the epic story in which the missionaries played such an important part remains compelling as we continue our acts of commemoration in the present day. ■

⁴⁹*Oregon and the National Statuary Hall*, 6: "Final Report of the Oregon Statuary Committee, Submitted to the Governor of Oregon and the Forty-seventh Legislative Assembly, January 15, 1953," 1-2.

⁵⁰"Final Report," 3.

⁵¹"The state of Washington's representation in Statuary Hall eventually was completed by a kneeling figure of Mother Joseph of the Holy Order of the Sisters of Providence, which was installed in 1980. Telephone communication with Sister Rita Bergamini, Sisters of Providence Archives, Seattle, Washington, May, 1987. The sculptor of the Mother Joseph statue was Felix Weldon.



Henry and Eliza Spalding left their mission to the Nez Perce after the death of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman in 1847; but the Spaldings returned in 1864 and settled at Kamiah—the site of Asa Bowen Smith's mission from 1838 to 1841—in 1871. In 1874, after Spalding's death, Sue McBeth took over the Kamiah mission. She left the area during the Indian troubles of 1877-1879, but she returned in the latter year with her sister, Kate. In 1880 the cabin shown above was erected for Sue McBeth as both schoolhouse and residence; Kate lived in Sue's original schoolhouse. The sisters remained at Kamiah until conflict with the Indian agent forced them out in 1885. Sue then went to Mount Idaho, Kate to Lapwai. This picture of the cabin was taken by Jane Gay during the allotment of Nez Perce lands in the early 1890's; the cabin badly deteriorated, was restored, and was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

On the outside back cover: This charming old gentleman was an historic figure in his own lifetime. He is Fr. Joseph Cataldo, shown here in Lewiston—at the age of 91—in 1928. Cataldo came to what is now Idaho in 1865, to serve at the mission that is known by his name. More on his career will be found in the article that begins on page 8 of this issue.

