First Year in Oregon, 1840–1869: A Narrative History

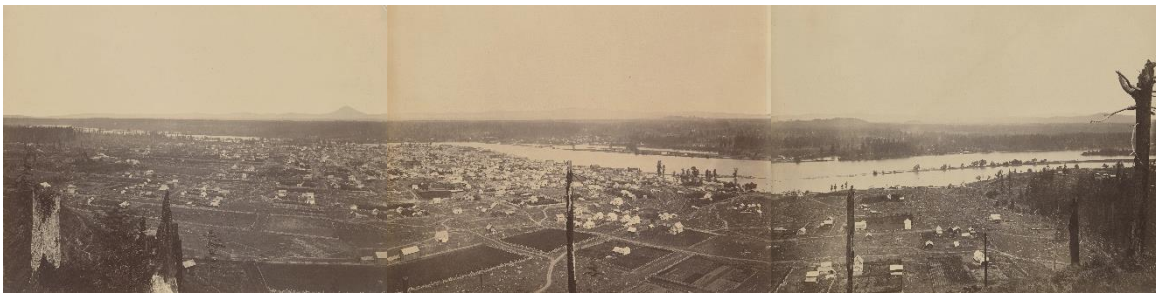

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Photo on cover: Panorama of Portland, Oregon, taken by Carleton E. Watkins, 1867.
Source: Oregon Historical Society.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

First Year in Oregon: Introduction

After traversing the roughly 2,000-mile Oregon Trail, overlanders arrived at their destination: the fertile and rain-soaked Willamette Valley. The first year in Oregon presented challenges for new arrivals: Where would they sleep? What would they eat? Could they count on anyone to help them? How might they work to earn food, clothing, or money? Not all who arrived were pleased with what they found in the Willamette Valley: decades of boosterism about Oregon had raised the expectations of some overlanders so high that the reality was a letdown.

This narrative history describes how overlanders survived their first year in Oregon and how the first-year experience evolved from 1840 to 1869. While many arrived in Oregon City in the 1840s, or in Portland in later years, they settled far and wide across the Willamette Valley, the Umpqua Valley, the Red River Valley, Clatsop Plains, and other parts of Oregon and Washington. They often spent their first winters in temporary accommodations with friends, relatives, or strangers willing to rent rooms, and they only later found land where they could build houses and live more permanently.

Who overlanders interacted with upon arrival depended on when they came to Oregon. Around 1840, the population of the Willamette Valley was primarily fur trade employees, former fur trade employees and their Indigenous wives, Methodist and Catholic missionaries, and Upper Chinookan and Kalapuyan people who continued to call the Willamette Valley home, although they had lost many community members to disease. As more and more American overlanders arrived to settle the Oregon and Washington Territories, the population makeup changed. The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) had dominated the local economy in the 1830s and early 1840s, but after the boundary between the United States and British-controlled Canada was settled in 1846, businesses run by American settlers replaced the HBC. The Oregon Donation Land Act of 1850 and the US government's forced removal of Indigenous people from the Willamette Valley later that decade further tipped the scales in favor of White Americans.[1]

White overlanders' first year in Oregon became easier as American communities grew and established transportation networks, businesses, and social organizations. During that same time, life for Indigenous people, Métis communities, Hawaiian laborers in the fur trade, and Black Americans who had traveled overland as free or enslaved persons became increasingly difficult. As settlers dislodged the Kalapuyan people who had long lived in the Willamette Valley, the new cultural and

[1] We capitalize the terms "Indigenous," "White," and "Black" in this report. We use the term "Indigenous" if we cannot with certainty determine how the individual would have self-identified, with the understanding that this term remains problematic, and that not everyone who might be called Indigenous by others identifies with it. We use "Black" rather than "African American" since it is a more encompassing phrase and reflects a shared community and culture. We choose to capitalize "White" despite historical concerns that doing so risks following the lead of white supremacists, because, as Kwame Anthony Appiah argues, not to capitalize White allows White people to skirt responsibility for the shared values and attitudes that have defined whiteness in this country. Appiah writes, "If the capitalization of *white* became standard among anti-racists, the supremacists' gesture would no longer be a provocative defiance of the norm and would lose all force." Kwame Anthony Appiah, "The Case for Capitalizing the *B* in Black," *Atlantic*, June 18, 2020, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/time-to-capitalize-blackand-white/613159/. See also Nancy Coleman, "Why We're Capitalizing Black," *New York Times*, July 5, 2020, A2; Michael Yellow Bird, "What We Want to Be Called," *American Indian Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 1–21, esp. 3. For further explanation on our use of these terms, see Jackie Gonzales and Morgen Young, *Overlanders in the Columbia River Gorge, 1840–1870: A Narrative History* (National Park Service National Trails Office, 2020), 3–4.

political structures built by Whites facilitated assimilation of people like them and hindered the inclusion of others who had called the land home before their arrival.

The Willamette Valley

Figure 1. The Willamette Valley is depicted here by the artist Paul Kane, drawn ca. 1849 to 1856.

Source: Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum, (c) ROM.

The Willamette River runs approximately 150 miles from south to north, creating the Willamette Valley. Its headwaters converge near Eugene, and the river empties into the Columbia River near Portland (see Figure 1). About 26 river miles upstream from the Columbia are the Willamette Falls, horseshoe-shaped waterfalls that are 42 feet high and 150 feet wide. Currently the largest falls by volume in the Pacific Northwest, following the inundation of Celilo Falls in 1957, Willamette Falls mark the end of the naturally navigable portion of the Willamette River.[2] Tributaries to the Willamette flow through the wide valley and form perpendicular valleys in the Cascade and Oregon Coast ranges on the valley's east and west flanks. These rivers, from south to north, are the Middle Fork, Coast Fork, McKenzie, Long Tom, Calapooia, Santiam, Luckiamute, Pudding, Yamhill,

[2] In 1873, past the period of this study, a private company constructed a canal and locks around the Willamette Falls to make upstream portions of the river accessible to boat traffic. E. Burslem Thomson, "The Rise and Fall of Traffic on the Willamette River: Above Portland, Oregon," *Military Engineer* 13, no. 71 (September–October 1921): 406–8, esp. 407. For more on Celilo Falls, see George W. Aguilar, Sr., *When the River Ran Wild! Indian Traditions on the Mid-Columbia and the Warm Springs Reservation* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 2005), and Katrine Barber, *Death of Celilo Falls* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005).

Molalla, Clackamas, and Tualatin.[3] Overton Johnson and William Winter, visitors to the Willamette Valley in the 1840s, described its natural features:

> The Valley of the Willammette, which has generally been considered the best portion of Oregon, is situated on the South side of the Columbia River, between the Cascade Mountains, a lofty range running nearly parallel with the coast, at a distance from it of about one hundred and twenty-five miles, and the Calapooiah Mountains, a range of considerable height, which rise immediately on the coast, and extend along it so as to form an entire rock bound shore. The Valley has an average width of about seventy-five miles, and extends South one hundred and fifty miles. It is traversed from South to North, by the Willammette River, a large and beautiful stream, which is navigable to the Falls, within two miles of which the tide reaches. [After] The Falls [are] overcome, and navigation reaches fifty miles further up the River. This valley is divided into several portions, by ranges of high lands running in different directions, generally following the course of the streams. The principal tributaries of the Willammette, are the Clackamus, which rises in the Cascade Mountains and empties one and a half miles below the Falls; the Twalita [Tualatin], which rises in the Calapooiah Mountains, flows through the Twalita Plains, and empties two miles above the Falls; and, eight miles above the Falls, the Moolally or Pudding River, which rises in the Cascade Mountains and empties into the Willammette, from the East: fifteen miles above the Moolally, the Yamhill River, which empties from the West; and above the Yamhill, the Sandy Yam, which empties from the East.[4]

Johnson and Winter contrasted the Willamette Valley with Eastern Oregon, which they described as barren and harsh, albeit with a few oases:

> Very much the largest portion of Eastern Oregon, is at present, and must continue for a great number of years, to be, comparatively valueless. It is a desert, so rugged, so dreary, and so exceedingly sterile, that it cannot, until ages upon ages have melted its mountains, until the winds, and floods, and changes of thousands and thousands of years, shall have crumbled into dust, its rocks, and its sands yield anything worthy of consideration, to the support of human life. There are, however, some beautiful exceptions to this general character; bright and blooming valleys, walled with mountains, and surrounded by wastes which, contrasting so widely with every thing about them, are regarded by the lonely traveler, as being, not only wildly romantic, but surpassingly beautiful. These, however, are rare.[5]

Glacial floods that carved the Columbia River 15,000 years ago from the dark, basaltic rock through which that massive river flows, also shaped the Willamette Valley. What is now the Willamette was an area of outwash, where the hundreds of flood events deposited silt, leading to the

[3] Jerry C. Towle, "Changing Geography of Willamette Valley Woodlands," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 83, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 66–87.

[4] Overton Johnson and William H. Winter, *Route Across the Rocky Mountains* (Lafayette, IN: John D. Semans, Printer, 1846; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1932), 44–45. Johnson and Winter traveled on the Oregon Trail in 1843 and kept detailed records during their journey. They wrote *Route Across the Rocky Mountains* (1846), which became a popular trail guide for overlanders in the mid- to late 1840s.

[5] Johnson and Winter, *Route Across the Rocky Mountains*, 71.

gentle sloping and fertile valley that exists today (see Figure 2).[6] In the early 1800s, dense forests of centuries-old firs and spruces covered the hills and mountains around the Willamette Valley. Grasslands scattered with Garry oaks and fir groves occupied the low-lying areas surrounding streams and rivers, while willows, alders, and cottonwoods grew in the marshlands adjacent to the river. Beavers were abundant in these marshy areas, which prompted fur trade companies to take an interest in the region.[7]

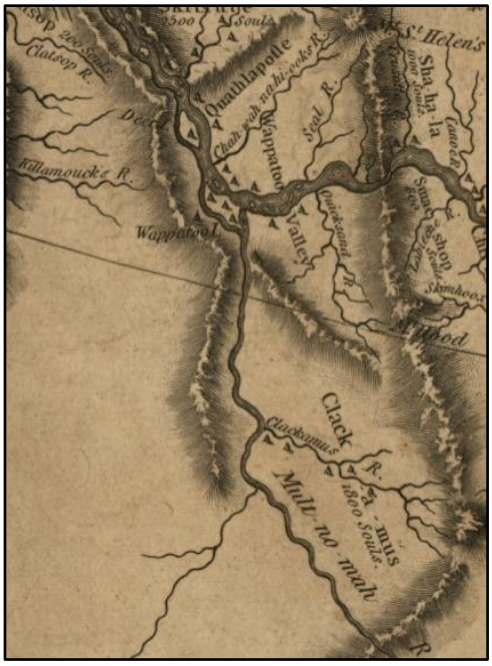

Figure 2. William Clark's depiction of the Willamette Valley, from his map of the Pacific Northwest after journeying through it in 1805–1806. Clark noted many Indigenous villages at the confluence of the Columbia River and Willamette (which he called the "Mult-no-mah"). Map published 1814.

Source: Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, Louisiana: European Explorations and the Louisiana Purchase.

Indigenous People Who Lived in the Willamette Valley

Kalapuyan and Chinookan people occupied most of the Willamette Valley for over 14,000 years (see Figure 3). Kalapuyan is the general term for these groups in the valley, who were culturally and linguistically linked enough that speakers of different dialects in the valley could understand one another.[8] David G. Lewis, anthropologist and member of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, explained,

> The Kalapuyan tribes were about nineteen tribes and bands in three distinct areas, organized linguistically north, central, and south. They occupied the majority of the Willamette Valley with villages scattered along the rivers and streams of the valley. They had a seasonal lifeway, where the tribes would harvest vegetables, hunt and fish at specific times of the year throughout a wide expanse of the valley and into the

[6] J. Harlen Bretz, "The Lake Missoula Floods and the Channeled Scabland," *Journal of Geology* 77, no. 5 (September 1969): 505–43, esp. 514–15.

[7] Melinda Marie Jetté, "'Beaver Are Numerous, but the Natives . . . Will Not Hunt Them': Native-Fur Trader Relations in the Willamette Valley, 1812–1814," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 98, no. 1 (Winter 2006/2007): 3–17.

[8] Peter Boag, "The Calapooian Matrix: Landscape and Experience on a Western Frontier," PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1988, 21–25; Melinda Marie Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races: A French-Indian Community in Nineteenth-Century Oregon, 1812–1859* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2015), 14.

> foothills and mountains bordering the valley. The northern Kalapuyans are the Tualatin, also known as the Atfalati, who live along the Tualatin River, and the Yamhill or Yamel, who live along the Yamhill River. The central tribes were the Pudding River or Ahantchuyuk, who lived along the Pudding River; the Luckiamute, who lived along the Luckiamute River, the Santiam, who lived along and between the north and south forks of the Santiam River; the Mary's River or Chepenefa; who live along the Mary's River, the Muddy Creek or Chemapho, who live along Muddy Creek. Other Central Kalapuya tribes in the Eugene area were the Tsankupi, who lived along the Calapooia River and Mohawk who lived along the Mohawk River; the Chafan, at where Eugene City is; and the Long Tom or Chelamela, who lived along the Long Tom River; the Winefelly, who lived along the Mohawk, McKenzie and Coast Forks of the Willamette River. The southern Kalapuyans were the Yoncalla or Kommema, who lived along the Upper Umpqua River.[9]

The place name "Willamette" originates from the name of a Clackamas village, Wilamt.[10] The lower Willamette Valley, from the falls to the confluence with the Columbia River, was occupied primarily by Upper Chinookan people (see Figure 4). While Kalapuyan people subsisted mostly on resources within the Willamette Valley, Chinookan communities had access to massive trading networks, stretching from modern-day British Columbia to California, through their control of the Columbia River.[11]

Kalapuyan people managed the land through controlled use of fire that improved yields of the valley's edible plants (the name "kalapuya" derives from the local name for these fire-maintained valleys).[12] The burning encouraged growth of food-producing plants in the resulting savannahs. In 1841, Charles Wilkes noted that these valleys looked "more like orchards of fruit trees, planted by the hand of man than groves of natural growth."[13] In these open grasslands, Kalapuyan people tended fields of camas and wapato, plants that grow well in marshy meadows. Camas grew in such abundance in the Willamette Valley that Kalapuyan people traded the excess to people outside of the valley for salmon and other products.[14] Kalapuyan people also hunted and fished, but salmon were

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[9] David G. Lewis, "Kalapuyan Tribal History," from forthcoming book *Tribal Stories of the Willamette Valley*, accessed January 11, 2021, https://ndnhistoryresearch.com/tribal-regions/kalapuyan-ethnohistory.

[10] David G. Lewis, "Native Place Names," *Quartux: Journal of Critical Indigenous Anthropology*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://ndnhistoryresearch.com/tribal-history-themes/native-place-names/.

[11] Yvonne Hajda and Elizabeth A. Sobel, "Lower Columbia Trade and Exchange Systems," in Robert T. Boyd, et al., *Chinookan People of the Lower Columbia* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2013), 106–24; Jennifer Karson, ed., *wiyáxayxt / wiyáakaaʔawn / As Days Go By: Our History, Our Land, Our People --The Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla* (Pendleton, Portland, Seattle, and London: Tamástslikt Cultural Institute, Oregon Historical Society, and University of Washington Press, 2006) 29; Mathias D. Bergmann, "'we should lose much by their absence': The Centrality of Chinookans and Kalapuyans to Life in Frontier Oregon," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 109, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 34–59, esp. 52; Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races*, 17.

[12] Boag, "Calapooian Matrix," 7–10.

[13] Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition During the Years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842, Volume 5* (New York: G. P. Putnam & Co., 1856), 222; Charles F. Wilkinson, *The People Are Dancing Again: The History of the Siletz Tribe of Western Oregon* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 50–51.

[14] Mollie Jo Manion, "Where Have All the Women and Children Gone? An Examination of Domestic Life at the Newell Farmstead (35MA41) in the Early Oregon Country," PhD diss., Oregon State University, 2014, 7.

less important to them than to the nearby Chinookan people, who controlled the major falls on the Columbia and dominated the salmon fishing on the lower river.[15]

For housing, Kalapuyan people lived in cedar bark and plank lodges atop earthen mounds, or in houses made of brush with excavated floors. They often spent winters on the valley floor, summers in the foothills hunting game and picking wild berries, and autumns back on the valley floor to set the seasonal fires to the grasslands, collect acorns, and harvest seeds.[16]

European diseases began to impact Kalapuyan people in the 1790s, likely beginning with smallpox and venereal diseases. From 1829 to 1833, malaria (often called "fever and ague" by English-speaking settlers) swept through the valley and killed an estimated 90 percent of Kalapuyan people.[17]

Figure 3. Charles Wilkes' depiction of the Willamette Valley, with colored borders representing his conception of Indigenous territorial boundaries in the area.

Source: Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

[15] Boag, "Calapooian Matrix," 25–27.

[16] William S. Laughlin, "Excavations in the Calapuya Mounds of the Willamette Valley; Oregon," *American Antiquity* 7, no. 2 (October 1941): 147–55, esp. 147; Boag, "Calapooian Matrix," 21–25.

[17] Lewis, "Kalapuyan Tribal History"; Boag, "Calapooian Matrix," 36–39; John Dunn, *The Oregon Territory and the British North American Fur Trade. With an Account of the Habits and Customs of the Principal Native Tribes on the Northern Continent* (Philadelphia: G. B. Zieber & Co., 1845), 83; Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races*, 63–68.

Figure 4. Chinookan and Kalapuyan people were the principal occupants of the Willamette Valley. A. T. Agate, who was part of the US Exploring Expedition led by Charles Wilkes, drew this scene. R. W. Dodson completed the engraving to accompany the published accounts of the journey, published in Philadelphia by Lea & Blanchard, 1845.

Source: David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries.

Fur Trade and Its Influence on the Willamette Valley

People of European descent first came to the Willamette Valley in the late 1700s. In 1792, Captain George Vancouver (a British explorer) sailed into the Columbia River, as did Captain Robert Gray (an American merchant). Over the next two decades, several fur trading companies established posts along the Columbia River, most notably the North West Company (a British company based in Montreal), the Pacific Fur Company (an American company based in New York), and the HBC (a British company based in London).[18]

[18] William L. Lang, "The Chinookan Encounter with Euro-Americans in the Lower Columbia River Valley," in Boyd et al., *Chinookan People of the Lower Columbia*, 250–54, 262–66; Karson, ed., *wiyáxayxt / wiyáakaaʔawn / As Days Go By*, 34; Jack Nisbet, *Sources of the River: Tracking David Thompson Across Western North America* (Seattle, WA: Sasquatch Books, 1994, reprinted 2007), 201–21; William R. Swagerty, "'The Leviathan of the North': American Perceptions of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1816–1846," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 104, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 478–517; T. C. Elliott, "The Fur Trade in the Columbia River Basin Prior to 1811," *Washington Historical Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (January 1915): 3–10.

Figure 5. The Hudson's Bay Company established forts along rivers and coasts in present-day Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia. Pictured here, Fort Astoria (also known as Fort Clatsop or Fort George), Fort Vancouver, Fort Nez Perces, Fort Umqua, Fort Nasqually, Fort Okanagan, and Fort Colville. Map by Washington Hood, John James Abert, and M. H. Stansbury, 1838.

Source: Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

In 1821, the HBC bought out the North West Fur Company, beginning a period of almost twenty years during which the HBC dominated the fur trade on the Columbia River (see Figure 5).[19] In 1824, the HBC established Fort Vancouver across the Columbia River from the mouth of the Willamette River, which was the most influential non-Indigenous-run trading post on the lower river for two decades. Also in 1824, the company appointed John McLoughlin as the Chief Factor of the Columbia, a position he held into the 1840s (see Figure 6). McLoughlin, whose first wife was Ojibwe and second wife was part Cree, established positive relationships with Chinookan and Kalapuyan

[19] Lang, "Chinookan Encounter with Euro-Americans in the Lower Columbia River Valley," 262–66; Nisbet, *Sources of the River*, 201–21; Jay H. Buckley, "Life at Fort Astoria: John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company Post on the Columbia River," *Proceedings of the 2012 Fur Trade Symposium, September 5–8, 2012, Pinedale, Wyoming*, edited by Jim Hardee (Pinedale, WY: Sublette County Historical Society/Museum of the Mountain Man, 2013), 63–82; Grace P. Morris, "Development of Astoria, 1811–1850," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 38, no. 4 (December 1937): 413–24; Swagerty, "'The Leviathan of the North'," 478–517; Elliott, "Fur Trade in the Columbia River Basin Prior to 1811," 3–10.

people in the lower Columbia and Willamette valleys.[20] The HBC's success in the fur trade of the Columbia River watershed was due in large part to the extensive and well-developed trading networks that Chinookan people had cultivated for many years.[21]

Those who lived and worked at Fort Vancouver reflected the diversity of the fur trade workforce. Employees hailed from French Canada, Great Britain, Louisiana, the United States (of European, Indigenous, and African descent), a variety of Indigenous nations from outside the region (Iroquois, Cree, Chippewa, Ojibwe), local Indigenous communities (Klickitat, Chinookan, Clatsop, Kalapuyan, Klamath), and the Hawaiian Islands.[22] Even before the fur trade, a pidgin language had developed along the Columbia River in areas of Chinookan trade networks. With the influx of newcomers in the early 1800s, the language evolved to include words from English, French, Hawaiian, Iroquoian, and others. The pidgin language became known as Chinook Jargon or Chinuk Wawa.[23]

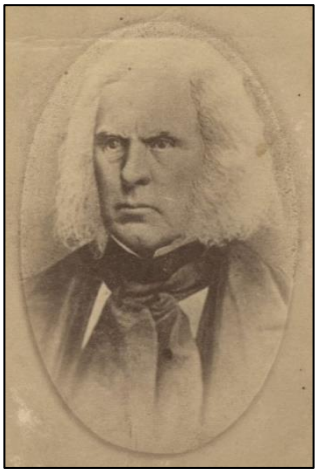

Figure 6. John McLoughlin headed the Hudson's Bay Company operations in the Columbia River region. McLoughlin established positive relationships with Chinookan and Kalapuyan residents of the area, as well as American overlanders when they began arriving in the early 1840s. Here, McLoughlin ca. 1855.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

During the 1830s, many former HBC employees and their families formed a settlement that they called Champoeg, located in the open plains south of the Willamette River, between the Pudding River and the present-day city of Salem (see Figure 7). The name "Champoeg" may have come from a Kalapuyan word, campuik, the name for an Ahantchuyuk village in the same area that may have been a regional village and trading center.[24] There were likely several Kalapuyan settlements around Champoeg, and Kalapuyan people helped the former traders, who had received special permission from McLoughlin to settle in the Willamette Valley, to create their new homes.[25] The settlers chose the Champoeg area because it was accessible to the Willamette River, which was navigable up to

[20] Dorothy Nafus Morrison, *Outpost: John McLoughlin and the Far Northwest* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1999), 51–52, 58–59, 174–86; T. C. Elliott, "The Dalles-Celilo Portage; Its History and Influence," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 16, no. 2 (June 1915): 133–74, esp. 144.

[21] Yvonne Hajda, "Social and Political Organization," in Boyd et al., *Chinookan People of the Lower Columbia*, 157–58; Bergmann, "'we should lose much by their absence'," 45; Karson, ed., *wiyáxayxt / wiyáakaaʔawn / As Days Go By*, 46.

[22] C. O. Ermatinger, "The Columbia River under Hudson's Bay Company Rule," *Washington Historical Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (July 1914): 192–206, esp. 198; Kenneth Wiggins Porter, "Negroes and the Fur Trade," *Minnesota History* 15 (1934): 421–33; Melinda Marie Jetté, "Betwixt and Between the Official Story: Tracing the History and Memory of a Family of French-Indian Ancestry in the Pacific Northwest," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 111, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 142–83; Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races*; John A. Hussey, "Chapter 2: Old Fort Vancouver, 1824–1829," in *The History of Fort Vancouver and its Physical Structure* (Tacoma: Washington State Historical Society and National Park Service, 1957), [no page number in online format], http://www.npshistory.com/publications/fova/hussey/chap2.htm.

[23] Eugene S. Hunn, E. Thomas Morning Owl, Phillip E. Cash Cash, and Jennifer Karson Engum, *Čáw Pawá Láakni – They Are Not Forgotten: Sahaptian Place Names Atlas of the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla* (Pendleton, OR: Tamástslikt Cultural Institution, 2015), 76–93; Henry B. Zenk, Yvonne P. Hajda, and Robert T. Boyd, "Chinookan Villages of the Lower Columbia," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 117, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 6–37, esp. 7.

[24] Ahantchuyuk is the name of the subgroup of Kalapuyans who lived in the watershed of the Pudding River.

[25] David G. Lewis, "The Kalapuya Village of Champoeg," *Quartux: Journal of Critical Indigenous Anthropology*, June 25, 2016, https://ndnhistoryresearch.com/2016/06/25/the-kalapuya-village-of-champoeg/.

Willamette Falls, and the open prairie was easier to settle than areas along the river with thick stands of trees. Furthermore, a stream at Champoeg was well-suited for construction of a mill. The newcomers settled in "long lots" so that each had river frontage, similar to Louisiana, the St. Lawrence Valley, and other places settled by French people.[26]

Figure 7. Many former HBC employees and their families settled in Champoeg. These Métis communities led early American settlers to call the area "French Prairie." Champoeg is depicted here in 1847, in a drawing by the artist Paul Kane.

Source: Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum, (c) ROM.

The area around Champoeg became known as "French Prairie." Settlements in French Prairie, as well as settlements of former trappers and traders in nearby Tualatin Plains, were culturally heterogeneous. This was partly because the HBC had encouraged men to marry Indigenous women. In the French Prairie, many of the women came from Indigenous communities in the larger Columbia River watershed, while most men were French-Canadian. The resulting communities became known as "Métis," which translates roughly to "mixed" in French.[27]

When malaria devastated the Kalapuyan population in the 1830s, the Métis community at Champoeg benefited in that the settlers there suddenly had fewer people competing with them for land and resources. The epidemic also shaped French Prairie: unlike other Métis communities across the continent, French Prairie families had few kinship ties to the local people.[28]

[26] Manion, "Where Have All the Women and Children Gone?," 16; Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races*, 16–17, 52. This practice was also common in Spanish settlements in arid locales, in order to distribute riverine access among many settlers. See Alvar W. Carlson, "Long-Lots in the Rio Arriba," *Annals of the Association of Geographers* 65, no. 1 (March 1975): 48–57.

[27] Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races*, 42–43; Bergmann, "'we should lose much by their absence'," 38–40; Karson, ed., *wiyáxayxt / wiyáakaaʔawn / As Days Go By*, 47; Daniel Lee and Joseph H. Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon* (New York: J. Collord, Printer, 1844), 214–15.

[28] Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races*, 42–69.

French-Indigenous communities of the Willamette Valley are often left out of the settlement narrative of Oregon, which has focused on the White American settlers who came after them. However, Métis families were the earliest settlers of the area, and their communities facilitated later American settlements in the valley. As the United States took over the area, Americans institutionalized White supremacy through laws and social norms that "increasingly placed 'mixed-bloods' in the racial category of 'Indian' rather than in the category of 'white.'" This led to a cultural bifurcation in which some Métis descendants "distance[d] themselves from their Indian heritage and outwardly acculturated into White society, while others chose an opposite route and joined their kinfolk on Indian reservations."[29] This assimilation into White or Indigenous communities facilitated the erasure of Métis families from the history of Willamette Valley settlements.

Figure 8. Although Hawaiian men had worked in Oregon in the fur trade for decades, they faced discrimination in American Oregon. Here, a Hawaiian man and fur trade veteran that the artist Paul Kane calls "Old Cox," ca. 1867–1847.

Source: Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum, (c) ROM.

Not all former employees of the fur trade business could become landowners in Oregon. Laws precluded Hawaiian and Black employees from making land claims because of their race. Evidence of this overt racism is apparent in US Territorial Delegate Samuel R. Thurston's remarks to Congress in 1850:

> I am opposed to the amendment of the Land Committee . . . because it would give land to every servant of the Hudson's Bay Company, including some hundreds of Canakers, or Sandwich Islanders [Hawaiians], who are a race of men as black as your negroes of the South, and a race, too, that we do not desire to settle in Oregon.[30]

Hawaiians who had worked in the fur trade often returned to Hawaii or settled in British Columbia, where the British-Canadian government allowed people of Hawaiian descent to claim land (see Figure 8).[31]

Missions

In 1834, Methodist missionary Jason Lee and his nephew, Daniel Lee, arrived at Fort Vancouver, intent on establishing a mission in the area. McLoughlin suggested they choose a site

[29] Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races,* 1–11, quotes from 8.

[30] *Congressional Globe* 31 (1850): 1079.

[31] Kainoa L. Little, "A Search for Hawaiian Cultural Persistence in the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Vancouver," Master's thesis, Northern Arizona University, 2016, 53.

somewhere in the Willamette Valley.[32] The first mission was at a place that became known as "Mission Bottom," on the outskirts of the French Prairie settlement. Daniel Lee, who led the mission, constructed the mission's buildings with help from Kalapuyan and Hawaiian people.[33] He later explained this process of evangelizing to Kalapuyans:

> To make provision for the sick, it was determined to build an hospital; and a building was commenced, but so slowly did the work advance, that it was not finished till 1840, and then it became necessary to occupy it for a dwelling-house, to accommodate the reinforcement of 1839. Our attention was now turned toward the Calapooyas, and efforts were made to give them instruction by holding meetings among them, and visiting them at their lodges; and for their special benefit a missionary society was formed, and a very liberal sum was devoted to that object, about four hundred dollars. The object of the society was to induce them to locate on a piece of ground, and till the soil, and to assist them in the building of comfortable houses. A man was hired to help them, and some efforts were made in order to induce them to work and help themselves. There was, however, so much apathy among them, that, after having used various means for a year quite in vain, they abandoned the attempt. Yet meetings have been held among them from time to time since, and at periods when their location admitted meetings have been regularly holden; and a house has been built near the mission mill which affords them a shelter, in worship, during the rains.[34]

Thomas J. Farnham, an American author who traveled extensively in what became the western United States, described the mission after passing it in 1839:

> Twelve or thirteen miles from the doctor's we came in sight of the Mission premises. They consisted of three log cabins, a blacksmith's shop, and outbuildings, on the east bank of the Willamette, with large and well cultivated farms round about; and a farm, on which were a large frame house, hospital, barn, &c., half a mile to the eastward. . . . They have many hundred acres of land under the plough, and cultivated chiefly by the native pupils. They have more than a hundred head of horned cattle, thirty or forty horses, and many swine. They have granaries filled with wheat, oats, barley, and peas, and cellars well stored with vegetables.[35]

Additional Methodist missionaries arrived to settle the area in 1837 and 1839. The earlier missionaries called the arrival of these newcomers the "Great Reinforcement."[36] Daniel Lee first left the Willamette mission for a mission at The Dalles in 1838, and the Methodists abandoned the site in 1841, when, due to flooding, they chose to relocate the mission to present-day Salem. There, the

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[32] Report of Warre and Vavasour, Dated 26 October, 1845, Directed to "The Rt. Hon. the Secretary of State of the Colonies," October 26, 1845, in Joseph Schafer, "Documents Relative to Warre and Vavasour's Military Reconnaissance in Oregon, 1845–6," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 10, no. 1 (March 1909): 1–99, esp. 47–48.

[33] Lee and Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon*, 129.

[34] Lee and Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon*, 151.

[35] Thomas J. Farnham, *Travels in the Great Western Prairies, the Anahuac and Rocky Mountains, and in the Oregon Territory, Volume II* (London: Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street, 1843), 209–12.

[36] Boag, "Calapooian Matrix," 90–91.

Methodists built a new mission and a school for Indigenous children. By 1844, the school had been repurposed as the Oregon Institute.[37]

Figure 9. Catholic priests established two missions in the Willamette Valley in 1838. Here, St. Paul Mission is depicted in an 1847 painting by the artist Paul Kane.

Source: Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum, (c) ROM.

Catholics also founded missions in the Willamette Valley.[38] In 1838, French-Canadian Catholic priests, led by François Norbert Blanchet and Modeste Demers, established one in French Prairie (St. Paul) and one at the Willamette Falls near the fledgling town of Oregon City (St. Louis) (see Figure 9).[39] By 1839, they had constructed a chapel, wooden buildings for a blacksmith and carpenter, and a dwelling house at the French Prairie Mission. They built a school that primarily educated Métis boys.[40] Father de Smet wrote in 1845 of the increasing attention to English-speaking, American settlers as they continued to increase in population:

> Father De Vos is the only one of our fathers of Willamette who speaks English. He devotes his whole attention to the Americans, whose number already exceeds 4,000.

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[37] Gustavus Hines, *Oregon and its Institutions: comprising a full history of the Willamette University, the first established on the Pacific Coast* (New York, Carleton & Porter, 1868), 138–61. For more on the missions, see Robert J. Loewenberg, *Equality on the Oregon Frontier: Jason Lee and the Methodist Mission 1834–43* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976).

[38] John McLoughlin, who aided both Protestant and Catholic missionaries in the Oregon Country, converted to Catholicism in 1842. He had previously been an Anglican. See the McLoughlin entry written by Frederick V. Holman, in Charles George Herbermann, et al., eds., *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume 9 (New York: Appleton, 1914), 504.

[39] Report of Warre and Vavasour, in Schafer, "Documents Relative to Warre and Vavasour's Military Reconnaissance in Oregon, 1845–6," 1–99, esp. 48, 52; Nellie Bowden Pipes, "Extract from Exploration of the Oregon Territory, the Californias, and the Gulf of California, Undertaken during the Years 1840, 1841 and 1842 by Eugene Duflot de Mofras," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 26, no. 2 (June 1925): 151–90, esp. 171; Lee and Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon*, 214–15.

[40] P. J. De Smet, letter written June 20, 1845, from St. Francis Xavier, Willamette, in Pierre-Jean De Smet, *Oregon Missions and Travels over the Rocky Mountains in 1845 46* (New York: Edward Dunigan, 1847), 86, 98.

> There are several Catholic families, and our dissenting brethren seem well disposed; many among them are eager to be instructed in the Catholic faith.[41]

Overlanders and Settler Colonialism in Oregon[42]

Table 1-1. Overland Immigration to Oregon, 1840–1860.[43]

Total Number of Arrivals by Destination			
Year	**Oregon**	**Oregon and California**	**Cumulative West Coast Total (OR and CA)**
1840	13	13	13
1841	24	58	71
1842	125	125	196
1843	875	913	1,109
1844	1,475	1,528	2,637
1845	2,500	2,760	5,397
1846	1,200	2,700	8,097
1847	4,000	4,450	12,547
1848	1,300	1,700	14,247
1849	450	25,450	39,697
1850	6,000	50,000	89,697
1851	3,600	4,700	94,397
1852	10,000	60,000	154,397
1853	7,500	27,500	181,897
1854	6,000	18,000	199,897
1855	500	2,000	201,897
1856	1,000	9,000	210,897

[41] De Smet, letter written June 20, 1845, from St. Francis Xavier, Willamette, in De Smet, *Oregon Missions and Travels over the Rocky Mountains in 1845 46*, 97.

[42] Historically, many White settlers used the word "emigrant" to refer to Americans who moved from eastern and midwestern states to Oregon. This term is fraught with cultural superiority that emphasizes the leaving, rather than the arriving. Settlers arrived in a place with thousands of years of its own cultures; they were immigrants to this new space. To avoid the problematic connotations of "emigrant," we most often choose "overlander," a long-used term to describe one who traveled across land from the eastern and midwestern United States to the western reaches of the continent, or "settler." In some cases, we use the term "immigrant," but we avoid "emigrant" unless it was used in original text in a quote. See also Gonzales and Young, *Overlanders in the Columbia River Gorge*, 4.

[43] Unruh, *Plains Across*, 119.

Table 1-1. Overland Immigration to Oregon, 1840–1860.[43]

Total Number of Arrivals by Destination			
Year	**Oregon**	**Oregon and California**	**Cumulative West Coast Total (OR and CA)**
1857	1,500	5,500	216,397
1858	1,500	7,500	223,897
1859	2,000	19,000	242,897
1860	1,500	10,500	253,397
Total 1840–1860	**53,062**	**n/a**	**253,397**

Over 200,000 people traveled on the Oregon Trail between 1840 and 1860 (see Table 1-1).[44] People migrated to Oregon for a variety of reasons, usually connected to economic opportunity. Many had read literature extolling Oregon's fertile environment and widespread opportunities for new settlers. Much of this literature used the Willamette Valley as a stand-in for the whole of Oregon.[45] In a book published in 1849, Charles Wilkes praised the valley's suitability for American settlement:

> That portion of the country known as the Willamette Valley lies to the south of the Columbia, extending to the Elk Ridge, where the river takes its rise . . . the principal settlements of the country have been made in this valley, on account of its good soil and easy cultivation. It is divided into an upper and lower prairie; the first is adapted for pasturage and the raising of stock; the latter arable and productive land, on which all kinds of grain yield abundant crops. The southern end of the valley rises gradually into undulating hills, destitute of trees, except a few oaks, which are found on the banks of the streams. The soil is a red decomposed basalt. The Willamette river flows nearly north, in the middle of the valley, and has several small streams which empty into it. Fifteen miles below the valley the river falls about twenty-five feet [the drop is actually closer to 42 feet], and at this place is 350 yards wide. . . . The banks below the falls are high and basaltic, to within four miles of its mouth, when they become low and subject to be overflown. Its width varies, from there being many islands in it, which are covered with beautiful groves of oak. The freshets in this river take place in February and March, and by the sudden rise at times do great damage.[46]

[44] John D. Unruh, *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840–60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 119.

[45] Adam Gomez, "Agrarianism, Expansionism, and the Myth of the American West," *American Political Thought* 1, no. 2 (September 2012): 236–62, esp. 236–47.

[46] Charles Wilkes, *Western America, Including California and Oregon, with Maps of Those Regions, and of 'The Sacramento Valley'* (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1849), 55–56.

When Americans arrived in Oregon, the idealized descriptions they had read of the Willamette Valley did not always square with the realities they faced, as later chapters will describe.

Overlanders who tried their luck in Oregon were often farmers from midwestern states.[47] They often made the trek as part of a gradual shift westward. Fred Lockley, who interviewed many overlanders, later summarized:

> In talking to the pioneers you will find that a large majority of them came from Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, or North Carolina; that is, if they themselves were not born there, their parents were and came west by easy stages first to Illinois or Ohio and then on to Missouri, which was the jumping off place from which the emigrants started for Oregon.[48]

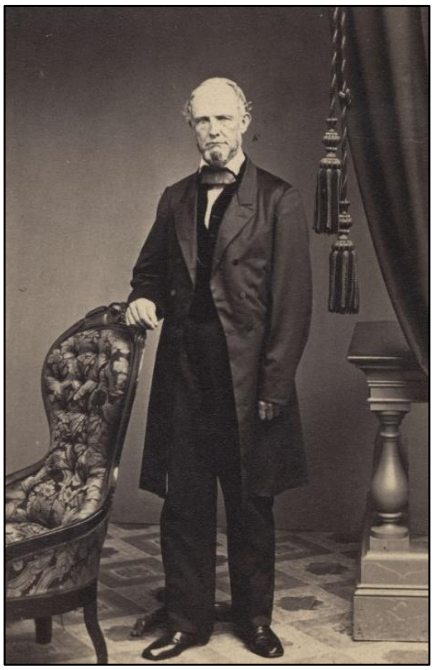

Figure 10. Peter Burnett traveled overland to Oregon in 1843. Burnett later moved to California, where he became that state's first governor. He wrote extensively about his experiences colonizing Oregon and California in his 1880 memoir. Pictured here, ca. 1868.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

These settlers were also mostly White. In practice, the promise of Oregon—of claiming new land and starting a fresh life—was mostly available to White individuals and not to others. Estimates of how many Black individuals traveled overland on trails to the West (to all destinations, not just Oregon) range from 10,000 to 15,000 people. However, sources make it difficult to quantify the number of Black overlanders, since those chronicling the journey in diaries and letters were usually White, and many left out any mention of Black companions or enslaved people. When they arrived in Oregon, Black overlanders faced significant discrimination and limited economic possibilities because of racism. The experiences of Black and other non-White overlanders were, in large part, excluded from historical records that were written and maintained by White settlers.[49]

Overlanders have been portrayed by contemporary Oregon boosters and by later historians as traveling in family units.[50] While the majority of American settlers arrived via the Oregon Trail with

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[47] Samuel N. Dicken and Emily F. Dicken, *The Making of Oregon: A Study in Historical Geography* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1979), 70–73; Quintard Taylor, "Slaves and Free Men," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (Summer 1982): 153–70, esp. 153–54; John Mack Faragher, *Men and Women on the Overland Trail* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 4, 34; Kenneth R. Coleman, *Dangerous Subjects: James D. Saules and the Rise of Black Exclusion in Oregon* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2017), 72–73.

[48] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, July 11, 1914, 4.

[49] Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, *Sweet Freedom's Plains: African Americans on the Overland Trails, 1841–1869* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 5–8, 157–58; Stacey L. Smith, "Oregon's Civil War: The Troubled Legacy of Emancipation in the Pacific Northwest," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 115, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 154–73; R. Gregory Nokes, *Breaking Chains: Slavery on Trial in Oregon* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2013); Jason E. Pierce, *Making the White Man's West: Whiteness and the Creation of the American West* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2016); Katrine Barber, "'We were at our journey's end.' Settler Sovereignty Formation in Oregon," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 120, no. 4 (Winter 2019): 382–413, esp. 386–87.

[50] James C. Bell, Jr., "Introduction," in Joseph Williams, *Narrative of a tour from the state of Indiana to the Oregon territory in the years 1841-2* (New York: The Cadmus Book Shop, 1921), 13–14.

families, some came as hired hands, servants, enslaved people, entrepreneurs, or individuals looking to scout out the area before returning with their families. For instance, Charles Bolds recalled his experience as a hired hand arriving in Oregon in 1845:

> There was a lot of talk in those days about coming to Oregon, so in the spring of 1845 I hired out to John Potter to drive one of his teams to Oregon. When I got to the forks of the road near Fort Hall, where one trail led southward to California, Potter decided to go to California. . . . . After Potter left I hired out to Bill Ingalls, who came on through to Oregon and settled on Molalla prairie, a mile or two south of Molalla Corners. . . . We took up a donation land claim in the forks of Beaver creek, a few miles south of Oregon City, not far from what is now the town of New Era.[51]

Peter H. Burnett, who traveled overland to Oregon in 1843 and later became the first governor of California, noted that fellow overlander Captain James Waters was "among the first of our immigrants to arrive at Vancouver, having no family with him" (see Figure 10).[52]

Oregon overlanders participated in the global rise of settler colonialism occurring at the time. Historian Katrine Barber explained this process:

> While distinct sites of settler colonialism developed in particular ways, they shared common characteristics: settler land hunger, extinguishment of Indigenous land rights (and people through physical violence as well as cultures through assimilation), and importation of immigrant laborers who were excluded from citizenship rights and expelled during periods when their labor was not critical. The ongoing resistance to these structures by Indigenous people, by "temporary" laborers who made their homes permanently in settler societies, and by some settlers and their descendants has also been an ineradicable characteristic of settler colonialism . . .
>
> White supremacy operates beyond the bounds of settler colonial structures but, especially in the United States, also plays out within the context of territorial expansion and settler colonialism. . . . The development of anti-Blackness in support of the enslavement of Africans and their descendants and the dispossession of Indigenous people from their lands characterize American race relations. Settler colonialism rationalized the strategies waged against Indigenous people: genocidal violence, removal, theft, and forced assimilation.[53]

The mostly White Americans who arrived in the Willamette Valley between 1840 and 1869 "were the building blocks of an indomitable national narrative that married 'earth hunger' with a doctrine of land improvement that entitled American settlers to take the plow to Indigenous homelands and that justified the removal and massacre of Native people as necessary to territorial expansion."[54]

A central tenant of settler colonialism was the erasure of Indigenous people—through warfare, murder, physical removal, or cultural genocide—as means to justify the colonial project. In the

[51] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, July 11, 1914, 4.

[52] Peter H. Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1880), 142–45.

[53] Barber, "'We were at our journey's end.'," 386–88.

[54] Barber, "'We were at our journey's end.'," 384.

United States, the myth of the "vanishing Indian"—a perception that "primitive" Indigenous people were destined to die out as "civilized" White people moved in—led White settlers to see taking Indigenous land as part of a natural progression. Writings from overlanders are full of stories about Indigenous people being feeble, weak, reduced in population, and near extinction. In the Willamette Valley, settlers cited the numerous Kalapuyans who died during epidemics in the 1830s as evidence of this, using the tragedy to reinforce the mythology and justify the taking of Indigenous lands.[55] Literature encouraging Americans to settle in Oregon also reinforced the narrative, portraying the Willamette Valley as an orderly, English-speaking settlement in which the local Indigenous people "were ultimately destinated to vanish from the landscape," leaving the valley open for agrarian development by American settlers.[56] As American overlanders continued to flood into Oregon, their settlements, culture, and racial ideologies increasingly marginalized Indigenous, Métis, Black, Hawaiian, Chinese, and other non-White people, excluding them from the new Oregon that they created in the Willamette Valley.

[55] Gray H. Whaley, "Creating Oregon from *Illahee*: Race, Settler-Colonialism, and Native Sovereignty in Western Oregon, 1792–1856," PhD diss., University of Oregon, 2002, 227, 233, 235; Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races*, 134–36; Barber, "'We were at our journey's end.'," 391, 395–96.

[56] Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races*, 102. For more on the popular conception of the West as an uninhabited wilderness and the role of the US government and white settlers in promulgating that narrative, see Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950); Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Chapter 1: First Year for Overlanders Arriving during "Joint Occupation" (1840–1845)

For overlanders who settled in the Willamette Valley between 1840 and 1845, the first year in Oregon was marked by the presence of the HBC, Chinookan and Kalapuyan villages, and previous settlers, often former fur trappers or retired employees of the HBC and their families. Settlers who came to Oregon during this period often leaned on the knowledge and assistance of Métis and Indigenous people, who had established communities, trading networks, and food sources. New settlers usually moved around during the first winter, not finding a more permanent place to build a home until the spring or summer after their arrival.[57]

Geopolitics and Demographics of Settlement

In 1840, Great Britain and the United States were jockeying for position along the Columbia River (see Figure 11). Chinookan people still controlled the bulk of trade on the lower Columbia River, while Kalapuyan people had suffered huge population losses as a result of recent disease epidemics. The HBC was the most powerful non-Indigenous trading constituency along the river, and the majority of settlers in the Willamette Valley were retired French-Canadian fur traders and their Indigenous wives who had settled in French Prairie.[58] The few American settlers in the valley petitioned Congress in 1840 to establish Oregon as a territory of the United States. Congress took no action in light of the ongoing land dispute with Britain, but settlers in the Willamette Valley appointed a committee in 1841 "to draft a constitution and code of laws."[59]

In 1843, American and Métis settlers in the valley met to form a provisional government.[60] In its first year of session, the Oregon provisional government passed the area's first land law, which allowed settlers to claim up to one square mile (640 acres) "in a square or oblong form" unless topography made that impossible. A person wishing to claim land needed to "designate the extent of his claim by natural boundaries, or by marks at the corners, and on the lines of such claim, and have the extent and boundaries of said claim recorded in the office of territorial recorder." A revised law

[57] Carlos A. Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 91–92; Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races*, 137–80.

[58] Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races*, 137–42.

[59] H. W. Scott, "The Formation and Administration of the Provisional Government of Oregon," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 2, no. 2 (June 1901): 95–118, esp. 101.

[60] Juliet Thelma Pollard, "The Making of the Metis Children in the Pacific Northwest Fur Trade: Race, Class, and Gender," PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 1990, 256–57.

passed June 25, 1844, that narrowed the allowable shapes of land claims in order to eliminate non-standard shapes, which had been allowed if necessitated by topography.[61]

Figure 11. This 1845 map of the Willamette Valley shows the Indigenous groups in the area (Chinooks, Callapuya, Molele, Klamet, Umpqua), HBC's Fort Vancouver, missions around the area, and the settlements of Champoeg, Portland, and Oregon City. Map by Sidney E. Morse.

Source: David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries.

The provisional government's land laws ignored the fact that the United States held no legal claim to Oregon: according to US and British legal systems, the land still belonged to the Indigenous people who lived there. This did not slow the rush of American settlers. Historian John Suval

[61] Boag, "Calapooian Matrix," 115–17; Kenneth R. Coleman, "'We'll All Start Even': White Egalitarianism and the Oregon Donation Land Claim Act," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 120, no. 4 (Winter 2019): 414–39, esp. 419–20; Scott, "Formation and Administration of the Provisional Government of Oregon," 95–118, esp. 102, 109–10; Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 169.

explained how squatting on Indigenous land became US policy and how the illegal settling facilitated America's claim to Oregon:

> Squatter Democracy conditioned the claiming of Oregon Country. Democrats in the White House and Congress and their allies in the press brashly asserted the nation's "clear and unquestionable" title to the bountiful land still occupied by Native peoples and also claimed by Great Britain, and they encouraged emigrants to redeem that title by settling there. Americans flooded into the contested domain, bringing with them the practices of the U.S. public lands system — including the prerogative of preemption — and enacting them on the ground. Their overwhelming numbers and assertions of ownership helped tip the balance of power in America's favor. . . . Following squatters' footsteps into Oregon Country yields new perspectives on how a vast expanse of Pacific Northwest territory came into U.S. possession, much of it becoming the private property of white emigrant families.[62]

Suval argued that the vast numbers of Americans arriving in the Willamette Valley "helped tip the balance of power in America's favor." As of 1841, approximately 500 people lived in the Willamette Valley, roughly half Métis/French-Canadian and half American, mostly missionaries and former fur trappers.[63] Over 800 Americans arrived in 1843, followed by almost 1,500 in 1844 and around 2,500 in 1845.[64] By 1845, American settlers comprised the largest non-Indigenous block of residents in the area, eclipsing the French-Canadian, Métis, and British populations. The growth in their numbers shifted the power dynamic in favor of White American settlers.[65]

Existing Communities and Settlement Trends

From 1840 to 1845, most overlanders arrived at their destinations in the Willamette Valley, usually at Oregon City, in mid- to late autumn, after a journey that took an average of 169 days (approximately five and half months).[66] Overlanders who had encountered difficulties on the journey generally arrived in early winter. Rachel Cornelius (maiden name McKinney) came with her family from Missouri in 1845, when she was twelve years old. She remembered later, "We didn't get to the Willamette valley until a day or two after Christmas."[67] Arriving late could make their first year much more difficult, since roads were muddy, overlanders sometimes ran out of food the longer a journey lasted, and there were not always lodging options available upon their arrival.

Most of the new arrivals aimed for Oregon City and then found a place elsewhere in the Willamette Valley to spend their first winter, as noted in the "Finding a Home" section below. When

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[62] John Suval, "'The Nomadic Race to Which I Belong': Squatter Democracy and the Claiming of Oregon," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 118, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 306–37, esp. 307–10.

[63] Boag, "Calapooian Matrix," 90–91.

[64] Unruh, *Plains Across*, 119.

[65] Leslie M. Scott, "Oregon's Provisional Government, 1843–1849," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (September 1929): 207–17, esp. 216; Report of Warre and Vavasour, in Schafer, "Documents Relative to Warre and Vavasour's Military Reconnaissance in Oregon, 1845–6," 1–99, esp. 48–50; Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races*, 137–82.

[66] Kenneth L. Holmes ed., *Covered Wagon Women, Volume 1: Diaries and Letters from the Western Trails, 1840–1849* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 1995), 38; Faragher, *Men and Women on the Overland Trail*, 7; Schwantes, *Pacific Northwest*, 84, 90.

[67] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, July 23, 1914, 8.

the weather improved in the spring or summer, they looked for land to farm. In the early 1840s, there were plenty of areas where they could make land claims in the Willamette Valley (despite it being legally still Kalapuyan land), which led many settlers to spend their entire first year in the valley.[68]

People often chose to settle in areas with others who were like them: Catholics or French-speaking people went to Champoeg, while Methodists located near the former Methodist Mission in Oregon City or the newer one in Salem.[69] The earliest areas settled by non-local Indigenous people were French Prairie, Tualatin Plains, and Oregon City, and settlement in general progressed from north to south, beginning where the Willamette River met the Columbia River.[70] This section describes settlements in the Willamette Valley as they existed in the first half of the 1840s and discusses how newly arrived settlers interacted with people in the existing communities.

Kalapuyan and Chinookan Villages

When American settlers began arriving in the Willamette Valley in large numbers in the early 1840s, the Kalapuyan people of the Willamette Valley had recently been ravaged by malaria and other diseases.[71] When Wilkes passed through in 1841, he estimated there were 600 Kalapuyan people in the upper Willamette Valley and 275 Upper Chinookans in the lower Willamette Valley.[72] Kalapuyan populations likely had decreased to half of that by 1844.[73]

Kalapuyan people in the valley continued to live in small communities. Jesse A. Applegate recalled that in 1843, a Kalapuyan winter village was located along the Rickreall Creek:

> Dickydowdow [a Kalpuyan patriarch], with his family and relatives, had permanent quarters on the Rickerol. Here he had his winter house, and some of his relatives had a fish trap. . . . At this place the Indians built their best houses, and moving from place to place during the dry season, returned to them as winter approached.[74]

Applegate also described a Kalapuyan settlement near the former Methodist mission:

> We found a tribe of Kalapooyas living along the river at this place. They were not numerous. There were a few families of them living in miserable hovels near us, and down the river, less than a quarter of a mile, was a small village. There were a few huts at other places. But little skill was made manifest in the design or construction

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[68] B. F. Nichols, "Across the Plains in 1844: Reminiscences of Oregon," *Laidlaw Chronicle*, November 28, 1906, Mattes Collection, available on OCTA website; Report of Warre and Vavasour, in Schafer, "Documents Relative to Warre and Vavasour's Military Reconnaissance in Oregon, 1845–6," 1–99, esp. 53.

[69] Dicken and Dicken, *The Making of Oregon*, 73.

[70] Zach Windler, Celia Moret-Ferguson, and Mini Sharma-Ogle, "Cultural Resource Inventory for the Proposed SAP South – Plan Area 2 Residential Development, Clackamas County, Oregon" (SWCA Environmental Consultants, 2013; prepared for the US Army Corps of Engineers), 17.

[71] Bergmann, "'we should lose much by their absence'," 34–59, esp. 40; Joseph E. Taylor, III, "Making Salmon: Economy, Culture, and Science in the Oregon Fisheries, Precontact to 1960," PhD diss., University of Washington, 1996, 63.

[72] Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races*, 139.

[73] Lewis, "Kalapuyan Tribal History"; Boag, "Calapooian Matrix," 36–39.

[74] Jesse A. Applegate, *A Day with the Cow Column in 1843: Recollections of My Boyhood* (Chicago: Caxton Club, 1934), 150–51.

> of their houses. These Indians were poor in every sense of the word. A few miserable ponies were all the live stock they had—save vermin and fleas. They were spiritless and sickly and seemed to be satisfied with a miserable existence. Many died that winter, and the hideous wail of the mourners, as they conducted funeral services, was heard almost daily. If any effort had been made to civilize or Christianize this tribe, there was no evidence of it. That they could hardly have been more wretchedly housed, poorer in property, more degraded morally or more afflicted mentally with demonology, was plainly to be seen.[75]

Although still dealing with devastating epidemics, Kalapuyan people participated in the evolving economies of the Willamette Valley. Missionaries, French-Canadians, and the HBC hired Indigenous men to assist with river navigation, agriculture, and managing livestock.[76]

Dramatically reduced populations played into the "vanishing Indian" myth that the United States used to justify settlement. Missionaries like Daniel Lee and Joseph Frost reinforced this myth in their writings:

> there never was but one tribe of Calapooyas, and of that tribe there are only a few most miserable remnants left, (which is the condition of all the Indians in the lower country,) and these remnants, consisting of but a few families each, are scattered over the most part of the Walamet Valley, and will not number more than from five to eight hundred.[77]

Of the Umpqua people farther south, Lee and Frost noted that there were "but a few miserable fish-eaters, who were as savage as the bears."[78] In his description of Indigenous people in the valley as of 1841, Wilkes quoted Horatio Hale, who fed into the vanishing Indian myth and debasement of Indigenous people even as he backhandedly complimented the Kalapuyan people:

> The Callapuya possess the valley of the Willamette, above the falls,--the most fertile district of Oregon. . . . the natives were formerly numerous, but have been reduced by sickness to about five hundred. The Callapuya, like the Umpqua, hold a position intermediate between the wild, wandering tribes of the interior and the debased, filthy, and quarrelsome natives of the coast. They are more regular and quiet than the former, and more cleanly, honest, and moral than the latter.[79]

Other new arrivals to the valley bolstered the narrative, noting unhealthy or negative aspects of Chinookan and Kalapuyan communities. Farnham described a Chinookan village opposite of Fort Vancouver derogatorily, as "a collection of mud and straw huts, surrounded and filled with filth which might be smelt two hundred yards."[80]

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[75] Applegate, *A Day with the Cow Column in 1843*, 127–129.

[76] Bergmann, "'we should lose much by their absence'," 43.

[77] Lee and Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon*, 100.

[78] Lee and Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon*, 100.

[79] Wilkes, *Western America, Including California and Oregon*, 100.

[80] This was likely the Chinookan village of Watlala. Zenk et al., "Chinookan Villages of the Lower Columbia," 8–9. Quotation from Farnham, *Travels in the Great Western Prairies*, 201–2, 219.

French Prairie

Settlers in French Prairie were well-established by 1843, as French naturalist Eugene Duflot de Mofras noted on a visit:

> At the beginning of 1843 the French settlers on the Willamette possessed 3000 beef cattle, 1800 horses, 3000 swine and 500 sheep; they harvested during the year 10,000 hectoliters of wheat, and 3000 of leguminous and other grains; such as oats, peas and beans. The yield of these grains gives an average return of twelve for one, and the soil produces at least eight hectoliters a hectare. The colonists sell their harvest to the Hudson's Bay Company, which gives them European merchandise, iron and farm implements in exchange. Some of them have set up grist mills and sawmills on the numerous streams which water the valley. Others, and particularly Stanislas Jacquet, go to California nearly every year to buy cattle and horses. In the proper season they trap the small number of beavers which still remain, and prepare the furs and skins, but their principal occupation is agriculture.[81]

> Although the great majority of settlers have married Indian wives, the French language is the only one in use in the colony. Rapids, cascades, all the dangerous places bear French names: la Porte de l'enfer, la Course de Satan, le Passage du Diable, les Cornes du Demon, and other witticisms drawn from the vocabulary of the Canadian hunters. During our visit to the Willamette with Governor Simpson, we could not help noticing the painful impression the Canadians experienced in seeing themselves governed by a person of a race and religion different from their own, and who did not even speak the same language. Several farmers, indeed, when Sir George said to them in English, "How do you do"—replied, "We do not speak English; we are all French here."[82]

De Mofras's observation indicates how cultural and language barriers influenced where American settlers chose to make their homes.

Despite these barriers, Métis settlers in French Prairie area showed generosity to new arrivals, as missionaries Lee and Frost reported,

> Along the river we found about a dozen families, mostly French Canadians, who had been hunters in the service of the Hudson's Bay company, or free trappers, and had very lately left that employment and begun to farm, that themselves and families might have a surer support and greater security than they could while following the hazardous life of hunters. They seemed prosperous and happy, and gave us a very polite and generous welcome to the best they could set before us. One night Mr.

[81] Pipes, "Extract from Exploration of the Oregon Territory, the Californias, and the Gulf of California," 151–90, esp. 169.

[82] "Governor Simpson" refers to Sir George Simpson, who was the highest-ranking HBC official for the company's North American business. Quote from Pipes, "Extract from Exploration of the Oregon Territory, the Californias, and the Gulf of California," 151–90, esp. 169.

> Gervais set up our tent in his garden, among melons and cucumbers. It reminded one of the scripture, "A lodge in a garden of cucumbers."[83]

Lee and Frost added that the Catholic mission in French Prairie "embraced Frenchmen, Americans, Indians, half-breeds."[84]

Visitors to French Prairie in the early 1840s noted that Thomas McKay, son of fur trader Alexander McKay and Marguerite Wadin (a Métis woman who was part Cree and who later married John McLoughlin), had recently erected a gristmill there.[85] McKay's mill was one of only a handful in the valley, and it was amply supplied with wheat by the productive farms in the area. Farnham wrote,

> We . . . went to view McKay's mill. A grist-mill in Oregon! . . . The frame of the mill-house was raised and shingled; and an excellent structure it was. . . . McKay's mother is a Cree or Chippeway Indian; and McKay himself is a compound of the two races.[86]

John Dunn wrote of French Prairie, "The colony has all the appurtenances of a settlement—school-houses—chapels—an hospital—a meeting-house—granaries," and a "considerable extent of land under cultivation."[87] Jesse A. Applegate reported on the wealth of the settlers, as well as their kindness toward new arrivals:

> There was in the neighborhood a small settlement of French Canadians, trappers and mountain men, who had consorted with native women and become ranchers. They had cleared small farms and were growing grain and vegetables. They had horses, hogs, and chickens, and, being kindly disposed toward the emigrants, assisted them, through barter and otherwise, to provide subsistence; that is, the food sufficient to live upon . . .[88]

English-speaking American settlers began settling in and around French Prairie as they increased in number from 1843 to 1845. Examples of these new settlers include Sarah A. Case's family and Sol Durbin's family, who settled near the site of the old Methodist Mission on the outskirts of French Prairie.[89] Beginning in 1844–1845, former trappers Robert Newell and Andre Longtain platted out Champoeg and began selling lots there, further increasing American settlement in the area.[90]

Tualatin Plains

While former trappers of French-Canadian and Indigenous descent had settled in French Prairie, other French traders and many American former fur trappers built houses on the Tualatin Plains.

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[83] Lee and Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon*, 124–25.

[84] Lee and Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon*, 149.

[85] T. C. Elliott, "Marguerite Wadin McKay McLoughlin," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (December 1935): 338–47.

[86] Farnham, *Travels in the Great Western Prairies*, 206–7.

[87] Dunn, *Oregon Territory and the British North American Fur Trade*, 126–27.

[88] Applegate, *A Day with the Cow Column in 1843*, 127–29.

[89] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, June 21, 1914, 14; "Mrs. Sarah A. Case," in *Transactions of the Thirteenth Annual Re-Union of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1885* (Salem, OR: E. M. Waite, Steam Printer and Bookbinder, 1886), 83–84.

[90] Manion, "Where Have All the Women and Children Gone?," 38–40.

Many of these men were also married to Indigenous women.[91] Mary Aplin described her family's first year of settlement on the Tualatin Plains, in 1838:

> When I was 7 years old, my father quit working for the Hudson Bay company, and took up a place on Tuality Plains . . . We used to leave our horses with the Indians. Father would say in jargon, "How much you going to charge to take us to Fort Vancouver?" Always they would say, "One shirt." When father would produce the cotton shirt the Indian would go back of a log, put on the shirt and strut out proudly. . . . It makes me laugh to think of the things my mother told me when I was little. She was a British Columbia Indian. She told me when her people first saw white men they thought they were half animals, because they had fur on their faces. They had never seen people with beards. The squaws would tell their little ones to be good or the strange new animals would get them.
>
> Our nearest neighbors on Tuality Plains were Charley McKay, Joe Meek, with his Nez Perce wife and family, and Mr. Elberts, with his Indian wife and family, and J. S. Griffin, a very strange and severe man, a missionary, and a man named Burris, who had an Indian wife and three children.[92]

Others who settled on the Tualatin Plains in the late 1830s through 1841 included the missionaries Griffin (mentioned by Aplin above) and Asahel Munger, congregationalist missionary Harvey Clark, Alvin T. Smith, former trappers Robert Newell and Joseph Meek and their families, and others (see Figure 12). The settlement tended more toward English-speaking settlers, but many families were of mixed European and Indigenous descent.[93] Peter Burnett later described the Tualatin Plains as he saw them in 1843:

> When we arrived in Oregon, we found there a number of Rocky Mountain hunters and trappers, who were settled in the Willamette Valley, most of them in the Tualatin Plains. The invention of the silk hat had rendered the trapping of beaver less profitable. Besides, most of these men had married Indian women, and desired to settle down for life. They had been too long accustomed to frontier life to return to their old homes. Oregon offered them the best prospects for the future. Here was plenty of land for nothing, and a fine climate.[94]

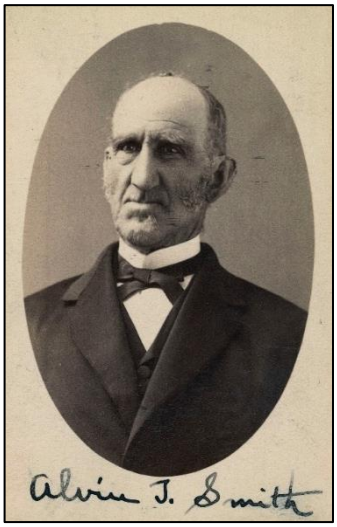

Figure 12. Alvin T. Smith traveled overland to Oregon and settled in the Tualatin Plains. Pictured here, ca. 1860s.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

[91] Richard P. Matthews, "Limited Horizons on the Oregon Frontier: East Tualatin Plains and the Town of Hillsboro, Washington County, 1840–1890," Master's thesis, Portland State University, 1988, 22–39.

[92] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, September 17, 1914, 8.

[93] "Address of Matthew P. Deady," in *Transactions of the Third Annual Re-Union of the Oregon Pioneer* Association (Salem, OR: E. M. Waite, Printer and Bookbinder, 1876), 29–30; Mrs. F. F. Victor, "Col. Joseph L. Meek," in *Transactions of the Third Annual Re-Union of the Oregon Pioneer Association* (Salem, OR: E. M. Waite, Printer and Bookbinder, 1876), 81; Fred Lockley, "Picturesque Character in Old Oregon was Joe Meek," *Oregon Journal*, May 5, 1913, 6.

[94] Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 154.

Oregon City

Oregon City began when McLoughlin established a settlement at the massive waterfall on the Willamette River around 1830 (see Figure 13). By 1840, the town had a mill and an HBC store at the falls. Wilkes described the city in 1841:

> At the Falls is the principal settlement in the territory. It has received the name of Oregon *city*. Its location is very contracted, and ill adapted for trade. The principal advantage of its site is its suitableness for the establishment of mills, and its being one of the best salmon fisheries in the country.[95]

Other stores opened in Oregon City in the 1840s that competed with the HBC posts, including a "trading establishment" begun by a Mr. Cushion in 1842, a store opened by Francis W. Pettygrove and Philip Foster in 1843, and George Abernethy's store, which had begun as the Methodist mission store before the mission closed and Abernethy moved it to Oregon City in 1843.[96] A grassy meadow outside of Abernethy's house served as a congregating point for new arrivals and became known as "Abernethy Green."[97]

Starting in 1843, Oregon City became the seat of the Provisional Government, increasing its importance to Americans.[98] Nineveh Ford wrote of his 1843 arrival there:

> There were not over a dozen houses at Oregon City when we got there. It was mostly round about near the falls. There were but few people & they were very kind and generous. There was a Missionary store there, there were some packers that had come there with their animals over the Cascade Mountains on the trail, but they lost their animals repeatedly through the Indians and had to buy them back. Some of them had to give the Indians their shirts to have the animals brought back; so that when they got in they had not any shirts themselves--only their coats on.[99]

By 1845, the town was bustling. Joel Palmer described the town when he passed through that year:

> There were already erected, when I left there, about one hundred houses, most of them not only commodious, but neat. Among the public buildings, the most conspicuous were the neat Methodist church, which is located near the upper part of the town, and a splendid Catholic chapel, which stands near the river and the bluff bank at the lower part of the town site. There are two grist mills; one owned by M'Laughlin, having three sets of buhr runners, and will compare well with most of the mills in the States; the other is a smaller mill, . . . owned by Governor Abernethy

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[95] Wilkes, *Western America, Including California and Oregon*, 56.

[96] William A. Bowen, The *Willamette Valley: Migration and Settlement on the Oregon Frontier* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 68; Lee and Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon*, 330; M. J. Cody, "Philip Foster (1805–1844)," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, January 8, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/foster_philip.

[97] Bethany Nemec, "Oregon City and the End of the Trail," *Historic Oregon City*, April 3, 2019, https://historicoregoncity.org/2019/04/03/oregon-city-and-the-trail/.

[98] Nichols, "Across the Plains in 1844."

[99] Nineveh Ford, *The Pioneer Road Makers* (Salem, OR: n.p., 1878), excerpt available in "The Emigration to the Oregon Country in 1843," compiled by Stephenie Flora, 2017, http://www.oregonpioneers.com/1843trip.htm. Original copy of *The Pioneer Road Makers* is at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, BANC MSS P-A 25-35 FILM.

> and Mr. Beers. At each of these grist-mills there are also saw-mills, which cut a great deal of plank for the use of emigrants. There are four stores, two taverns, one hatter, one tannery, three tailor shops, two cabinet-makers, two silversmiths, one cooper, two blacksmiths, one physician, three lawyers, one printing office, (at which the Oregon Spectator is printed, semi-monthly, at five dollars per annum,) one lath machine, and a good brick yard in active operation. There are also quite a number of carpenters, masons, &c., in constant employment, at good wages, in and about this village. The population is computed at about six hundred white inhabitants, exclusive of a few lodges of Indians.[100]

Others reported that Oregon City's residents were mostly American as of 1845. By that time, developers had divided the town into lots that newly arrived settlers could purchase and build on.[101]

Figure 13. Settlers built the town of Oregon City beside the Willamette Falls, the first major obstruction when traveling upstream on the Willamette River. Photograph by Carleton Watkins, 1867.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

[100] Joel Palmer, *Journal of travels over the Rocky Mountains to the mouth of the Columbia River: made during the years 1845 and 1846*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1906), 158–60.

[101] Report of Warre and Vavasour, in Schafer, "Documents Relative to Warre and Vavasour's Military Reconnaissance in Oregon, 1845–6," 1–99, esp. 47–50.

Linnton

M. M. McCarver and Peter Burnett established Linnton as a speculative venture, and some overlanders spent their first winter there. Burnett spent much of his first year in Oregon laying out the town, where he then lived with his family from January to May 1844.[102] Melvina Millican Hembree, who came to Oregon in 1843, lived in Linnton for her family's first winter, thanks to McCarver and Burnett's promotions:

> The first winter we were here, in 1843, we settled at Linnton. General McCarver and Peter Burnett thought there would be a big city some day on the Willamette, so they tried to start it there. That was before Portland was started. General McCarver promised a free lot to anyone who would build a cabin; so five or six families built cabins that winter at Linnton.[103]

Despite their efforts, Linnton failed, and American settlers had mostly abandoned it by 1845.[104] Other American settlements in the valley, such as Portland and Milwaukie, were not yet established as of 1845.[105]

Settler Interactions with Indigenous and Métis People

In the early 1840s, new arrivals relied on the Métis people who lived in the Willamette Valley to help them find food, shelter, and transportation, and to help them become accustomed to their new surroundings. Settlers like James Miller and Jesse A. Applegate recalled learning Chinook Jargon (or Chinuk Wawa), the pidgin language that developed in the Columbia River trade networks from Métis families and Indigenous people in the valley.[106] Applegate wrote of their first winter,

> We learned to speak the Chinook Wa-Wa that winter. The mission children spoke it as habitually as they did their mother tongue. We talked Chinook every day with the Indians and half-bloods. There was one Indian who spoke both English and Chinook. he had a droll way of speaking in Chinook and then in English. He would say, "Nike tik-ek chuck," "I want water," "Nika hyas olo," "I am very hungry." "Potlatch tenas piah sap-po-lil," "Give a little bread," and so on. But we could not have had a better teacher than this waggish Indian.[107]

Livestock brought by settlers consumed resources that the Kalapuyan people relied upon for food. Former HBC postmaster Dunn wrote that HBC pigs "subsist on the wappatoo, acorns, &c., and are become a source of profit, by supplying pork for the home consumption, and for

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[102] Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 137–39.

[103] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, November 12, 1914, 8.

[104] Report of Warre and Vavasour, in Schafer, "Documents Relative to Warre and Vavasour's Military Reconnaissance in Oregon, 1845–6," 1–99, esp. 46.

[105] Nichols, "Across the Plains in 1844."

[106] Bergmann, "'we should lose much by their absence'," 52–53.

[107] Applegate, *A Day with the Cow Column in 1843*, 124–25. Jesse A. Applegate was seven years old when he accompanied his family, including his father, Lindsay Applegate, and uncles Jesse and Charles Applegate, to the Oregon Country. His recollections of the journey were published ninety years later. See Jesse Applegate, *A Day with the Cow Column in 1843: Recollections of My Boyhood* (Chicago: Caxton Club, 1934).

exportation."[108] Burnett explained how settlers disrupted Kalapuyan lifeways: "They saw that we fenced in the best lands, excluding their horses from the grass, and our hogs ate up their camas. They instinctively saw annihilation before them."[109]

American settlers complained that the annual autumn fires set by Kalapuyan people endangered settlers' livestock and agricultural goods, despite the fact that settlers had been attracted to the Willamette Valley by the lush landscapes created and sustained through annual burning.[110] Applegate wrote of these fires,

> It was a custom of these Indians late in the autumn, after the wild wheat, Lamoro sappolil, was fairly ripe, to burn off the whole country. The grass would burn away and leave the sappolil standing, with the pods well dried and bursting. Then the squaws, both young and old, would go with their baskets and bats and gather in the grain. The lamoro sappolil we now know as tar-weed.
>
> It is probable we did not yet know that the Indians were wont to baptise the whole country with fire at the close of every summer; but very soon we were to learn our first lesson. This season the fire was started somewhere on the South Yamhill, and came sweeping up through the Salt Creek gap. The sea breeze being quite strong that evening, the flames leaped over the creek and came down upon us like an army with banners. All our skill and perseverance were required to save our camp. The flames swept by on both sides of the grove; then quickly closing ranks, made a clean sweep of all the country south and east of us. As the shades of night deepened, long lines of flame and smoke could be seen. The Indians continued to burn the grass every season, until the country was somewhat settled up and the whites prevented them; but every fall, for a number of years, we were treated to the same grand display of fireworks. On dark nights the sheets of flame and tongues of fire and lurid clouds of smoke made a picture both awful and sublime.[111]

Many accounts from overlanders who arrived in the early 1840s offer stark insight into the lens through which White settlers viewed Indigenous people, including the Métis people in French Prairie.[112] American settlers used dehumanizing language to refer to Indigenous people, calling the Métis children and adults "half-breeds" and Indigenous women "squaws." They also expressed jealousy of the relatively good lives that French-Canadian and Métis families had in the Willamette

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[108] Dunn, *Oregon Territory and the British North American Fur Trade*, 116–17.

[109] Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 149–50.

[110] Bergmann, "'we should lose much by their absence'," 52–53; Thomas Lowe, Hudson Bay Company, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, Columbia River, 1843–1846, 7, University of Manitoba.

[111] Applegate, *A Day with the Cow Column in 1843*, 136–38.

[112] Americans open hostility to French-Canadian and Métis families was also due in part to religious tensions. Many fur trappers were Catholic, while most Americans were Protestant. During the 1830s and 1840s, both Protestant and Catholic missionaries began arriving in the Oregon Country. Increasingly, American settlers began associating Protestantism with American interests and Catholicism with British interests, through the Hudson's Bay Company and the French-Canadian and Métis men it employed. See also: Cameron Addis, "The Whitman Massacre: Religion and Manifest Destiny on the Columbia Plateau, 1809–1858," *Journal of the Early Republic* 25, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 221–58, esp. 226.

Valley, having already spent many years establishing their farms. Juliet Pollard, who studied Métis children, described this relationship:

> The immigrants' bias against the retired [HBC] servants was not only ethnic or cultural, it was also racist and steeped in anti-Hudson's Bay Company sentiments. The settlers had arrived imbued with "Oregon Fever" and the spirit of Manifest Destiny. They saw themselves as the forerunners of American occupation and looked with resentment at the Company's well-stocked posts and firm economic control of the region. Despite the generosity of the Company towards them, they believed they were being exploited by a foreign monopoly and ruled by a "salmon skin aristocracy."[113]

Burnett further discussed how White Americans overtook Métis settlements and disrupted Indigenous foodways:

> The few Canadian-French who were located in the Willamette Valley were mostly, if not entirely, connected by marriage with the Indians, the Frenchman having Indian wives, and were considered to some extent as a part of their own people. But, when we, the American immigrants, came into what the Indians claimed as their own country, we were considerable in numbers; and we came, not to establish trade with the Indians, but to take and settle the country *exclusively* for ourselves. Consequently, we went anywhere we pleased, settled down without any treaty or consultation with the Indians, and occupied our claims without their consent and without compensation. This difference they very soon understood. Every succeeding fall they found the white population about doubled, and our settlements continually extending, and rapidly encroaching more and more upon their pasture and camas grounds.[114]

Burnett's account lays bare the strategy of settler colonialism in America, which was predicated on appropriating Indigenous land and food sources "without any treaty or consultation with the Indians."

Other White American settlers boasted of their or others' role in vigilante justice and racial violence against Indigenous people.[115] William T. Newby wrote in 1845 about an experience during his first year in Oregon, in 1843:

> The Indians killed J. G. Bakers cow and carried her off for beef. Baker came to my house and we went to Jurding Hembrees and made up a company of 11 men & followed the Indians & over took them in about 20 miles from heare on the road to Oregon City, and killd [*sic*] one Indian, wounded another, and took one prisner, and got home the third day. The company consisted of A. J. Hembree, J. J. Hembree, A.

[113] Pollard, "Making of the Metis Children," 428–29, 434–35.

[114] Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 149–50.

[115] Barber, "'We were at our journey's end.'," 392.

> Hembree, J. T. Hembree, J. G. Baker, John Penington, N. K. Sitten, A. B. Hendrix, Eliga Millican, W. T. Newby, Zip. [?].[116]

Some of the earliest criminal court proceedings in the Willamette Valley's new American courts centered on Indigenous thefts of American livestock. Even with this court system in place, extralegal violence against Kalapuyan people continued.[117]

Finding a Home

Finding Lodging Upon Arrival

Most overlanders stayed somewhere temporarily during their first winter while they tried to figure out more permanent accommodations. Many who came to Oregon between 1840 and 1845 via the Columbia River route first stayed at Fort Vancouver for a few nights while they sought shelter for the winter. Tom Owens later recalled his family staying at Fort Vancouver upon arrival in 1843:

> At Vancouver Dr. McLoughlin took us in as if we were relatives. We stayed there while my father, with Mr. Hobson, Holly and Simmons, went down the Columbia in a canoe to look for a home.[118]

Burnett's family also stayed at Vancouver.[119]

After a short stop at Fort Vancouver, or right after arriving in the Willamette Valley for those who did not take the Columbia River route, many people found temporary housing with family, friends, or strangers willing to take them in for the winter. In the early years of heavy American settlement, few people already had family in the area, so shelter was often with strangers or acquaintances, with someone willing to rent out a room (if the family had money or goods available to pay rent), or in schools, churches, or meeting houses. If none of the above were available, families often camped as they had along the trail or built lean-tos or temporary sheds to protect them from the cold and rainy Oregon winter.[120] Those who stayed with strangers often found hosts with the same cultural or language background. For example, F. X. Matthieu, originally from Montreal, came to Oregon in 1842 and stayed with a fellow Frenchman during his first winter in Oregon:

> When I, reached Oregon City, I heard from the Hudson's Bay men that there, was a big settlement of my people up on French Prairie so I went up there. There was an

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[116] Harry N. M. Winton, "William T. Newby's Diary of the Emigration of 1843," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (September 1939): 219–42, esp. 241–42.

[117] Pollard, "Making of the Metis Children," 41; George O. Goodall, "The Upper Calapooia," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 4, no. 1 (March 1903): 70–77, esp. 75.

[118] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, June 15, 1914, 4.

[119] Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 137–39.

[120] Bowen, *Willamette Valley*, 73; Susan G. Butruille, *Women's Voices from the Oregon Trail* (Boise, ID: Tamarack Books, 1993), 122.

> old man living there by the name of Etienne Lucier. He was about 60 years old. He had been in this country for a long while. I stayed with him all winter.[121]

Some who arrived in 1843 stayed at church or mission buildings, such as Burnett's family,

> By permission of a neighbor of ours, a sincere minister, we were allowed to occupy temporarily the log-cabin then used for a church, upon condition that I would permit him to have services there every Sunday.[122]

The Applegate family stayed in the abandoned structures of the former Methodist Mission at Mission Bottom.[123] Jesse A. Applegate described their first winter there:

> There were about twenty-five persons, men, women, and children, living in the three cabins. The three Applegate families, and three or four young men who came out with them as help. The wagons, teams and all the cattle and horses had been left at Fort Walla Walla. Much of the furniture, cooking utensils and bedding had been lost in the disaster on the Columbia River. The families had reached the place where they were to pass the winter almost destitute of furnishing goods or food supplies and without visible means of support. I am not prepared to say how nearly destitute they were, but I remember that mother did her baking all that winter on a skillet lid found in the house.[124]

William Shaw's family rented the former Methodist Mission farm the summer after their 1844 arrival, before taking a permanent claim in Marion County that autumn.[125]

Others rented or stayed for free in rooms in the growing town of Oregon City. In 1843, Mrs. John Kirkwood (first name unknown) rented a room from a man named Foster, a storeowner in Oregon City, before moving to a rented house on the Tualatin Plains for the remainder of the winter. She explained,

> Captain Thompson, an old mountain man, offered his place to my father at a very low price so father took it. Captain Thompson had an Indian wife and a house full of half breed children. His place joined Joe Meek's place. Joe Meek also had an Indian wife and a big family of children. My brother, Adam, got work from Joe Meek cutting fence rails. We spent the winters of '43 and '44 on Tuality river. Next summer we went up the river and bought Dr. David Leslie's farm, just across from Mission Bottom. Father paid $1400 for this place. It had a good house, built of logs. The doors and windows had been shipped around the Horn. It had one of the old

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[121] Fred Lockley, "Life Career Reaches to Early Formative Period," *Oregon Journal*, April 13, 1913, 10.

[122] Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 183.

[123] Lindsay Applegate, "Notes and Reminiscences of Laying out and Establishing the Old Emigrant Road into Southern Oregon in the Year 1846," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (March 1921): 12–45, esp. 14; Applegate, *A Day with the Cow Column in 1843*, 132–36.

[124] Applegate, *A Day with the Cow Column in 1843*, 127–29.

[125] T. C. Shaw, "Capt. William Shaw," in *Transactions of the Fifteenth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1887* (Portland, OR: Press of Geo. H. Himes, 1887), 50.

> fashioned large brick chimneys coming down in the middle of the house with a fireplace on each side.[126]

Joseph Williams found a place to stay for free upon arrival, apparently in exchange for work:

> On the 9th, we arrived at the beautiful plains of Willamette, where we staid with Mr. Hubbard, who was married to an Indian woman, as are all the white men in this country, excepting the missionaries. He used us very well, and charged us nothing.[127]

Edward Evans Parrish (see Figure 14), originally from Hoskinsville, Ohio, spent a few days in Linnton in December 1844 before proceeding to Oregon City. Parrish's journal entries describe his family's lodging situation, which began with someone offering them a room, and then continued most of the winter with rental situations before changing again the following summer and then autumn:

> TUESDAY, Dec. 10.—Landed at the City in the afternoon and were kindly invited to occupy a room in the basement story of a large building. The room was occupied by Mr. Mudget and two other young men. We accepted the kind offer and soon were all comfortably situated around a stove fire.
>
> WEDNESDAY. Dec. 11.—A rainy day. How thankful we feel that we have made our escape, and how glad that we have a shelter from the storm. We have not yet rented a house, but have a prospect of getting suited to-day. To-day we got the children into school and then rented of Mr. Newel the room which we first stopped in at a rental of $4.50 per month. We remained in Mr. Newel's room until February 27, 1845, when we moved into the house of J. R. Robb, where we remained until Monday, March 10th, when we shipped on board Mr. Ford's boat and made the portage the same after noon and, on the morrow, set out for the upper country and landed on the afternoon of Saturday, March 15th at the 'Institute Farm.' Went into the house of Mr. Judson. This we call the end of our travels to Oregon. . . .

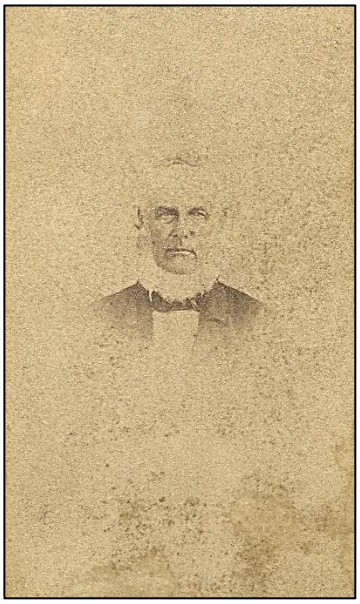

Figure 14. Edward Evans Parrish, pictured here in 1862, arrived in Oregon in 1844.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

> FRIDAY, July 11.—We remained in the Judson house until 11th of July, when we moved on our own place and lived in camp until October 11th, when we moved into our own new house in the Mt. Pleasant valley. After camping three months in this camp I had a short but very severe spell of fever and chills, but, thank God, my health is again restored so that I am able to attend labor, and I now finish my

[126] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, March 10, 1914, 6.

[127] Williams, *Narrative of a tour from the state of Indiana to the Oregon territory*, 50.

> traveling diary, having been two . . . years and one day since we left the Hoskinsville school house.[128]

W. W. Walter, who was eighteen when he arrived in 1844, reminisced later that his family lacked adequate shelter until late December, "when we finally moved into a little cabin 14 feet square."[129]

Some single men who had arrived in earlier years rented out space in their cabins. Washington Smith Gilliam, who was fifteen when his family arrived in Oregon in November 1844, wrote about staying with two single men for the winter:

> We wintered where the town of Cornelius now stands, about eighty rods south of the depot, with Messrs. Waters and Emerick, who were keeping bach [living as single men, or bachelors] at that time. The winter was very mild, which impressed us very favorably with. the climate.[130]

In 1845, Betsey Bayley arrived with her husband and seven children in Oregon in the autumn of 1845 and stayed with a bachelor, Sidney Smith, in his log cabin.[131]

Not all overlanders arrived in the Willamette Valley free to find their own lodging. Robin and Polly Holmes and their daughter, three-year-old Mary Jane, arrived in the Willamette Valley in 1844 with the man who enslaved them, Nathaniel Ford. Ford had promised to free the people he enslaved once they arrived in Oregon, but he failed to deliver. Instead, he built a small cabin for the Holmes family, where they lived and where Polly had another baby in 1845. The Holmeses lived in that cabin for several years.[132]

By 1845, there were more rental options in Oregon City for new arrivals. Mrs. William H. Rees (whose maiden name was Hall and whose first name is unknown) came to Oregon with her family in 1845, at age seventeen. She remembered, "We stayed in Oregon City that winter, living in a house we rented from William Dement."[133] Sarah J. Cummins, who came with her family from Illinois and was also about seventeen, spent the winter in a house her father rented about twelve miles down the river from Oregon City.[134]

Types of Houses Built During the First Year

Settlers' dwellings changed with the duration of their time in Oregon, as they had time, money, and materials to build more complex houses and farm buildings. French Prairie residents built houses that varied in style and quality, according to British visitor John Dunn:

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[128] Edwards Evans Parrish, "Crossing the Plains in 1844," in *Transactions of the Sixteenth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1888* (Portland, OR: Himes Printer, 1889), 120–21.

[129] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, July 27, 1914, 4.

[130] "Reminiscences of Washington Smith Gilliam," in *Transactions of the Thirty-First Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1903* (Portland, OR: Peaslee Bros. Company, Printers, 1904), 210.

[131] Holmes, *Covered Wagon Women, Volume 1*, 33.

[132] Moore, *Sweet Freedom's Plains*, 194.

[133] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, February 15, 1914, 28.

[134] Sarah J. Cummins, *Autobiography and reminiscences of Sarah J. Cummins of Touchet, Wash.* (La Grande, OR: La Grande Printing Co., ca. 1914), 7, 24, 55.

> The residences show different degrees of comfort, according to the property, the intelligence, and industry of the occupiers; from the rude log-structure, of fifteen or twenty feet square, with the mud-chimney—a wooden bench in place of chairs—a bedstead covered with flag-mats—a few pots, and other trifling- articles, to the large, tolerably well-built, and equipped farm-house; in which the owners enjoy, in rude plenty, the produce of tolerably well-tilled, and well-stocked farms. These spots of cultivated land, of course, vary in extent and quality of culture according to the skill and resources of the owners. Some farms consist of not more than thirty acres; some consist of one hundred. The best appointed farms are those of the Company's servants.[135]

Thomas Farnham described a house on French Prairie in 1839:

> We soon crossed the stream, and entered the cabin of Mr. Johnson. It was a hewn log structure, about twenty feet square, with a mud chimney, hearth and fire-place. The furniture consisted of one chair, a number of wooden benches, a rude bedstead covered with flag mats, and several sheet-iron kettles, earthen plates, knives and forks, tin pint cups, an Indian wife, and a brace of brown boys. . . . [Outside there were] fenced fields, many acres of wheat and oat-stubble, potato-fields, and garden-vegetables of all description, and a barn well stored with the gathered harvest . . . Adjoining Mr. Johnson's farm were four others, on all of which there were from fifty to a hundred acres under cultivation, and substantial log-houses and barns.[136]

Robert Newell, an American trapper whose wife was Nez Perce and who settled on the Tualatin Plains in 1840, built a "wigwam type shelter" during his first winter. This structure did not hold up well in the wet winter weather and may have contributed to sickness in his family.[137]

In the early 1840s, the first house a settler constructed was usually a temporary log cabin that could be erected in a short amount of time. This could be difficult, since many trees were too large to be used for this purpose. As more sawmills were established in the area, building one's first house from wooden boards became easier, but that was rare before 1845.[138] Historian Liz Carter later described these structures:

> The first buildings constructed by newly-arrived settlers ranged from simple and very temporary lean-tos or pens, to more traditional log cabins usually intended to provide shelter for one winter or for several. References to dugout dwellings have also been noted in oral histories or diaries. Log cabins of various types generally consisted of simple one- or one-and-one-half-story, single- or double-pen buildings built with round logs, notched corners, dirt or puncheon floors, gable roofs and, at

[135] Dunn, *Oregon Territory and the British North American Fur Trade*, 126–27.

[136] Farnham, *Travels in the Great Western Prairies*, 206–7.

[137] Manion, "Where Have All the Women and Children Gone?," 38–40.

[138] Susan Cashman Trexler, "Behind the Scenes: Investigating Processes Shaping Willamette Valley Architecture 1840–1865 with a Case Study in Brownsville," Master's thesis, University of Oregon, 2014, 14. Many Indigenous people in the region built winter houses out of cedar planks, since cedar is easily split into boards, but no evidence points to settlers attempting a similar build structure.

> least initially, few window openings, if any. Chinking of mud, straw and other materials was used to fill the drafty gaps between the logs.[139]

Carter notes that few, if any, of these early cabins are still standing, and that "none have been identified in historic site surveys in the Willamette Valley, though the former locations of several have been noted in National Register of Historic Places nominations and other documentation."[140]

Another description of early log cabins in Oregon comes from John Arthur's reminiscences about his 1843 arrival in Oregon City:

> during the winter of 1843 and 1844, they . . . lived in log houses oftener twelve by fourteen feet than eighteen by twenty feet. The openings between the logs were filled with chinks and daubed on the outside with mud. The chimney was built upon the outside of the house, made of split sticks laid on in proper form and thoroughly daubed and plastered with mud on the inside to prevent them from taking fire; a large opening cut through the logs communicating with the chimney, formed a fire-place, of which the back, jambs and hearth was made of mud and dried by slow fire. The roof was made of shakes laid like shingles, kept in place by small timbers laid across each row, those kept in place by shorter ones placed between them up and down the roof. In this manner the pioneer constructed a roof for his cabin without the expense of a dime for nails, with wooden hinges and a wooden latch for the door, the latch string made from the skin of a deer pursued and killed by himself; which as the old song has it, 'hangs outside the door,' in those days symbolizing a cordial welcome within. There was a bed in each corner at the end of the room opposite the fireplace. There was no chamber above to obliterate the view of the roof. There was no division in departments; from floor to roof, from wall to wall was a single family room, occupied by the family in common. A rough board table, and a very few other articles, such as could be manufactured out of a fir tree with an ax and auger, completed the inventory of household furniture of a pioneer's house.[141]

Generally, the first houses settlers built were intended to be temporary, and very few were built during the first winter. Those who could find other lodging for the first winter often waited until the spring or summer to construct their own home.

Staking Land Claims in the Spring and Summer

Settlers waited until the spring to claim land in part so they could find a suitable location and then get to work fencing, farming, and building on the land, as was required to keep the claim under American laws. A few examples of overlanders who arrived in 1843 and settled on land claims in the

[139] Liz Carter, "Settlement-era Dwellings, Barns and Farm Groups of the Willamette Valley, Oregon," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, October 30, 2013, certified January 5, 2015, E13–14.

[140] Carter, "Settlement-era Dwellings, Barns and Farm Groups," E13–14.

[141] John Arthur, "A Brief Account of the Experiences of a Pioneer of 1843," in *Transactions of the Fourteenth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1886* (Portland, OR: Press of Geo. H. Himes, 1887), 98–99.

spring or summer of 1844 include John Gordon Baker, Joel Jordan Hembree, and Absalom Hembree.[142]

Sometimes, male relatives spent the winter scouting to find land they could claim and later returned to collect the rest of the family. Jesse Applegate, the uncle of Jesse A. Applegate, did this, and then brought the family out once he had made enough improvements for them to live there.[143] Washington Smith Gilliam's father began looking for land in February of his first year:

> In February father went up the country to select a land claim. I think his was the first claim taken south of the Rickreall. The town of Dallas now stands on part of it. He came back with a glowing account of the country he had seen, and particularly of the place that he had selected for a home. So we got ready, and as early in March, as traveling was good, we started for our new home. We arrived there the 16th of March, it being Sunday. The whole country was a natural park, and, combined with the ideal spring day when we reached there, made it seem to me like dreamland.
>
> We went to work in good earnest building a log cabin. but before we could complete it we were overtaken by the equinoctial storm, which gave us some very serious discomfort. The next thing to do was to put in some garden and sow some wheat, and nature gave us a bountiful yield in both field and garden.[144]

B. F. Nichols, who arrived in Oregon in 1844, picked a spot and began work on a land claim in Polk County in August 1845.[145] Betsey Bayley's family filed a land claim in Yamhill County in June 1846, after having arrived in Oregon in the autumn of 1845, and Anna Maria King and her family, after traveling to Oregon in 1845, had filed a land claim in Luckiamute Valley (now known as Kings Valley) by April 1846.[146] W. W. Walter's family "took up a claim of good land" during the spring of 1846, having arrived the previous autumn.[147]

Sarah J. Cummins described her family's moves after renting a house in Oregon City for the winter of 1845–1846:

> As soon as Spring opened father and my husband went up the Willamette valley to the old Methodist Mission at Salem. They located donation claims on land near what is now Brooks Station, Marion county, Oregon. Here two of my sons were born - Peter Smith, February 24, 1847, and Nathan Bourne Stout Smith, September 10, 1849. About this time we sold the improvements on our claim and moved to the Walde Hills, six miles east of Salem, where we located a donation claim and soon had a comfortable home. Mr. Walden taught several terms of school and the two elder children attended their first terms of school with their father as teacher, but a severe illness rendering him a permanent cripple came on and financial difficulties were to be encountered, yet we were reasonably prosperous and as the years went by we

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[142] Winton, "William T. Newby's Diary of the Emigration of 1843," 219–42, esp. 241–42.

[143] Applegate, *A Day with the Cow Column in 1843*, 132–36.

[144] "Reminiscences of Washington Smith Gilliam," 210.

[145] Nichols, "Across the Plains in 1844."

[146] Holmes, *Covered Wagon Women, Volume 1*, 33–44.

[147] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, July 27, 1914, 4.

> were ever blest with every needed comfort. In the fall of 1848 father went to California with a few others who were allured there by the excitement that followed the discovery of gold.[148]

Some Americans claimed land in areas already staked out by others of European descent who were eligible for claims. This practice became known as "claim jumping." In 1845 journal entries, HBC employee Thomas Lowe described a conflict between an HBC employee who was establishing a claim and newly arrived American residents who tried to take it over:

> [March] 11th, [1845] Tuesday. Henry Williamson who has taken a claim within a short distance of the Fort, was found with a Surveyor and three other Americans, this forenoon in the woods making a survey of the place. Upon being asked by Mr. Lewis what they were doing there, they replied that they were making a survey of Mr. Williamson's claim. Upon this Mr. Lewis returned to the Fort to give information concerning them, and was followed in a short time afterwards by the whole five. They had a long dispute with Dr. McLoughlin and Mr. Douglas regarding it, and finished by saying that sooner than quit the place they would die for what they considered their rights and privileges. They were told that the Hudson's Bay Company were determined to maintain <u>their</u> rights to the utmost of their power, and if they did not leave they must take the consequences. Dr. White, Mr. Pettygrove and some others who were present, advised Dr. McL. to write in the first place to the authorities at the Wallamette Falls, and if they would not interfer[e] that they should then be forcibly turned off the place. This has accordingly been done, and in the meantime the fellows have gone to resume their survey. About the 15th, of last month a house was found partly built in the woods by these same men, and as soon as known, it was pulled down and burnt, and a notice they had stuck up upon an adjoining tree, was destroyed. The weather to day was clear and warm.
>
> [March] 12th. Wednesday. It seems that those five Americans who were threatening so much yesterday, have desisted for the present from their attempt, and decamped this morning to Chenook. One of the five, Alderman, is very unpopular in the Wallamette, having already caused disturbances there by jumping claims, and it is supposed that their doings here will not be approved of by the rest of their countrymen. Dr. White, Mr. Pettygrove, Mr. Beers and several other Americans who came here yesterday, left this forenoon again, for the Falls. Beautiful warm weather.[149]

Oregon City's newspaper, the *Oregon Spectator*, weighed in on claim jumping:

> We understand that a number of individuals from this side of the Columbia, have recently made so bold as to take claims in the immediate vicinity of Vancouver. And we learn that in one instance, this procedure has caused an altercation between one of the claimants and the authorities at Vancouver, which is likely to terminate in a lawsuit. We are opposed to any thing like claim-jumping or intruding on the claim of any individual who has complied with the conditions of the law, in having it recorded

[148] Cummins, *Autobiography and reminiscences of Sarah J. Cummins of Touchet, Wash.*, 57.

[149] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 14.

> and improvements made thereon within a certain limited time, yet we cannot see with some, that the offence of dispossessing an individual of his claim who has failed to comply with the conditions required by the statute, is any more heinous in its nature, barely from the fact that it is on the north side of the Columbia or near Fort Vancouver, when it is not intruding on grounds occupied by the Hudson Bay Company.[150]

Not everyone stuck with their claims. Some individuals improved land and then sold it to others, such as the man named Johnson on French Prairie, who Farnham had met.[151] Others disliked the land they claimed and moved on elsewhere.[152]

Economic Realities

HBC Assistance to Settlers

In addition to providing temporary lodging to new arrivals, the HBC helped the American overlanders of 1842 and 1843 survive their first year in Oregon by making food and supplies available. Since many overlanders arrived in Oregon without money or goods to trade, McLoughlin allowed Americans to purchase items from the HBC's Fort Vancouver and Oregon City stores on credit and also provided goods for free, as McLoughlin explained:

> When the immigration of 1842 came, we had enough breadstuffs in the country for one year, but as the immigrants reported that next season would be a greater immigration, it was evident if there was not a proportionate increase of seed sown in 1843 and 1844, there would be a famine in the country in 1845, which would lead to trouble, as those that had families, to save them from starvation, would be obliged to have recourse to violence to get food for them. To avert this I freely supplied the immigrants of 1843 and 1844 with the necessary articles to open farms and by these means avoided the evils. In short I afforded every assistance [*sic*] to the immigrants so long as they required it, and by management I kept peace in the country.[153]

Many overlanders and former traders commented on how generous the HBC was to new American arrivals during these few years in particular. Rufus Sage, a former trapper in the Rocky Mountains, noted after visiting in 1842, "The agents of the Hudson Bay Company at present are of great advantage to emigrants. They extend to them every reasonable assistance by selling goods and necessaries at very low prices, and receiving their various products in payment upon most favorable terms."[154] Washington Smith Gilliam, who arrived with his family in 1844, said that James Douglas, who was chief factor at Fort Vancouver at that point, "received father kindly and treated him

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[150] "Land Claims," *Oregon Spectator*, August 20, 1846, 2.

[151] Farnham, *Travels in the Great Western Prairies*, 208–9.

[152] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, February 16, 1914, 4.

[153] John McLoughlin, "Private Papers: 1825–1856," Bancroft Library ms. P-A 155:2, 19–20. Quoted in Bowen, *Willamette Valley*, 65–66.

[154] Swagerty, "'The Leviathan of the North'," 478–517, esp. 507–8.

splendidly" and called him "kindness personified."[155] Burnett later wrote of the importance of the HBC store extending credit to settlers, in terms of their ability to survive that first winter:

> Had it not been for the generous kindness of the gentlemen in charge of the business of the Hudson's Bay Company, we should have suffered much greater privations. The Company furnished many of our immigrants with provisions, clothing, seed, and other necessaries on credit. This was done, in many instances, where the purchases were known to be of doubtful credit. At that time the Company had most of the provisions and merchandise in the country; and the trade with our people was, upon the whole, a decided loss, so many failing to pay for what they had purchased. Many of our immigrants were unworthy of the favors they received, and only returned abuse for generosity. . . . many of the purchasers never paid, contenting themselves with abusing the Doctor and the Captain, accusing them of wishing to speculate upon the necessities of the poor immigrants. The final result was a considerable loss, which Dr. McLoughlin and Captain Waters divided equally between them. . .
>
> It was most fortunate for us that two such noble men were managers of the Company at the time of our arrival. Our own countrymen had it not in their power to aid us efficiently. Many of them were immigrants of the preceding season; others were connected with the missions; and, altogether, they were too few and poor to help us much. The Company could not afford to extend to succeeding immigrations the same credit they did to us. The burden would have been too great. This refusal led many to complain . . . [156]

Joseph Watt recounted how McLoughlin set his party up with goods and supplies for their first winter, after they arrived at Fort Vancouver on November 13, 1844:

> We then made known to him our wants. We were all out of provisions. There was a small table in one corner of the room, at which he took a seat, and directed us to stand in a line, — (there being so many of us the line reached nearly around the room) —and then told us the year before, and in fact previous years, he had furnished the people with all the provisions and clothing they wanted, but lately had established a trading house at Oregon City, where we could get supplies; but for immediate necessity he would supply provisions at the fort. Several of our party broke in, saying, "doctor I have no money to pay you, and I don't know when or how I can pay you" "Tut, tut! never mind that; you can't suffer," said the doctor. He then commenced at the head man saying, "Your name, if you please; how many in the family, and what do you desire?" Upon receiving an answer, the doctor wrote an order, directing him where to go have it filled; then called up the next man, and so on until we were all supplied. He told us the account of each man would be sent to Oregon City, and when we took a claim, and raised wheat, we could settle the account by delivering wheat at that place. Some few who came after us got clothing. Such was the case with every boat load, and all those who came by land down the

[155] "Reminiscences of Washington Smith Gilliam," 209.

[156] Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 142–45.

> trail. If he had said "We have these supplies to sell for cash down," I think we would have suffered.[157]

HBC assistance to newly arrived Americans went beyond civilians: the company also helped John C. Frémont's US military party in 1843.[158]

The daily journal of HBC employee Thomas Lowe mentioned the aid provided to settlers during their first months in Oregon:

> [September 18, 1844:] A great many Settlers from the Wallamette receiving advances from the Shop. The Barge had 5000 Bricks on board which have been made in the Wallamette, and are the first which have come here yet.[159]

As the number of immigrants increased rapidly in succeeding years, the HBC was more reluctant to give for free or sell on credit provisions to American settlers.[160] Lowe confirms this shift in his journal in 1845:

> September 24[, 1845]: A Party of 18 Americans arrived at the Fort from above before breakfast, in two of the Company's boats, being part of this year's Immigration from the States. The whole party when they started from Independence amounted they say to 3300 men, women, and children having with them 600 waggons, of which number however 100 waggons have branched off to Calefornia, so that only 500 come to the Columbia. . . . No accounts are to be opened here with the new Immigrants, whatever they get from the Shop must be paid for in Cash.[161]

In addition to food, materials available for purchase from HBC stores included clothing, as well as cloth and leather to make clothing. A young Jimmy Belieu, who arrived in 1844, later wrote, "The first thing I bought in Oregon was a shirt and a pair of boots at Dr. McLoughlin's store at Oregon City. Both of them were men's size and were much too large for me."[162]

Most settlers did not begin farming until the spring or summer after their arrival, once they had made a land claim and begun to build a barn, house, and other farm outbuildings. When that time came, settlers procured farming tools from the HBC, which had a near monopoly on agricultural implements in the area in the early 1840s.[163] Joel Palmer explained that the lack of farming implements caused hardships for American settlers:

> The settlers are labouring under great disadvantages on account of not being able to obtain a sufficient amount of farming implements. The early settlers were supplied at the Hudson Bay Company's store, and at prices much less than those now charged

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[157] Joseph Watt, "Recollections of Dr. John McLoughlin," in *Transactions of the Fourteenth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1886* (Portland, OR: Press of Geo. H. Himes, 1887), 24–26.

[158] Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 130–31.

[159] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 7.

[160] Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 142–45.

[161] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 26.

[162] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, September 1, 1914, 4.

[163] "Address of John Minto," in *Transactions of the Sixteenth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1888* (Portland, OR: Himes Printer, 1889), 131–32.

> for the same articles. At that time the supply was equal to the demand; but since the tide of emigration has turned so strongly to this region, the demand is much greater than the supply.[164]

Jesse A. Applegate guessed that the plow his family procured "was probably purchased from a missionary or French-Canadian settler," and he noted that they used it to plant a spring wheat crop and a small garden a year after their arrival.[165]

Currencies and Means of Exchange

Overlanders arriving in the early 1840s rarely had silver, gold, or paper currency. Currency was not standardized across the United States at that point: instead, banks issued their own notes, and notes from banks in the midwestern or eastern United States were not of much value because to trade them with those banks required a journey of several months.[166] Instead, overlanders who did not purchase items on credit, as noted above, bartered and exchanged to procure needed items. Thomas Manley Ramsdell of Portland recounted performing labor for the HBC in exchange for clothes upon his arrival in Oregon:

> When I got to Hoover's my pants were worn off above the knees, my buckskin shirt and cap were almost worn out and I looked pretty disreputable. I worked a while for Mr. Hoover. His wife gave me enough cloth to make me a shirt. I then got a job with Dr. McLoughlin and took for payment enough buckskin to make a good shirt and trousers. I worked for Charley McKay for five days for a pair of shoes made from leather he had tanned.[167]

Burnett described bartering in Oregon City:

> I never felt more independent than I did on one occasion, in the fall of 1847. In the streets of Oregon City. I met a young man with a new and substantial leather hunting-shirt, brought from the Rocky Mountains, where it had been purchased from the Indians. I said to him, "What will you take for your leather hunting-shirt?" He replied, "Seven bushels of wheat." I said at once, "I will take it." I measured him out the grain, and took the article.[168]

In the absence of widespread coinage or standard paper currency, store owners began to create their own forms of currency. George Abernethy, after realizing that people in the valley were trading accounts or orders from the stores as a sort of exchange medium, made his own makeshift money. He used flint refuse piles left by Indigenous people at Willamette Falls, gluing strips of paper onto them with his name, the word "change," and the amount each was worth.[169] Ramsdell described his memories of the currency used for Abernethy's store: "It consisted of small pieces of rock or flint

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[164] Palmer, *Journal of travels over the Rocky Mountains*, 216–17.

[165] Applegate, *A Day with the Cow Column in 1843*, 142–44.

[166] Stephen Mihm, "Follow the Money," *Journal of the Early Republic* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2016): 783–804, esp. 797–98.

[167] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, January 12, 1914, 4.

[168] Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 185–186.

[169] Stephen H. Bibler, "Specimen of Abernethy Rock: A Medium of Exchange," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (September 1943): 249–52, esp. 250–51.

with a paper pasted on, giving its value as 25 cents or 50 cents, or whatever it happened to be. these were accepted at Abernathy's store in lieu of money."[170]

Asa Lovejoy explained that other stores, in addition to Abernethy, had created their own forms of currency:

> It got to this: There was the Hudson's Bay Company, Abernethy and Pettygrove's store, and Vancouver money. All these moneys were different. They were different in this way: Abernethy's order was not good for some things. There were two or three kinds of money at Vancouver. There was beaver money and common money, some discounted and some not. When we made a trade it was so much in Abernethy money, or Couch money or Vancouver money. Vancouver money was the best, because they always had goods and supplies and the others had not. That state of things lasted some time until the legislature made wheat a legal tender.[171]

The HBC, like the man Burnett encountered with the leather shirt, accepted wheat for payment. By 1843, there was considerable wheat production in the area and enough gristmills to turn the wheat into flour, and wheat became a standardized means of exchange.[172] John Minto, who came to Oregon in 1844 (see Figure 15), later explained,

> The price of wheat was 62½ cents per bushel, for which any goods could be drawn from the Hudson's Bay Company's stores, except spirits, at 50 per cent. advance on London cost.[173]

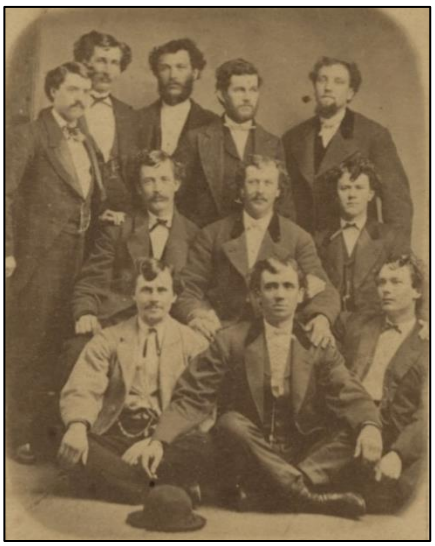

Figure 15. John Minto arrived in Oregon in 1844. He and other arrivals purchased goods at the Hudson's Bay Company stores, often through trading in wheat. Here, Minto (*middle row, far right*), with other Oregonians, ca. 1870.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

The HBC sent boats to settlements at French Prairie to collect wheat, which it ground into flour in HBC gristmills.[174] Settlers who had bought items on credit from HBC stores upon arrival often repaid their debts with wheat, after they had established farms. In 1843, the Oregon Provisional Government codified the practice of wheat as currency by making it a legal tender of Oregon, fixing the rate of exchange at one dollar per bushel.[175] Nichols, who arrived in Oregon in 1844, later explained how the wheat exchanges worked:

> As there was no circulating medium, or money, with which to transact the business of the country the Legislature came to the rescue and enacted a law declaring wheat

[170] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, January 12, 1914, 4.

[171] A. L. Lovejoy and Henry E. Reed, "Lovejoy's Pioneer Narrative, 1842–48," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (September 1930): 237–60, esp. 256–57.

[172] Pollard, "Making of the Metis Children," 243–44; Johnson and Winter, *Route Across the Rocky Mountains*, 47–48.

[173] "Address of John Minto," 131–32.

[174] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 4–5, 10.

[175] Bowen, *Willamette Valley*, 68.

> at the dollar a bushel as legal tender for all debts, public and private. If one was indebted to another the debt could be paid by delivering one bushel of wheat for every dollar due. Often by contract the wheat was to be delivered to either McLaulin' or Abernathy Mills at Oregon City, hence after harvest wheat came tumbling in to pay for indebtedness. The people became accustomed to that manner of doing business and I think they enjoyed it, and why not?[176]

Makeshift currencies and wheat exchanges were common in Oregon City until silver and gold coinage became more widespread in the late 1840s.

Finding Employment

In addition to selling provisions or supplies to the settlers, the businesses of the HBC and former HBC employees provided work opportunities for men. Some were hired for specific projects or tasks, while others worked on a longer-term basis. Some worked at Fort Vancouver farms, while others were employed at HBC sawmills cutting logs, making shingles, or moving timber. Paid employment enabled settlers to procure food, goods, and enough capital (often in the form of wheat or furs) to begin their own farms the following year.[177] Many men found work at HBC or other sawmills or gristmills.[178] For instance, overlander Medorem Crawford met men who worked at a mill upon his 1842 arrival in Oregon City (see Figure 16).[179]

Figure 16. Medorem Crawford arrived in Oregon in 1842 and met men working at a mill. Here, Crawford is pictured in 1864 along with his brother Leroy and others.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

[176] Nichols, "Across the Plains in 1844."

[177] Bowen, *Willamette Valley*, 65–67; Lockley, "Life Career Reaches to Early Formative Period," 10; Shaw, "Capt. William Shaw," 50; Fred Lockley, *Oregon's Yesterdays* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1928), 130.

[178] Johnson and Winter, *Route Across the Rocky Mountains*, 47.

[179] Medorem Crawford, journal, 1842, 13, Mattes Collection, available via OCTA.

Former fur trade employees who had settled in French Prairie and the Tualatin Plains also provided employment for newly arrived Americans. These families often had established farms and welcomed extra hands to help with farm work or erecting new structures.[180] Thomas Ramsdell, who arrived in Oregon in 1844, wrote about finding work in the French Prairie area:

> Being unable to find work in Oregon City, I went up the Willamette valley to French Prairie. There I found a Frenchman named Etienne Lucier, who wanted a barn built. The way they built houses and barns in those days was by the cut and try method. If it fitted, all right. If it didn't, they made the best of it. Being a carpenter and joiner, this way didn't appeal to me. Mr. Lucier was unable to speak English. About the only English he knew was "Boy, come eat." But conducting the negotiations through his son-in-law, we arrived at a satisfactory bargain and he hired me to build his barn.
>
> I made a wooden square, borrowed some tools, and went to work. Mr. Lucier lived very much in the old baronial style. His wife was a squaw and he had purchased quite a number of Indian slaves taken by the Willamette valley Indians in warfare with the Klickitats, Modocs and Shastas. There was a colored man on French Prairie who was very expert in talking Chinook. He taught me jargon and I was soon able to transact my own business. It makes me laugh yet, though, to think of some of the mistakes I made when I was learning jargon. Lucier had an Indian slave woman, I wanted her to wash my shirt and instead of saying "Mike wash nika shirt," which means, "You wash my shirt," I said, "Nike was mika shirt," which meant, "I will wash your shirt." She burst out laughing and someone explained my mistake to me.
>
> It took me three months to build the barn. All the French settlers came to see it and they always spoke of it as a "Yankee barn."[181]

The following spring, Ramsdell worked as a carpenter on the Tualatin Plains:

> In the spring of 1845 I went to the Methodist mission at Salem. Here I found work with Rev. Parrish, the missionary. . . . From there I went to Tualatin Plains and worked for a missionary named J. S. Griffin, who had come out in 1840. His house was made of split lumber as there was no sawed lumber to be had. I made his window sashes from well-seasoned oak rails. I also did considerable of the finer inside work on his house. My bill for services amounted to $50. he persuaded me to take a horse in exchange for my bill . . . I took a place three miles from the Santiam river. Each of the settlers fenced his place in any shape he wanted as the land was not surveyed, so a settler could fence as much or as little as he desired.[182]

W. W. Walter, who was eighteen when he arrived in Oregon, found work "making rails for an Englishman by the name of White." White paid Walter and others in wheat, which they took "to a little mill on Gales creek and had it ground into flour."[183] This practice, of bringing in small amounts

[180] Bowen, *Willamette Valley*, 66–67; Pollard, "Making of the Metis Children," 244.

[181] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, January 12, 1914, 4.

[182] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, January 13, 1914, 6.

[183] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, July 27, 1914, 4.

of wheat and asking for it to be ground into flour, was common at mills in Oregon City at the time.[184]

Children, especially boys, helped with farm work at rented houses during their first year. Jesse A. Applegate described the tasks assigned to him:

> Our people harvested on the mission farm, using sickles and scythes to cut the grain, which was afterwards formed into bundles or sheaves. My work was to stack the sheaves into shocks. A vine known as the ground blackberry had grown with the grain. When they cut the grain they failed to separate it from the vines, which were bent and twisted into loops all through the stubble, and were also in and around the bunches of bound-up wheat and oats. My poor, bare feet had to wander in thorny paths and the scratches on my hands made me forget that I was tired and hungry. Sometimes I would find a sheaf securely bound to the earth by vines; in that case I had to pull the vines out of the ground before I could get the sheaf. By harvesting this crop our people supplied themselves with grain to take to the new settlement. The wheat was the red bearded variety.[185]

Other children worked for the HBC, either for wages (in the form of wheat or credit, as adults received), or for candy or other treats. McLoughlin also hired Indigenous children who had been enslaved through Indigenous slave trading networks.[186]

Women usually performed domestic work during their first year, as they had on the trail. During the first winter, most settlers did not yet have farms, so farm work like milking cows, harvesting crops, preserving goods, and churning butter were not yet needed. Instead, for the first winter, many women took care of children and the sick, mended clothing, cooked, did laundry, and performed other tasks in the home.[187]

One such task was teaching children, since there were few schools open before 1845. Harriett Rogers Burnett, wife of Peter Burnett, taught her children and about six others during her first winter. Melvina Millican Hembree attended this makeshift school and recalled, "We studied out of whatever books we happened to have, and as Mrs. Burnett only taught reading, writing, and figuring, the fact that we had different books didn't make much difference."[188]

There were very few organized schools for American children in the first years of the 1840s. One of the only one was in French Prairie, where Métis, French-Canadian, and some American children (but not local Indigenous children) attended, including the younger Applegates. Jesse A.

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[184] An article in the *Oregon Spectator* in February 1846 noted, "until within a few weeks past, the flouring mill was conducted as a public mill grinding for the settlers for toll; it, however, has been changed from doing custom work to that of exchange, giving a certain number of pounds of flour for a bushel of wheat." "Willamette River," *Oregon Spectator*, February 19, 1846, 2.

[185] Applegate, *A Day with the Cow Column in 1843*, 132–33.

[186] Pollard, "Making of the Metis Children," 229.

[187] Schwantes, *Pacific Northwest*, 89; Lillian Schlissel, *Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey* (New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1992), 35; David Peterson del Mar, *Oregon's Promise: An Interpretive History* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2003), 80.

[188] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, November 12, 1914, 8.

Applegate remembers the school as having "about twenty-five pupils," taught by a man named Andrew Smith.[189] Applegate described his experience at the school:

> I went to school all that winter. We children followed a foot path through wild shrubbery higher than our heads. After a rain we were well sprinkled from the wet bushes, and often arrived at the school house thoroughly soaked. The school room being a cold and cheerless place, we considered ourselves fortunate if we were dry by noon. I can remember no play time, no games, not even tag. The last school day I recall must have been near the close of the term, for I went from the old well near the school house door to the fence on the mission farm and saw that the wheat was as high as the fence.[190]

Edward Evans Parrish wrote that he and his wife "got the children into school" near Newell's house on the Tualatin Plains, which they attended through late February.[191] In addition, Methodists in Salem set up mission schools for Indigenous children, but it is unlikely that the children of American settlers attended them.[192]

First-Year Hardships

Hardships during the first year in Oregon—especially during the first winter—included illness, hunger, weather-related problems, and challenges due to lack of clothing, food, shelter, or supplies. Difficulties at the end of the journey often carried on through the first winter, especially if a family arrived with sicknesses or little food.

Illness

Overlanders usually arrived in the autumn, bringing diseases with them. Outbreaks spread among settlers, Indigenous people, and traders.[193] Many overlanders who arrived in 1845 experienced a particularly difficult journey and arrived in poor health, or they were grieving family members who had died during the journey, which made their first winter especially challenging.[194] British officers Henry Warre and Merwin Vavasour reported,

> The American immigrants continued to arrive in the country till late in December [1845]. Their condition was most miserable. The lateness of the season and humidity of the climate having occasioned much sickness and suffering.[195]

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[189] Applegate, *A Day with the Cow Column in 1843*, 125.

[190] Applegate, *A Day with the Cow Column in 1843*, 132.

[191] Parrish, "Crossing the Plains in 1844," 120–21.

[192] Report of Warre and Vavasour, in Schafer, "Documents Relative to Warre and Vavasour's Military Reconnaissance in Oregon, 1845–6," 1–99, esp. 48, 53; Williams, *Narrative of a tour from the state of Indiana to the Oregon territory*, 56–57.

[193] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 3–5.

[194] Report of Warre and Vavasour, in Schafer, "Documents Relative to Warre and Vavasour's Military Reconnaissance in Oregon, 1845–6," 1–99, esp. 50.

[195] Warre and Vavasour to The Right Honorable Secretary of State for the Colonies, June 16, 1846, in Schafer, "Documents Relative to Warre and Vavasour's Military Reconnaissance in Oregon, 1845–6," 1–99, esp. 66.

Joseph Williams, who arrived in Oregon in 1841, wrote about how difficult traveling conditions and cold rain caused him to be ill for much of his first winter:

> I tried to labor in picking brush and clearing for brother Waller; but could not do much at it. . . . I attended, with brother Waller, some Indian meetings, and tried to preach to the white people. . . . On New Year's day, I started in company with some Frenchmen, up the Willamette, in a canoe. . . . I came to our landing place, and then I had to walk about fifteen miles through the water in mud. It was sometime in the night before I reached Mr. Roe's, where I staid that night, and next morning started on foot for the Methodist mission, with my saddle-bags on my back. I traveled all day in the wet, and at night missed my way . . . I got to Mr. Jennings, a French Catholic, who was very kind and friendly to me. I was very wet and cold. This day's traveling caused me to lay by nearly all the winter with the rheumatism.[196]

Some stayed east of the Cascades during their first winter due to illness. William Shaw's family overwintered at The Dalles before proceeding on to the Willamette Valley in the spring, too sick to make it down the Columbia River or over the Cascade Mountains in the winter weather. [197]

Mental health issues also plagued some overlanders during their first winter. The missionaries Daniel Lee and Joseph Frost wrote about Asahel Munger, who had come to Oregon as a Methodist missionary.[198] Munger experienced mental illness during his first winter in the Willamette Valley, resulting in his death:

> Mr. Munger, who was associated with Mr. Griffin in coming to Oregon, spent some time with Dr. Whitman at Warlotgos, and in 1841 went to the Walamet. He was an ingenious mechanic, but was destroyed by *monomania*. Under the influence of this disease. . . he appeared to think that Christ would work a miracle to convince the people that certain peculiar religious notions he entertained were from God. So going into his shop, he fastened one hand with a nail to the side of, or above the fire-place, and hung himself into the fire. It was in the evening; and he was so badly burnt before he was discovered that he died within three days. . . . His widowed wife and orphan child were thus left as aliens in a strange land.[199]

Others may have struggled with mental health issues as they adjusted to a new place during their first year in Oregon, but the stigma attached to such illnesses likely resulted in their failure to be recorded in historical documents.

Hunger

Procuring food was often the most pressing need for new arrivals, posing particular challenges during the first winter, especially when there were few stores to purchase from. Besides, settlers had little money to purchase food, and the few non-Indigenous farms in the valley were operated by

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[196] Williams, *Narrative of a tour from the state of Indiana to the Oregon territory*, 54–55.

[197] Shaw, "Capt. William Shaw," 50.

[198] Asahel Munger and Eliza Munger, "Diary of Asahel Munger and Wife," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 8, no. 4 (December 1907): 387–405, esp. 387.

[199] Lee and Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon*, 211.

French-speaking Métis people, presenting a cultural barrier to English-speaking American settlers. Jesse A. Applegate remembered that the men in his party worked for food, not money, during their first winter, desperate to keep themselves fed. Most settlers ignored the plentiful foods that were staples of Kalapuyan diets, such as camas, wapato, and acorns. Applegate remarked on a local Kalapuyan soup, but he did not report eating it himself: "The Indians were very partial to peas, or lepwah, as they called them. They used them for making soup which was called liplip."[200]

Settler families survived on whatever was available through HBC or settler-run stores or farms, such as boiled wheat, boiled peas, salted pork, venison, beef, barley, and potatoes.[201] Prices were relatively high, however—ten cents a pound for pork and four cents a pound for flour—and so settlers had to subsist on whatever they could afford.[202] Lucy Ann Deady remembered years later, "We lived on boiled wheat and boiled peas in the winter of 1846," and Martha Morrison recalled, "We never had a bit of tea or coffee, the coffee made was pea coffee."[203] Washington Smith Gilliam also remembered the lack of bread, but he said that his family was far from starving during the winter of 1844–1845:

> During this season we suffered some privations in food. For instance, at times we had to substitute boiled wheat for bread. It is hardly necessary to say that we did not do this from choice; but, having plenty of wild meat, milk and butter, we could have a meal that would hardly pass muster now; but I can assure you that a person would be long time starving to death on it. We never had any shortage of breadstuffs after the first season, for there was a gristmill built in the immediate neighborhood the next year, where we could get flour any time.[204]

Burnett elaborated on the difficulty of procuring food in the first years in Oregon:

> The wild game in Oregon was scarce and poor. The few deer that are found there seldom become fat. The wild fowl were plentiful in the winter, but they constituted an uncertain reliance for families settled some distance from their usual places of resort. Besides, we had no time to hunt them, and the weather was generally too wet to admit of it. Had the country contained the same amount and variety of wild game, wild fruits, and honey as were found in the Western States at an early day, our condition would have been better. But the only wild fruits we found were a variety of berries, such as blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, blueberries, and cranberries, which were not only abundant but of excellent quality. We only found one nut in the country, and that was the hazelnut in small quantities. There were no wild grapes or plums, and no honey.

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[200] Applegate, *A Day with the Cow Column in 1843*, 123–124.

[201] Butruille, *Women's Voices from the Oregon Trail*, 129; Bowen, *Willamette Valley*, 68.

[202] Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 142–45. As a comparison, overlanders paid half these amounts for pork and flour when outfitting their wagons ahead of the journey to Oregon.

[203] Schlissel, *Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey*, 147.

[204] "Reminiscences of Washington Smith Gilliam," 210–11.

> For the first two years after our arrival the great difficulty was to procure provisions. The population being so much increased by each succeeding fall's immigration, provisions were necessarily scarce. [205]

Clothing

Finding clothing or materials to make clothing was another difficulty that newly arrived settlers encountered in the early 1840s. The region lacked the woolen mills and textile factories found in the eastern United States. Burnett noted, "We had no wool, cotton, or flax" with which to make clothing.[206] Setters reported that Indigenous people in the area often traded for shirts or other articles of clothing, so the demand was high with the new arrivals and the supply was low.[207] Burnett also noted that the availability of shoes was nearly as dire as that of cloth, for similar reasons of a surge of new arrivals and a lack of production:

> It was most difficult to procure shoes for myself and my family. The Hudson's Bay Company imported its supply of shoes from England, but the stock was wholly inadequate to our wants and we had no money to enable us to pay for them; and as yet there were no tan-yards in operation. One was commenced in my neighborhood in 1844, but the fall supply of leather was only tanned on the outside, leaving a raw streak in the center. It was undressed, not even curried. Out of this material I made shoes for myself, my eldest son, and a young hired man who was then living with me. To keep the shoes soft enough to wear them through the day, it was necessary to soak them in water at night.
>
> My father, in the early settlement of Missouri, was accustomed to tan his own leather, and make the shoes for the family. In my younger days he had taught me how to do coarse sewed work. But now I had to take the measure of the foot, make the last, fit the patterns to the last, cut out the leathers, and make the shoe. I had no last to copy from, never made one before, and had no one to show me how. I took the measures of all the family, and made what I supposed to be eight very nice lasts; and upon them I made the shoes, using tanned deer-skin for the females and small boys. The shoes were not beautiful, nor all comfortable, as they were not all good fits. . . .
>
> The greatest difficulty I had to encounter for the want of shoes was in 1844. I had sown some three acres of wheat about the first of May, and it was absolutely necessary to inclose it by the first of June to make a crop. I did not commence plowing until about the 20th of April. My team was raw, and so was I, and it required several days' trial to enable us to do good work. While I was engaged in making and hauling rails to fence in my wheat, my old boots gave out entirely, and I had no time to look for a substitute. . . I was determined to save my wheat at any sacrifice, and I therefore went barefoot. During that first week my feet were very sore; but after that

[205] Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 174–75.

[206] Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 174–75.

[207] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, September 17, 1914, 8.

> there came a great shield over them, so that I could work with great ease, and go almost anywhere except among thorns.[208]

In his same passage, Burnett acknowledged that Indigenous people had traditions of shoes particular to the resources of the region. He wrote that of the Indigenous people who came to church at the house he was staying in, "They wore moccasins, and stared at my bare feet as I passed."[209]

The lack of fabric and material in the early 1840s sometimes added to the boredom of the first winter for women, who lacked domestic work or other occupation. Martha Ann Morrison, who arrived in 1844, wrote that during her first winter in Oregon, "I had nothing to do but be homesick…There was not a newspaper or book in the country…I ripped up an old dress and sewed it together with ravellings, just to have something to do."[210] Morrison elaborated on the shortage of fabric for clothing:

> I think there was only one bolt of calico in Oregon when we came here—That was all the cloth we had for dresses at that time. That was sold for fifty cents a yard. It was very poor quality of calico. The women and girls that came here were very destitute. The next summer…my oldest sister and I gathered a barrel of cranberries and I sent them to Oregon City and got a little piece of blue drilling that made us a covering. And that was about all; it could hardly be considered dresses, but it was so we were covered. We did not have any ruffles, I think. There were no shoes or stockings to buy, and if there were we did not have the money to pay for them. My sister and I managed to…get us a pair of fine slippers. We used to carry them in our hands and put them on just before we got to [a] house.[211]

Weather

Weather could present hardships during the first winter, but whether settlers complained about the weather depended on its severity, as well as their expectations of Oregon's temperate climate. The winter of 1843 was relatively mild, as Jesse A. Applegate wrote years later:

> I have said our first winter was mild. I can recall but one snow storm, and this snow disappeared in a few hours. There was ice on a few mornings, but it was no thicker than window glass. I might have forgotten that little snow storm, had it not been necessary for me to gather sticks and chips for fuel; picking them out of the snow made my hands ache, and when I went to the fire to warm them the agony brought the tears to my eyes. We had no team nor wagon and could not borrow. The home of the man who lived on the mission farm was less than half a mile from our place. This man refused to let father use his yoke of oxen to haul a load of wood. He said he would not allow strangers to use them, as they might be spoiled.[212]

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[208] Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 181–83.

[209] Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 184.

[210] Schlissel, *Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey*, 147.

[211] Schlissel, *Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey*, 147–48.

[212] Applegate, *A Day with the Cow Column in 1843*, 131–32.

The autumn of 1844, however, brought flooding, which washed away some of the new structures in settlements along the Willamette River.[213]

Rain damaged property that overlanders had taken great pains to cart across the country. HBC employee Thomas Lowe wrote about heavy rain inundating settlers as they arrived at Fort Vancouver:

> Incessant rain. The Callepooiah arrived late at night from the Cascades with an immense number of Immigrants, men, women and children, and overloaded with wagons, trunks etc. Having been anchored too close to the shore, she grounded and the tide receding left her on her beam ends half filled with water. What of the property that was not washed overboard was completely damaged, and the poor half starved passengers left on shore while the rain poured down in torrents.[214]

Others complained about the rain simply for the dreariness it brought. Burnett complained that the rain was so constant during the rainy season that, "Sometimes the sun would not be seen for twenty days in succession. These rains were not very heavy, but cold and steady, accompanied with a brisk, driving wind from the south."[215]

Fire

Settlers sometimes lost their possessions due to fire. Missionaries Lee and Frost wrote of new arrivals who lost their belongings in a fire at Fort Walla Walla:

> Messrs. Clarke, Smith, and Littlejohn, went to reside in the Walamet in the autumn of 1841. They left most of their little effects at Fort Wallah-wallah, to be forwarded down to Fort Vancouver in a boat, while they made the overland journey with horses to the Walamet. But the fort accidentally taking fire before the goods were moved, nearly all they had deposited there was an entire loss, and to them a heavy and irreparable one. They however found many sympathizing friends, who were happy to afford them some relief.[216]

There were also several fires at Fort Vancouver in the early 1840s.[217]

Expectations vs. Reality

Impressions of Oregon during the first year varied with the difficulty of the overlanders' journeys and the situations they found themselves upon arrival. Although many overlanders stopped writing in their journals when they finished their journeys, others wrote in real time about their impressions of Oregon. Medorem Crawford, upon arriving in Willamette Valley in 1842, wrote,

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[213] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 9.

[214] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 29.

[215] Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 140.

[216] Lee and Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon*, 212.

[217] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 5–7.

> Oct. 7. Rode about to see the country like it much. This is among the first frosty nights. . . .
>
> [Oct.] 13. Went with Mr. Shortess & Doct. Babcock to Youngs valley. Beautiful country, returned and wrote to my father.[218]

Others published their accounts in midwestern newspapers, extolling the benefits of Oregon as beyond even their high expectations. These descriptions were often the product of boosterism, as settlers sought to encourage others to come to Oregon. John Kirk Townsend's 1843 account in a St. Louis newspaper is one such example:

> The soil of the valley is rich beyond comparison. Rain rarely falls, even in the winter season; but the dews are sufficiently heavy to compensate for its absence. The epidemic of the country, fever and ague, is rarely known here. In short, the Wallamet Valley is a terrestrial paradise, to which I have known some to exhibit so strong an attachment as to declare that notwithstanding the few privations which must necessarily be experienced by settlers of a new country, no consideration would ever induce them to return to their former homes.[219]

In 1844, a Missouri paper published John Boardman's account, which praised (and perhaps overstated) the region's natural advantages:

> It [this] is a fine climate—a perpetual summer, and little rain. The natives require but little clothing, and, in fact, some of them do not wear any.
>
> I hardly know what to write about Oregon, or what you would like to know; though if I was where you are, and should see some one from Oregon, I could ask him a hundred questions, as you could me. The report of Wilkes that you had is very correct. There are thousands of salmon here [Oregon]—some wild game, plenty of ducks, geese, and swans, and some good wet places to raise more of them—as there must be some wet places, being so much rain in the winter, and no snow.
>
> There is scarcely any corn raised—it will not do well. I saw a little, but it was poor. Most other kinds of grains do well.[220]

S. M. Gilmore wrote an account, also published in a Missouri paper, concluding that economic riches awaited the entrepreneurial overlander: "I am satisfied from the products of the country that a man can live easier here than he can in any part of the United States. If he raises any produce he is sure of getting a good price for it in anything he may call for . . ."[221]

Settlers wrote letters to relatives telling them about Oregon and offering them tips for overland travel. These letters often focused on the positive, perhaps to justify the journey or to encourage

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[218] Crawford journal, 13.

[219] J. K. Townsend, "Oregon, the New Eldorado," *St. Louis New Era*, February 14, 1843, reprinted in "Migration to and Settlement of Oregon," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 4, no. 4 (December 1903): 399–409, esp. 402.

[220] "Oregon Material Taken from a File of an Independence (Mo.) and Weston (Mo.) Paper for 1844 and 1845; Also Some Minor Extracts from Other Papers in That Vicinity," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 4, no. 3 (September 1903): 270–86, esp. 275–76. Brackets in original.

[221] "Oregon Material Taken from a File of an Independence (Mo.) and Weston (Mo.) Paper," 270–86, esp. 283.

friends and family to join them. In 1843, Morton M. McCarver, a co-founder of the town of Linnton and later the speaker of the Oregon Provisional Legislature, wrote in a letter to a friend back in Iowa,

> Our journey may be said to be at an end as we are now in the Willamette Valley. . . . Perhaps there is no country in the world that offers more inducements to enterprise and industry than Oregon. The soil in this valley and in many other portions of the territory is equal to that of Iowa, or any other portion of the United States, in point of beauty and fertility, and its productions in many articles are far superior, particularly in regard to wheat, potatoes, beets, and turnips. The grain of the wheat is more than a third larger than any I have seen in the States. Potatoes are abundant and much better than those in the States, I measured a beet which grew in Doctor Whitman's garden which measured in circumference two inches short of three feet, and there is now growing in the field of Mr. James John, less than a mile from this place where I write you, a turnip measuring in circumference four and one half feet, and he thinks it will exceed five feet before pulling time.[222]

Betsey Bayley wrote to her sister, Lucy P. Griffith of Ohio, about Oregon's bounty, especially in their first year there:

> Oregon is the healthiest country I ever lived in; there is no prevailing disease, and many people come here for health. The climate is mild and pleasant, and the air pure and bracing. I have kept fresh meat for three weeks, good and fresh without salt. Chehalem Valley is a most beautiful place. It is surrounded with hills, mountains and beautiful groves. We live in full view of Mount Hood, the top of which is covered with eternal snow. The country abounds in almost all kinds of vegetation. It is one of the best wheat countries in the world. You can sow wheat any time of the year, and you are sure of a good crop. Vegetables do well; cabbage will grow all winter. I have seen heads of cabbage branch out from an old stalk that was three years old. The country produces almost all kinds of fruit – whortleberries, blackberries, thimbleberries, strawberries, etc. The first year we came here strawberries bloomed all winter, but in 1847 we had a hard winter; the snow laid on the ground for three weeks, but I did not think this is a hard winter, compared with Missouri or Ohio. In this country it scarcely ever snows, and if any snow falls at all it melts quickly. Men can work in thin shirt sleeves all winter. Oregon is settling very rapidly. People are flocking here from all parts of the world.[223]

Anna Maria King praised the fertile land, mild weather, and easy chance at making a living in a letter to her mother, brothers, and sisters written the April after she arrived in Oregon:

> It is a beautiful country as far as I have seen. Every person eighteen years old holds a section by making improvements and living on it five years. They sow wheat here from October till June, and the best wheat I ever saw and plenty of it. . . . The water is all soft as it is in Massachusetts. Soda springs are common and fresh water springs

[222] Verne Bright, "The Folklore and History of the 'Oregon Fever'," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (December 1951): 241–53, esp. 242–43; On Morton, see Michael B. Husband, "Morton M. McCarver: An Iowa Entrepreneur in the Far West," *Annals of Iowa* 40, no. 4 (Spring 1970): 241–54, esp. 248.

[223] Holmes, *Covered Wagon Women, Volume 1*, 37.

> without number. It is now the 1st of April and not a particle of snow has fallen in the valley neither have I seen a bit of ice a half inch thick this winter but it rains nearly all winter but this does not hinder them from plowing and sowing wheat. We have the most frost in the spring. They don't make garden until the last of April or the 1st of May, but it comes good when it does come. There are thousands of strawberries, gooseberries, blackberries, whortleberries, currants and other wild fruits but no nuts except filberts and a few chestnuts. The timber is principally fir and oak.
>
> You perhaps wish to know how I like the country. I like it well. It is an easy place to make a living. You can raise as many cattle as you please and not cost you a cent, for the grass is green the whole winter and the cattle are as fat as if they had been stall fed the whole year round. Wheat is raised without trouble and will fetch anything, the same as cash. And although I was much apposed [*sic*] to coming as anyone could be, if I were back there and known what I known now, I should be perfectly willing to come. The land you get is sufficient to pay for your trouble and if you were here and John and Warren each of them and yourself had a claim, I should like to live there. . . . The Indians appear to be very friendly, like to have the Bostons come, as they call them ["Boston" was the Chinuk Wawa term for Americans]. You think it is a long road and so it is, but the worst is over when you get started.[224]

King, like others, sought to reassure family that the journey would be worthwhile, to convince them to join her in Oregon.

Many who wrote their accounts in later years focused on the positive aspects of Oregon. Joel Palmer, who arrived in 1845, later wrote,

> We were now at the place destined at no distant period to be an important point in the commercial history of the Union — Oregon City. Passing through the timber that lies to the east of the city, we beheld Oregon and the Falls of the Willamette at the same moment. We were so filled with gratitude that we had reached the settlements of the white man, and with admiration at the appearance of the large sheet of water rolling over the Falls, that we stopped, and in this moment of happiness recounted our toils, in thought, with more rapidity than tongue can express or pen write.

Palmer also admitted, "I had expected to find the winters much more severe than they turned out to be."[225]

Conclusion

American settlers who arrived in Oregon between 1840 and 1845 often survived their first winter in large part thanks to the assistance and generosity of the HBC and the Métis families of former fur traders who had settled in the valley in previous years. Former HBC postmaster John

[224] Holmes, *Covered Wagon Women, Volume 1*, 43–44.

[225] Palmer, *Journal of travels over the Rocky Mountains*, 157.

Dunn criticized Americans for portraying Willamette Valley settlements as American in their boosterism publications, ignoring their dependence on the HBC:

> It is in this fertile district, near the banks of the river, at the distance of about fifty miles from its entrance into the Columbia, that the Wallamette settlement has been established.
>
> The Americans make a great boast of this settlement as an American establishment; and speak of it in their public papers and speeches, as if it were a settlement exclusively American, and founded by Americans, capable of being made the nucleus of a great community —that it is a most thriving colony—that it continues the right of possession to the government of the States —that it owes no favour to, and is independent of, the Hudson's Bay Company —that there it stands, and will stand, a memorial of American right —that it is the duty of the American government to protect it; while it holds out every incentive to industrious and enterprising citizens to join it.[226]

British military agents Warre and Vavasour explicitly connected the assistance offered by the HBC to overlanders to the dispute between Britain and the United States over who could "claim" Oregon:

> We are convinced that without their [HBC] assistance not 30 families would now have been in the settlement the first Immigration in 1841 or 1842 arrived in so miserable a Condition that had it not been for the trading posts of the Hudson's Bay Company they must have starved or been cut off by the Indians . . . Thus Encouraged Emigrations left the states in 1843, 1844, 1845 and were Received in the same Cordial manner[.] [T]heir numbers have Increased so Rapidly that the British party are now in the Minority and the Gentlemen of the Hudson's Bay Company have been obliged to join the organization [the Oregon Provisional Government] without any Reserve Except the mere favour of the Oath of Office[.] Their Lands are Invaded themselves insulted and they now Require the protection of the British Government against the Very people to the Introduction of whom they have been more than Accessory.[227]

McLoughlin defended himself and his assistance to the immigrants, arguing that the British settlers had been in the minority since 1840 due to the numbers of Methodist missionaries and former trappers who had settled in the valley. McLoughlin maintained that the new settlers (1) now felt like they owed the HBC thanks to his generosity, and (2) did not raid HBC stores to procure food as they may have done had McLoughlin not aided them:

> It is true I assisted the Immigrants But there is a time and manner in Doing all things and from the time and the manner in which this was Done it had the Desired Effect and Every American in the Country Believes and says he could not have gone on without my assistance[.] And was I as the Representative of the Hudson's Bay Company to be such a Simpleton and [as] to destroy the Beneficial Effect of my

[226] Dunn, *Oregon Territory and the British North American Fur Trade*, 119–20.

[227] Herman A. Leader, "McLoughlin's Answer to Warre Report," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (September 1932): 214–29, esp. 216–17.

> measures to tell them "It is true I assisted you from principles of humanity But if I had not done so you would have fallen on our hands when we would have been obliged to feed you Gratis I assisted you with means to sow Wheat Spring 1844[.] But if I had not done so there would have been a famine in the Country in 1845 as I Know you would not allow your families starve to Death when there are provisions in the Hudson's Bay Companys store and as a quarrel about them would be Extremely injurious to the Hudson's Bay Companys Business[.] Indeed much more than assisting you of two Evils I choose the least[.]"[228]

The HBC remained a strong economic force in the Willamette Valley through 1845 and played a central role in the first year of overlanders who arrived during this time.[229] The 1846 resolution of the Oregon boundary dispute between Great Britain and the United States would change the future for the HBC and for overlanders arriving in the Willamette Valley in the later years.

[228] Leader, "McLoughlin's Answer to Warre Report," esp. 221–29, quotation from 228–29.

[229] Report of Warre and Vavasour, in Schafer, "Documents Relative to Warre and Vavasour's Military Reconnaissance in Oregon, 1845–6," 1–99, esp. 45–46.

Chapter 2: First Year for Overlanders Arriving in American Oregon (1846–1849)

The American presence in the Willamette Valley grew in the second half of the 1840s, propelled by large immigrations starting in 1843 and the formation of a Provisional Government. The Treaty of 1846, which established the boundary between the United States and Canada, solidified this presence and encouraged further American migration to what became the Oregon Territory in 1848. Immigrant numbers dipped in the late 1840s, with the Whitman incident in 1847 and the discovery of gold in California in 1848, with the latter attracting overlanders heading west and those already settled in Oregon. By the end of the decade, White American settlers outnumbered everyone else in the Willamette Valley.

Geopolitics and Demographics of Settlement

Prior to 1846, Great Britain and the United States had jointly occupied the Oregon Country. The continued migration of Americans across the Oregon Trail during the early to mid-1840s enabled the United States government to negotiate the Treaty of 1846, also known as the Oregon Treaty, which was signed on June 15, 1846. It established boundaries for Oregon as follows: the 42nd parallel on the south, the 49th parallel on the north, the Pacific Coast on the west, and the Continental Divide on the east.[230] Mainland north of the 49th parallel remained in Canada. Anticipating this boundary settlement, the HBC moved its Columbia Department headquarters from Fort Vancouver to Fort Victoria on Vancouver Island in 1845.[231] On November 1, 1846, people at Fort Vancouver received news that

> the Oregon Boundary has been fully and finally settled. The whole of the Territory as far north as the 49th degree is to belong to the United States, but the Columbia River and Puget Sound are to remain free and open to England until the expiration of the present Charter of the Hudson's Bay Company, which will not be until the year 1863. Vancouver's Island is to belong exclusively to England. This is the arrangement which several of the Gentlemen here have been expecting, but others are very much disappointed, and think that England has surrendered more than was either just or necessary.[232]

Settlement of the boundary issue left the Provisional Government, first established in 1843 as an entity independent from both the United States and Great Britain, as the sole governing body in the

[230] William L. Lang, "Oregon Trail," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/oregon_trail.

[231] William G. Robbins, "This Land, Oregon," *Oregon History Project*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/narratives/this-land-oregon/resettlement-and-the-new-economy/a-new-legal-landscape; Gregory P. Shine, "Fort Vancouver," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/fort_vancouver.

[232] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 52.

Oregon Country until August 1848.[233] That year, the US Congress passed the Oregon Territorial Act, which provided for organization of a US territorial government in the Oregon Territory. It passed in large part due to the political pressure drummed up by newly arrived White Americans.[234]

Legislators in the new Territory of Oregon defined citizenship in the territory as based on "race, as opposed to national origin or religion." They did so because of their perception that former HBC employees who were White—whether British, American, or French Canadian—could assimilate into American culture. By contrast, Indigenous and Black people were excluded from citizenship and landownership. This effectively created what historian Katrine Barber termed, "an affirmative action plan for Anglo-American settlers."[235] Children of Métis families who looked White could often pass as such and could participate fully in Oregon's new American society, while those with darker skin often joined Indigenous communities, unwelcome in the new White society Americans were crafting in the Willamette Valley.[236]

Settler Interactions with Indigenous and Métis People

Relationships between Indigenous people and settlers strained as more and more Americans arrived in Oregon. As scholars Roberta Conner and William L. Lang described, "From 1843 to 1846, the stream of immigrants became a river, with thousands of immigrants and livestock each year. By 1847, it was a flood."[237] These tensions reached a breaking point with the Whitman incident in November 1847, in which Cayuse men killed Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and ten other people at the Waíiletpu Mission near what is now Walla Walla, Washington. Oregon Trail boosters then labeled the Whitman killings a massacre and used it to justify increased migration of Americans to the Pacific Northwest.[238] Representatives of Oregon's Provisional Government, as well as American politicians who supported the addition of Oregon to the union, used the killings as further impetus to organize the region into an American Territory.[239]

Anthone Minthorn, then Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, wrote about the inaccuracy of the term "massacre" in 2006:

> I choose not to call it a "massacre," as it has been labeled in popular historical literature. The use of "massacre" prejudges and freezes the event in time, ignoring the context from both sides of the account, including the hundreds of people who died in the epidemic that Whitman could not cure. The incident must also be understood from the standpoint of tewatat "medicine doctor tradition," which calls for the life of the healer to be taken if he fails to cure the sick. When Marcus Whitman returned east to protest the proposal to close the Waíiletpu Mission and, on

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[233] Barbara Mahoney, "Provisional Government," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/provisional_govt_conference_in_champoeg_1843.

[234] Lang, "Oregon Trail," *Oregon Encyclopedia*.

[235] Barber, "'We were at our journey's end.'," 394.

[236] Barber, "'We were at our journey's end.'," 391–95.

[237] Karson, ed., *wiyáxayxt / wiyáakaaʔawn / As Days Go By*, 52.

[238] Karson, ed., *wiyáxayxt / wiyáakaaʔawn / As Days Go By*, 63–64; Cameron Addis, "Whitman Killings," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/whitman_massacre.

[239] Addis, "Whitman Massacre," 246–48.

> the return trip, when he brought more people to settle the Oregon Country, the Cayuse leaders warned him that what he was doing was not the understanding they had with him. His expressed purpose for being with the Cayuse was to teach them about the Christian religion. But he brought more people, developed more land, and brought sickness that killed many Cayuse. Whitman refused to listen to the warnings, and the Cayuse killed him and others living at the mission.[240]

The killing of the Whitmans and others led to what became known as the Cayuse War of 1848, during which American settlers in the Willamette Valley formed militias and traveled to central and eastern Oregon to fight the Cayuse, Nez Perce, Walla Walla, and Umatilla people living on the Columbia River Plateau.[241] Local news coverage spurred Willamette Valley settlers to "avenge" the Whitmans:

> When the appalling news of the savage massacre of the late Dr. Whitman, his Lady, and the other American citizens reached this valley, a gloom overspread the countenances of its citizens, and out of that gloom came up a voice, deep, clear, loud, yet single—for it was the voice of all, as of one;—"those brutal murders must and shall be avenged."
>
> Doctor Whitman's mission among the Indians was a mission of love, he and his worthy associates have spent years in faithful and active endeavors to improve the mental and moral condition of those Indians, and in the midst of that mission he, his worthy lady, and twelve American citizens have fallen victims to Indian ingratitude and insatiable love of blood! Surely, "those brutal murders must and should be avenged."
>
> Nearly five hundred of your fellow citizens have rallied at their country's call, and are advancing into the enemy's country.[242]

Men across the valley, including those who had been in the region less than a year, headed east to fight Indigenous people. Thomas Smith recalled volunteering for a militia months after he first arrived in Oregon in 1847:

> There was a few families scattered about within a few miles of where Eugene now is, and as soon as we heard of the massacre of Whitman and others about one half hitched up their teams and left for the more settled parts of the country. I was making rails for E. F. Skinner and concluded to remain and take my chances with the rest. We had several little scares during the winter, the Indians killed some of our cattle, but beyond that no further damage was done. In April, 1848, Felix Scott, then residing on the Yamhill river, came up with a commission from Governor Abernethy authorizing him to raise a company of rangers to protect the southern frontier. There were two or three other young men in the vicinity and we all enlisted, I having first made a bargain with the captain to make him a lot of rails for a certain Spanish horse he was riding. Captain Scott scouted about considerably, never taking more than

[240] Karson, ed., *wiyáxayxt / wiyáakaaʔawn / As Days Go By*, 64.

[241] Karson, ed., *wiyáxayxt / wiyáakaaʔawn / As Days Go By*, 63–64; Addis, "Whitman Killings."

[242] "To the People of Oregon," *Oregon Spectator*, February 10, 1848, 2.

> fifteen or twenty men at a time, though I believe his company numbered seventy. It so happened that I never went out with him.[243]

Both public opinion and public officials used the military mobilization during the war as further justification to occupy Indigenous homelands. Columbia Lancaster, a Provisional Government judge, advocated the establishment of army posts along the Oregon Trail route to aid the increasing number of overlanders arriving in the Northwest, which in turn would force Indigenous communities to surrender their lands to the Americans:

> We here are in possession of the rich valley, our cattle and hogs destroy the grapes and roots upon which the Indians, and their horses in part subsist. Their fisheries are also disturbed. The people had good reason to suppose that before this[,] agents would have been appointed to treat with the Indians and pay them for their lands. They, the Indians, had been promised this and had been often deceiv'd, the tribes more remote seeing the yearly increased numbers of the emmigrants are assured that the day is at hand when they too must retire and surrender their lands without consideration. A spirit of rebellion is apprehended here, there are spirits here, (dreadful as the consequences may be which I hope may be averted) who say that the time has come when the preservation of thousands of human lives becomes paramount to any other consideration, that it has been yearly recommended that a line of military posts be established on the line of emmigration to this place for the avowed purpose of aiding the emmigrants through that in 1845—500 troops of the regular army of the United States came to the South pass of the Roc[k]y Mountains near the persons of the emmigration of that year, that at the South pass the gates have been shut down, showing to the world for the first time the mournful fact that a Christian nation has by her own acts and the sayings and doings of her leading men, induced thousands of her hardy and enterprising citizens to pass her lonely deserts, climb over her highest mountains, and spread themselves along her fartherest border, and there each for himself, taking from the Indians his home and appropriating it to himself, and in this condition, without assurance of title, power to treat with the Indians, without protection or anything else but hope defered, are at this time threatened by the combined forces of all the tribes in Oregon, with many of their best citizens butchered and thrown into a common grave together.
>
> I believe that Congress will take measures for our relief so that the fearful and restless minds of many may become at ease, so the enterprising and industrious, the worthy and the good may plough, reap and build upon their own lands, their allegiance strengthened and this beautiful region brought and made what nature intended it—the Commercial Garden of America.[244]

Meanwhile, articles in the *Oregon Spectator* began encouraging White settlement directly on the homelands of the Cayuse:

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[243] Thomas Smith to John Minto, June 23, 1875, in *Transactions of the Eighteenth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1890* (Portland, OR: A. Anderson & Co., Printers and Lithographers, 1892), 77–78.

[244] Columbia Lancaster to Alpheus Felch, December 22, 1847, in Mentor L. Williams, "A Columbia Lancaster Letter about Oregon in 1847," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (March 1949): 40–44, esp. 43–44.

> We see no reason now, why the Cayuse country should not be open to the settlement of the white man. All that portion of country, and nearly all of Middle Oregon, and considerable of Eastern Oregon, is immensely valuable for the purposes of grazing. Probably this valley can nowhere be surpassed for the growing of wheat, but we understand, that portions of the Cayuse and Nez Perce country produce corn superior to any other portions of Oregon, and also all the other grains in great profusion. But the great value of that portion of Oregon, consists in its broad expanse of prairies, covered with a heavy growth of luxurious bunch-grass. . . . Who can estimate the wealth of such lands?[245]

The Cayuse War further strained relationships among American, Indigenous, and Métis people living in the Willamette Valley. Kalapuyan and Chinookan populations continued to decline as more Americans arrived in the valley, spreading disease, as well as pushing Indigenous people out of their homelands. However, Kalapuyan and Chinookan cultural and economic systems left an indelible mark on the Pacific Northwest, and those who survived carried on Indigenous traditions and culture.[246]

Local newspapers portrayed Kalapuyan and other Indigenous individuals as threats, and much of the coverage focused on violence committed against Whites. By the late 1840s, the *Oregon Spectator* routinely reported theft, arson, and assault inflicted both upon and by Whites, though presumably many attacks on Indigenous and Métis individuals went unreported. An article from 1848 illustrates the tension between White settlers' racism toward Indigenous people and the recognition of injustices being committed against them:

> We are informed that the dwelling houses and goods of the chief of the Molalas, have been burned by some of the whites of the Molala settlement. If we are correctly advised a Klamet stole some article of trifling value from a settler, whose friends retaliated for this larceny, by burning the house and goods of a Molala chief, who was absent upon a hunt. Such a retaliation was very wrong, and will not find an approving response from any considerate well-wisher of Oregon. We do not object to the retaliation, in consequence of the trifling value of the article stolen; but because of the recklessness of the punishment—because of the visiting upon the innocent, the punishment *due to the guilty*. Already the citizens of Oregon are surrounded with many difficulties, and no man should so far forget his duty to himself, and his fellows as to multiply these difficulties by unprovoked barbarities. The people, and *all* the people of Oregon should recollect, that they are upon soil to which the Indian title[247] has not yet been extinguished, and that as long as they are

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[245] "Colonization," *Oregon Spectator*, July 13, 1848.

[246] Robbins, "This Land, Oregon"; Bergmann, "'we should lose much by their absence'," 54.

[247] The federal government recognized Indian ownership of land, based on longtime occupancy of a particular territory. Under federal law, Indian title could only be extinguished by treaty with the United States. This was to prevent individuals or states from taking or purchasing Indian lands and creating conflicts with Tribes (i.e., national security). Individuals could not claim land under federal land laws to which Indian title had not been extinguished. See *An Act to Regulate Trade and Intercourse with the Indian tribes, and to Preserve Peace on the Frontiers*, Statute I, Chapter CLV (June 30, 1834), Acts of the Twenty-Third Congress of the United States, Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/23rd-congress/c23.pdf; and Felix S. Cohen, *Handbook of Federal Indian Law* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1942).

> upon Indian soil, and one Indian bears himself friendly and honestly, that Indian is entitled to humane treatment.
>
> There is no doubt but that wisdom, safety and justice, all require that the citizens of Oregon should be quick to see, and prompt and efficient to punish every intended Indian aggression; but that punishment should be inflicted upon the aggressors alone, if by possibility they can be separated from the innocent.
>
> We also learn that in the upper portion of this valley, several of the Calipooia Indians have been severely whipped by the whites. It is said that the Indians commenced stealing the cattle of the whites, and continued it, though warned to desist, until the whites rallied, [illegible] and overtook the Indians while driving off a number of cattle, and severely whipped ten of their number. It is said too, that the Thlickatala have been committing depredations upon the property of the settlers, in the upper portion of this valley. It should be remembered, that the Indians are a degraded, unfortunate race, and that they are unable to obtain amunition for the killing of the wild game of the country; but when Indians or white men commit intended and wanton aggressions, by the laws of God and man, *justifiable* punishment may, and should be inflicted.[248]

While supporting military attacks against Cayuse, Nez Perce, Walla Walla, and Umatilla people on the Columbia Plateau, as well as justifying settler attacks on Indigenous and Métis people in the Willamette Valley, the *Spectator* also romanticized Indigenous people and perpetuated the myth of the "vanishing Indian":

> The mysterious interest connected with the past history of the Indian tribes, their once numerous and warlike race, their more recent connexion with the trapper and trader, and their now rapidly thinning ranks, present to the antiquarian and lover of romance a fine field for the gratification of that roving curiosity so natural to the human heart. Many a pleasing story might be told of the dark sons and daughters of the valley of the Columbia.[249]

The Cayuse War ended in 1850 when five Cayuse headmen—Clokomas, Kiamasumkin, Isiaasheluckas, Tomahas, and Tiloukaikt—surrendered to US Army officials at Fort Dalles. Known as the Cayuse Five, the men were taken to Oregon City and put on trial by representatives of the territorial government. Found guilty of killing Marcus Whitman, the men were hanged on June 3, 1850. Although the conviction of these five men remains controversial, their hanging temporarily appeased White fears in the region. Americans' desire to occupy all parts of Oregon, regardless of any Indigenous title, continued into the 1850s and culminated with a series of treaties, including those with Willamette Valley and Columbia Plateau people.[250]

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[248] "Willamette Indian Relations," *Oregon Spectator*, March 23, 1848, 2.

[249] "Our Salutatory," *Oregon Spectator*, October 4, 1849, 2.

[250] Karson, ed., *wiyáxayxt / wiyáakaaʔawn / As Days Go By*, 64–65, 82; David Lewis, "Willamette Valley Treaties," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed April 5, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/willamette_valley_treaties; Ronald B. Lansing, *Juggernaut: The Whitman Massacre Trial, 1850* (Pasadena: Ninth Judicial Circuit Historical Society, 1993), 15–17.

Existing Communities and Settlement Trends

In the mid-1840s, American overlanders flooded into an Oregon that was dominated by their compatriots.[251] There were distinctions, as well as tensions, between established settlers and recent overlanders, however, as described by Peter Burnett, who had arrived in 1843:

> Our friends were arriving each fall, with jaded teams, just about the time the long rainy season set in. The community was divided into two classes, old settlers and new, whose views and interests clashed very much. Many of the new immigrants were childish, most of them discouraged, and all of them more or less embarrassed. Upon their arrival they found that those of us who preceded them had taken up the choice locations, and they were compelled either to take those that were inferior in quality or go farther from ship navigation. There was necessarily, under the circumstances, a great hurry to select claims; and the new-comers had to travel over the country, in the rainy season, in search of homes. Their animals being poor, they found it difficult to get along as fast as they desired. Many causes combined to make them unhappy for the time being. The long rainy seasons were new to them, and they preferred the snow frozen ground to the rain and mud.[252]
>
> . . . . At any public gathering, it was easy to distinguish the new from the old settlers. They [the new settlers] were lank, lean, hungry, and tough; we were ruddy, ragged, and rough. They were dressed in broadcloth, and wore linen-bosomed shirts and black cravats, while we wore very coarse, patched clothes; for the art of patching was understood to perfection in Oregon. But, while they dressed better than we did, we fed better than they. Of the two, we were rather the more independent. They wanted our provisions, while we wanted their materials for clothing. They, seeing our ragged condition, concluded that if they parted with their jeans, satinets, cottons, and calicoes, they would soon be as destitute as we were; and therefore they desired to purchase our provisions on credit, and keep their materials for future use. This plan did not suit us precisely. We reasoned in this way: that, if they wished to place themselves in our ruddy condition, they should incur the risk of passing into our ragged state—they should take the good and bad together. We therefore insisted upon an exchange. After much grumbling on their part, the parties ultimately came to an agreement. But in many cases the new immigrants had nothing to give in exchange, and we had to sell them on credit.[253]
>
> . . . . But the state of discontent on the part of the new immigrants was temporary, and only lasted during the winter. In the spring, when the thick clouds cleared away, and the grass and flowers sprang up beneath the kindling rays of a bright Oregon sun, their spirits revived with reviving nature; and by the succeeding fall they had

[251] Karson, ed., *wiyáxayxt / wiyáakaaʔawn / As Days Go By*, 51–52.

[252] Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 175–76.

[253] Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 179–80.

themselves become old settlers, and formed a part of us, their views and feelings, in the mean time, having undergone a total change.[254]

Oregon City had two English-language newspapers by the late 1840s (the *Oregon Spectator* issued its first edition in February 1846, and the *Oregon Free Press* began in March 1848).[255] These papers published updates on the status of overlanders as they made the westward journey. Many residents of the territory had family or friends making the journey and appreciated updates about how many wagons were coming and the challenges of their journey.[256] In a more creative turn, the *Oregon Spectator* published a poem welcoming new arrivals on September 17, 1846:

To the Oregon Emigrants of 1846.

Welcome! ye freeborn yeoman of the soil,
Right welcome are you to our new made home;
Here ends your weary pilgrimage and toil,
You've reached the goal, and need no longer roam.
O'er dreary wastes, and arid sterile sands,
O'er mountain crag, through torrents mad'ning roar
You've toiled undaunted in courageous bands,
To seek a home, on this far distant shore.
Here waits ye then, ye tillers of the land,
The verdant pra[i]rie and prolific field,
Rich forest dells, where giant cedars stand,
Shading fresh treasures yet to be revealed.
The cunning autumn of every trade,
The learned professions, and the man of wealth,
Will for his journey here, be soon repaid
With ample competence, and blooming health.
Unlike the bee, that daily roams the bower,
Culling the nectar from each blushing stem,
Forsakes the rose, to taste some brighter flower,
But finds that none are quite as sweet as them.
You leave, the crowded towns, and worn out field,
Of *old* Columbia, for our virgin soil,
Here industry, a richer harvest yields;
In *new* Columbia, healthy repays your toil.
Come sieze [sic] the plough, the awl, the axe, the spade.
The pond-rouse sledge, or what so e'er you please,
And soon your labour will be well repaid,
With showers of plenty in the lap of cane.
Then here united let us firmly be,
And when Columbia shall extend her laws,

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[254] Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 180.

[255] "Address of George L. Curry," in *Transactions of the Third Annual Re-Union of the Oregon Pioneer Association* (Salem, OR: E. M. Waite, Printer and Bookbinder, 1876), 72.

[256] "Arrival of Emigrants," *Oregon Spectator*, September 3, 1846, 2; "The Emigration," *Oregon Spectator*, October 29, 1846, 2.

We'll hoist the stars and stripes of liberty,
From Old Atlantic, to Pacific's shores.[257]

British officers Henry Warre and Mervin Vavasour reported in early 1846 that American settlers had claimed much of the easy-to-cultivate land in the Willamette Valley:

> The American immigrants have as yet confined themselves principally to the valley of the Willamette, which has by far the richest soil, and finest land, in the whole territory. The cultivable part of it, however, cannot be said to extend more than 60 or 80 miles in length, and 15 or 20 miles in breadth. Nearly all of the prairie land is now taken up, and the immigrants are too indolent to clear the woods. They are consequently forming new settlements on the banks of the Columbia, at the mouth of the same river, and on the beautiful but not very rich plains to the north, in the neighborhood of Nisqually and Puget's Sound.[258]

In contrast to overlanders in the early 1840s, those traveling to Oregon in the late 1840s used trail guides to assist their journey, such as the *Emigrant Guide to Oregon and California* (Lansford Hastings, 1845), *Route Across the Rocky Mountains* (Overton Johnson and William Winter, 1846), and *Journal of Travels* (Joel Palmer, 1847).[259] These guides included helpful (if not always accurate) information regarding equipment, provisions, and supplies needed for the journey, as well as common mistakes and dangers overlanders should avoid while en route to Oregon. Most of the guides' content centered on what to expect during the journey, rather than the destination, though each did describe, often in embellished language, the main destination of the Willamette Valley. Johnson and Winter's guide went further, illustrating the Umpqua and Rogue River valleys, as well as lands east of the Cascade Mountains, which would increasingly be settled by American overlanders in the coming decades.[260] Palmer's guide included a limited dictionary with useful words in Nez Perce and Chinook Jargon.[261] Armed with this extra information, overlanders were able to complete their journey faster than their predecessors. Between 1841 and 1848, the westward trek took an average of 169.1 days. By the following decade, that number had been reduced to an average of 128.5 days.[262]

By 1846, those who came on the newly opened Barlow Road could reach the Willamette Valley as early as September.[263] In August of the following year, papers reported on how many wagons were estimated to be traveling west—perhaps as many as two thousand, journalists heard, but doubted that high of a number—and where those overlanders originated (primarily Missouri, Iowa,

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[257] "To the Oregon Emigrants of 1846," *Oregon Spectator*, September 17, 1846, 4.

[258] Warre and Vavasour to The Right Honorable Secretary of State for the Colonies, June 16, 1846, in Schafer, "Documents Relative to Warre and Vavasour's Military Reconnaissance in Oregon, 1845–6," 1–99, esp. 77.

[259] Lang, "Oregon Trail."

[260] Johnson and Winter, *Route Across the Rocky Mountains*, 167–71.

[261] Palmer, *Journal of travels over the Rocky Mountains*, 264–76.

[262] Schwantes, *Pacific Northwest*, 90.

[263] "The Emigration," *Oregon Spectator*, October 29, 1846, 2.

and Illinois, according to local intelligence).[264] That massive group of settlers began arriving in Oregon City in September 1847.[265] The *Oregon Spectator* reported,

> From a statement handed to us by Mr. Barlow, it appears the numbers that have passed by the Mount Hood road gate up to the present time, are:
> Males……1110
> Females……896
> Wagons……420
> Horses, cattle and mules……4976
> Sheep……500[266]

Some, like Thomas Smith, arrived later in the year. The twenty-year-old Smith began heading west on April 9, 1847. He recalled, "Our company got into the extreme head of the Willamette valley Sunday evening, October 24th, 1847, on as lovely a day as the sun ever shone upon."[267] Other overlanders found themselves only in The Dalles or at the foot of the Cascades in November or December.[268]

In 1847, 4,000 overlanders made the journey to Oregon. The Whitman incident contributed to a significant drop in Oregon-bound travelers for the next two years, with 1,300 arrivals in 1848 and 450 in 1849.[269] Instead, many overlanders headed for California, drawn by the discovery of gold in 1848. Many men who had previously settled in Oregon joined overlanders in heading to California to try their luck at the gold mines, leaving their families behind in Oregon with the plan to return upon striking it rich.[270]

US military troops also arrived in the region in 1849, as part of the retaliation against Cayuse people for the Whitman incident. These cavalry troops, known as the American Mounted Riflemen regiment, arrived in Oregon City in October of 1849. Upon their arrival in the Willamette Valley, dozens of soldiers from the regiment deserted for the California gold mines.[271]

Settlement Patterns

Most overlanders arrived in the Willamette Valley in the autumn, just as the rain began. Typically, they wintered in the northern part of the valley and then headed south in the spring to look for land. Some, though, immediately continued south upon arriving in the valley.[272] But unimproved roads, muddy from the continuous rain, made it difficult to travel around the valley

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[264] "News of the Immigration," *Oregon Spectator*, August 19, 1847; "The Largest Immigration Yet," *Oregon Spectator*, August 19, 1847, 2.

[265] "The Immigration," *Oregon Spectator*, September 30, 1847, 2.

[266] "The Emigration," *Oregon Spectator*, October 28, 1847, 2.

[267] Thomas Smith to John Minto, June 23, 1875, in *Transactions of the Eighteenth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1890* (Portland, OR: A. Anderson & Co., Printers and Lithographers, 1892), 77–78.

[268] "The Immigrants," *Oregon Spectator*, November 25, 1847, 2.

[269] Unruh, *Plains Across*, 119.

[270] Pollard, "Making of the Metis Children," 438.

[271] "The Troops," *Oregon Spectator*, October 18, 1849, 2; Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 73.

[272] Boag, "Calapooian Matrix," 100–104.

until the drier months of the spring and summer. Elizabeth Dixon Smith, who spent the winter of 1847–1848 in Portland, illustrated the problem of such roads in her diary: "You will think it strange that we do not leave this starved place. The reason is this—the road from here to the country is impassable in the winter, the distance being 12 miles, and because our cattle are yet very weak."[273]

Tolbert Carter came to Oregon in 1846 via the Applegate Trail.[274] Carter noted the state of the roads in his recollections of his first winter in Oregon:

> The next place of note we came to was where the beautiful city of Eugene is located. A small pole cabin was built—the first sign of civilization we had seen in traveling 2,000 miles. The little cabin, without door or window, looked homelike, indeed. Here several families, whose teams had become exhausted, were going to abandon their wagons and were making canoes to make the rest of the journey by water. Had I not been situated as I was, I would have joined that party. We went from this camp to what is now known as Long Tom River—a stream running crosswise of the valley, with much swampy land. It now being in December, of course all such sections were saturated with the continuous rains. To undertake this piece of road with exhausted teams proved to be terrible, as frequently each day oxen would mire and become helpless, and many had to be dragged out by main force, after which some were not able to stand, and were left to die. After several days of such helpless experience, Long Tom was reached.[275]

In the early 1840s, there were only a handful of White settlements, such as Champoeg and Oregon City. As the decade progressed, people spread southward, particularly as those established towns became crowded and land scarce. The *Oregon Spectator* noted in early 1847 that "at least nine tenths of succeeding emigrants to this country, must find homes south of Salem."[276]

Even earlier arrivals were moving south, sometimes on second land claims. Washington Smith Gilliam arrived with his family in 1844. His father acquired a land claim that spring but moved the family again two years later, as Gilliam recalled:

> In the fall of 1847 father disposed of the place we settled on, and moved up the country about twelve miles and bought a place on Pedee. This fall one of my sisters married. In the meantime some Indians had become acquainted with us, and were living in the immediate neighborhood.[277]

Other overlanders moved between towns and land claims in search of economic opportunities. Thomas Smith arrived in Oregon in 1847 at the age of twenty. In an 1875 letter, he related how he moved around the valley, from one job to the next:

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[273] "Diary of Mrs. Elizabeth Dixon Smith Geer," in *Transactions of the Thirty-Fifth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association, Portland, June 19, 1907* (Portland, OR: Chausse-Prudhomme Co. Commercial Printers, 1908), 175.

[274] "Tolbert Carter," *Southern Oregon History, Revised*, January 31, 2021, https://truwe.sohs.org/files/tolbertcarter.html.

[275] Tolbert Carter, "Pioneer Days," in *Transactions of the Thirty-Fourth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association, June 14, 1906* (Portland, OR: Peaslee Bros. Chausse, Printers, 1907), 87.

[276] Z., "Road to Oregon—No. 2," *Oregon Spectator*, February 4, 1847, 3.

[277] "Reminiscences of Washington Smith Gilliam," in *Transactions of the Thirty-First Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1903* (Portland, OR: Peaslee Bros. Company, Printers, 1904), 212–13.

Although arriving at the extreme south end of the valley I never halted until I reached Butteville, and there I concluded I was far enough north. At this place I had my first experience in making rails out of fir timber, although I had made many thousands out of different varieties of oak and ash and other timber east of the Mississippi river. From Butteville I went to Orville Risley's, on the north fork of the Yamhill river, just above where Lafayette now is, and made rails for him. From there I went to the neighborhood of Eugene City and helped the family I boarded with on the southern road erect a dwelling house, and then made rails in that neighborhood for the widow Wright, E. F. Skinner and others.[278]

French Prairie

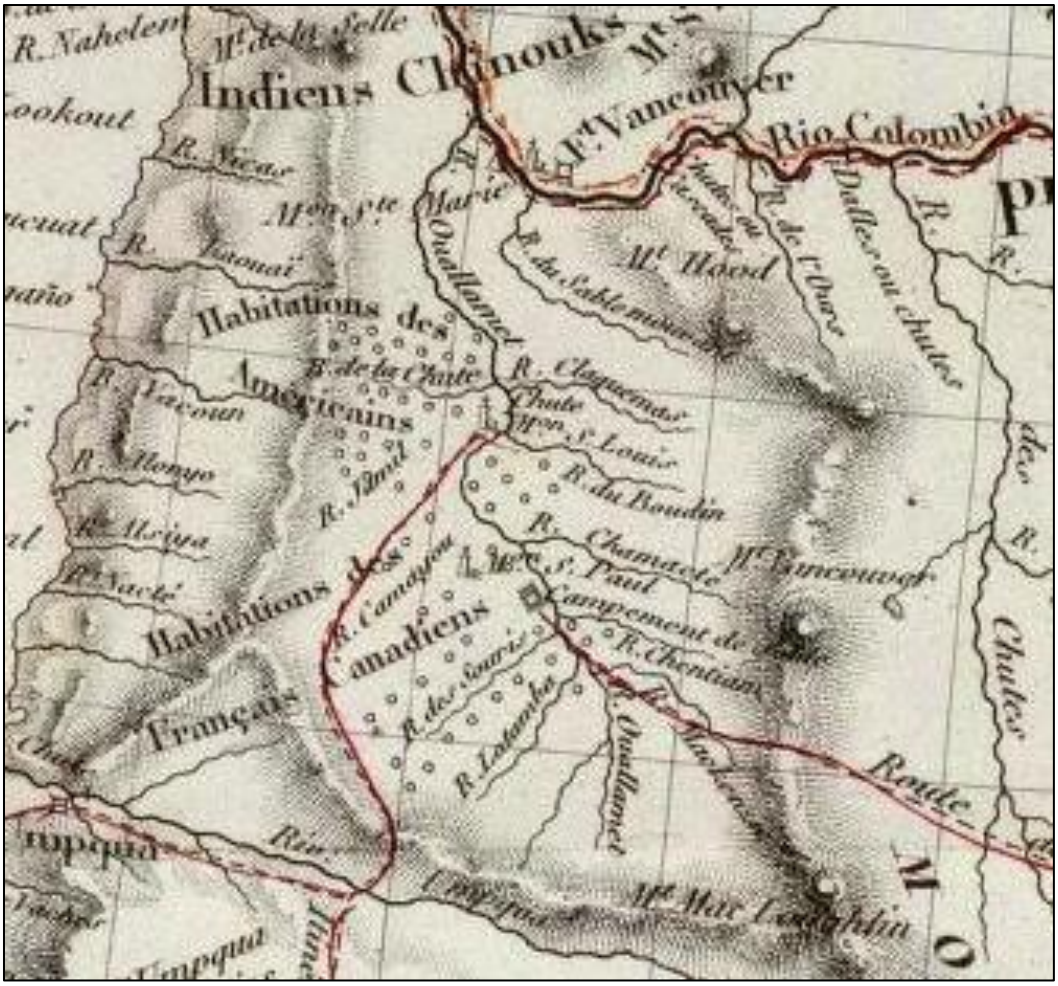

Figure 17. This section of Eugene Duflot de Mofras's 1844 map of Oregon shows American and Métis settlements in French Prairie.

Source: David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries.

[278] Thomas Smith to John Minto, June 23, 1875, in *Transactions of the Eighteenth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1890* (Portland, OR: A. Anderson & Co., Printers and Lithographers, 1892), 77–78.

In the 1840s, the five main towns of French Prairie were Butteville, Champoeg, Gervais, St. Louis, and St. Paul.[279] The towns along the Willamette River, including Champoeg and Butteville, aspired to become cities, as did growing towns like Oregon City and Portland.[280]

While French Prairie had been a center for the Métis community, it increasingly became occupied by White Americans during the late 1840s (see Figures 17 and 18). In addition to the rise of Americans, Métis families, facing restricted options under the new territorial government in Oregon, began leaving the Willamette Valley or assimilated into larger White communities.[281] Those who left settled elsewhere in Oregon, as well as in British Columbia and California, following the discovery of gold in the latter.[282] Mary Aplin, whose father had been a dairyman at Fort Vancouver and whose mother was Indigenous, remembered how the rush of Métis families to California caused the Catholic community centers in French Prairie to disintegrate:

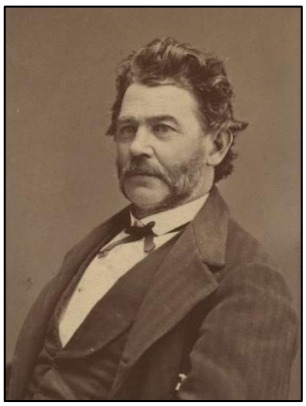

Figure 18. In the late 1840s, English-speaking Americans increasingly settled in French Prairie, eventually displacing many of the area's earlier Métis residents. Pictured here (ca. 1872) is Willard H. Rees, who traveled overland to Oregon in 1844 and later settled in French Prairie.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

> Sometimes in our congregation we would have Kanakas [Hawaiians] from the Sandwich islands; Iroquois Indians, most of whom were Catholics, French Canadians with their Indian wives and children, and sometimes our white-haired governor, the well-loved Dr. McLoughlin, would be there.
>
> In many ways the discovery of gold was bad for Oregon, for it destroyed the old peaceful and happy life of the settlers. By taking away many of the most faithful Catholics of St. Paul to California it crippled the churchwork. St. Joseph's college for Catholic boys stopped its work in 1849, and it never resumed. Later the Jesuits closed the mission of St. Francis Xavier and three years later, in 1852, the convent at St. Paul in charge of the Sisters of Notre Dame, was closed, as well as the school at Oregon City. But we still had the church and those of us who were left were faithful in its support.[283]

Oregon City

Oregon City was the center of the American community in the Willamette Valley during the mid- to late 1840s. Its strategic location on the Willamette River and at the base of Willamette Falls made it an important center for trade, as well as the main terminus for the Oregon Trail (see Figure

[279] Melinda Jetté, "French Prairie," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/french_prairie.

[280] Richard Engeman, "Champoeg," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/champoeg.

[281] Pollard, "Making of the Metis Children," xx, xxii, xxvii.

[282] Pollard, "Making of the Metis Children," 438.

[283] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, September 21, 1914, 6. Aplin calls herself a "half-breed" in Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, September 19, 1914, 4.

19).[284] In 1845, the Provisional Government named Oregon City its capital. The town had nearly one hundred buildings, including businesses, churches, and residences. Land lots in Oregon City became some of the most expensive in the valley with the influx of gold from California, costing from $70 to $2,000 in the late 1840s, the equivalent of $2,200 to $63,000 in 2020 currency.[285] A population of 300 in 1845 grew to nearly 700 by 1850, making it the most populous settlement in the Oregon Territory.[286]

Figure 19. Oregon City continued to be the most influential American settlement in Oregon through the late 1840s. Here, Oregon City as depicted by the artist Paul Kane, drawn sometime between 1849 and 1856.

Source: Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum, (c) ROM.

The *Oregon Spectator* described Oregon City and neighboring Linn City (now known as West Linn) in 1846 (note that there are discrepancies between this and other descriptions of the towns):

> On the east side of the Willamette, at the falls, the land is claimed by Dr. John McLaughlin [*sic*], who laid out Oregon City in the year 1842. The many advantages presented for the growth and prosperity of a manufacturing city, is manifest to the most casual observer. We are informed that where Oregon City now stands, it was, three years ago, a dense forest of fir and underbrush. The march of improvement has been with gigantic stride. The city is now incorporated with a population of not less than 500 souls, and about eighty houses, to-wit: Two churches, two taverns, two blacksmith shops, two cooper shops, two cabinet shops, four tailor shops, one hatter

[284] William G. Robbins, "Willamette Valley," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/willamette_valley.

[285] Whaley, "Creating Oregon from *Illahee*," 265.

[286] Val Ballestrem, "Oregon City," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/oregon-city.

> shop, one tannery, three shoe shops, two silversmiths, and a number of other mechanics; four stores, two flouring and two saw mills, and a lath machine. One of the flouring and one of the saw mills, together with the lath machine, were erected and put in operation by a company of American citizens, associated together under the name of the "Oregon Milling Company," and until within a few weeks past, the flouring mill was conducted as a public mill grinding for the settlers for toll; it, however, has been changed from doing custom work to that of exchange, giving a certain number of pounds of flour for a bushel of wheat. The mill owned by Dr. John McLaughlin has never done any custom grinding, but exchanged flour for wheat. We are satisfied that the march of improvement would have been much greater at Oregon City, if nails and paints could have been obtained sufficient to meet the demands of the citizens. On the west side of the river, opposite the falls, the land is claimed by Robert Moore, Esq., who has also laid out a city, called Linn City, and improvements are going ahead. . . . Linn City contains one tavern, one chair manufactory, one cabinet shop, one gunsmith shop, and one wagon shop. Next on the list of cities comes Multnomah City, laid out by Hugh Burns, Esq., immediately adjoining Linn City, and opposite to Oregon City. . . . The falls of the Willamette affords ample water privileges for the erection of machinery of every description, to any extent desired; and we believe that, in a few years, there will be constructed a canal on each side of the river . . . which improvement would afford power for the manufacturing of every thing necessary for internal purposes, as well as transportation. With these advantages, together with the great quantity of timber immediately in our neighborhood—a healthy climate, a productive soil, and minerals yet to be found, we are sanguine that the time is not far distant when we must become great, and we hope, good.[287]

James D. Miller, an 1848 overlander, later reflected on his memories of Oregon City:

> On our arrival at Oregon City, I found everything quite different from what I had expected, so I now have many subjects to relate and treat upon. Oregon City contained a population of 350 to 400 whites, possibly 500, including halfbreeds and Indians. There were three small churches, Methodist, Congregational and Catholic. The Baptists held their meetings in a school house. There were three stores, a large one of the Hudson's Bay Company, one owned by Abernethy and Clark, not a very large store, and one owned by Kilborn and Pettygrove. There were also one or two blacksmith shops, a wagon shop, one meat market, possibly one saloon, two flour mills, two sawmills and one weekly newspaper, Oregon Spectator, whose editor was Aaron E. Wait. The Spectator was the only newspaper published at that time in the Oregon country.[288]

Major Osborne Cross, who arrived with the Mounted Riflemen in Oregon City in October 1849, recorded in his first impressions of the town, which differed significantly from Miller's:

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[287] "Willamette River," *Oregon Spectator*, February 19, 1846, 2.

[288] James D. Miller, "Early Oregon Scenes: A Pioneer Narrative (In Three Parts, I.): Overland Trail, 1848," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (March 1930): 55–68, esp. 66. Also in 1848, Baptists built a meeting house in Oregon City. See Joseph McQueen, "Baptist Church Started in 1844 in Cabin Home," *Oregonian*, April 1, 1934, 7.

> Oregon [City] is not a very prepossessing place in its appearance, for like all new places in the western country the stumps and half-burnt trees lie about in every direction. . . . To get from Fort Vancouver to Oregon City, which is the capital of the territory one [must] be a good woodsman, as there is nothing but a crooked bridle-path through as dense a forest as can be found in any country. In going to and coming from Oregon City Captain Ingalls and myself [got] lost repeatedly, and that too within a mile of the city.[289]

Milwaukie and Falls

As Oregon City continued to grow, land within the town's boundaries became scarce, and what was available became increasingly expensive. The *Oregon Spectator* commented on this trend in both Oregon City and Linnton:

> There has been a great advance in the value of property in the cities of the Falls of the Willamette within a few months. Real estate has more than trebled [sic] in value this season, and this tendency is still upward. There have been a good many new buildings erected recently, and the place is improving rapidly. And though a large proportion of our population are gone to the gold mines, yet everything wears the appearance of active business prosperity. And the extensive improvements every where making, give good assurance that our citizens are using their abundance of gold to good purpose.[290]

As a result, two new communities emerged both north and south of Willamette Falls by the end of the 1840s: Milwaukie and Falls.

Lot Whitcomb left Missouri in the spring of 1847, arriving in Oregon City that autumn. He filed a land claim at the mouth of Johnson Creek, on lands that been occupied by the Clackamas, about eight miles north of Oregon City.[291] In 1848, he platted the townsite of Milwaukie, roughly named after his Wisconsin hometown.[292] The town boomed during the California gold rush years. With its location on the Willamette River, Milwaukie was accessible to ocean-going vessels. Whitcomb built a sawmill and grist mill to supply lumber and flour to markets to the south. He became an early developer of the maritime shipping industry in Oregon, building the first steam-powered boat on the Willamette River, the *Lot Whitcomb*, in 1850 to carry his own goods to California. By the late 1840s to early 1850s, Milwaukie was beginning to outpace Oregon City as a center of trade in Oregon.[293]

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[289] Raymond W. Settle, ed., *The March of the Mounted Riflemen: First United States Military Expedition to travel the full length of the Oregon Trail from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Vancouver May to October, 1849, as recorded in the journals of Major Osborne Cross and George Gibbs and the official report of Colonel Loring* (Glendale, CA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1940), 265–66.

[290] "Property in Oregon and Linn Cities," *Oregon Spectator*, October 18, 1849, 2.

[291] Val Ballestrem, "Milwaukie," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/milwaukie.

[292] In the mid-nineteenth century, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, was also frequently spelled "Milwaukie." How someone spelled the town name typically indicated their political affiliation. Whigs, and later Republicans, used "Milwaukee." Democrats favored "Milwaukie." See Ballestrem, "Milwaukie."

[293] Ballestrem, "Milwaukie."

Writers at the *Oregon Spectator*, not yet worried about the rise of Milwaukie, described the town in 1849:

> We take pleasure in announcing the commencement and growth of numerous villages in this Territory. . . . we begin with Milwaukie. This village is located on the east bank of the Willamette river, in Clackamas county, some six miles below the Falls. Lot Whitcomb, Esq., is the proprietor. It may be said to be at the head of ship navigation on the Willamette. . . . In the rapid improvement it is making we have evidence that its citizens possess the right kind of go-ahead American energy to guarantee its prosperity. The erection of a new building is a matter of very frequent occurrence [sic], and gives assurance of an active, busy population. Four saw mills and one grist mill are, or soon will be in active operation. . . . There is a good and full school in operation there, under the care of Mr. Campbell. . . . We commend Milwaukie to the notice of the public, and wish it abundant prosperity.[294]

Absalom F. Hedges arrived in Oregon City in 1844. Finding most of the lots taken, he traveled just south of the city to an area known as Canemah and staked out his claim. In 1849, he platted a townsite and named it Falls City.[295] The *Oregon Spectator* reported on the new town in December 1849:

> It is situated on the East side of the Willamette, immediately above the Falls, and adjoining Oregon City. It enjoys great commercial advantages as the terminus of the navigation of the Willamette from above. It undoubtedly will in a few years become a place of very considerable business—Though Falls city was surveyed only a few weeks since, such is the spirit of improvement, that we see several new houses erected, and we are assured that others will be erected soon. We are authorized to say that a lot will be cheerfully donated to any Christian denomination that may wish to erect a house of worship in Falls city.[296]

By the late nineteenth century, Falls had been all but absorbed by the expansion of Oregon City.[297]

Portland

Overlanders began establishing additional communities that would soon rival Oregon City. In 1843, Asa Lovejoy filed a land claim for 640 acres on the Willamette River, in an area known as "the clearing," which Multnomah Chinooks had cleared of underbrush. This site would eventually become the center of downtown Portland. Lovejoy filed this claim with his business partner William P. Overton, who soon sold his half-share to Francis W. Pettygrove.[298] Lovejoy and Pettygrove platted the initial townsite in 1845, between what is now SW Washington and Jefferson Streets. To promote their new town of Portland (named by Mainer Pettygrove), the pair offered inexpensive

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[294] "Milwaukie," *Oregon Spectator*, December 13, 1849, 2.

[295] Howard McKinley Corning, *Willamette Landings: Ghost Towns of the River* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 2nd Edition, 1977), 41, 45, and 58–69.

[296] "Falls City," *Oregon Spectator*, December 13, 1849, 2.

[297] Corning, *Willamette Landings*, 214.

[298] Susan Badger Doyle, "William P. Overton," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/overton_william; Lovejoy and Reed, "Lovejoy's Pioneer Narrative," 237.

lots and gave many away at no cost to those who agreed to build cabins on them.[299] In 1846, Pettygrove built the first wood-frame house in the townsite, along with a wharf, warehouse, and store at the foot of Washington Street.[300]

Warre and Vavasour wrote about the emerging community on June 16, 1846: "Since the summer [of 1845] a village called Portland has been commenced between the falls and Linnton, to which an American merchant ship ascended and discharged her cargo, in September [1845]. The situation of Portland is superior to that of Linnton, and the back country of easier access."[301]

Some overlanders stopped in Portland on their way to destinations to the south. Elizabeth Dixon Smith, an 1847 overlander, wrote about her brief time in Portland in her diary. Rachel Fisher, another 1847 overlander, had traveled to Oregon with her husband John and their daughter Angelina, in a train led by family friend Henderson Luelling.[302] Both John and Angelina died en route, but Rachel survived the journey. She arrived in Portland in November, staying there a month before settling in the Tualatin Valley, in what is now Washington County, where she married William A. Mills.[303] Excerpts from a March 13, 1848, letter to her family provide her impressions of Portland as well as other nearby communities:

> I stoped at Portland near a month after I got there but my cattle were not doing well where they were & hearing that the range was better on the plains I concluded to move out there and winter at Isaac Mills. . . . Health appears to be good on the plains people look well and there appears to be but little use for grave yard At Portland (which is 24 miles from here) they have the ague some, but the second person was buried there while I was stoped there that had ever died neer the place & that person was an emigrant . . . Oregon City appears to be quite A flourishing little town there is something of A spirit of reform existing there, there is A temperance meeting A licium two common day schools, & two different religious meeting up there. the situation of the place seems to be to be rougher than any place that I ever seen in Iowa. the bluff coming up to within a stonethrow of the river, leaves A small space for A city, but it advantages of mill privileges can not be exceled in any place the falls of willamet being just at the upper edge of town. Portland is the head of ship navigation there has been between 15 and 20 ships there within the last twelve months it is A better situation for A town than Oregon City notwithstanding it is

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[299] Carl Abbott, "Portland," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/portland.

[300] Richard Engeman, "Wooden Beams and Railroad Ties: The History of Oregon's Built Environment," *Oregon History Project*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/narratives/wooden-beams-and-railroad-ties-the-history-of-oregons-built-environment/sawn-lumber-and-greek-temples-1850-1870/town-beginnings.

[301] Warre and Vavasour to The Right Honorable Secretary of State for the Colonies, June 16, 1846, in Schafer, "Documents Relative to Warre and Vavasour's Military Reconnaissance in Oregon, 1845–6," 1–99, esp. 76–77.

[302] Henderson Luelling (also sometimes spelling Lewelling) brought hundreds of fruit tree sprouts, including cherry, apple, and pear, with him to Oregon during his 1847 journey. He, along with his brother Seth Lewelling and foreman Ah Bing, are credited with developing the Pacific Northwest fruit tree industry. For more information, see Thomas C. McClintock, "Henderson Luelling, Seth Lewelling and the Birth of the Pacific Coast Fruit Industry," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (June 1967): 153–74.

[303] Holmes, *Covered Wagon Women: Volume 1*, 97–98, 103.

> very heavy timbered. there seem to be but little thought of in Portland but to get rich nor does there seem to be much else thought of in Oregon.[304]

Salem

In 1841, Methodist missionary Jason Lee opened a mission and school in the Willamette Valley near the Kalapuyan village of Tchimikiti. He also established a nearby town, which he named Chemeketa. His house, built in 1842, became the first frame house in the region. He also built a grist mill and sawmill. Lee closed the mission in 1844 and transferred the property, including the town of Chemeketa, to William Willson. The school became the Oregon Institute. Willson platted a new townsite at Chemeketa, which he named Salem, after "salaam," the Arabic word for peace.[305]

In late 1849, the *Oregon Spectator* described Salem as a town with "four or five stores, and good saw and grist mill, a most beautiful site, and a large and fertile agricultural country all around it. At this place is located the Institute; which is the most liberally endowed and efficient institution of learning in the Territory. It has a population of some 300."[306]

Finding a Home

Finding Lodging Upon Arrival

Upon arriving in the Willamette Valley, most overlanders found temporary shelter during their first winter. This included lodging with family or friends, renting a room or house, staying in a hotel, or squatting in an abandoned building. Unlike those who arrived during the first half of the 1840s, travelers later in the decade did not typically stay in Fort Vancouver. Instead, they traveled directly to Portland, Oregon City, or other established and emerging communities.

Some overlanders, like Abraham Garrison who arrived in 1846, stayed with family. He later recalled:

> About the first of December, we landed in the Willamette valley. . . . Just after passing Skinner Bute we met Uncle Enoch Garrison walking, and leading a horse packed with provisions. You see by this, that our relatives who came to Oregon in 1843 had not forgotton us. First Uncle Joseph, then Cousin Jeptha then his Father, My Uncle Enoch, came to our relief. It was about 10 Oclock AM when Uncle met us, Father was driving the team, when they met, they kissed each other, then Uncle turned and and [they] walked side by side, Jeptha said for half of a mile without either speaking [they were] Blubering like calves. I suppose it was an effecting meeting. The last time they were together, their Mother was with them, and you can imagine what thoughts came surging to their minds. The next morning after Uncle Enoch arrived, Cousin Jeptha and David my Brother started for home as we began to call Uncle Enochs place. We now felt that we were homeward bound, a few more

[304] Holmes, *Covered Wagon Women: Volume 1*, 104–6.

[305] David Lewis, "City of Salem," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/salem_city_of.

[306] "Salem," *Oregon Spectator*, December 27, 1849, 2.

> days, and our journey would be ended. . . . After turning the teams out, we started for Uncle Enochs place where we arrived on Saturday evening at sundown, and on the 12th day of December 1846.[307]

Others stayed with friends during that first winter. Mrs. Charles Croner, who crossed the plains in 1847, remembered decades later,

> We arrived at Eugene in November in a heavy rain. There was a cabin standing about where Villard hall now stands. A man named Shaw was living in the cabin. The men slept outdoors while some of the women folks spent the night in the cabin. My sister was six years old. I was four and mother had a baby a year old. . . . We settled at Pleasant Hill. I can remember distinctly when we moved on our donation land claim and broke the ground for the first time with the plow.[308]

William Porter completed his 1848 journey in October, arriving at a friend's home, "where we expect to live one year."[309]

Some overlanders lived in cramped quarters, sharing shelter with other families. Elizabeth Dixon Smith arrived in Portland on November 29, 1847, along with her husband Cornelius Smith and their eight children.[310] She recorded her efforts to find shelter the following day:

> Raining this morning I ran about trying to get a house to get into with my sick husband. At last I found a small, leaky concern, with two families already in it. Mrs. Polk had got down before us. She and another widow was in this house. My family and Welch's went in with them, and you could have stirred us with a stick. Welch and my oldest boy was driving the cattle around. My children and I carried up a bed. The distance was nearly a quarter of a mile. Made it down on the floor in the mud. I got some men to carry my husband up through the rain and lay him on it, and he never was out of that shed until he was carried out in his coffin. Here lay five of us bedfast at one time, and we had no money, and what few things we had left that would bring money, I had to sell. I had to give 10 cents a pound for fresh pork, 75 cents per bushel for potatoes, 4 cents a pound for fish. There are so many of us sick that I cannot write any more at present. I have not time to write much, but I thought it would be interesting to know what kind of weather we have in the winter.[311]

Smith provided additional details about the family's lodgings in these excerpts from her diary, written in 1848:

> JAN. 16.—Warm and dry. We are still living in the old, leaky shed in Portland. It is six miles below Vancouver, down the Columbia and 12 miles up the Willamette.

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[307] Abraham Garrison, "Reminiscences of A. H. Garrison His Early Life, Across the Plains and of Oregon from 1846 to 1903," 1906, Oregon State Historical Society, Mss. 1508, transcribed by James Tompkins, 35–36.

[308] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, October 25, 1913, 4.

[309] William Porter, trail diary, 1848, http://www.oregonpioneers.com/porter.htm.

[310] Holmes, *Covered Wagon Women: Volume 1*, 111–12.

[311] "Diary of Mrs. Elizabeth Dixon Smith Geer," 172–75.

> Portland has two white houses and one brick and three wood-colored frame houses and a few cabins.
>
> JAN. 31.—Rain all day. If I could tell you how we suffer you would not believe it. Our house, or rather a shed joined to a house, leaks all over. The roof descends in such a manner as to make the rain run right down into the fire. I have dipped as much as six pails of water off of our dirt hearth in one night. . . .
>
> FEB. 9.—Clear and cool. Perhaps you will want to know how cool. I will tell you. We have lived all winter in a shed constructed by setting up studs 5 feet high on the lowest side. The other side joins a cabin. It is boarded up with clapboards and several of them are torn off in places, and there is no shutter to our door, and if it was not for the rain putting out our fire and leaking down all over the house we would be comfortable.[312]

Cornelius Smith died on February 1, 1848. Elizabeth Dixon Smith and her children left Portland on February 24. She lived for a time with her daughter Susan Welch and Métis son-in-law Russell Welch on the Welch land claim on Panther Creek. In June 1849, Smith later married Joseph Cary Geer and settled on his land claim in Yamhill County, across the Willamette River from Butteville.[313]

Over the winter of 1849–1850, Inez Adams Parker's family of four lived with another family with ten children in a two-room shelter with a loft. To pay for the lodgings, Parker's father served as a schoolteacher to all the children. In the evenings, he made tables, chairs, and brooms by the light of a "shallow tin pan of melted tallow, with all but one end of an inch-wide strip of cotton or woolen cloth immersed in it, and the protruding end resting on the edge of the pan ignited for light . . . later when candle wicking could be had, mother made candles."[314]

Those without friends or relations in Oregon rented out rooms or sometimes entire houses, for either money or services rendered. Tabitha Brown, who arrived in 1846, provides one example. Her eldest son, Orus Brown, had traversed the Oregon Trail in 1843, briefly settled in what is now Washington County, and then returned east to Missouri in 1845 to encourage members of his family to take the journey westbound as well. Tabitha joined Orus and other family members in a wagon party, which split near Fort Hall, Idaho. Orus Brown took the traditional route across the Blue Mountains, while the remaining members took a new cutoff that later became known as the Applegate Trail. The new trail proved arduous, and the party nearly starved to death before finally reaching the Willamette Valley in late December. Tabitha Brown found shelter her first winter in a home in Salem.[315] She recounted,

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[312] "Diary of Mrs. Elizabeth Dixon Smith Geer," 172–75.

[313] Holmes, *Covered Wagon Women: Volume 1*, 112–14, 149–50.

[314] Schlissel, *Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey*, 147; for the original source, see Inez Eugenia Adams Parker, "Early Recollections of Oregon Pioneer Life, 1848," in *Transactions of the Fifty-Sixth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1928* (Portland, OR: Oregon Pioneer Association, 1928), 17–35.

[315] Holmes, *Covered Wagon Women: Volume 1*, 48–50; Jean M. Ward, "Tabitha Moffat Brown (1780–1858)," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 31, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/brown_tabitha_moffat_1780_1858_; Jeff LaLande, "Applegate Trail," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 31, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/applegate_trail.

> On Christmas Day at 2 P. M. I entered the house of a Methodist minister, the first I had set foot in for nine months. He requested me to take the whole charge of house and family through the winter – his wife was as ignorant and useless as a Heathan [sic] Goddess. My services compensated for my own board and Captain Brown's through the winter.[316]

Ella Talbot recalled the experiences of her parents and siblings, who had originally left Illinois for California in 1849, but instead made their way to Portland, where they rented a room:

> When they came to the forks in the trail where the road swung south to California they found the Indians had burned the grass off all that country and father was afraid they could not go through on account of having no feed for the oxen. He decided to come on to Oregon so they arrived in Portland in the fall of 1849. They lived in a house that Finice Carruthers built on First street, near what is now Salmon street. It was a three room house. A man by the name of Morgan and his mother lived in one room, the Davis family had the other room and my folks had the third room. I have often heard my brothers and sisters talk about their first winter in Portland. The pigs used to get under the house and greatly annoy my mother with their squealing and grunting and occasionally when they had a fight they would almost lift the boards off the floor. There was one old sow that was particularly bad about fighting and squealing so my brother Charley poured some hot water through the crack in the floor on her and that settled her. She decided to go where things were not so tropical, and never came back.[317]

The American Mounted Riflemen regiment arrived in Oregon City on October 9, 1849, after traveling the length of the Oregon Trail. They lodged in six rented houses:

> These provided quarters for officers and men, officers, a hospital, and storehouses. In addition stables and mule lots were secured. The total amount paid for these accommodations was $611 2/3 per month. Complaints were immediately made that the buildings were not satisfactory, either as to quantity or quality. [Major Osborne] Cross, who was responsible for locating the troops, advised the breaking down of partitions where possible, the assignment of two officers to a room, and the securing of additional quarters if necessary.[318]

Mrs. J. K. Waite, who arrived with her family in 1849, shared memories of renting rooms, including one to Jacob Kamm, later a developer of river transportation in the region and co-founder of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company:[319]

> During winter of '49–'50 they were building the "Lot Whitcomb," Jacob Kamm, a young man from Switzerland and a fine mechanic, was in charge of installing her machinery. He boarded with us. I was 13 years old that winter, and I can remember

[316] Holmes, *Covered Wagon Women: Volume 1*, 58.

[317] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, March 14, 1914, 4.

[318] Settle, *March of the Mounted Riflemen*, 265.

[319] "Jacob Kamm," *The Oregonian*, December 16, 1912.

> how kind Mr. Kamm used to be to me. We charged the transient trade from $1 to $2 a meal, and most of our pay was in gold dust.[320]

If they had the financial means, new arrivals stayed in hotels. As more overlanders arrived in Oregon, the number of hotels and the number of hotel advertisements increased. The following are some examples:

> The travelling community are respectfully invited to call. The City Hotel is undergoing repairs, and the proprietor feels safe in saying that when completed, his customers will feel more comfortable, as every necessary attention will be rendered to make them so. His table shall not be surpassed in the territory. Those who favor him with a call from the west side of the river, will receive horse ferriage fee. [City Hotel, Oregon City, 1846.][321]

> This hotel is designed for the accommodation of the travelling community. . . . The proprietor has a large pasture only a short distance from the Hotel, which will be appropriated to the use of his customers. [Washington Hotel, Linn City, 1847.][322]

> By reference to our advertising columns it will be seen that our friend Theo. Magruder has reopened the "City Hotel." The house has undergone a thorough renovation, indeed with its additional improvements it is better than new, and we are fully satisfied that the traveling community will find in Mr. Magruder a gentlemanly host and enjoy the best of accommodations at his establishment. [City Hotel, Oregon City, 1847.][323]

Other overlanders found empty or abandoned buildings and squatted in them over their first winter. Tolbert Carter recalled learning about such shelter from Portland resident Thomas Reed:

> he informed us of one of those lovely, unoccupied cabins a short distance from his place, that he thought we might get into for a time, but the man who had control of it lived two miles beyond. He gave us directions as how to find the cabin, and we struck out, without trail or road, and luckily found it. My cousin mounted a horse and started to ascertain if we could occupy the house, leaving us and the teams standing till his return. It was raining as though a second flood was approaching. I went and looked through a crack, and there I saw the first dry ground I had seen in two months. I had seen gorgeously furnished sitting-rooms, floors carpeted with the finest Brussels, but nothing I had ever seen had such a charm for me as did that dry ground, with the drenching rain overhead. The temptation was too strong for a youngster like me to endure, so without considering the penalty of breaking into a dwelling, I went to the wagon and got an ax, and in much less time than it takes to write it, I had place cut for a door. Firewood being handy, I soon built a fire against the side of the chimney. I quickly improvised an Oregon bedstead (one-legged) and conveyed my invalid charge into the house, and placed her in a comfortable bed. I

[320] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, April 17, 1914, 8.

[321] "City Hotel By H. M. Knighton, Oregon City," advertisement, *Oregon Spectator*, February 5, 1846, 3.

[322] "Washington Hotel, by S. H. L. Meek, Linn City," advertisement, *Oregon Spectator*, September 17, 1846, 4.

[323] [No title], *Oregon Spectator*, September 30, 1847, 2.

then turned the teams loose on the grass, which was very plentiful. All these changes were made before my cousin returned and reported that we could occupy the house. He asked how I knew I could occupy the house. I knew I could when I cut a hole in the wall, and there were not men enough in Oregon to put me out till it quit raining. I am sure that a king in his palace never felt better or enjoyed himself better than we did the first night in our new habitation. . . . Our first night under shelter, with beds arranged on dry ground, and the rain pattering over our heads, was a joy and comfort that none but persons in our weary and exhausted condition can possibly imagine. Oh, how sound we slept! The rain pattering on the roof sounded sweeter than any music from the finest quartet of today. Morning came, and we all arose refreshed from the effect of our night's rest, with knowledge that this was the first morning in almost eight months without the hurry and discomfort incident on preparing to move camp. This morning there was nothing to do but to partake of our simple repast. . . . Attention was now turned toward making our new home as comfortable as circumstances would permit. The wagons were stripped of their covers, one was used to make a door shutter, the two tents were spread out and made protection on three side and served as ceiling inside; rough, uncouth seats were improvised, nails driven in the walls to adjust clothing, and in a word our new home was made comfortable, compared with that of our long, tedious journey. [324]

Staking or Purchasing Land Claims

Most overlanders in the later 1840s spent their first winter in temporary housing—sometimes with friends or relations, sometimes as renters, and sometimes by squatting—and then began seeking land in the spring. They could find claims in rural stretches across the Willamette Valley, or they could purchase lots from the increasing number of towns and villages being platted in the region.

A September 1847 letter to the *Oregon Spectator* provided advice to recent arrivals regarding both land claims and town lots:

> Permit me, while I rejoice in the anticipation of so large and important addition to our infant community and settlement in this territory as that which will be afforded by your safe arrival amongst us, to make a few remarks with regard to our situation and social capacity, which I think may be taken kindly by you as coming from one who has many friends and acquaintances amongst your number. No doubt many of you may have encountered hardships and privations in effecting your journey beyond your worst anticipations—with such I can most heartily sympathise; and in landing in this country, the first object of many of you will be to settle a land claim, which may be your future home, and in doing this in Oregon, you will do well to proceed with caution, taking sufficient time to examine and satisfy yourselves with the right of the different claims of the various portions of country for pre-eminence in advantageous locations, quality of the soil, and other natural advantages pertaining thereto, before you determine your section of location, in the process of which you will find the same disposition for speculation in land claims that you may have found

[324] Carter, "Pioneer Days," 89–93.

> at an earlier period in some of the new territory of the Mississippi valley; and here, in order to protect yourselves against impositions that may be practised upon you by venders of such property, I would refer you to the regulations of our temporary government. . . .
>
> Those of you having your attention turned towards locations in villages and the acquisition of town property, will be met by the vender of town and village lots, with all the usual form of acquirements in favor of their respective eligible positions, and in their transactions, above all others, you may perhaps be the worst imposed upon. So far, the usual practice of proprietors of town sites in Oregon, has been to take a few stakes, and with compass in hand, lay off as ma[n]y lots as will answer for present purposes—make a memorandum or plats of the same, which they keep closely under the thumb, when not safely deposited under lock and key, they offer these lots for sale as town lots, and obtain corresponding prices—avoiding at the same time to make the certificate, deeds, and acknowledgments, together with the public record as prescribed by the laws, adopted and now in force in the territory, with regard to town sites and town property, by which they retain in themselves alone the right alone of possession to all the streets, alleys, wharfs and landings. This is the case, at least, with all the principal town sites in Oregon, and although much to be wondered at, these proprietors have succeeded in sales to a considerable extent, and even to the building of some considerable towns, yet still escape the penalty of the law made and provided for the punishment of such games of swindling. . . . Thus, after having disposed of a great number of lots, at extravagant prices, and a village of several hundred inhabitants has grown up by the industry and enterprise of its citizens, he still seeks to obtain the fee simple to all the streets, alleys, and whatever else. . . . [I]t may be readily overlooked by strangers until their funds may have been transferred to the proprietors' coffers, when too late they may discover that their lots are hemmed in on every side by his private property, to travel over which in obtaining free access to such lots, would place you with him constructively in the position of an eternal vassal.[325]

Those overlanders who ventured south in the valley to find claims, and later east and west, typically avoided any land near the Willamette River, which was prone to flooding. They looked for foothills, which had both prairie and forest features, and streams, as reliable sources of fresh water.[326] Tolbert Carter, who arrived in Oregon in 1846, claimed land the following spring. He recognized the value of having water on his property:

> I came to the place that from then till now has been my home. A fine spring was gushing out at the edge of the valley, and about all I knew of selecting a home was that it should possess water, and I fancied that this place, when improved, would make a good one, so I resolved to locate it for that purpose. . . . With the dark future in view, my brother and I returned next day, laid a foundation for a house, near the spring, drove stakes at the corner, which filled the requirements of the organic law at the time. Good luck came my way, as this narrative will show, so that I retained my

[325] S. S. White, "To the Immigrants of 1847," *Oregon Spectator*, September 30, 1847, 4.

[326] Boag, "Calapooian Matrix," 92–93.

> place, and it is my home today. Without giving occurring incidents, I will say that after a time my cousin purchased a claim a short distance from mine, built a house and all hands moved to his place. It was a beautiful location, and he made it afterwards a lovely home.[327]

Frances Marion Wilkins told the story of her parents coming west from Missouri in 1847, where they wintered before setting out to find a claim in the spring:

> The season was late. Father put up a temporary cabin of poles near Marquam to winter in, intending to go on to southern Oregon early next spring. In this chinked-pole cabin I was born. Next spring Thomas Cady and my father started out to look over the country, and select donation land claims. They found places to their liking at Willamette Forks now called Coburg, and took up their claims.[328]

Clinton Kelly, an 1848 overlander, first saw what would become his claim (in what is now southeast Portland) that autumn. After spending his first winter in Oregon City, he moved onto the claim over the spring of 1849:

> By the advice of Seth Catlin, whose claim was located a short distance south of the present site of East Portland, Clinton visited during the fall of '48 the claim afterward known by his name, and determined to locate thereon, paying Baker, the agent, $50 for the squatter's title and interest. After looking the ground over with great care and precision, and taking into consideration her natural advantages, he came to the conclusion that Portland was destined to be not alone the metropolis of the Northwest, but a city of vast proportions. . . . Early during the following spring he moved upon his donation claim with his family. At this time the woodman's axe had scarcely marred the forest primeval, over which roamed the wild beasts at their own free will. The roads were Indian trails, he being the first to open the road between Portland and his place in the direction of Powell's Valley. The neighbors were few and widely scattered, but none so warm-hearted and hospitable—Seth Catlin, Gideon Tibbits, James Stephens, Jacob Wheeler, and John Caruthers; and, on the Columbia bottom, David Powell, Thomas Cully, and Switzler. He was among the first in the vicinity to turn his attention to gardening and the growing of fruit, and hence very early the products of his garden found their way to market, first upon wheelbarrow, direct to the river, thence conveyed across upon his own flat boat.[329]

Some new arrivals purchased claims that had already been developed by earlier overlanders. The *Oregon Spectator* included numerous advertisements of farms for both sale and rent.

> Farm for Sale. The subscriber hereby notifies the public generally, and those in particular who wish to purchase an improved claim, in an eligible part of the country, that his claim is now offered for sale. Said claim lies on the Wallace Prairie . . . having a log cabin and a French barn, and also another set of logs for a cabin, which was once put up, and has been removed, and about two hundred acres enclosed, and

[327] Carter, "Pioneer Days," 93–94.

[328] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, October 24, 1913, 8.

[329] Richmond Kelly, "Rev. Clinton Kelly," in *Transactions of the Fifteenth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1887* (Portland, OR: Press of Geo. H. Himes, 1887), 58–59.

about sixty acres of that old land, upon it. Said claim is about 3 miles from the Salem mills, and 4 miles from the Oregon Institute.[330]

Farm for Sale by A. Cook in Tualaty plains. . . . There are on the claim 80 acres in cultivation, under a good fence, with a log-cabin thereon, and also timber for a framed dwelling and barn, a quantity of shingle, &c.[331]

Farm to Let. . . . [T]he subscribed has two fields, containing 60 acres each, of old ground equal to the best in Oregon, with good houses, barns, and out houses, which he is desirous of renting early in the fall.[332]

A Tenant Wanted. A farm, containing about 60 acres enclosed, thirty of which, have been cultivated; a good garden with several fruit trees—a good comfortable dwelling and out houses, together with a fine stock of cattle, hogs and poultry—all of which the subscriber will let on reasonable terms. the above described place is situated in Champoeg county, about two miles from the Bute. For further information, apply to W. G. T'Vault or Hugh Burns, Oregon City, or to the subscriber on the premises.[333]

Farm for Sale. . . . [I]n Baker's prairie. There are over three hundred acres of prairie, and one hundred ready for cultivation, surrounded with good fences. Upon the Farm is a good log house, 20 by 30 feet, a well of good water, being well calculated by nature for raising cattle or sheep.[334]

Houses Built or Bought During the First Year

Overlanders arriving in the Willamette Valley typically built their homes once they settled on land claims. Some built log cabins and hewn log houses, in styles commonly found in their home states, and using resources provided by their immediate environments, like timber, rocks, and clay.[335] A typical building method for such structures consisted

> of logs laid up in a square, notched on the corners, to make them lay properly, faced down with a broad-axe inside and out after being laid up; cracks chinked and daubed—sometimes with clay and sometimes with moss from the trees—to keep the cold out. A fireplace, the jambs and back made of baked clay with chimney, built with split stick daubed inside and out with clay. A puncheon floor, and the roof covered with clapboards held down by weight—poles to keep from blowing off, nails being out of the question at that early date. Door with wooden hinges, opened by a latch string always hung out.[336]

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[330] "Farm for Sale," advertisement, *Oregon Spectator*, March 19, 1846, 3.

[331] "Farm for Sale," advertisement, *Oregon Spectator*, June 25, 1846, 2.

[332] Ransom Clark, "Farm to Let," advertisement, *Oregon Spectator*, September 17, 1846, 4.

[333] W. J. Bailey, "A Tenant Wanted," advertisement*, Oregon Spectator*, October 1, 1846, 3.

[334] A. Husted, "Farm For Sale," advertisement, *Oregon Spectator*, February 18, 1847, 3.

[335] Boag, "Calapooian Matrix," 100–104.

[336] J. Fred McCoy, *A Biography of John McCoy with a Brief History of Linn County, Oregon* (Albany, OR: R. R. Milligan, 1983), 11.

Abraham Garrison described his uncle Enoch's house, which he moved into upon arriving in the Willamette Valley in 1846:

> The house was built of round logs 18 by 20 feet, in length, and just high enough to make one good story, we had no floor above, and the ground was the floor below, the cracks was stopped by driving in between the logs pieces of slit timbers called chinking, then the crack was daubed with mud, the door was made of rough board split out with a frame, we used a piece of domestic in place of glass, for a window, we made the chimney with sticks and mud, the fireplace was made, by building a frame inside the cobbing that supported the chimney, about a foot of space was left between the frame and cobbing, this space was then filled with stiff mud, that had been thoroughly worked, it was well beaten with a heavy pestle while being put in, then this was dried out with a slow fire, it took about a week to dry, then a fire built and the frame was com[pletely] burned out, and the . . . fireplace was completed. And so was the house, the roof being put on long before.[337]

Many built their own homes, but others hired other settlers to help with some or all of the work. HBC employee Thomas Lowe, for example, "[e]ngaged an American of the name of Turrel to build a Chimney in my house for six dollars" in October 1846.[338]

As the 1840s progressed, more settlers built timber-framed houses using sawn lumber and shingles. Lowe himself "rode up to the Saw Mill to day in order to get Slabs for my house."[339] The sawmill quickly became one of the most important businesses in communities across the Willamette Valley. The mills supplied local needs but also produced some of Oregon's earliest exports, particularly during the decade following the California gold rush.[340]

Among the extant houses from this era is the Silas Jacob N. Beeks residence, built near what is now Forest Grove. Silas Jacob and Mary Anna Beeks traveled on the Oregon Trail in 1847, along with Mary Anna's parents. In 1848, the Beeks acquired a land claim of 570 acres on the Tualatin Plains, six miles north of the Tualatin settlement. They built a one-story, two-room, timber-framed house that same year. This structure later became a wing to a Gothic Revival style, balloon-framed farmhouse, built circa 1860 by the Beekses. The house was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1984.[341]

Another surviving house from this time period is the Thomas and Walter Monteith House. Brothers Thomas and Walter Monteith were also 1847 overlanders. They purchased 320 acres from Hiram Smead at the confluence of the Calapooia and Willamette rivers and then acquired an additional 320 acres of adjacent land. They subsequently platted a townsite they named Albany, after the capital of their home state of New York. They built a two-story, Classic Revival-esque home of sawn lumber. Construction paused for a few months while the brothers went to the California gold fields, and they completed the house in 1849. It was the first frame structure to be built in Albany. It

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[337] Garrison, "Reminiscences of A. H. Garrison," 37.

[338] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 50–51.

[339] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 50–51.

[340] Engeman, "Wooden Beams and Railroad Ties."

[341] Melissa Cole and Elizabeth O'Brien, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination: Silas Jacob N. Beeks House, Forest Grove, Washington County, Oregon" (Portland, OR: Cole-O'Brien Consultants, 1983), 2–5.

also served a community center for the city, hosting religious sermons and political meetings. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1975, it is now a house museum.[342]

As westward migration continued, more and more houses dotted the Willamette Valley. The later someone arrived in Oregon, the more likely they could afford to buy an extant residence. In 1847, Ohioan Edward Long purchased a house in East Portland (now part of the City of Portland), which he moved into and spent his first winter in Oregon "cutting hoop poles for the Hudson's Bay Company."[343] James D. Miller, an 1848 overlander, recollected that "My father purchased a house and lot in Linn City, opposite Oregon City, and we moved into it soon after we arrived."[344]

Some people who had arrived early in the Oregon Country did not build homes on their claims until later. They improved their land in order to comply with a requirement of the organic laws passed by the Provisional Government in 1843. In order to possess the 320 acres granted to every White man (or 640 acres to every married couple), settlers had to make "permanent improvements" to that land. Thomas Lowe, then an HBC employee, recorded his work on his claim during the summer and autumn of 1846 in his journal:

> [August 8] Employed all day building a small House on my claim, in order to fulfill the conditions of the Oregon Land Law, which requires that in order to hold a claim, some improvement must be made. Mr. Grahame and others were employed in a like manner erecting houses on their respective Claims. We have been obliged to take these precautions as 6 or 7 Americans are Prowling about in the woods, in order to jump such claims near the Fort as are not properly registered or improved upon.[345]
>
> [October 8] I proceeded after breakfast to the Bridge over the Little River on the road to the back Plain, to build a House of round logs 18 feet by 14, in order the better to secure my claim. I had a Canadian (Charles Proulx) an Islander and an Indian with me, and I must endeavor after it is finished to find out some one to live there. The Bridge is about 2½ miles from the Fort, and about 1/2 mile from the 1st. Plain.[346]
>
> [December 1, 1847] Rode out to the house built on my claim in the afternoon, to make arrangements with an American who wishes to remain in it during the winter, and to work for me.[347]

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[342] Barbara Asai, Meredith Wiley, and Phillip Dole, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination: Thomas and Walter Monteith House, Albany, Linn County, Oregon" (Albany: Monteith Historical Society, 1975), 2–8; Monteith House, "About," accessed April 4, 2021, https://www.monteithhouse.org/about.html.

[343] "Edward Long," in *Transactions of the Sixteenth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1888* (Portland, OR: Himes Printer, 1889), 146.

[344] Miller, "Early Oregon Scenes," 67.

[345] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 46.

[346] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 50–51.

[347] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 61.

Economic Realities

HBC Assistance to Settlers

Until the passage of the Treaty of 1846, the British HBC essentially served as the governing body of the Oregon Country, with its Columbia Department headquarters at Fort Vancouver. With concerns about the growing number of Americans in Oregon, as well as in anticipation of the new boundary between the United States and Canada, the HBC moved its headquarters to Fort Victoria (in present-day Victoria, British Columbia) in 1845. That same year, HBC leadership removed John McLoughlin from his post at Fort Vancouver.[348] Following the treaty, Fort Vancouver was on American soil. The HBC maintained a small presence there until 1860, but it eventually leased the buildings and land to the US Army.[349]

The HBC continued to influence the economy of the Willamette Valley during the second half of the 1840s. Newly arrived overlanders tapped into existing economic networks in the valley, many of which were still dominated by the HBC.[350] The company operated a mercantile store in Oregon City from 1844 to 1848, serving current and former employees as well as increasing numbers of American customers (see Figure 20).[351] The HBC also continued to export goods, like flour, lumber, and salmon from the valley to places such as British Columbia, California, and Hawaii.[352]

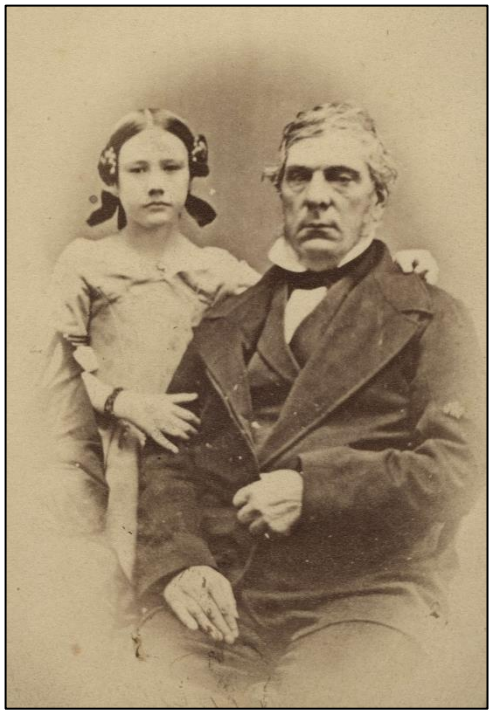

Figure 20. Francis Ermatinger, pictured here with his daughter or niece, worked for the Hudson's Bay Company at the company's Oregon City store.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

HBC employee Thomas Lowe recorded some of the company's economic activities during the spring of 1846:

> [May 19] The Callepooiah sailed in the morning for the Wallamette Falls, Capt. Cook having disposed of his cargo of potatoes at about 75 cents per Bushel.
>
> [May 28] Columbia taking in Wheat.

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[348] "Dr. John McLoughlin's Last Letter to the Hudson's Bay Company, as Chief Factor, in charge at Fort Vancouver, 1845," *American Historical Review* 21, no. 1 (October 1915): 104–34.

[349] Shine, "Fort Vancouver."

[350] Addis, "Whitman Massacre," 226.

[351] Gregory P. Shine, "Hudson's Bay Company," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/hudson_s_bay_company.

[352] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 56–60.

> [June 6] All hands knocked off work at 12 o'clock in order to assist at the launch of the new vessel built by Searthe, intended for the transport of Wheat from the Cowelitz and Wallamette to this place. She is 75 feet long in the keel, and will carry about 3000 Bushels Wheat, being flat bottomed, with a beautiful run.
>
> [June 18] I busy packing Furs. Cadboro taking on Flour for Fort Victoria.[353]

Fort Vancouver was no longer a place where overlanders stopped on their way to destinations farther south in the Willamette Valley. The Barlow Road brought overlanders to the valley some fifteen to twenty miles south of the Columbia River, meaning they bypassed Fort Vancouver entirely. . The fort later served as an important site for American military troops, such as the American Mounted Riflemen, who arrived in the region during the Cayuse War. Major Osborne Cross of the Mounted Riflemen described the fort in 1849:

> Fort Vancouver, which is the headquarters of the Hudson's Bay company, is on the right bank of the river. It is situated on a beautiful plain about five miles long and probably three-quarters of a mile wide. The country gradually rises and runs back for ten or fifteen miles, passing through several plains, some of which are cultivated. On one of these plains there is an excellent seminary where the children from the fort and neighborhood are educated. Immediately in the rear of the fort and on the rising ground, the company of artillery under Breve-major [John Samuel] Hatheway have put up temporary quarters and have made themselves very comfortable. This place would be a fine location for troops. Indeed it is the only spot between here and the mouth of the river where the mountains will admit of it.[354]

Currencies and Means of Exchange

In the mid-1840s, Oregon still had no formal currency. Until currency became readily available in Oregon, wheat, which grew so successfully in the region, served as one form of legal tender.[355] For example, some field hands were paid in wheat, at the rate of three bushels per day.[356] New arrivals frequently bought their goods on credit at the HBC mercantile in Oregon City or one of the general stores that were springing up in communities across the Willamette Valley. Others exchanged or bartered goods. James D. Miller, who arrived in the territory in 1848, described the evolving means of exchange in Oregon during this period:

> We could buy from the Indians a salmon weighing from 20 to 30 pounds for almost anything that we had to give in old clothing, or, if we had any money, 25 cents. In the year 1847, bran made at the flour mills was thrown into the river to get it out of the way, no demand for it. There was no paper money, but occasionally one might see a piece of coin or a Mexican dollar in the hands of some emigrant of recent arrival. According to the territorial laws, one bushel of wheat was legal tender for $1.

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[353] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 39–42.

[354] Settle, *March of the Mounted Riflemen*, 266–67.

[355] Taylor, "Making Salmon," 73.

[356] [No title], *Oregon Spectator*, July 27, 1848, 3.

> For labor or any other indebtedness, an order on the Hudson's Bay Company, George Abernethy and Clark or Kilborn[e] and Pettygrove's store was good.[357]

The lack of a formal currency in 1840s Oregon presented issues, as outlined by the *Oregon Spectator*:

> . . . there is much complaint of the *currency* of the country, especially among the farmers and mechanics . . . Where is the fault? Many persons charge it to the merchants—others to the legislature . . . Perhaps the greatest fault of the few merchants we have is, that they have been too liberal with their favors of credit, and thereby induced, or at least allowed us to go too extensively into debt. The legislature, fully apprised of the fact that the people were generally in debt, and fearing a general effort to force payment would be made by the merchants, and knowing that there was not a sufficiency of the precious metals to pay the debts of the country, thought it their duty to save the debtor from a ruinous sacrifice of property; consequently, they passed an act, making g*overnment scrip*, *accepted orders on solvent merchants*, and *wheat*, a legal tender for taxes and all judgments and decrees, &c., &c. . . . Could we have our own individual choice of a legal tender, it should be the precious metals only.[358]

The discovery of gold in California in 1848 changed the currency situation, but it did not fully solve the problem. Many established settlers, as well as recently arrived overlanders, headed south to the mines and returned to Oregon with gold dust, as James D. Miller noted not long after settling in Oregon:

> in almost two months after our arrival, absent fathers and brothers beg[a]n to arrive overland and by the return trips of the sailing vessels. All, without exception, had gold dust; some had large amounts in the thousands of dollars. Then, prices on all property began to rise, and the mode of payment turned to the primitive gold scales, and soon the large trading establishments put in large gold scales. Gold dust was $16 per ounce, in payment of all purchases.[359]

Those in possession of gold dust often did not receive the full dollar value in trade. George L. Curry later noted, "Our people returning from the gold mines in California, could get but eleven dollars per ounce for their gold dust in trade, when it was worth from sixteen to eighteen dollars cash."[360] Gold dust could become contaminated and was subject to fraud, creating difficulties for those who accepted it as a means of exchange.[361]

To address this issue, the Provisional Government passed legislation during the winter of 1848–1849 authorizing the weighing, assaying, melting, and stamping of gold coins. However, this was in direct defiance of federal law, which did not allow local coinage to be minted at the time. For a few weeks in late February 1849, the Provisional Government operated a mint in Oregon City to make

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[357] Miller, "Early Oregon Scenes," 67.

[358] "The Currency," *Oregon Spectator*, May 14, 1846, 2.

[359] Miller, "Early Oregon Scenes," 67.

[360] "Address of George L. Curry," 72.

[361] Richard Engeman, "Beaver Gold Coins," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/beaver_gold_coins; "Address of George L. Curry," 72.

gold coins. But the venture was shuttered by Joseph Lane, the first federally appointed governor of the Oregon Territory, when he arrived in Oregon City in early March.[362]

A group of local Oregon City business interests, including former provisional governor George Abernethy and former provisional treasurer William K. Kilborne, established the Oregon Exchange Company to continue the effort of creating a local currency. About a dozen similar businesses existed in California at the time. The Oregon Exchange Company designed a coin that included an illustration of a beaver on one side, along with the initials of the company's eight members, and the company name on the reverse.[363] Before it stopped operating in September 1849, the company minted an estimated 6,000 five-dollar coins and 2,850 ten-dollar coins. As the coins were made of solid gold, they gained favor among settlers as a reliable form of currency and quickly entered general circulation. When a federal mint opened in San Francisco in 1854, the US government required all private coinage to be turned in and melted down.[364]

Agriculture

Established and recently arrived settlers grew wheat, barley, and potatoes. They planted fruit and nut trees as well (see Figure 21). They raised livestock, including cattle, pigs, and sheep, some of which they had driven across on the Oregon Trail.[365] An 1846 *Oregon Spectator* advertisement reflected the range of products raised and sold by Oregon farmers: "Produce for Sale: Wheat, Oats, Corn, Pears, White Beans, and Potatoes. Also, Bacon, Salt Pork, Pork Hogs, and Breeding Sows. Apply to the subscriber, at his house on the Yamhill River."[366]

Figure 21. Overlanders who started farms planted orchards with fruit and nut trees. Pictured here, John Stevenson in his orchard in Skamania County, Washington, near the Columbia River.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

[362] Engeman, "Beaver Gold Coins"; "Address of George L. Curry," 72.

[363] "Address of George L. Curry," 72.

[364] Engeman, "Beaver Gold Coins."

[365] Taylor, "Making Salmon," 73; "Sheep," *Oregon Spectator*, November 30, 1848, 2.

[366] Ransom Clark, "Produce for Sale," advertisement, *Oregon Spectator*, September 17, 1846, 4.

The *Spectator* frequently reported on the bountiful wheat crops in the Willamette Valley:

> The prospects for a bountiful harvest of wheat throughout the settlements, are said to be most flattering. The farmers are just entering upon the delightful business of reaping the fruits of their labors, with the fullest assurance of a most liberal reward. It is truly gratifying to us, on the eve of receiving among us thousands of our fellow-citizens from the states, to be assured that they shall not want bread.[367]

Some 150,000 bushels of wheat were produced in Oregon in 1846. This included 60,000 bushels in Champoeg County, 30,000 in Tualatin, 20,000 in Yamhill, 15,000 in Polk, and 25,000 in combined Clackamas, Vancouver, Clatsop, and Lewis counties. The *Spectator* estimated this amounted to a surplus of 50,000 bushels beyond local needs, which could be milled into approximately 10,000 barrels of flour for export outside of Oregon.[368] Demand increased steadily for Oregon-grown wheat, due in large part to the California gold rush, with 208,000 bushels produced in 1850.[369]

In the first months after gold was discovered, some in Oregon expressed concern that the farmlands and forests would be abandoned in favor of the gold mines of California. But the gold rush created new and expanding markets for Oregon products. The *Spectator* captured some of this spirit in an October 1848 article:

> Some of our fellow citizens express their fears that Oregon has been ruined, by the discovery of the late extensive gold mines of California. They ask—Who will cultivate the ground when from $10 to $100 per day can be realized at the mines?
>
> Hold! friends. Has the boasted purity of the climate of Oregon deserted her? No. Have her great natural facilities for commerce passed away? No. Has her soil become barren? By no means. Have her native, perennial grasses for your cattle, horses, and sheep, and her camas for your hogs, ceased to grow spontaneous, rich, and abundant? They have not. Has rust, [illegible], the worm, or fly, destroyed or harmed your wheat fields? They never have. Is not a market for your wheat, beef, pork, potatoes, peas, beans, garden vegetables, fish, and lumber, a desirable matter? and will not such mines draw them a sufficient population to provide you a market for all these articles? Certainly. Oregon is temporarily by reason of so many of her citizens having left their farms, and shops, for the purpose of gold digging, but only temporarily. The time will come, when the population of the gold mines of California and Oregon (for we believe there are gold mines in Oregon,) will be supplied, in part, with provisions from the Atlantic seaboard. Wheat, and most of the other grains, with the exception of Indian corn, can be afforded cheaper in Oregon than in any other part of the Union, and beef vastly cheaper; and how many persons are there in the United States, . . . think you, who would gladly exchange the growing of grains, and cattle, east of the mountains, at the prices paid for those products there, for the like avocation upon the healthy and beautiful plains of Oregon, at such

[367] "The Wheat Crop," *Oregon Spectator*, July 23, 1846, 3.

[368] "Productions of Oregon," *Oregon Spectator*, January 7, 1847, 2.

[369] Taylor, "Making Salmon," 73.

> prices as provisions will command, when governed by the price of those brought from the Atlantic seaboard?
>
> Nothing short of an interposition of Providence can prevent a dense population of Oregon, when her climate, soil, and advantages shall be properly appreciated. . . . Yes, Oregon is capable of producing 100,000,000 bushels of wheat; contains a vast amount of valuable timber; her rivers afford abundant water power, and abound in fish; she possesses almost boundless grazing facilities; and a climate salubrious, and so mild that cattle, horses, and sheep, subsist throughout the year without other food than the natural grasses, and without shelter? and is such a country ruined, because gold mines are discovered in the neighborhood? Surely not; it should rather be regarded as a rich blessing, at the hands of the great, and wise Ruler of the Universe.[370]

The gold rush became a catalyst for both agricultural production and commercial development in Oregon. Prospectors, miners, and other business interests in California's gold rush communities turned to Oregon for both food and building materials. Raw products from across the Willamette Valley were sent to sawmills and gristmills in Oregon City and Portland, which became centers of the lumber and flour trades. These products were then shipped to markets south via ships on the Willamette River. The gold rush directly contributed to Portland's emergence as the region's leading city by the 1850s.[371]

Finding Employment

Though its influence in the region was waning, the HBC continued to provide work opportunities for recent arrivals in Oregon. Men like Edward Long spent their first winter in the region cutting poles or doing other manual labor for the HBC. The following spring, Long established a sawmill with two other overlanders, and he soon after secured a land claim in east Portland, where he lived for the next three decades.[372]

Arriving in the Willamette Valley with a trade made it easier to find immediate employment. Carpenters and mechanics were always in demand, as reported in the *Oregon Spectator*:

> Mechanical labor commands enormous prices at present in this Territory. In the neighborhood of Willamette Falls, where the most extensive improvements are in progress, Mechanics are receiving from $5 to $10 per day, and from $5 to $12 per square for carpenter's work. And all other kinds of mechanical labor commands equally good wages.[373]

Those with money could start new businesses in places where they saw economic opportunity and gaps in service. Every year, more businesses opened in Oregon City, Portland, and other population centers in the Willamette Valley. By the late 1840s, overlanders arriving in Oregon City

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[370] "Oregon—Gold," *Oregon Spectator*, October 12, 1848, 2.

[371] Robbins, "This Land, Oregon."

[372] "Edward Long," in *Transactions of the Sixteenth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1888* (Portland, OR: Himes Printer, 1889), 146.

[373] "Mechanical Labor—High Wages," *Oregon Spectator*, November 1, 1849, 2.

could obtain the services of dentists, physicians, surgeons, and attorneys; frequent taverns and grocers; and purchase items such as soap, hats, pens, umbrellas, oil lamps, and other sundries from any number of general stores and dry goods merchants.[374]

Women's Labor

During their first year in Oregon, women typically continued the same work they had done during their overland journeys. They took care of children and the sick, cooked and cleaned, and completed other household chores. Once settled on land claims, they would resume typical farm work, including tending to livestock and planting and cultivating vegetables in garden plots.[375] Some women, like Tabitha Brown, started small side businesses (which she described using an offensive term):

> For two or three weeks of my journey down the Willamette I'd something in the end of my glove finger which I supposed to be a button. On examination at my new home in Salem I found it to be a six and one-fourth center piece; this was the whole of my cash capital to commence business in Oregon. With it I purchased three needles; traded off some of my old closes to the squaws for Buckskin; worked it into gloves for the Oregon Ladies and Gentlemen; which cleared me upwards of $30.00 extra of boarding.[376]

Schooling

Much like the first half of the 1840s, there were still only a handful of organized schools in Oregon in the second half of the decade. The first school in Portland opened in a log cabin in 1847, but it closed after three months.[377] In lieu of formal schools, some parents taught their own children, as Abraham Garrison remembered about his first Oregon winter in 1846:

> Father had laid in a supply of school books before leaving home, and he now taught school on rainy days, and the evenings was spent by us children studying our book, in fact we put in all our time at studying our books, father hearing us recite out of evenings, our light that we used, was from pitchwood.[378]

More schools were established by the end of the 1840s (see Figure 22). Calvin Geer recalled the first school in Marion County:

> The neighbors wanted Father to teach a school, and Mr. Parker told Father that if he would come down to his place they would build a house for us to live in. We went down, they built a log cabin about twelve feet from their cabin and roofed them over

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[374] Advertisements, *Oregon Spectator*, March 4, 1847, 3; "For Sale," "New Goods," and "For Sale At the Brick Store, Oregon City," advertisements*, Oregon Spectator*, September 17, 1847, 3; Advertisements, *Oregon Spectator*, October 18, 1849, 3.

[375] Butruille, *Women's Voices from the Oregon Trail*, 129–38.

[376] Holmes, *Covered Wagon Women: Volume 1*, 58.

[377] "Central School," *Oregon History Project*, accessed April 5, 2021, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/central-school.

[378] Garrison, "Reminiscences of A. H. Garrison," 38.

together and then went a mile south, on the Hendrick's place and built a log school house. I drove the oxen to haul the logs up out of the woods and while the men would lay them up, others were cutting more logs and they built the house in one day. The next day they made boards and covered it and then went down to Capt. English's mill to get lumber to floor it and got slabs to make seats. They had to make long benches, bored holes in the walls and layed a wide board for a writing desk and then it was ready for the school. So on Monday morning, Father took up the first district school ever taught in Marion County and he had something like thirty scholars. Some came from Rowel Prairie and over by Waldo's and would come on horseback and stake out their horses on fine grass. When the school was near out in the fall we moved back up to the Culver cabin so Father could see to his crop and we walked from there to school.[379]

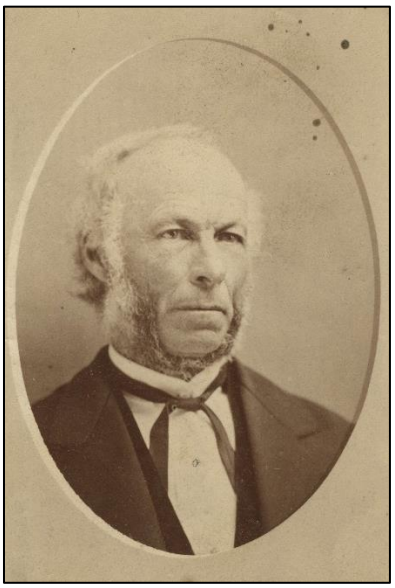

Figure 22. The Reverend Horace Lyman traveled to Oregon via ship (from New York, around Cape Horn, and then to the West Coat) in 1848 and taught school in Portland upon his arrival.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

Hardships

The hardships that were so common during their journeys on the Oregon Trail—sickness and disease, diminishing food supplies, and extreme weather—continued for many overlanders once they arrived in the Willamette Valley, particularly during their first winter.

The winter of 1846–1847 proved particularly challenging for those who traveled on the newly established southern route, known as the Applegate Trail. With an insufficiently surveyed route and continuous stretches of difficult terrain, many were forced to abandon their wagons and provisions and proceed north on foot. Those who made it to the Willamette Valley helped arrange relief parties for those who remained behind. Other overlanders wintered in the Umpqua Valley until early 1847. The *Oregon Spectator* dedicated more than a year of coverage to the experiences of those to first

[379] Calvin Geer, "My Trip to Oregon as I Remember It," February 11, 1925, http://www.theragens.com/history/Geer%20-%20My%20Trip%20To%20Oregon.htm.

traverse this route, including news articles, opinion pieces, and letters from those overlanders stuck in southern Oregon, such as this one written in December 1846:

> At the suggestion of a Mr. Holt, who says he is personally acquainted with you, I am induced to write to you, and through you to arouse the sympathies of the good people of Oregon, in [sic] behalf of a small company of emigrants who are unable to cross the Callapoia mountain before sometime next season—myself and a large family among them. We are not, it is true, in a state of actual starvation, as yet, but of great want, and we do not know what the consequence will be, unless we receive some aid from the settlement, as soon as practicable.
>
> We are in number about 25 or 30 souls, who are the last of the unfortunate ones who took the route to Oregon recommended by Mr. Applegate, and have lost nearly all of our property, and almost every means of subsistance [*sic*]. And indeed, about the one half of the company was just at the point of starvation, when Mr. Holt, (whose liberality we shall not easily forget) helped us to three tolerably good beeves. We have scarcely any flour or sale in the camp; and nothing in prospect but a little poor beef, and occasionally a poor venison—which is quite uncertain, for deer are very scarce, as well as very wild. . . .
>
> Some say it will be May or June next, before the road will be dry enough for us to reach the settlements, and that we shall be detained here at least some three or four months. And in conclusion, we are sorry to say, that we have been credibly informed, that some of our fellow emigrants, who were more fortunate than ourselves, and had crossed the mountain, actually misrepresented our condition, to prevent bringing us supplies and pack-horses, by stating that we had plenty, and might have reached the settlements long ago, had it not been for our indolence, in order to receive fresh aid themselves, though so near the settlement.
>
> Now, in conclusion, we wish you to use your influence in our behalf, and try to induce some hardy young men to bring us some provisions, such as beef, flour and salt, as soon as the weather will permit. In doing which, you will confer a lasting favor, which we will, as soon as possible, endeavor to remunerate.[380]

Those who survived their journey on the Applegate Trail in 1846–1847 arguably faced even greater hardships their first year than those who had taken the northern route, as summarized by the *Spectator*:

> it may be affirmed, that almost every man, (perhaps indeed, every one) who came into Oregon by the southern route, is, in a pecuniary point of view, ruined by doing so. Do men arrive "safely" who lose their wagons, teams, tents and clothing; and who freeze their feet, and come in looking like famished wolves?[381]

[380] J. A. Cornwall, letter to the editor, December 27, 1846, reprinted in the *Oregon Spectator*, March 4, 1847, 3.

[381] J. Quinn Thornton, "The Immigration: Southern Route," *Oregon Spectator*, March 4, 1847, 1.

Illness

Illness proved one of the greatest dangers to overlanders after reaching the Willamette Valley. Some arrived infected with diseases and other illnesses that they had contracted during their trek to Oregon. Elizabeth Dixon Smith arrived in Portland in November 1847 with her husband seriously sick from an unspecified illness, as she detailed in her diary:

> JAN. 15.—My husband is still alive, but very sick. There is no medicine here except at Fort Vancouver, and the people there will not sell one bit—not even a bottle of wine…
>
> JAN. 31.—…Here I sit up, night after night, with my poor sick husband, all alone, and expecting him every day to die. I neglected to tell you that Welch's and all the rest moved off and left us. Mr. Smith has not been moved off his bed for six weeks only by lifting him by each corner of the sheet, and I had hard work to get help enough for that, let alone getting watchers. I have not undressed to lie down for six weeks. Besides all our sickness, I had a cross little babe to take care of. Indeed, I cannot tell you half.
>
> FEB. 1.—Rain all day. This day my dear husband, my last remaining friend, died.
>
> FEB. 2.—Today we buried my earthly companion. Now I know what none but widows know; that is, how comfortless is that of a widow's life, especially when left in a strange land, without money or friends, and the care of seven children.[382]

Others fell victim to disease outbreaks once they settled in Oregon. Thomas Lowe recorded one such outbreak at Fort Vancouver in November 1847: "The measles has broken out amongst our men. It has been prevailing to a great extent for some time past amongst the Indians, up the River." On December 8, he wrote, "Almost all our working hands are laid up with the measles, and it is only the white who are able to work." He noted the names of several Native Hawaiians who died during the outbreak, including Napoua, William Payne, Tayapapa, Jem Lanuka, Charley, Toovyoora, and Kaneoukai.[383]

Reports of contagious diseases decreased in the late 1840s. In 1848, the *Oregon Spectator* noted that for overlanders, "there has been but little sickness upon the road this season."[384] And 1849 proved a relatively healthy year as well, with most illnesses brought to Oregon by those returning from the gold mines:

> The summer and autumn have passed away, and our city has enjoyed the most excellent health. We have it is true seen some persons afflicted with Ague, and other forms of bilious disease, but they came from the gold mines, or some other place. we do not recollect having noticed a case of fever, or ague which was contracted in this place; and only two deaths have occurred within our knowledge. And these were

[382] "Diary of Mrs. Elizabeth Dixon Smith Geer," 172–75.

[383] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 69–70.

[384] "Oregon Riflemen.—Immigration," *Oregon Spectator*, October 12, 1848, 2.

> infants who died of diseases peculiar to infantile years. We have not indeed known any person to be seriously sick of any disease for months past.[385]

Hunger

When Virgil K. Pringle arrived in the Willamette Valley in November 1846, he wrote, "our living is poor. Can obtain nothing but bread and meat, vegetables being very scarce and we nothing but labor to give."[386] Abraham Garrison recalled how his family survived that first winter, without having easy access to local mills:

> The only mills in Oregon was at Oregon City, and one at Gervice on the French prairie, and it was impossible to get to those mills, what little wheat we could get, we had to eat it boiled, as our coffeemill was not sufficient to grind it, but we could not [get] sufficient wheat, no not half enough for the family, but Uncle Enoch had raised a good supply of peas, and we could get all we wanted, so we had to substitute peas, for bread, and peas for coffee, then we could have peas boiled. During the winter we got one hog that was fattened on Cammas, a root, or small bulb that was the main supply of food that the Indians have, we got this hog of Mr Eades, and this was all the meat we had until the snow went off, then Uncle Joseph sent us a beef animal.[387]

Garrison's experience is further evidence of how new arrivals relied on friends and family to make it through the first year.

Tolbert Carter also remembered the challenge of living miles from a source of flour:

> my cousin concluded to make the effort to get flour so as to make bread for the children. The mill was twenty-five miles away, with two streams to swim. It was near the present city of Dallas, the county seat of Polk County. Blankets were arranged, our pockets filled with meat, and the writer and my cousin struck out. I went for the purpose of looking at the country, and to be company for the boy. He carried his gun, took a horse to carry the flour, and, to make a long story short, lest I become wearisome, the fourth day we arrived at camp with the flour, all rejoicing more to see the flour than the party. Many inquiries were made as to who and what we had seen. The gun came in good play, as wild geese were plentiful, and they were our principal diet on the trip, except on our return, when we had bread mixed with goose meat. We brought back 100 pounds of flour, and that was all the ten persons used until the first of April.[388]

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[385] "Health of the City," *Oregon Spectator*, December 13, 1849, 2.

[386] "Diary of Virgil K. Pringle, 1844," in *Transactions of the Forty-Eighth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association, Portland, July 1, 1920* (Portland, OR: Chausse-Prudhomme Co. Commercial Printers, 1923), 299–300.

[387] Garrison, "Reminiscences of A. H. Garrison," 37–38.

[388] Carter, "Pioneer Days," 92–93.

Weather

The winter of 1846–1847 was particularly bad and presented a variety of challenges to recently arrived overlanders. It was one of the coldest settlers could remember, as reflected in articles from the *Oregon Spectator*.

> We have had remarkably cold weather, for Oregon, during the last week, and a considerable fall of snow. The mercury in the thermometer fell to two degrees above Zero, on Monday morning last; indeed, we have not had such severe weather since the winter of 1842 and '43. The Clackamas river is frozen over near the Indian village so strongly as to permit a common thoroughfare to be established across it. The navigation of the upper Willamette is obstructed in consequence of ice in the vicinity of Rock Island. We understand that the Columbia river is likewise fastened with the fetters of the "ice king." Information comes to us of a great mortality existing among cattle, chiefly among those that were brought in with the last immigration; but apprehensions are entertained for the welfare of live stock generally, should the severe weather continue, as no provisions have been made for feeding them, and there is so much snow on the ground as to preclude almost, the possibility of their obtaining sufficient subsistence from the grass.[389]

> The snow has at last made its disappearance from the prairies, and once more our animals have the privilege of grazing, although many have died, and more will in all probability not live to feed upon the new year's grass. This extraordinary winter has changed the minds of many with regard to Oregon; but let us consider how careless we have been with our stock—not a single farmer that I know of has any hay, oats, or even straw in store for his animals when the winter sets in, and consequently we have lost some cattle. In Champoeg county, I learn that some have lost upwards of 20 head of cattle, and others something under that number; and throughout the Territory, more or less have lost cattle, horses, and hogs. From the best information I have, it is the old cows and horses that in all probability would have died soon, with the best of weather and food. The hogs have been obliged to seek shelter in the woods, and the six or seven days of cold weather which we have had, took away many of them. But for the future, let us save our straw to throw out to our stock, in case another winter like this should happen, and then there will be no danger of our stock perishing.[390]

Many livestock starved during that winter, as snow covered the grasslands, and few settlers had set aside feed in anticipation of such extreme weather.[391]

Abraham Garrison later recalled his first winter in Oregon:

> The winter of 1846 and 47 was one of the most severe winters I have ever experienced in Oregon, the rains began about the 20th of November and l[asted] until the middle of Dec, it was continuous poredown, evry stream throughout the

[389] "The Weather," *Oregon Spectator*, January 21, 1847, 2.

[390] [No author indicated], letter to the editor, *Oregon Spectator*, February 4, 1847, 2.

[391] Lockley, *Oregon's Yesterdays*, 130.

> country was in a flooded condition. About the 20th the weather turned colder, and it began to freeze at nights, on Christmas day, it began to snow, and it continued until the ground was covered to a depth of twenty inches, this snow remained on the until the first of March. At the beginning of the storm, father had thirteen head of oxen, and twelve head of cows, and one fine American mare. There was no feed to be had, and the grass was so covered that the cattle could get nothing to eat only as we would cut down trees so they could get some browse from the limbs of the trees; when spring came, we had four oxen, and three cows left. We lost three fourths of our stock. As we had no ground fenced, Father rented land of Mr Bears, a missionary and put in a crop of spring wheat and raised plenty for our own wants, and some to spare to the emigrants that came in the next fall.[392]

The winter weather affected both those already settled in Oregon as well as those still arriving from both the main northern route of the Oregon Trail and the recently blazed southern route of the Applegate Trail. An overlander wrote to the *Oregon Spectator* of the suffering experienced by those in the Umpqua Valley in December 1846:

> I have just arrived in the settlements of this valley from the Kenyon in the Umpqua mountains. I left the people suffering beyond any thing you have ever known. They must perish with hunger unless the people of the settlements go to their relief with pack horses and provisions, and bring them in. They will have property with which to pay for such services. If they are not brought away they must perish. Before I left, they had already commenced eating the cattle that had died in the Kanyon. At least one hundred head of pack horses should be taken out immediately. I implore the people of this valley, in the name of humanity, and in behalf of my starving and perishing fellow travelers to hasten to their relief.[393]

During the winter of 1849–1850, heavy rainfall, coupled with melting snow due to unseasonably warm weather, led to flooding. Thomas Lowe recorded the flooding of the Willamette River in his journal in December 1849: "the River has risen to a most astonishing height for this season of the year, being now nearly as high as in the Summer freshet, which is a very rare occurrence in the Winter here. It is brought on by the heavy rains we have had of late and the melting of the snow caused by the unusual warmth of the weather."[394]

Lowe also noted damages caused by the flood in late December:

> [December 28] Arrived at Oregon City about 2 in the afternoon and found that the water had done much execution there. The two Clackamas Mills have been carried off and several hundred thousand feet of lumber, and two large stores and several small houses in Water Street have likewise been swept off. The water however is now falling fast and no further danger is apprehended.
>
> [December 30] Attended Divine Worship at the Methodist Church, where Mr. Wilber gave us as a text the folly of the man who built his house on the sand,

[392] Garrison, "Reminiscences of A. H. Garrison," 37.

[393] J. Quinn Thornton to the editor, *Oregon Spectator*, December 10, 1846, *Oregon Spectator*, 2.

[394] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 45.

> evidently in allusion to the fact that all the Houses in the City which were carried off by the late flood, had their foundations laid on the sand.[395]

The *Oregon Spectator* also documented the unprecedented flooding in the Willamette Valley:

> The recent heavy fall of snow has gone off with torrents of continued rain, and the consequence is that the Willamette has not been so high as at present for the last five years. All the smaller rivers, tributaries of the Willamette, are rushing down from the mountains with their foaming floods and occasioning a great destruction of property. Already have we learned that the mills and lumber at Clackamas City have been swept away. Loss not less than $75,000. The mill dam recently erected on Tualitin [sic] river by Messrs. Moore & Bird is greatly damaged. On Monday morning the lower beef market, on Water street, was swept away, and on the following night the upper beef market went off. Tuesday night the house occupied by Kilburn & Co. and Moore's store house in Linn were carried away. On Wednesday afternoon the two large buildings known as the red stores and Couch & Co's establishment gave way and went off together; and the new store house of Cranfill & Simpson was undermined and stands on its end in the water. We further learn that Clackamas Point, the resident of Mr. Ri[illegible]erson, has been washed away, occasioning great destruction to that beautiful site. Some damage has been already done to the works about the Oregon City mills, and they are yet exposed to great danger. The water is now falling. We fear, however, that this is only the beginning of evil tidings.[396]

Leisure

Despite the hardships, settlers found time for more leisurely activities during their first year in Oregon. For example, the *Oregon Spectator* reported on the local theater scene in January 1847:

> The first performance of this season took place on the evening of the 5th instant, on board H. B. M. S. Modeste, by the same party of sailors who got up the drama so credibly, and afforded so much amusement last winter. They plays were "High life below stairs," "The deuce is in him." and "The Irish Widow;" and to do justice to these companions of the wave, the characters were, if not more ably, equally as well sustained as formerly. a numerous audience attended (front seats graced by a beauteous circle of the fair sex) and all appeared much gratified with the fun and mirth of these entertainments.[397]

In addition to theatrical performances, local residents attended dances, parties, and other social events, as evident in the journal entries of Thomas Lowe, an HBC employee, over the winter of 1849–1850:

> [December 26, 1849] Having received an invitation from Mr. Lane to go up to Oregon City to a Ball he was to give there, a large party of us started this morning at 10 o'clock in a well-manned boat for that place. We did not reach Portland until 8

[395] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 71.

[396] "Great Freshet," *Oregon Spectator*, December 27, 1849, 2.

[397] "Theatre at Vancouver," *Oregon Spectator*, January 21, 1847, 3.

> o'clock in the evening, where we encamped. Had a tent pitched for the Ladies, and we erected a sort of covering for ourselves with oilcloths on the opposite side of the fire. Called on Capt. Crosbie and Mr. Smith after supper. Capt. Couch, Mr. Wm. Ogden and Kenneth Logan came to our encampment, and took a glass or two of warm punch with us. Were much annoyed by the drunken sailors during the night.[398]
>
> [December 28, 1849] In the evening had a very pleasant dance at Mr. Lane's, at which most of the Officers of the Rifle Regiment and their ladies were present, besides many of the principal citizens. A part of the regimental band performed during the evening, and the party did not break up until between two and three o'clock in the morning.

Back in Fort Vancouver on January 1, 1850, Lowe wrote that he "made several calls in course of the day, wishing my friends the compliments of the season. Dined at 3 o'clock, and several of the Artillery Officers were present. . . . Had a whist party in Dr. Barclay's room in the evening."[399] On January 10, 1850, Lowe wrote, "Had a singing party in Mrs. Covington's in the evening." The following next day, he recorded, "Had a dance to night in Mrs. Covington's room." And on January 12, "Another dance to night, in the Second Hall, but I was not present."[400]

Expectations vs. Reality

Overlanders' impressions of Oregon during the mid- to late 1840s varied, as they had during the first half of the decade (see Figure 23). Some thought it was beautiful and saw promise, while others felt it did not live up to the reports they had heard. Virgil K. Pringle, an 1846 overlander, recorded in his diary on November 25, 1846, "Travel down the valley 6 miles and passed over some spurs of the mountains and camp on the Willamette River, the handsomest valley I ever beheld. All charmed with the prospects and think they will be well paid for their sufferings."[401]

The *Oregon Spectator* boosted Oregon, publishing articles like this one from April 1848:

> From all the information we were enabled to obtain before emigrating for this country, we arrived at the conclusion, that the lower portion of the country (the portion between the Cascade and Coast mountains) possessed a rich soil, with a surface generally level and conveniently diversified with prairie and timber; that the middle portion of the country (between the Cascade and Blue mountains,) possessed considerable, though not extraordinary advantage, and that the Eastern part of the country, (between the Blue and Rocky mountains) was of little or no value. We had lived in New England, and in the Western states, and had expected to find Oregon a New England—increased in the size and grandeur of its mountains, trees, and streams; and increased also in the extent of its vallies, and temperate in its climate. Oregon as a whole, far—very far surpasses our expectations. The Willamette valley does not contain as much level land as we had expected; but its soil is as rich, and its

[398] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 70.

[399] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 71.

[400] Lowe, Private Journal kept at Fort Vancouver, 72.

[401] "Diary of Virgil K. Pringle, 1844," 299–300.

> tillable land much more extensive than we had expected to find it. Nearly all of the American settlements in Oregon are confined to the Willamette valley, and yet much choice land between Puget Sound and the head waters of this river remain untaken. The degree of fertility of any soil may be safely estimated from its products. The ordinary forest trees not only grow here in gigantic proportions; the Black Alders in Oregon grows to a stately tree fit for saw logs, from two to three feet in diameter—to doubt that such a soil would richly reward the labor of the husbandman, is treason against the Architect of Nature. This valley has received favorable representations from nearly all who have seen it, and spoken or written in relation to it. The land in this valley, for forty miles from its foot is generally rolling, and covered with dense or scattering timber; above this distance to the head of the valley about one hundred and forty miles, the prairie predominates. The lower portion of the valley possesses an extremely rich soil, and is valuable for its timber, fish and water power; but presents but little natural beauty. The middle and upper portion of the valley is strikingly beautiful and grand, and to its great beauty and grandeur, is added a ready and sensible preparation, by nature, for its settlement and profitable occupation by the weary traveler. The lower portion of this valley is not without its prairies, among the most important of which are the Tualatin plains. These plains are in the form of a half moon, containing at least 40,000 acres of prairie land, extremely rich and beautiful, are in full view three snow capped mountains in the Cascade range.[402]

The newspaper continued to print such promotional literature about the virtues of western Oregon, especially during the winter of 1848–1849, when many men were leaving for the gold mines in California. Articles extoled the mountains and timber, salmon and game, fertility of soil and ease of growing things, and the health of the atmosphere and climate.[403]

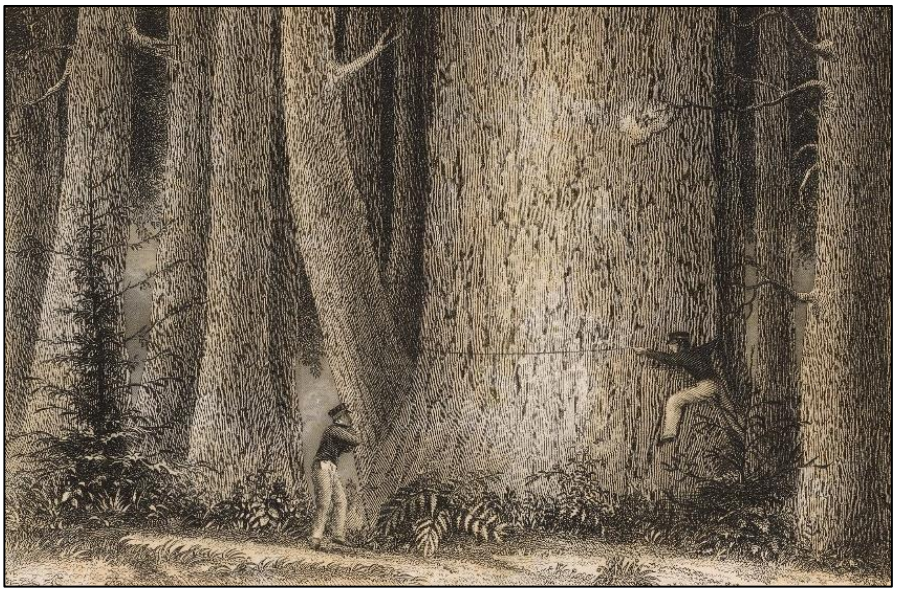

Figure 23. Oregon newspapers and books about Oregon boasted of its natural resources. Drawing by Joseph Drayton of the Wilkes Expedition, 1845.

Source: David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries.

[402] "Oregon as it has been Represented, and as it is," *Oregon Spectator*, April 20, 1848, 2.

[403] "Oregon," *Oregon Spectator*, February 22, 1849, 1–2.

Other overlanders had mixed feelings about Oregon. Tolbert Carter, an 1846 arrival, later reflected,

> We were then in the border of the Willamette Valley, our long-desired destination. There was nothing in sight to encourage us; the supplies we expected to find were all disposed of and the parties had gone home. So this much-lauded Willamette Valley presented nothing to us but broad, fertile prairies covered with a rich coat of luxuriant grass, very acceptable to teams, but the milk and honey that we were to find in this valley were not in sight; so we had to content ourselves with our poor beef or venison, with a little dirty flour, strongly tinctured with both the smell and taste of the sickening anise seed.[404]

Rachel Fisher also shared ambivalent feelings about her new home in a March 13, 1848, letter to her family back in Iowa:

> I cannot say much whether I like it or not for I have not seen much of it as far as I have seen the face of the country does not look as butiful as Iowa, but perhaps the health & mild climate make amend for the want of beauty of the country & perhaps when I see more of it I will be better pleased. there is salmon & trout fish here plenty & there is deer, bear, tigar elk panther & wolves plenty there is chickens turkey & ducks that is tame & wild fouls about as they were there except wild turkeys there is none of them here.[405]

An 1847 overlander, in a letter to the *Oregon Spectator* editor, expressed general dissatisfaction with the Willamette Valley and encouraged prospective settlers to consider destinations in either southern Oregon or Puget Sound:

> Through the medium of your paper, I wish to address a few words to my fellow immigrants of the present year, in regard to the most advantageous settlements now to be made in this country. Having arrived at the end of our journey, and made temporary provisions for the comfort of our families, it is natural we should now take a survey of this our adopted land, and see how far it meets our expectations, and will remedy the evils and disadvantages which we hoped to obviate by the long journey.
>
> By coming here we were led to expect a healthier country, a milder climate, and by the vicinity of an ocean, greater facilities of commerce, and a better price for the products of labor, than we enjoyed in the United States, and I think before setting our stakes upon a vacant spot, or "buying" out a former settler, we should first inquire how far such location will meet the objects for which we left our homes in the U. States. For my part, I am so far without a claim, and in some respects disappointed in my expectations of the country. The Willamette valley, though the soil is apparently good, and the country healthy, has not that "vernal beauty" I expected to find. "The green hills and flowery meads" have given place to bleak mountains and frozen marshes, and instead of the "milk and butter and fat beef"

[404] Carter, "Pioneer Days," 84.

[405] Holmes, *Covered Wagon Women: Volume 1*, 108.

said to be abundant in the valley, I find the farmers generally without these luxuries, and instead of fat cattle, they seriously apprehend losing their stock for want of food. Though this scarcity of grass is said to be uncommon, yet it is so this year, and may be so again when the country has a larger population, and the greater number of animals increase the evil. But the state of trade is a much more discouraging subject than even "the nakedness of the land."

Wheat made perfectly clean and of the best quality, delivered on the Willamette at certain points below the mouth of the Yamhill, and on that river near its mouth, is received in *barter* by the British and American merchants for good. The barter given by the British, being considered the best, is for the imperial bushel (a measure larger than the America) they allow in goods, at an advantage of 100 per cent. on the cost, the sum of 60 cents!! and for other products of the farm and dairy no regular price is fixed, as there is none as yet exported.

The settlements already extend up the Willamette 100 miles above the highest point at which merchants will receive wheat, even at these ruinous rates; the river, if made navigable at all, will be dangerous, and freights on it high—at present it is not attempted, and consequently the upper settlers of the Willamette valley have no market for their produce, and must ever suffer for a ruinous drawback from expensive transportation.

From this cause, I find there is no necessity for those of the late immigrants who have the means to purchase, taking up inferior claims, or sitting down upon back seats, as the old settlers are generally discontented, and some of the best farms and most eligible situations may be had a very low prices. The "Sound" and the "south" appear to be the points of attraction, and to one or the other place the farmers of the Willamette are much more inclined to immigrate, than to remain contentedly on their present location.

If those who have be experience become acquainted with the advantages and disadvantages of the country, are anxious to give up the best locations and remove elsewhere, it will be well for the newly arrived immigrant to pause and examine well the country before investing his money in improvement, or improving a claim, which a better acquaintance with the country may make him anxious to leave.[406]

Conclusion

American overlanders who arrived in Oregon between 1846 and 1849 found a region increasingly occupied by their compatriots. While the HBC still maintained a presence in the region, it was no longer the main provider of assistance and supplies to new arrivals. Instead, Americans increasingly relied on other Americans who had settled in the Willamette Valley in earlier years.

The steady stream of Americans who arrived during the 1840s dipped slightly in 1848 and 1849, due somewhat to hesitation to migrate to Oregon following the Whitman incident, but more

[406] "An Emigrant," letter to the editor, *Oregon Spectator*, February 18, 1847, 3.

because of the discovery of gold in California. But the trail would become heavily trafficked in the early 1850s, as tens of thousands of White overlanders headed west, lured by acreage promised by the passage of the Oregon Donation Land Claim Act.

Chapter 3: First Year for Overlanders Arriving After Enactment of the Donation Land Claim Act (1850–1855)

The 1850 passage of the Oregon Donation Land Claim Act cemented American hegemony in the Pacific Northwest (see Figure 24).[407] The act also created a color line in Oregon, attracting and legitimizing White settlement, while excluding Blacks, Hawaiians, and other people of color from land ownership. During the 1850s and 1860s, the federal government continued the process of transferring land to White settlers by extinguishing Indigenous title to large areas through a series of treaties.[408]

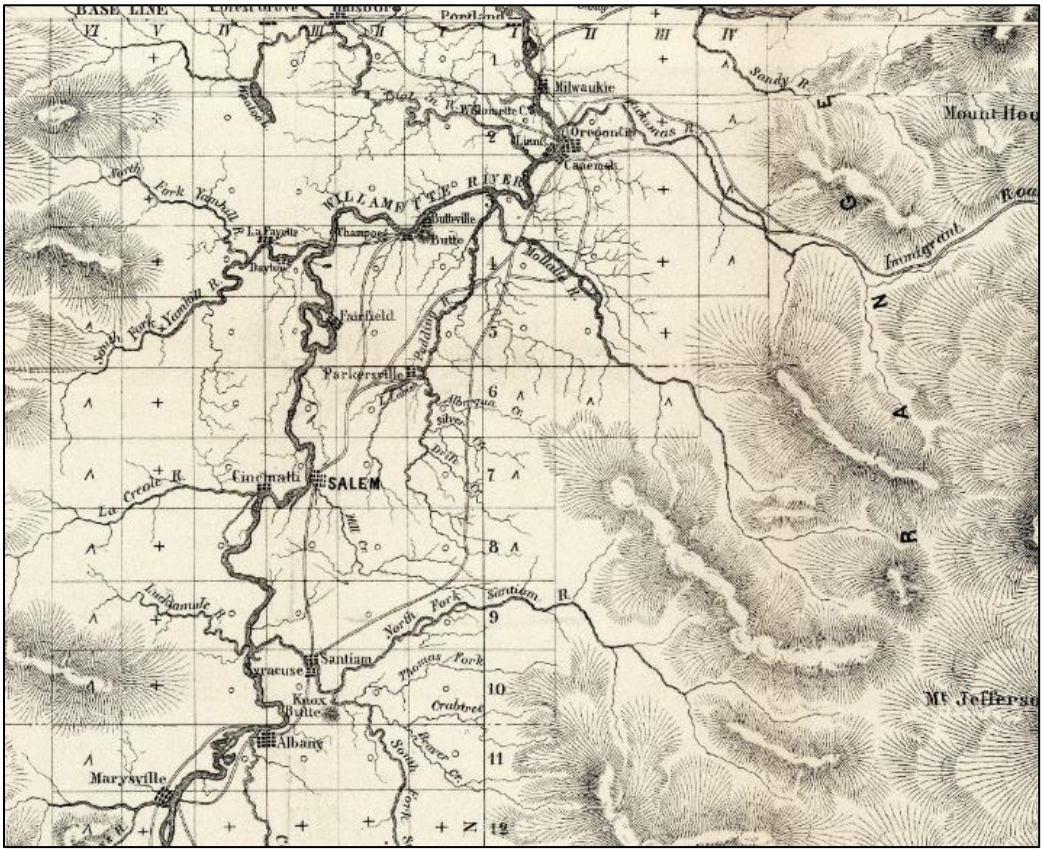

Figure 24. Tens of thousands of overlanders arrived in the Willamette Valley in the early 1850s. This increased American settlement is apparent in this 1852 US General Land Office map, which shows surveyed land and existing settlements.

Source: David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries.

[407] Barber, "'We were at our journey's end.'," 389–90.

[408] William G. Robbins, "Oregon Donation Land Law," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed April 7, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/oregon_donation_land_act.

Between 1850 and 1855, more than 33,000 people ventured west on the Oregon Trail. That figure accounted for 85 percent of all westbound overland travel to the territory during the 1850s. The overwhelmingly majority of overlanders were White, lured by the US government's promise of free land.[409] Compared to overlanders in the 1840s, those who arrived in the 1850s had increasing numbers of relatives, friends, and other social networks they could tap into once in Oregon. Overlanders who arrived in the early 1850s could also move more easily around the territory, as new roads connected communities and steamships traveled along the Columbia and Willamette rivers. Expanded White settlement in the Puget Sound region led to the establishment of the Washington Territory in 1853.[410] As land became scarce in the Willamette Valley, improvements in the region's transportation network enabled new settlers to migrate to other parts of Oregon, including the northwestern coast and valleys in the south and southwest. And for those who sought more urban environments, towns grew into cities beginning in the 1850s, spurred by the influx of gold from California and southwestern Oregon.[411]

Oregon Donation Land Claim Act

The Provisional Government laid the groundwork for the Oregon Donation Land Claim Act (DLCA) in 1843 through its Organic Laws, which had enabled every White or "half-breed Indian" man to claim 320 acres and their wives an additional 320 acres.[412] The Oregon Territorial Act of 1848 voided all land grants made by the Provisional Government, with the exception of claims made by various Christian missions. Willamette Valley settlers, fearing they could lose title to their previous claims, asked newly elected Territorial Delegate Samuel R. Thurston to secure a federal law that would legitimize the land grants.[413]

The US Congress addressed Oregon settlers' call by passing one of the most generous land laws in American history.[414] The DLCA, which became law in September 1850, recognized land claims made under the Provisional Government. For those arriving in Oregon after 1850, men—and only men—could receive 320 acres of land. Section 4 of the act stated that eligibility was "granted to every white settler or occupant of the public lands, American half-breed Indians included, above the age of 18 years, being a citizen of the United States, or having made a declaration according to law of his intention to become a citizen."[415] If single men married before December 1, 1851, they could claim another 320 acres.[416]

The marriage stipulation made single men in Oregon economically attractive as marriage partners, providing an incentive for single women to come to the territory. As 1851 overlander Lucia Loraine Williams noted in a letter to her mother that September, "Girls are foolish that they do not

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[409] Unruh, *Plains Across*, 119.

[410] *An Act to Establish the Territorial Government of Washington*, ch. 90, 10 Stat. 172 (March 2, 1853).

[411] Robbins, "This Land, Oregon."

[412] Robbins, "Oregon Donation Land Law."

[413] Robbins, "This Land, Oregon."

[414] Robbins, "Oregon Donation Land Law."

[415] Robbins, "Oregon Donation Land Law."

[416] Robert Bunting, *The Pacific Raincoast: Environmental and Culture in an American Eden, 1778–1900* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1997), 97.

come to Oregon Territory to marry. There is no end of bachelor establishments."[417] As the December 1851 deadline approached, the *Oregon Spectator* encouraged matchmaking, if only to double the size of one's acreage:

> The young men and bachelors of the country should bear in mind that the first day of December, 1851, is near at hand. Your days of grace soon expire and the 320 acres is lost beyond redemption, unless you are up and stirring.—The ladies, it seems to us, should wear their most winning smiles, and encourage the timid young man to nerve himself up to the sticking point, and boldly declare his desire to possess another half (section).[418]

If men married Indigenous women, they too were entitled to a claim, as interpreters of the DLCA believed Indigenous wives would assume the racial identity of their husbands.[419]

Under the original terms of the 1850 act, settlers had to make improvements to the land and live on the property for four continuous years to gain title.[420] A later amendment reduced this residency requirement to one year.[421] Changes to the law in 1853 granted land only to White American male citizens over the age of twenty-one, thus blocking Métis men who had been eligible to receive land under the Provisional Government's Organic Laws.[422] The 1853 amendments reduced the acreage to 160 acres per White male, with an additional 160 acres for their wives, but they also acknowledged the rights of widows to claims.[423]

By the time the DLCA expired in 1855, more than 33,000 White overlanders had arrived in Oregon, as noted above. Approximately 7,000 were granted claims to 2.5 million acres of land, primarily in the Willamette, Umpqua, and Rogue River valleys. Oregon's population, as reported by the federal census, grew nearly 300 percent, from 13,294 in 1850 to 52,465 in 1860, with most arrivals in that decade drawn by the promise of free land.[424]

The DLCA effectively established a color line in Oregon (see Figure 25). It legitimized White settlement while explicitly excluding Hawaiians and Blacks, communities which Delegate Thurston had denounced repeatedly. Ultimately, the DLCA spurred the federal government to take lands outright from Indigenous communities.[425] Hawaiians had been in the region since the late eighteenth century as an integral part of the HBC's workforce at Fort Vancouver, as well as assisting the earliest missionaries to the Oregon Country. They quickly found themselves excluded from mainstream

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[417] Kenneth L. Holmes, ed., *Covered Wagon Women: Diaries & Letters from the Western Trails, 1851, Volume 3* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 148.

[418] [no title], *Oregon Spectator*, November 11, 1851, 2.

[419] Whaley, "Creating Oregon from *Illahee*," 272–73.

[420] Robbins, "Oregon Donation Land Law."

[421] Robbins, "Oregon Donation Land Law."

[422] Pollard, "Making of the Metis Children," 438.

[423] Bunting, *Pacific Raincoast*, 97; Robbins, "Oregon Donation Land Law."

[424] Robbins, "Oregon Donation Land Law."

[425] Robbins, "Oregon Donation Land Law."

society in the new Oregon Territory. In addition to being denied land claims, they could not become citizens, vote, or testify against Whites in courts.[426]

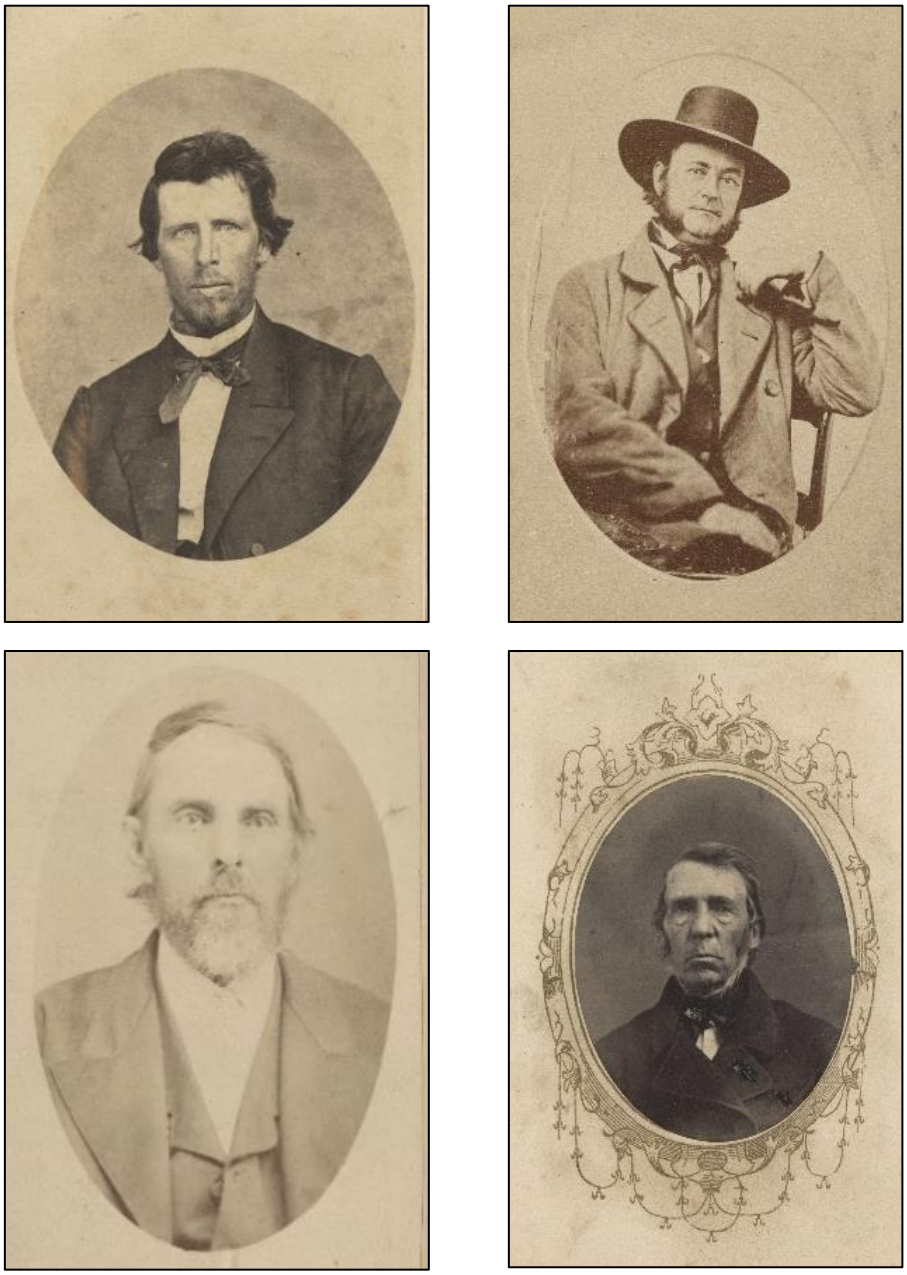

Figure 25. The Oregon Donation Land Claim Act opened up land almost exclusively for White settlers. Here, a few overlanders who claimed land under the act: Plympton Kelly (*top left*), Joseph Meek (*top right*), Charles Frederick Putnam (*bottom right*), and William Helm (*bottom left*).

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

[426] Jean Barman and Bruce McIntyre Watson, "Hawaiians in the Oregon Country," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/hawaiians_in_the_oregon_country.

While the Provisional Government had passed Oregon's first Black exclusion law in 1844, and the Territorial Government passed the second in 1849, the DLCA was the most damaging anti-Black law passed during this period. The race-based land policy cemented White supremacy into Oregon Territory—and later, the state—politically, economically, and socially.[427] Historian Kenneth R. Coleman further elaborated on the lasting impacts of the DLCA:

> The DLCA was the only federal land-distribution act in U.S. history that specifically limited land grants by race, essentially creating an affirmative action program for White people. Perhaps most decisively, the issuance of free land resulted in a massive economic head start for White cultivators and initiated a long-standing pattern in which access to real estate became an instrument of White supremacy and social control. This result would have immeasurable consequences for social inequality in Oregon, as emerging markets in privatized land were major engines of economic prosperity in the nineteenth-century United States and beyond. The lobbying efforts of Oregon's early political leaders were so successful that Congress allowed the region's Anglo-American settlers to seize Indigenous homelands without Tribes' having ceded their lands through treaties with the federal government—a violation of U.S. law.[428]

Settler Interactions with Indigenous People

While the DLCA benefited White overlanders, it simultaneously dispossessed Indigenous communities of their land. When Territorial Delegate Thurston met with members of Congress prior to passage of the act, he informed them that before the land question in Oregon could be settled, Indigenous title to land first had to be extinguished. [429] The Oregon Territorial Act of 1848 had stipulated that Indigenous people would maintain rights to their lands, "so long as such rights shall remain unextinguished by treaty between the United States and such Indians."[430] In response, lawmakers authorized commissioners to negotiate treaties with Tribes, particularly those west of the Cascade Mountains, to gain access to their lands and to remove them to reservations.[431] Carried out over the next two decades, the treaty process would make much of the Indigenous land in the Northwest part of the public domain and therefore available for overlander settlement under the DLCA and later federal land laws.[432]

The federal government had in place a policy of negotiating land cession treaties with Indigenous Tribes before any lands could be settled by Americans. Congress violated this policy when it passed the DLCA. The act enabled White settlers to gain title to lands that had yet to be ceded by the Indigenous communities that had inhabited them since time immemorial.[433] The rush

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[427] Darrell Millner, "Blacks in Oregon," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/blacks_in_oregon.

[428] Coleman, "We'll All Start Even'," 415.

[429] Robbins, "Oregon Donation Land Law."

[430] Robbins, "This Land, Oregon."

[431] Robbins, "Oregon Donation Land Law."

[432] Robbins, "This Land, Oregon."

[433] Taylor, "Making Salmon," 67.

of land-hungry overlanders began well before the federal government started negotiating or ratifying treaties with Indigenous people.[434]

President Zachary Taylor appointed Anson Dart as the Oregon Territory's first superintendent of Indian affairs. Dart's role was to negotiate treaties with Tribes so as to clear land titles for American settlers. Throughout 1851, he negotiated with Tribes in the Willamette Valley. At this time, approximately twenty Tribes lived in the valley, including Kalapuya, Molalla, and Chinook people. Though Indigenous people in the Willamette Valley had continued their own lifeways and cultures, they faced the ongoing pressures of American settlement. Many communities' populations had been decimated by diseases that overlanders brought in, and they were further impacted by the loss of land and resources as White settlement expanded geographically. For these reasons, many Tribes agreed to meet with Dart.[435]

Dart initially sought to remove the Tribes to east of the Cascade Mountains and offered money, supplies, and food as inducements. The Tribes refused to leave their lands, so Dart included small reservations within their homelands in all of the treaties. He signed individual treaties with the Santiam, Luckamiute, Yamhill, Tualatin, Molalla, Santiam Band Molalla, and Clackamas people.[436]

The *Oregon Spectator* covered the treaty negotiations closely, as most, if not all, White settlers in the valley held the collective goal of extinguishing Indigenous title to lands. In May 1851, the paper reported,

> The Commissioners have closed their business at Champoeg, after a session of about five weeks, and have returned to Oregon City. Treaties have been concluded with the upper and lower bands of the Molala Indians, for the cession of the western slope of the Cascade range of mountains, and all their lands in the Wallamet valley, from the dividing ridge between the Clackacmas and Molala rivers to the head waters of the Wahlamat. This tribe, contrary to general belief, made no claim east of the summit range of the mountains, while on the other hand their range extends some distance into the valley below the line of the fir timber.—Their numbers, too, are greater than has been supposed, the northern band consisting of 58, and the southern of 65. In the case of the first band, a reserve was made of a tract lying between the old Klamet trail and the summit of the Cascade Mountains, and extending from the divide between the Clackamas and Molala to Silver Creek . . . [illegible – details on sale] . . . The Santiam or southern band, reserve a small tract commencing on the fork of Santiam river above the Callapooya reserve, thence southward along the base of the mountains to the second creek; thence up the creek to its source and eastward to the summit of the mountains; thence north to a point due east of the north fork of the Santiam; and thence west down that fork to the place of beginning. the consideration of the last purchase is $20,000, to be paid in 20 annual installments; $200 in case and the balance as before, in goods, with a present of ten rifles and a horse, on ratification. The chiefs respectively recognized are, by the first, Quai-eck-ete, Yulkus and Crooked Finger; by the second, Kost-nah. The claims of white settlers within the reserves, are preserved to them; but these are very few, the lands excepted being

[434] Barber, "'We were at our journey's end.'," 395.

[435] Lewis, "Willamette Valley Treaties."

[436] Lewis, "Willamette Valley Treaties."

> chiefly mountain country. Both purchases are important, as the first includes a tract coming down within a few miles of Oregon City, and the latter is absolutely necessary to settlers in the eastern part of the upper Wahlamet, from the fact that the only timber there is upon or at the base of the mountains.[437]

Congress ultimately did not ratify a single treaty negotiated by Dart. American settlers in the Willamette Valley had sent complaints to Washington, DC, regarding the treaty stipulations that Tribes would be moved to reservations within the valley, rather than to eastern Oregon. Without clearing any title to Indigenous land, Dart was forced to resign.[438]

In 1853, President Franklin Pierce appointed Joel Palmer as Dart's replacement. Palmer eventually negotiated nine treaties in western Oregon, of which Congress ratified seven. One—the Treaty with Kalapuyan people, also known as the Willamette Valley Treaty—was negotiated in January 1855 and ratified that March.[439] Under the treaty, several Tribes agreed to confederate, including the Kalapuyan, Tualatin, Santiam, Yamhill, Ahanchuyuk, Lackmiute, Chelamela, Pee-you, Winfelly, Calapooia, Northern Molalla, and Clackamas Chinook people.[440] These Tribes would cede a million of acres of land to the federal government and be forcibly removed to the Grand Ronde, Siletz, and Coast Reservations.[441]

Palmer also worked to negotiate treaties with Tribes in southwestern Oregon.[442] White settlers had increasingly occupied this region with the opening of the Applegate Trail in 1846. The trail provided an important corridor for overlanders heading north into the Willamette Valley, as well as for prospectors heading south to the California gold mines. The discovery of gold in southern Oregon increased already existing tensions between White settlers and the so-called Rogue River Indians. This contemporary designation by White settlers included a range of Tribes in the Rogue River area, such as the Takelma, Shasta, Dakubetede, and many Athapaskan-speaking people.[443] These Indigenous communities resisted the increase in White settlement on their lands. By the 1850s, violent conflicts had erupted in southern Oregon and northern California, where White militia forces attempted to drive Indigenous communities from their lands.[444]

In September 1853, Palmer met with Takelma leader Asperkahar and other representatives from both sides near Lower Table Rock on the Rogue River to negotiate a peace treaty.[445] Palmer initially

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[437] "Treaties 5 and 6," *Oregon Spectator*, May 15, 1851, 2.

[438] Lewis, "Willamette Valley Treaties"; Lewis, "Kalapuyan Tribal History."

[439] Melinda Jetté, "Kalapuya Treaty," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed April 7, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/kalapuya_treaty.

[440] David Lewis, "Willamette Valley Treaties," *Oregon Encyclopedia*.

[441] Melinda Marie Jetté, "The Frenchman's Gaze: Pierre de Saint-Amant's Travels in the Oregon Territory, 1851," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 121, no. 2 (Summer 2020): 120–55, esp. 129–33.

[442] Lewis, "Willamette Valley Treaties."

[443] Lewis, "Willamette Valley Treaties."

[444] Chelsea Rose and Katie Johnson, "Rising from the Ashes: Jacksonville Chinese Quarter Site (35JA737) Data Recovery Excavations" (Southern Oregon University Laboratory of Anthropology, Ashland, 2016; prepared for the Oregon Department of Transportation), 10.

[445] Jeff LaLande, "Council of Table Rock," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 31, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/council_of_table_rock.

sought to remove the Tribes to eastern Oregon, but they refused.[446] The subsequent Treaty of Table Rock established a temporary reservation on the north side of the Rogue River. Table Rock Reservation was the first reservation in the Pacific Northwest.[447]

A writer for the *Oregon Spectator*, in the paper's coverage of treaty negotiations, sheds light on the how White settlers dehumanized Indigenous people and advocated in favor of forcing people to leave their homelands:

> that the Indians be immediately removed to some other portion of Oregon, such as may be assigned them by government, we think extremely doubtful. They contend strongly and earnestly for the ground of their nativity, and say too that they will fight to the last man for their hereditary rights. They are a bold, intrepid and revengeful race. This sort of prejudice is by no means confined to that particular tribe or the tribes engaged in the war; but the same feeling is prevalent among all the tribes inhabiting the Willamette valley, and in other portions of the Territory. They cling with great tenacity to their old fishing and hunting grounds. To get rid of them, compulsion will be necessary. They are a nuisance to the white settlers wherever they live in close proximity. Their limits have been circumscribed, and their changes for obtaining a living lessened, and all the best lands, particularly of this valley, occupied by white settlers. To them there appears to be no other alternative left but to steal. Petty thefts are becoming quite frequent. Their wants are not many, and their thefts are confined principally to articles of food and wearing apparel. If the citizens in the mining country had their full swing, and the power to do it, they would soon provide everlasting homes for the Indians in that quarter. No treaty with the southern Indians can be entered into that the whites will be safe under after it is made. There is trouble in the future, no matter whether the war is at an end or not.[448]

The treaty provided for the cession of approximately 1,900 acres of Indigenous land to the United States, making it available for overlander land claims. The negotiated peace ended in October 1855, when a group of White settlers attacked a band of Takelma and began the so-called Rogue River War of 1855–1856.[449] The US Army would later remove most of the surviving Rogue River Tribes to the Coast Reservation, which the federal government initially intended to be the only permanent reservation in Oregon for Tribes from the coast, Willamette Valley, and southwestern Oregon.[450]

Demographics of Settlement

Overlanders poured into Oregon during the first half of the 1850s, with annual migration to the region over the Oregon Trail reaching an all-time high of 10,000 in 1852. This period also included the second and third highest numbers of arrivals between 1840 and 1860, with 7,500 people in 1853

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[446] Lewis, "Willamette Valley Treaties."

[447] Rose and Johnson, "Rising from the Ashes," 11.

[448] "Indian Affairs," *Oregon Spectator*, September 16, 1853, 2.

[449] Rose and Johnson, "Rising from the Ashes," 11.

[450] Robbins, "This Land, Oregon"; David Lewis, "Coast Indian Reservation," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed April 7, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/coast_indian_reservation.

and an estimated 6,000 arrivals in Oregon in both 1850 and 1854 (See Table 1-1, above).[451] The explosion of overland travel was due in large part to the DLCA, which attracted scores of Americans to the Pacific Coast. Continued boosterism from popular publications and politicians, as along with established settlers encouraging their friends and relations to move to the region, also contributed to the uptick in arrivals during the early 1850s. Territorial Delegate Samuel Thurston, who helped secure passage of the DLCA, became one of Oregon's biggest boosters. The *Oregon Spectator* noted that "Mr. Thurston's zeal on behalf of Oregon" helped promote overland migration.[452]

Figure 26. During the heavy years of immigration in the early 1850s, many overlanders traveled to Oregon with their families. Pictured here are Joab and Ann Powell ca. 1865, who, along with their fourteen children, arrived in Oregon from Missouri on October 10, 1852.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

The increased number of arrivals was also due, in part, to the reuniting of families. While many overlanders still traveled as family units (see Figure 26), some men who had arrived in Oregon in the 1840s and 1850s secured land and then returned to their home states to bring family and friends to Oregon. Others, like Reverend Gustavus Hines, had arrived earlier to do missionary work and later brought their families to settle in the region.[453] Still others, like Parish Lovejoy Willis's father Stephen, went west to first assess the opportunities in the region before deciding to move their families to Oregon:

> Father didn't want to bring the family out west unless he was sure he would like it, so, leaving the rest of the family and taking me along for company, he started for Oregon in 1852 by ox team. Two neighbors, Henry Purdy and Zaro McClung, came with us. . . . I was a boy of 14 when I crossed the plains. . . . Henry Purdy, who came with us, settled near Roseburg. McClung didn't like Oregon; it was so different from Illinois. So he went back. My father, Stephen D. Willis, took up a donation land

[451] Unruh, *Plains Across*, 119.

[452] "Emigration to Oregon," *Oregon Spectator*, May 30, 1850, 2.

[453] "An old Oregonian Returned," *Oregon Spectator*, October 13, 1853, 3.

> claim four miles northwest of Corvallis, in Benton County. . . . Father liked Oregon so well he sent back word for the family to come out. In the spring of 1853 mother and my oldest brother went to New York city, where they took passage for San Francisco by way of the Isthmus of Panama. From San Francisco they came by water to Portland. . . . The next summer father started back on the old Oregon trail with provisions to meet the part of our family who were coming overland. . . . When our family was once more reunited we decided to go to southern Oregon. We settled in the Umpqua valley. Not far from us Harrison Rice, one of my brothers-in-law, found a place, and Alexander Gilland, the other brother-in-law, settled a mile or two away.[454]

By the 1850s, it took a typical wagon party three to four months to reach Oregon, compared to five to seven months in the previous decade.[455] The *Oregon Spectator* reported that it took one party "about three months" to travel from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Oregon City, where it arrived in August 1850.[456] The *Spectator* closely monitored each year of immigration as more and more Americans began populating the territory:

> We are glad to learn that the great majority of the immigrants will arrive in time to avoid the rain and snow in the fall. . . . The time of traveling from the Missouri river to Oregon by the first immigrants is generally computed to be from 90 to 100 days this season for those with horse and mule teams, the ox teams will be from two to four weeks later.[457]

Those who were able to arrive by the late summer or early autumn had more time to get settled and prepare themselves for winter. In 1851, the first overlanders arrived at Oregon City in late July, giving them plenty of time to get settled before the cold and rainy months set in. The *Oregon Spectator* reported as follows:

> First Immigrants.—Mr. Fisher, of Iowa, in company with some 14 others, with four ox teams, arrived at the Dalles one day last week direct from the States. He arrived in this city on Sunday evening last. He left St. Joseph on the 23d of April. They had quite a successful trip—got through with all their stock.[458]

Generally, the later that overlanders arrived in any given year, the more hardships they might face. The start of the wet season in October and November meant that rain could make the trail muddy, or snow could obstruct passes, both of which slowed a wagon party's progress. The later in the year, the less likely overlanders could find sufficient grass and feed for their oxen and livestock, leading to further delays. More days spent on the trail ate into a party's supply of food and other provisions, leaving overlanders susceptible to disease and more prone to exhaustion and accidents. The *Oregon Spectator* commented on such a situation in 1853:

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[454] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, July 20, 1914, 4.

[455] Schwantes, *Pacific Northwest*, 90.

[456] "A Fact for Emigrants," *Oregon Spectator*, August 22, 1850, 2.

[457] "The Immigrants," *Oregon Spectator*, August 5, 1851, 2.

[458] "First Immigrants," *Oregon Spectator*, July 29, 1851, 2.

> The early immigrants got along this season remarkably well. There was little or no sickness. The grass was plenty and good, and the dust was, comparatively, but little trouble. The situation of those still behind, we regret to learn, is quite critical. So much stock has died of late that many persons with families have had their teams so reduced that they have scarcely team sufficient to draw them along. . . . The stock of the rear immigrants has suffered immensely for want of grass. . . . This will prolong the trip so much for many who thought they would make a quick trip that they will run out of provisions. Thus starvation will bring on sickness and sickness death. Very few deaths are said to have occurred among the first immigrants this season. They made quicker trips and their stock looked better than those of any former immigration.
>
> We sincerely pity those who may have the misfortune to have been in the Cascade mountains during the rain on last Tuesday night and the following day. . . . Persons having friends on the road would do them a kindness to persuade them not to cross the mountains after the period we have named. They must count on their stock doing without anything to eat from the time they enter the mountains until they get through. The little grass that grows where there is a chance for stock to get to it is all fed up long before the period we have named arrives. Persons have succeeded in getting through as late as the last of September.[459]

Late arrival also meant less availability of housing. Maria Parsons Belshaw, an 1853 overlander, noted in her diary, "Emmigrants still coming in and feel disappointed when they get here and do not find houses to suit them."[460]

Those overlanders arriving during the early 1850s still favored settling in the Willamette Valley (see Figure 27). But as the years progressed, available land became scarce, particularly in the northern half of the valley. The *Oregon Spectator* reported in 1851, "It was unexpected to us to see so much of the country occupied by new claimants. From Linn City out to the [Tualatin] Plains the land, we have been informed, is nearly all claimed, hills and all."[461]

As the Willamette Valley filled up, new arrivals were drawn farther south in the Oregon Territory. In the early 1850s, overlanders increasingly settled in the Umpqua and Rogue River valleys. Internal boosterism of these valleys became common, as seen in this 1853 letter from a South Umpqua resident, published in the *Oregon Spectator*:

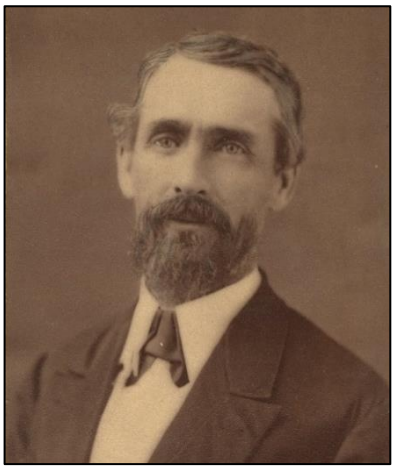

Figure 27, Joseph A. Hanna traveled overland to Oregon in 1852 and settled in the Willamette Valley in Marysville (the name of which later changed to Corvallis). Like Hanna, the majority of overlanders arriving in the early 1850s were White.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

[459] "The Late Immigrants," *Oregon Spectator*, September 2, 1853, 2.

[460] Joseph W. Ellison, "Diary of Maria Parsons Belshaw, 1853," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (December 1932): 318–33, esp. 332–33.

[461] [no title], *Oregon Spectator*, July 29, 1851, 2.

> I am glad to learn that this year's immigration is large. There is yet room enough in Oregon, though the country is of such a nature that it is extremely hard for people to become much acquainted with it on a short time. There is a good deal of valuable land still vacant in this [Umpqua] valley. Persons having limited means will think it excessive living here at the present time. Were it not for this fact, I would advise all to come to this [illegible], for it is certainly superior in many respects to some other portions of the Territory. Its [Jacksonville] proximity to the mines will afford it an excellent market for a long time to come, so when there is a good wagon road open to Scottsburg—and probably there soon will be—settlers in this valley can supply themselves with foreign articles with [illegible], and at reasonable prices.[462]

Improvements to Road and River Transportation

Roads during this period were typically surfaced with rock and dirt but could become impassable during the rainy season. In 1849, Portland tannery operator Daniel Lownsdale began advocating for the construction of a plank road from the Tualatin Valley to the city. Such roads were popular in the eastern United States and Canada during this period because they could be built at a lower cost than railroads. But they had disadvantages, such as deteriorating within a few years of construction.[463]

In 1851, Lownsdale, along with his business partners William Chapman and Stephen Coffin, received a charter from the Oregon territorial legislature to begin construction of what became known as the Great Plank Road, stretching from Portland to the Tualatin Valley.[464] Portland & Valley Plank Road Company laid the first sixteen-foot-wide, three-inch-thick wooden planks on September 27, 1851. The road could accommodate single wagons and also included turnouts for vehicles to pass. But financial mismanagement led the company to collapse in early 1853.[465]

A new company, Portland and Tualatin Plains Plank Road Company, led by William S. Ladd, received a territorial charter in February 1856 and completed construction of the Portland-Tualatin Road by the end of the year. Farmers from Washington, Yamhill, and Polk counties utilized the road to bring their goods to ports in Portland, St. Johns, and St. Helens. Though the plank road provided a more reliable route to markets, its tolls—at seventy-five cents per wagon, thirty-seven and a half cents per horse and rider, ten cents per head of cattle, and five cents per sheep or pig—presented a financial burden to some farmers. In 1867, the *Oregonian* recommended that the road be macadamized (a form of road paving in which small stones are compacted to form a hard surface) to prevent further deterioration. Five years later, the newspaper declared all plank roads a financial burden compared to railroads. Portions of US Highway 26 west of Portland follow a segment of the original plank road.[466]

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[462] C. W. B., South Umpqua, to the editor, September 30, 1853, published in the *Oregon Spectator*, October 6, 1853, 1.

[463] Tyler Wayne, "Great Plank Road," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/great_plank_road.

[464] The Great Plank Road connected the Tualatin Valley to Portland. Today's Canyon Road follows much of the original route of the Plank Road. See Wayne, "Great Plank Road."

[465] Wayne, "Great Plank Road."

[466] Wayne, "Great Plank Road."

Such improvement efforts were typically undertaken by private interests, but the federal government also cut new routes, especially during the mid- to late 1850s, as soldiers arrived in the region during conflicts with Indigenous communities.[467] The *Oregon Spectator* noted,

> From the foot of the rapids to Linn city, we learn, there is now completed and in good use a good wagon road. It has been made at the expense of private enterprise. In this we recognise a principle that will build up and improve any country, and all we want is a *few* more of the same sort.[468]

Improvements to road transportation during this era helped facilitate the movement of overlanders to destinations beyond the Willamette Valley.[469] The new roads were developed along what had first been Indigenous trails. The *Oregon Spectator*, in describing a new connection between the Rogue River and Umpqua valleys, acknowledged this fact:

> The route chosen by Maj. Kearny was an old Indian trail which evidently from time immemorial served as the line of communication between the valleys; like all Indian roads, it seeks the open rather than the direct way between the points, besides many steep and rocky places, which might be easily avoided; it passes over the highest peak of the mountain dividing the valleys, while it is evident that on both sides there are chasms (perhaps canyons) where a road might be opened many hundreds of feet lower than the path.[470]

Improvements were also made to river transportation around established communities, including Oregon City, Portland, and Milwaukie in the Willamette Valley and Astoria on the Oregon Coast. The *Columbia*, a shallow-draft sidewheeler, was the first steamboat in Oregon Territory, making regular trips on the Columbia River between Portland and Astoria starting in 1850. Later that same year, the *Lot Whitcomb* launched in Milwaukie, providing reliable steamship transport along the Willamette River. By the mid-1850s, steamboats were operating along the Columbia, Willamette, and Yamhill rivers.[471]

Existing Communities and Settlement Trends

Settlement Patterns

In 1850, the year of the first US census of Oregon, the federal government enumerated the population of the territory by county (see Table 3-1). Counties that made up the Willamette Valley in 1850 included Benton, Clackamas, Linn, Marion, Polk, Washington, Yamhill, with a total population of 11,631. The Willamette Valley would later include Lane and Multnomah counties. Lane County was established in 1851 from portions of Linn and Benton counties, and Eugene eventually became

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[467] "The Military Road from Astoria to Salem," *Oregon Argus*, August 18, 1855, 2.

[468] [no title], *Oregon Spectator*, September 26, 1850, 2.

[469] Windler, et al., "Cultural Resource Inventory for the Proposed SAP South – Plan Area 2 Residential Development," 17.

[470] A Guide, letter to the editor, July 5, 1851, published in the *Oregon Spectator*, July 22, 1851, 2.

[471] William L. Lang, "Oregon Steam Navigation Company," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/oregon_steam_navigation_company.

its most populous community. Multnomah County was carved out of Clackamas and Washington counties in 1854, with Portland as the population center. Clark and Lewis counties are now in Washington state.[472]

The census data provides a comparison of overlander settlement in the different regions of the Willamette Valley. The northern valley—Clackamas, Washington, and Yamhill counties—had a population of 6,023. The mid-valley—Marion and Polk counties—had a population of 3,800. And the southern valley—Benton and Linn counties—had a population of 1,808.[473] Such data reflected the fact that overlanders first claimed lands in the northern half of the valley. As the northern valley filled up, settlers moved farther south in the valley, and some left the region altogether to claim land in the Umpqua and Rogue River valleys.[474]

Table 3-1. Total Population of the Oregon Territory, 1850.[475]

County	**Population**
Benton County	814
Clackamas County	1,859
Clark County	643
Clatsop County	462
Lewis County	558
Linn County	994
Marion County	2,749
Polk County	1,051
Washington County	2,652
Yamhill County	1,512
Total	**13,294**

The federal census recorded 13,294 people residing in the Oregon Territory in 1850. Men made up approximately 62 percent of the population and women 38 percent.[476] Nearly 98 percent (12,992 people) identified as White.[477] Of the White population, 87.2 percent (11,592 people) were born in the United States. More than half of this number (6,593 people) were born in either the Old

[472] Jesse S. Douglas, "Origins of the Population of Oregon in 1850," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (April 1950): 95–108, esp. 100–110.

[473] Boag, "Calapooian Matrix," 92–93.

[474] Windler, et al., "Cultural Resource Inventory for the Proposed SAP South – Plan Area 2 Residential Development," 17.

[475] Table adapted from Douglas, "Origins of the Population of Oregon in 1850," 95–108, Table IV.

[476] Douglas, "Origins of the Population of Oregon in 1850," Tables I, II, and III.

[477] Douglas, "Origins of the Population of Oregon in 1850," Tables IV.

Northwest (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and Ohio) or the so-called border states (Kentucky, Missouri, and Tennessee).[478] Overlanders had been leaving these states for Oregon since the first large wagon trains in 1843.[479]

The census-takers likely significantly undercounted Indigenous, Métis, Black, Hawaiian, and other people of color. Census data included 34 Black men, 20 Black women, 88 Indigenous men, 118 Indigenous women, 39 Hawaiian men, 2 Hawaiian women, and 1 Chinese man. These 302 people constituted only 2 percent of the territorial population. The number of Indigenous people, in particular, was likely much higher.[480]

Oregon City

The 1850 census also provided population data for five towns in Oregon: Astoria, 252; Linn City, 125; Milton City, 692; Oregon City, 697; and Portland, 821.[481] Oregon City, once the largest community in the territory, was quickly being surpassed by Portland in both population and commercial importance. The *Oregon Spectator*, ever the champion of its hometown, denied this well into the mid-1850s:

> In twenty years OREGON CITY will be the LARGEST city in the Territory!! . . . Some pretend to say, even, that we will be eclipsed by our rival town below—Portland. This is all nonsense. Her location is far short in point of beauty, health, or comfort.[482]

Oregon City continued to grow in the early 1850s, with new buildings constructed and improvements such as sidewalks added (see Figure 28). With the arrival of steamships on the Willamette River in late 1850, the town served as commercial and transportation hub for the communities surrounding Willamette Falls. But its growth was not at the same pace as its northern neighbor Portland. To the south, Salem became another rival when the territorial capital moved there from Oregon City between 1851 and 1852.[483]

Many overlanders, like Eugenia Zieber, still stopped first in Oregon City before traveling elsewhere in the territory. Zieber recorded her initial impressions of Oregon City and its neighbor across the Willamette, Linn City, in her journal on October 26, 1851:

> We are now in Oregon City, were here two weeks yesterday. Yes we are at the end of our journey, and on some accounts I half regret it, on others am heartily glad. Our journey was a long one, lasted too long, so that we became uneasy, fearing the rainy season would set in before we would reach the end of it. But now we are here, have been two weeks, and no rain until last night have we had. . . . Oregon City has a strange location. Among rocks, and right up against a high hill, though the water

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[478] Douglas, "Origins of the Population of Oregon in 1850," Table III.

[479] Boag, "Calapooian Matrix," 52; Coleman, *Dangerous Subjects*, 71

[480] Douglas, "Origins of the Population of Oregon in 1850," 95–108, Table I.

[481] Douglas, "Origins of the Population of Oregon in 1850," 100–110.

[482] "Prospects of Oregon City," *Oregon Spectator*, May 5, 1854, 2.

[483] Ballestrem, "Oregon City"; [no title], *Oregon Spectator*, December 19, 1850, 2; [no title], *Oregon Spectator*, February 13, 1851, 2.

> power here was no doubt the occasion of a city's being built here. We are residing across the river from Oregon City, in what is called Linn City. Every little place here assumes the title of city. We are but a few yards from the falls, having a fine view of them from our windows on the right hand side, on the left we see O. – C. –. Our situation here taking it altogether is rather a pleasant one and a very private one. Father only intends spending one winter here, may not remain all of that, thinks of making his claim and settling upon it, but must look around and endeavor to select one that will please him well. Not worth while to take the very first ground we meet, whether it suits or not, after coming so far for it.[484]

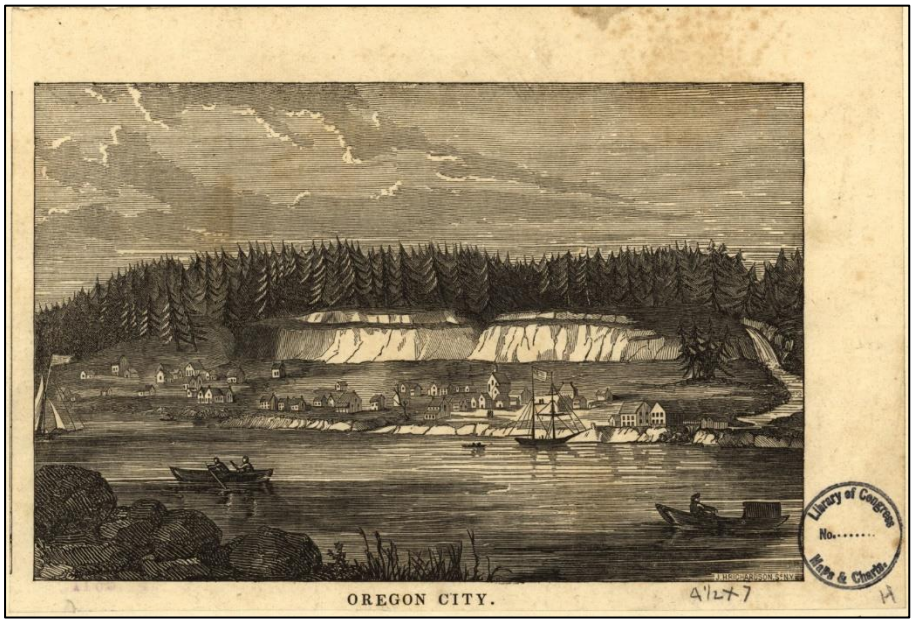

Figure 28. Oregon City continued to grow in the 1850s, but at a slower rate than Portland. Here, a drawing of Oregon City by James H. Richardson, ca. 1850s.

Source: Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

Oregon City continued to be an important location for territorial administration when the US government opened its first district land office (part of the General Land Office [GLO]) there in May 1851. Here, new arrivals could apply for land ownership, while more established residents could validate land claimed prior to passage of the DLCA in 1850.[485] The GLO was the federal agency that surveyed, bounded, and sold Indigenous land, dispossessing Indigenous residents of their homelands. Champ Clark Vaughan, retired from the Bureau of Land Management, explained the GLO's process of dispersing Indigenous lands to settlers:

> To obtain ownership of public domain lands, citizens had to satisfy the requirements of several laws and regulations, including locating available land, filing their claims and applications with the local GLO district land office, paying required fees or purchase money, receiving permission for entry and settlement, and meeting residence and improvement stipulations. If the lands were surveyed and Indian title was extinguished, then the GLO could issue a final certificate that authorized issuance of a land patent to transfer title. The land patent was and continues to be

[484] Holmes, *Covered Wagon Women, Volume 3*, 199–201.

[485] Ballestrem, "Oregon City."

> the primary title document used to convey public domain lands into private ownership. Because of the prerequisite to clear Indian title and survey lands, the first land patent in Oregon was not issued until 1858.[486]

The territory's first surveyor general, John B. Preston, oversaw the district land office and initiated land surveys under the Rectangular Survey System. Earlier overlanders—who defined their claims by hills, streams, and trees—had requested that such survey work be completed so that they could have claim boundaries delineated and then potentially divide and sell their land. Following standard federal survey practices, GLO surveyors laid out the Willamette Meridian (north and south) and Base Line (east and west), the basis for a rectangular survey grid, in June 1851. From there, they surveyed all the land in what is now Oregon and Washington into six-mile-square townships containing thirty-six one-mile-square sections per township. Survey work began in the Willamette Valley and then continued for decades, covering the various regions of Oregon and Washington.[487]

Portland

By 1850, Portland was the largest city in the Oregon Territory with 821 people. Its population would grow to 2,874 by 1860, an increase of 250 percent.[488] In December 1850, the territory gained another newspaper when the Portland *Oregonian* published its first issue. It became a platform for Whig politics in the region (see Figure 29).[489]

The territorial legislature granted Portland a city charter in January 1851. A city council, made up of the mayor, recorder, and five councilmen, governed the two-square-mile city. As the 1850s progressed, the city became more urban. Private interests constructed businesses, churches, and civic buildings; established water and gas works; laid out streets and sidewalks; and operated ferries on the Willamette River.[490]

The discovery of gold, first in California and then in southern Oregon, enabled Portland to grow exponentially during this era. Gold created markets for Oregon wheat, lumber, and other commodities, and large volumes of these products were shipped from Portland. The city's location near the confluence of the Columbia and Willamette rivers made it

Figure 29. Elisha Treat Gunn arrived in Oregon in 1849. Shortly thereafter, he became part owner and compositor of the Portland *Weekly Oregonian*. Pictured here, ca. 1868.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

[486] Champ Clark Vaughan, "U.S. General Land Office in Oregon, ca. 1850–1946," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/u_s_general_land_office_in_oregon_ca_1850_1946.

[487] Kay Atwood, "Oregon Land Survey, 1851–1855," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/oregon_land_survey_1851_1855.

[488] Robbins, "Willamette Valley."

[489] "To the People of Oregon," *Oregonian*, December 4, 1850, 2.

[490] William Toll, "Commerce, Climate, and Community: A History of Portland and its People," *Oregon History Project*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/narratives/commerce-climate-and-community-a-history-of-portland-and-its-people.

accessible to ocean-going vessels, which could not travel farther south than Portland to other ports due to the presence of navigational hazards such as sandbars. Portland was also accessible to adjacent communities by wagon following construction of the Great Plank Road through the Tualatin Mountains (now known as the West Hills).[491]

Throughout the 1850s, more and more overlanders traveled through Portland on their way to find land claims. Many recorded their impressions of the city in diaries and letters. Lucia Loraine Williams, who traveled west in 1851, wrote about the city to her mother that September:

> You will see from the date that I have been a good while writing. I cannot tell you much about the country as I have seen naught, but this place is situated on the Willamette. Steamboats and vessels from the salt water come here but cannot go to Oregon City at all times. . . . [Portland] has the best harbor in the world. It is 18 months old, has three taverns and three stores.[492]

Parthenia Blank arrived the following year and described her first views of Portland:

> About 2 o'clock came into the Willamette (pronounced Will-am-et) River, much like the Columbia, being wide, deep, and slow, and soon were at Portland, the largest town now in the territory, and a fine town it is, and would compare favorably with many eastern cities. at the head of ship navigation, it is bound to be the great commercial emporium of the northwest.[493]

Another 1852 overlander, E. W. Conyers, provided a more detailed description of the city, though he underestimated the population:

> Portland, situated on the west bank of the Willamette River, is a town of about 400 or 500 inhabitants, and most of the houses are built along the river front on what they call Front and First streets. As yet very little grading has been done on the streets and I notice a good many large fir stumps left standing in Front street. The streets running back from the river, a stranger would have to look very close to find them. There are a few scattering houses built back of these two streets bordering on a dense forest of fir. They have one weekly paper in this town called the Weekly Oregonian, edited by a man named Thomas J. Dyer. The office is situated on the corner of what they call Morrison and First streets in a one-story frame building about 18x50 feet. Mr. Dyer has for his residence a neat little one-story frame building situated on the north side and adjoining the printing office, standing back from the street with a neat paling fence in front. Both house and fence are painted white, looking very cosy.[494]

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[491] Abbott, "Portland."

[492] Holmes, *Covered Wagon Women, Volume 3*, 148.

[493] Bert Webber, ed., "The Oregon Trail Diary of Twin Sisters, Cecelia Adams and Parthenia Blank in 1852," (n.p.: Webber Research Group, n.d.), 80.

[494] "Diary of E. W. Conyers, A Pioneer of 1852, Now of Clatskanie, Oregon," in *Transactions of the Thirty-Third Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association, June 15, 1905* (Portland, OR: Peaslee Bros. Company, Printers, 1906), 508–9.

Communities surrounding Portland grew as well. Overlanders continued to settle in the Tualatin Plains, which was made more accessible by the opening of the Great Plank Road. The rise in the area's population led to the platting of towns and villages. East Tualatin Plains was platted as the town of Hillsborough (later shortened to Hillsboro) in 1850.[495] The town of Galbreath, established in 1853, was later renamed Bridgeport and then Tualatin, which is the community's current name.[496]

Milwaukie

In 1851, Milwaukie appeared likely to be a rival commercial and transportation center to Portland and Oregon City. Milwaukee residents Lot Whitcomb, Joseph Kellogg, and William Torrance launched the *Lot Whitcomb*, the first steamship on the Willamette River, that year.[497] An overlander later wrote,

> When I passed through Portland in the fall of 1850, it was pretty slow so I went to Oregon City. If I had been choosing between Portland and Milwaukie, I would have said that Milwaukie had the better chance of being the big city than Portland. It had a nursery, a newspaper, a boat line and the citizens were very enterprising.[498]

Despite the presence of steamships at its port, Milwaukie could not compete with Portland and its more accessible location on the Willamette.[499]

Salem

Salem had a population of 400 in 1850, but had grown enough by the following year to be designated the new territorial capital.[500] Salem gained a newspaper in 1853, when Asahel Bush moved the *Oregon Statesman* to the capital. Samuel R. Thurston had established the paper in Oregon City in 1851 as a Democratic rival to the Whig *Oregonian*. When Thurston died later that year, Bush, the paper's editor, assumed ownership.[501]

Excerpts from a letter written by Martha S. Read demonstrate the increased number of overlanders settling in the vicinity of Salem:

> we found we were too late to get through to the mines and rainy season had commenced and we wanted to keep our stock untill they were in condition to sell. so Clinton thought he had a right to a home as well as the rest of the folks so he looked around and made his claim of 320 acres of land. it is prairie land with timber enough on it for fire wood and a large tract of heavy timbered land on the mountains about

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[495] Deborah Raber, "Hillsboro," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed April 12, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/hillsboro.

[496] Karen Lafky Nygaard, "Tualatin, City of," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed April 12, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/tualatin_city_of.

[497] Ballestrem, "Milwaukie."

[498] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, February 19, 1914, 8.

[499] Ballestrem, "Milwaukie."

[500] "Birds-eye View of Oregon," *Oregon Spectator*, December 19, 1850, 2; Lewis, "City of Salem."

[501] Floyd McKay, "Oregon Statesman," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed April 12, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/oregon_statesman.

> 3 miles from us where he can get plenty of rail timber. we are about 3 miles from a saw mill and the best kind of timber for building[.] our folks say they can get hewing timber 100 feet long if they want[.] we are 6 miles from a grist mill where they make the best kind of flour. they raise they best kind of wheat here to make flour of[.] we are 9 miles from Salem on the Willamett river where steam boats run up. we are 40 miles from Oregon City. they have a meeting about 2 miles and some schools all around us. we have none in our neighborhood as yet but they will start one another summer. we have three or four neighbours within half a mile. we can see 8 or 9 houses in sight.[502]

Outside the Willamette Valley

Land in the Willamette Valley became increasingly scarce during the 1850s. Both new and established overlanders began moving to southern and southwestern Oregon, including the Bear Creek, Illinois, Rogue River, Umpqua, and Yoncalla valleys. White settlers laid claim to Indigenous village sites, ignoring Indigenous title to the land, and renamed Indigenous places throughout the region. Completion of the GLO surveys of these valleys in 1854 and 1855 allowed the land to be owned and sold for the first time.[503]

Other overlanders sought opportunities in northwestern Oregon, including Astoria and Clatsop Plains, or traveled farther to destinations in Washington and California.[504]

Finding a Home

Finding Lodging Upon Arrival

Finding lodging was typically the first, and perhaps only, task overlanders needed to accomplish before their first winter in Oregon began. The O*regon Spectator* noted in 1851,

> The immigrants have nearly all reached the haven of their hopes and are, compared with those of last year, comfortable in this valley of abundance. Another gratification is the comparative low prices of all kinds of vegetables, many of which, are three and four hundred per cent. cheaper than they were last year. The immigrant family needs this especially, as they all arrive too late in the season to accomplish much other than to provide shelter and something to live upon. Nearly all the claims, generally considered worth taking, are now pretty much all occupied. The first winter will try some of them sorely. We advise all to keep in good cheer, there's a good time coming.[505]

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[502] Holmes, *Covered Wagon Women, Volume 3*, 248–49.

[503] Kay Atwood and Dennis J. Gray, "This Land, Oregon," *Oregon History Project*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/narratives/as-long-as-the-world-goes-on-the-land-and-people-of-southwest-oregon/new-names-on-the-land/claiming-the-land.

[504] Engeman, "Wooden Beams and Railroad Ties."

[505] [no title], *Oregon Spectator*, October 7, 1851, 3.

Tired of sleeping in tents and wagons or on the ground, many, like Lucia Lorain Williams, sought houses as their first shelter in Oregon:

> Sept. 3. [1851] Arrived at Milwaukie. Went into a house to live again. The first one that I had been in since we crossed the Missouri. H. nearly wild with joy. Did not want to camp out again.[506]

For those en route to other destinations in the Willamette Valley, Philip Foster's farmstead became a first stop. He first arrived in Oregon in 1843, sailing west with his brother-in-law Francis Pettygrove. Foster financed Sam Barlow's road in 1846 and later supervised its construction, maintenance, and toll collection after Barlow withdrew his interest. Foster then established a farm and store along the road, approximately fifteen miles east of Oregon City in what is now Eagle Creek. His property was the first farm many overlanders saw after reaching the Oregon Territory.[507] Excerpts from John T. Kerns' 1852 journal include his impressions of Foster, as well as providing insight into such topics as shelter, work, and geography:

> Saturday, October 2—After driving eight miles over a hilly, mountainous road through cloudy, cool weather, we reached Foster's, the first house in the Willamette valley, after getting out of the Cascade mountains. Our lost spirits returned at this sight and we feel as if our journey was well nigh ended. Mr. Foster has a fine farm and on it all kinds of vegetables, fruits, etc., are growing in abundance. His farm is also very profitable to him at this time as he finds a market for everything he has to dispose of. He is selling flour at ten cents per pound, potatoes at $1.00 per bushel, onions, 25 cents per dozen, and everything in proportion. We intend remaining here for a week to recruit ourselves and what stock we have left. Country around presents some handsome scenery, as well as a good soil. Well watered and covered with a luxuriant growth of all wild products. Weather here clear and pleasant. 2557 miles.
>
> Sunday, October 3—This Sabbath day was spent at Foster's. Samuel got on the last horse we had left and started to Portland to see what had become of the folks that took water at the Dalles and ascertain their intentions as to what part of paradise they were going to settle in. The valley appears to be timbered with a large growth of the various species of pine, and fir. How I should like to hear from Rensselaer to-night. 2557 miles.
>
> Monday, October 4, 5, 6, 7, 8—We're laying at Foster's recruiting. In the meantime Mr. York, James McCoy and Merrill came in, all in good spirits and tolerable health. Poor Ann was regaining her health and she again displays those lovely features of pleasantness and affection equal to her interesting and agreeable sisters, Emma and Martha. James and Merrill brought out two of seven head of cattle left with them: the five died. We have now lost twenty head of cattle and four horses (with one we found dead this morning) in getting to Oregon, which, besides various other losses, would have brought us, Oregon prices, about $1500. We hope, however, to soon make it up if health and life are spared.

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[506] Holmes, *Covered Wagon Women, Volume 3*, 147.

[507] Cody, "Philip Foster (1805–1884)."

> Saturday, October 9— Samuel returned from Portland and reported all safe at Portland and living in town. We commenced preparing to start in the morning to meet them. Mr. York started to go up the valley to settle themselves on their new homestead. After we had bade them adieu and left us to regret their absence. Indeed, it seemed to me like being separated from nearest relations and better, for truer friends are not found among any relations. This is a beautiful climate in comparison to the mountains, as we have had sunshine all the day long.[508]

Those who had networks in Oregon stayed with family or friends for their first winter in the Willamette Valley. Parthenia Blank arrived in Portland in 1852 where "we remained 3 days nearly, when Brother James came for us with his teams and we started with him for his farm, 10 miles distant."[509] Clarence B. Bagley, another 1852 overlander, ultimately found housing through a family friend:

> we considered our journey ended as we reached the home of "Uncle Jesse Parish" near Parish's Gap. There is a range of hills between the valleys of Mill Creek and the Santiam River and a low point called the Gap was used for many years as the main road to the south. It is about four miles from the little town of Jefferson. Uncle West immediately settled on vacant land adjoining the Parish farm and lived there for a great many years.
>
> Next day father went to Salem and secured the rental of a small house not far from the bank of the Willamette and about the same distance from the north branch of Mill Creek. Uncle Ossian and Aunt Lucie Carr owned a home a couple of blocks from that house for many years; in fact until they came to Seattle, finally, to live.
>
> We remained in this house but a short time, as Wiley Chapman, who had come to Oregon in 1847 and already had a large home in Salem, made arrangements with father and mother to move into it and have Rhoda and Memory lived with us that winter while he and Will and Ed went to the mines in Southern Oregon.[510]

Those without networks relied on the kindness of strangers. Many new arrivals, like 1850 overlander Mary Jane Hayden, later described the assistance they received from established settlers, especially during their first few months in Oregon:

> We had gotten within six miles of Portland, when we met a man and his son in a boat, who were returning from Oregon City where he had been to get his wheat ground. Pulling along side of us he greeted us most cordially, expressing his curiosity at our boat and asking us many friendly questions, such as, "Where are you from, when did you start, where are you going, where did you stay last night, etc." We told him on a sand bar opposite a farm house on the river bank and he said that it was his home and he was on his way there. Then he said, "Friends, I want you to turn back

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[508] John T. Kerns, "Journal of Crossing the Plains to Oregon in 1852," in *Transactions of the Forty-Second Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association, Portland, June 25, 1914* (Portland, OR: Chausse-Prudhomme Co. Printers, 1917), 190–93.

[509] Webber, "The Oregon Trail Diary of Twin Sisters, Cecelia Adams and Parthenia Blank in 1852," 80.

[510] Clarence B. Bagley, "Crossing the Plains," *Washington Historical Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (July 1922): 163–80, esp. 179–80.

> and go home with me and be my guests for a week. I crossed the mountains in '45 and I know how hungry you are for fresh meat and vegetables, butter and eggs; all of which I have in plenty." Mr. Hayden then said, "Mr. Brown, your offer is more than kind and we fully appreciate it, but I am told your rainy season will soon be here and both my wife and uncle are in feeble health and I must not spend a day until I get them under cover and then I have got to hunt work." "Well, well, if it is work you want I can help you out as I have my harvesting to do," spoke Mr. Brown. "Mr. Brown, we accept your very kind offer with many kind thanks," answered Mr. Hayden, and we commenced to turn our boat around. We had not been lacking in courage before, but somehow the old wagon bed now seemed to go faster, even when we came to a head current.
>
> As we pulled along, passed the point or foot of the island, we pointed out where we had taken our lunch and when we come to the sand bar we said, "Here is where we slept last night." Mr. Brown pointed to his house and said, "And there is where you will sleep tonight." Such a warm reception when Mr. Brown advised his wife that these were some friends he had brought home to make a visit with them, and the first roof we had been under for five months. The father and son had been expected home and supper was ready. I must tell you about it. The fattest sweetest corned beef I ever tasted with potatoes, cabbage and cream. There were ten at the tables and no scarcity of anything. That was True Hospitality.[511]

Sometimes, however, new overlanders wore out the hospitality offered by earlier arrivals , as Peter Burnett recalled:

> An old acquaintance of mine, whom I had known in Missouri, came to Oregon in 1844, and selected a claim on the outskirts of the settlements. He was a man of fair means, and had a large family. His place was upon the mainly traveled route which led to the valleys above and beyond him. The consequence was, that he was overwhelmed with company. He had to travel many miles to secure his supplies, and had to transport them, especially in winter, upon pack-animals. He was a man of very hospitable disposition; but the burden was so great that he concluded he could not bear it. The travelers would eat him out of house and home. He determined, under the severe pressure of these circumstances, to put up an hotel-sign. He went into the woods, cut down a tree, split out a slab some two feet long and one foot wide, shaved it off smooth on both sides with his drawing-knife, and wrote upon it with charcoal, "Entertainment," and swung it upon a pole before his door. The result was, that travelers passed by without stopping, as they had naught wherewith to pay, and were too honest to pretend to be able. My friend said that for two months he had the greatest relief. His stock of provisions lasted much longer, and he was quite easy in his circumstances. But at the end of the two months he began to be lonesome; and by the time the third month had passed he became so lonely that he took down the sign, and after that he had plenty of company.[512]

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[511] Mary Jane Hayden, *Pioneer Days* (San Jose, CA: Murgotten's Press, 1915), 27–30.

[512] Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, 176–77.

Overlanders with financial means rented or bought houses during their first winter. But with the increasing numbers of people arriving every year during the 1850s, available properties were hard to find, and prices soared. John S. Zieber noted the challenge of finding housing in October 1851:

> Went about town [Portland] to see the place and find a house to rent. Vacant houses scarce and poor, rents high. Concluded not to land the family and continue our journey to Oregon City. Arrived at the rapids in sight of the city about 3 o'clock P. M. Went ashore and walked up. Crossed the ferry at Linn City and took lodgings at Frazer's Hotel. Found a vacant house at the upper end of Linn City and rented it at $10 for one month or $8 per mo. if we should keep it all winter. Concluded not to move the family into it till Monday morning.[513]

Like Zieber, Lydia Allen Rudd made do with an available structure:

> October 26 . . . we reached Burlington about two o'clock. There is one store one blacksmith shop and three or four dwelling houses. We encamped closed by found Mr. Donals in his store an old acquaintance of my husbands I do not know what we shall yet conclude on doing for the winter There is no house in town that we can get to winter in We shall probably stay here tomorrow and by the time know what we are to do for a while at least.[514]

> October 27 . . . Our men have been looking around for a house and employment and have been successful for which I feel very thankful Harry has gone into copartnership with Mr. Donals in the mercantile business and we are to live in the back part of the store for this winter Henry and Mary are going into Mr. D— house on his farm for the winter one mile from here Mr. D— will also find him employment if he wants I expect that we shall not make a claim after all our trouble in getting here on purpose for one I shall have to be poor and dependent on a man my life time.[515]

And others, as excerpts from Maria Parsons Belshaw's 1853 diary reveal, struggled to find any shelter whatsoever, despite traveling throughout the Willamette Valley:

> OCTOBER 2ND. Sabbath day again has rolled around and yet no worshiping assembly have I seen and have not had the privilege of seeking one, for we are still traveling, hoping every day to find feed for our stock and a home for the winter, traveling through timber part of the day. Came to French Prairie about 10 o'clock found a rich looking country, good farms houses and barns on most of the farms, good roads. . . .

> OCTOBER 3RD. Traveling on we know not where. The inhabitants tell us the better country is ahead. Came through some timber today. This evening we came in sight of the town that is called the most beautiful in Oregon, its name is Salem. . . .

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[513] "Diary of John S. Zieber, 1851," in *Transactions of the Forty-Eighth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association, July 1, 1920* (Portland, OR: Chausse-Prudhomme Co., Printers, 1921), 334.

[514] Schlissel, *Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey*, 197.

[515] Schlissel, *Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey*, 197.

OCTOBER 4TH. We started this morning, took a round through town, one institute; one church finished-they are fine buildings. Quite a town, business lively; produce as reasonable as could be expected. . . .

OCTOBER 5TH. Started again this morning. Came into town to trade. Took till 2 o'clock-we then left for the better country, as they say. We passed over very rich soil, all claimed. Settlement rather scattering. . . .

OCTOBER 6TH. A beautiful country we have been traveling through to-day, thinly settled. . . .

OCTOBER 7TH. Started again this morning on our tiresome journey. Came through Santiam City 1 store 1 Blacksmith shop, Post Office, Grocery, Tavern 2 families. It looks very unpleasant here all timber after we cross the river for 2 miles then we came to a pleasant prairie, it is extensive a beautiful farming country, good buildings and water privileges came to Albany this evening it is a new town-as beautiful as ever I saw for a late settled country All good buildings quite compact more so than Oregon City or Salem more taste and beauty displayed than in either of the others. It is on the Willamette River. . . .

OCTOBER 8TH. The country has about the same appearance as yesterday Some timber some prairie-much of the land overflows in winter and spring. Camped 2 miles from Marysville on Cold Creek. . . .

OCTOBER 9TH. Sabbath Day. No homes yet and not permitted to go to the house of worship. . . .

OCTOBER 10TH. Clear and pleasant this morning. Our men started out to look for claims, returned this evening, but one only found a claim that suited, they thought would answer their purpose. Will remain here until they look farther. Rained considerable last night, made the roads rather bad. All kinds of work going on to-day with us. Emmigrants still coming in and feel disappointed when they get here and do not find houses to suit them.[516]

Houses Built During the First Year

Once an overlander selected a claim, the next step was to construct a house. The 1850 DLCA required claimants to make improvements and reside on the land for four years to gain title. Erecting a house was typically the first improvement an overlander made, followed by plowing and fencing the land. They built other supporting structures, such as sheds, granaries, cellars, and chicken coops, as needed. Barn construction was usually delayed until a couple of years after a claim was made, due in large part to cost.[517]

Mary Jane Hayden, who arrived with her family in 1850, later reflected on her first home in Oregon:

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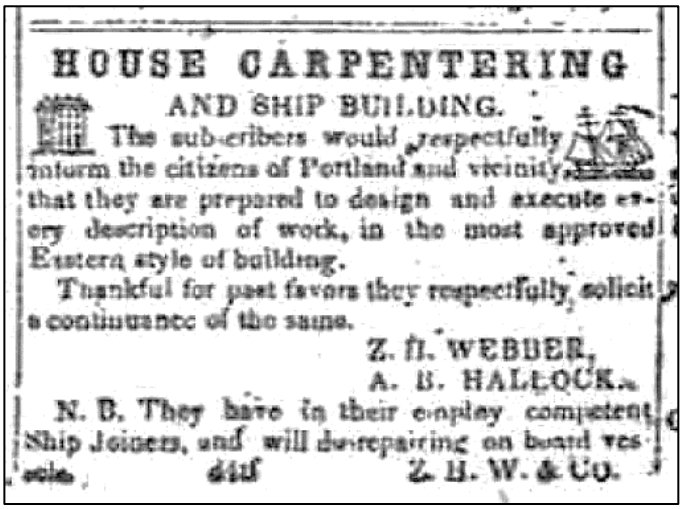
[516] Ellison, "Diary of Maria Parsons Belshaw, 1853," 330–33.

[517] Carter, "Settlement-era Dwellings, Barns and Farm Groups," E18–19.

> we had taken up a claim laying between Mr. Brown and his neighbor, and when we commenced to build our house Mr. Brown and his son with his team, helped to clear a place to put the house and helped with the building until it was finished. It was built with balm logs split and was clean and white on the inside with a shake roof, a slab floor, with an old sail from some vessel and when scrubbed off it looked clean and good. We had one six-pane window, two one-legged bedsteads, four stools made of slabs, a table made of dry goods boxes which took one yard of unbleached muslin for a tablecloth. We had a stick chimney with a good fireplace and hearth, which was as smooth as if made of brick. Our front door was made of shakes, old boat sails for hinges, wooden latch with a buck skin string which always hung out. This is a full description of my first home in Oregon. There is not a woman in all the Pacific Northwest today that is as proud and happy with her palace residence as I was of that little cabin.[518]

The majority of houses built in the Willamette Valley during this era, as well as in southern and southwestern Oregon, were made of wood. Sawn lumber, readily available in the 1850s with the rise of sawmills across the Willamette Valley, eventually replaced logs as the primary construction material.[519] Most homes built in the 1850s used one of two construction techniques: hewn timber framing and balloon framing.[520] Hewn construction, in which a timber frame was held together with wooden pegs, was a popular early method for overlanders. Balloon construction, in which a lightweight frame of sawn lumber was held together with nails, was a newer technique that became commonplace by the 1860s.[521]

The first brick structures in the Willamette Valley had been erected in the 1840s, including a farmhouse in Hopewell, a store in Oregon City, and a Catholic church in St. Paul. By the 1850s, brick commercial buildings could be found in Portland, Salem, and other towns. In addition to commercial structures, brick was also used in courthouses, fraternal lodges, churches, and woolen mills. Houses made of brick were rare during this period.[522]



HOUSE CARPENTERING
AND SHIP BUILDING.

The sub-cribers would respectfully inform the citizens of Portland and vicinity that they are prepared to design and execute every description of work, in the most approved Eastern style of building.

Thankful for past favors they respectfully solicit a continuance of the same.

Z. H. WEBBER,
A. B. HALLOCK.

N. B. They have in their employ competent Ship Joiners, and will do repairing on board vessels. d4tf Z. H. W. & Co.

Figure 30. Those skilled in trades advertised their talents in local papers. Here, an advertisement for a house carpenter that ran in the *Oregonian* on December 4, 1850.

Source: Oregon Digital Newspapers Initiative.

Included among the waves of overlanders were skilled carpenters,

[518] Hayden, *Pioneer Days*, 27–30.

[519] Carter, "Settlement-era Dwellings, Barns and Farm Groups," E16–17; Bowen, *Willamette Valley*, 73.

[520] Carter, "Settlement-era Dwellings, Barns and Farm Groups," E15–16.

[521] Engeman, "Wooden Beams and Railroad Ties."

[522] Engeman, "Wooden Beams and Railroad Ties."

building mechanics, and architects, who applied their trades to design and build houses, barns, and other buildings throughout Oregon Territory (see Figure 30). The known builders and architects of this period included Hamilton Campbell, Rice Dunbar, Dow Gilbert, Absalom Hallock, William Kane, William Pitman, and Reverend James Wilbur.[523] Those specifically involved in barn building in the Willamette Valley were Joe Laderoute, John Ridgeway, and Squire and George Rycraft.[524]

There are several surviving examples of houses constructed during the first year people arrived in Oregon. The Captain John C. Ainsworth House, built east of Oregon City in 1851, was one such residence (see Figure 31). Though Ainsworth traveled by ship rather than overland trail to Oregon, this Classical Revival Style house was built for him of milled lumber during his first year in the territory.[525] Absalom B. Hallock, one of the earliest architects to practice in Oregon, likely designed this house.[526] Ainsworth arrived in Oregon in 1850 to captain the *Lot Whitcomb*, a newly launched river steamboat. He later co-founded the Oregon Steam Navigation Company. He relocated his family to Portland in 1859, as that city continued to grow in importance as Oregon's main commercial center, where Hallock designed a new home for him in 1862.[527]

Figure 31. Absalom B. Hallock likely designed this house, east of Oregon City, for John C. Ainsworth. It was constructed in 1851. Pictured here in a photograph from 1934.

Source: Library of Congress.

[523] Carter, "Settlement-era Dwellings, Barns and Farm Groups," E16–17.

[524] Carter, "Settlement-era Dwellings, Barns and Farm Groups," E18–19.

[525] Paul Hartwig, "Captain John C. Ainsworth House, Clackamas County, Oregon," National Register of Historic Places Nomination (Salem: Oregon State Highway Division, 1973), 2.

[526] Richard Engeman, "Ainsworth House (Mount Pleasant)," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed April 7, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/ainsworth_house_mt_pleasant_.

[527] Engeman, "Ainsworth House (Mount Pleasant)."

Surviving examples of vernacular homes include the Terhune House and Sherer House in Marion and Linn counties, respectively. Jabez V. and Margaret Jane Terhune moved to Oregon in 1852 and claimed 320 acres near Jefferson. Their house, made of whipsawed and hand-planed lumber, was built circa 1852–1853.[528] The Sherer family—including David and Sarah Miller Sherer and their sons William and David Jr.—moved from Illinois to Oregon via the overland trail in 1853. David Sr. died en route. The family continued and settled in the Oakville area that October and took a land claim in the vicinity the following month. Their family house was built the following year.[529]

The Dimmick House and Hinkle House are two examples of extant houses in the Umpqua Valley. Ziba Dimmick first arrived on the West Coast via the Isthmus of Panama in 1849, to mine gold in California. He returned home to Illinois the following year. In 1853, he and his family took the overland trail to the Umpqua Valley and claimed land north of Kellogg, in Douglas County. He began construction on his Classical Revival, balloon-construction house in January 1854, not long after purchasing the rights to a ferry across the Umpqua River. Dimmick provided room and board to those using the ferry and road. In 1855, during the Rogue River Wars, Dimmick mustered into Company 1, Second Regiment, Oregon Volunteer Riflemen.[530] Tennessean Robert Hinkle first settled in Marion County in 1852 and then three years later moved to the Umpqua Valley, where he built his Classical Revival house in 1855.[531]

Economic Realities

Gold!

The gold rushes of the late 1840s connected Willamette Valley communities to markets in northern California and elsewhere as demand grew for wheat, timber, and livestock.[532] In 1850, gold was discovered on the Illinois River in southwestern Oregon. The Oregon gold boom continued into the 1860s, with strikes made in the Applegate, Illinois, and Rogue River valleys.[533] The towns of Jacksonville, Gold Hill, and Waldo sprung up to supply the miners. Portland also became a major supplier to the Oregon gold rush areas.[534]

Miners and prospectors poured into the Rogue River basin in the early 1850s. Thousands of Americans in the Willamette Valley, mainly men, headed south seeking their fortunes. The *Oregon Spectator* reported frequently on the Oregon gold rush, particularly the movement of settlers out of the valley:

> The recent reports from the gold mountain and the Klamath mines have produced great excitement throughout the Willamette Valley. . . . [Men are] preparing to start

[528] Stephen Dow Beckham, "Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties: Jabez V. Terhune House," August 10, 1976.

[529] Jill A. Chappel, "Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties: Sherer House," August 17, 1992.

[530] Terry Harbour, "Douglas County Cultural and Historical Resource Inventory: Ziba Dimmick House," August 19, 1982.

[531] Terry Harbour, "Douglas County Cultural and Historical Resource Inventory: Robert Hinkle House," August 8, 1982.

[532] Boag, "Calapooian Matrix," 240.

[533] Rose and Johnson, "Rising from the Ashes," 10.

[534] Taylor, "Making Salmon," 73–74.

> as soon as the state of the roads and condition of the streams render traveling easy and practicable. The people of this immediate neighborhood have been roused to an unusual excitement by the very flattering accounts. . . . The intensity of the excitement may be judged of when we state that the fever is likely to carry off professors even of the healing art, expounders of the law, clerks, mechanics of all kinds, and many of our most industrious farmers. This class we are less able to spare than any of those we have mentioned. We have expostulated with our farmers time and again, as to the propriety of staying at home, and there prepare for an emergency that in all probability will arise about the time of gathering in the fall crops. We have advised this, not only because it would be of greater benefit to the country, but because we were of opinion that it would be more certain, and the exposure and risk less; and would ultimately prove of more advantage in a pecuniary point of view…Our friends in the Umpqua valley are reminded that a fortune is in store for every agriculturist who will take heed to what we have written above.[535]

The newspaper's fears that farmers would leave their fields unattended and crops unharvested in pursuit of gold were shared by some new arrivals to the region. Martha S. Read, an 1852 overlander, commented, "most of the folks have been to the mines and got money which makes them negligent about farming."[536]

The gold rush brought the first Chinese immigrants to Oregon. In the 1850s, Cantonese Chinese, primarily from the Pearl River Delta region of China, began working in southwestern Oregon as miners and merchants. They arrived by sea to northeastern Oregon a decade later. Chinese miners likely worked in nearly every gold-bearing stream in the territory.[537]

Most Chinese immigrants in the 1850s initially settled in Josephine and Jackson counties, with smaller numbers living in Douglas County.[538] The town of Jacksonville, which started as a mining camp in 1852, included the first Chinatown in Oregon.[539] Some place names in southern Oregon, including China Bar, China Flat, and China Gulch, reflect the legacy of these early Chinese settlers.[540]

Finding Employment

As in the 1840s, overlanders who arrived in the early 1850s immediately sought employment opportunities. Those who arrived with a trade could earn more than those without a specific skillset. The *Oregon Spectator* frequently published information about jobs available in the territory:

> For the information of persons wishing to emigrate to Oregon, we will say that laborers of all kinds are much wanted here. Carpenters are receiving from 8 to 12 dollars per day. Common day laborers 4 or 5 dollars per day. Tailors charge $50 for

[535] "The Gold Mania," *Oregon Spectator*, February 27, 1851, 2.

[536] Holmes, *Covered Wagon Women, Volume 3*, 250.

[537] Jeff LaLande, "Chinese Mining in Oregon," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 31, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/chinese_mining_in_oregon.

[538] Douglas Lee, "Chinese Americans in Oregon," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 31, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/chinese_americans_in_oregon; LaLande, "Chinese Mining in Oregon."

[539] Rose and Johnson, "Rising from the Ashes."

[540] LaLande, "Chinese Mining in Oregon."

making a dress coat, and from 8 to $10 for vests and pantaloons. School teachers are in very great demand and at their own prices.[541]

Mechanics of all kinds, even at working by the day, can earn from $5 to $12 per day.[542]

There is, probably, no other trade that pays better than that of Blacksmithing.[543]

Although it was no longer the most influential business concern in the Oregon Country, the HBC was still a source of employment in the 1850s. P. S. Knight, for example, arrived from Iowa in 1853 and found work his first winter with the company, a job he held for two years, before becoming a carpenter.[544] Other settlers came for specific trade jobs: George Jerome, a riverboat pilot, arrived in Oregon in 1852 and began captaining a steamship, the *Wallamet*, the following year for five to six dollars per day.[545] James Wilson, who was from France, came to Portland in 1852 and worked on the steamers *Portland* and *Mary Hassalo* on the Columbia River.[546] Still other new settlers found work in mills, established farms, printing offices, retail shops, and other business ventures (see Figure 32).[547] But steady work could be difficult to secure, and some overlanders, like Americus Savage, bounced from job to job during their first year:

> I found myself in a new country with new prospects, in my prime with a stout heart, and a willing mind ready to do all I could for the welfare of my little family and my Mary. I had nothing left but one yoke of oxen. I had to sell two yoke to pay our passage down the river and other debts. I worked digging potatoes, and making shingles until October 30th. I hitched up, drove to Clackamas River, landed there at three o'clock, moved into an old house, then got

Figure 32. Sarah E. Archer Pope and her husband, Charles Pope, came to Oregon in 1851 and opened up a mercantile business in Oregon City. Pictured here, ca. 1865.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

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541 "Price of Labor in Oregon," *Oregon Spectator*, May 30, 1850, 2.

542 "Blacksmithing vs. Gold Digging," *Oregon Spectator*, December 26, 1850, 2.

543 "Blacksmithing vs. Gold Digging," *Oregon Spectator*, December 26, 1850, 2.

544 Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, July 2, 1913, 9.

545 Patricia Erigero, "Captain George Jerome House," Oregon Historic Resource Inventory Form, 1983.

546 Patricia Erigero, "Captain James Wilson House," Oregon Historic Resource Inventory Form, 1983.

547 Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, September 27, 1913, 4; "Diary of Orange Gaylord," in *Transactions of the Forty-Fifth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association, Portland, July 19, 1917* (Portland, OR: Chausse-Prudhomme Co. Printers, 1920), 434; "Diary of John S. Zeiber, 1851," 334–35; Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, January 8, 1914, 8.

> to work making shingles until I got provisions for the family and fifteen dollars in my pocket. I then made one pair of shoes, took my axe, started up the valley to select a place and build me a cabin to move into. My dress at that time consisted of a pair of shoes, a pair of trousers, a frock and one checkered shirt. I traveled about forty miles to the Waldo Hills, drove my oxen to good grass. I did not like any of the country. I went through and returned to Clackamas. I left my oxen with a man by the name of Bridges. I was offered good wages to work in a sawmill in Portland. I concluded to work until I got money enough to leave the country. . . .
>
> I finally selected a place on the Calapooia about 12 miles south of Albany. I built me a cabin, walked back, taking my oxen with me, again hitched up and started up the valley with Mary and the family through the rain and mud and sometimes snow for five days when we finally landed at our little cabin home, with a puncheon floor, a dirt fireplace, on the 25th day of December in 1851.[548]

Women sought employment as well, some finding work as teachers, and some providing domestic labor. Lucia Loraine Williams wrote to her mother in September 1851, not long after arriving in the Willamette Valley, "Labor is high though not as high formerly. From $2.00 to $10.00. A girl can get $1.00 per day. Most of the house girls, however, are men and boys."[549] With men outnumbering women in the territory, some men found jobs that were typically considered women's work. Williams' letter touches on this, as does George W. Knapp's recollection about finding employment in 1853:

> When we got to Portland I had no soles to my shoes, nor crown to my hat. Charles Savage, an old-time whaler, offered me a job on his ranch south of Dayton in Yamhill county. I asked him what he wanted me to do. He said, "There are no women in this whole country a man can hire for love or money. There are too many single men wanting to marry women. I want you to come out and work for me as a hired man, to nurse my wife, who is sick and to do the housework." I told him I have never been a "hired girl" yet but I would try it.[550]

Opening Businesses

Those overlanders who arrived with capital or existing professional networks could open businesses in the many communities dotting the Willamette Valley (see Figure 33). In 1850, businesses could be found in Oregon City and Portland selling clothes, shoes, lumber, books and stationery, windows, brushes, pickles, medicine chests, and various wholesale items.[551]

Potential business opportunities continued to increase in Oregon's urban centers, as the *Oregon Spectator* explained in August 1853:

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[548] "Americus Savage, diary, 1851," *A Genealogical History of Freeman, Maine 1796–1938* 3 (1996): 359–39, http://www.oregonpioneers.com/savage.htm.

[549] Holmes, *Covered Wagon Women, Volume 3*, 148.

[550] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, October 14, 1913, 8.

[551] Advertisements*, Oregonian*, December 4, 1850, 4.

> There is ten times the amount of business done here [Oregon City] now, to that done twelve months ago. To meet the demands of this increase of trade, large buildings have been erected and are still in process of erection. Dr. McLaughlin has nearly completed, on Main Street, two of the largest and most completely finished buildings in the city. Both of these houses are already occupied by wholesale establishments.—Messrs. Miles, Cushman & Co., occupying the one, and Messrs. Preston, O'Neil & Co., the other.
>
> S. W. Moss, too, is contributing largely toward improving and beautifying the city, by building in its very heart, still more commodious business establishments, to meet the exigencies of the times in that region. One large building is already completed and occupied by Mr. Sawyer, as a Stove, Tin, and Sheet Iron Manufactory; and another progressing rapidly towards completion, probably one of the largest and most substantial buildings in the city. . . . Ferdinand Behrn has erected, immediately opposite Abernethy & Co's. brick store, a tasty and rather neat building, which is designed for a business house. And last, though not least, Mr. Smith has erected a Foundry and Machine Shop in connection with it, on Mainstreet. . . . He is employing a great many hands, and uses steam (a very great improvement) instead of horse-power, and is now prepared to do casting of almost every kind, from one pound up to a thousand. Truly this is an age of progress.
>
> It is a fixed fact, Oregon City is to be the town of the Willamette valley. . . . Business in one line begets business in another. The employment given to laborers is increased more than four-fold this, over last year. In fact, all our mechanics are doing a thriving business.[552]

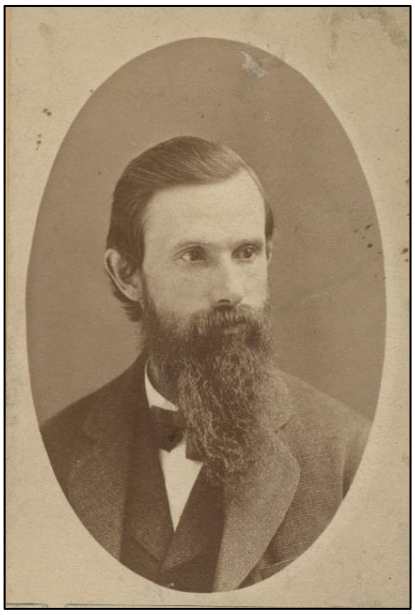

Figure 33. James W. Going traveled overland to Oregon in 1853. Upon his arrival, he worked as an accountant and then as city assessor.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

Such opportunities could be pursued by those wishing to start new ventures as well as those seeking to be employed.

Also in 1853, the *Spectator* began encouraging White settlers to take over the fishing industry from Indigenous people:

> The Salmon is becoming a heavy article of consumption, and those taken at the mouth of the Columbia, are not surpassed anywhere. The number of fisheries are yearly multiplying there, and a small quantity has been exported during the last year. Although there are Salmon taken at other points in the Territory, in the tributaries of

[552] "Oregon City," *Oregon Spectator*, August 19, 1853, 2.

> the Columbia, yet it is generally conceded that they are not so large and fine as those known as the Chinook Salmon. The price has ranged from $15 to $25 per barrel.
>
> At these prices we think the business could be made profitable and a large business carried on. But to do this there must be an improved method for taking them. To depend upon the Indians furnishing them, it will always keep the price much higher than it ought to be.[553]

David Eby, an 1852 overlander, wrote of White settlers tapping into Indigenous fisheries: "I was a cooper by trade and in the winter of 1852 I went to Astoria and made barrels and half-barrels for a man named Sam Hensell. There were no canneries in those days. He bought salmon from the Indians. I made my barrels from spruce and hooped them with vine maple hoops. He shipped the salted salmon to San Francisco and the Sandwich Islands."[554]

Hardships

As in earlier years, the hardships overlanders experienced on the trail contributed to those they experienced during their first year in Oregon.

Illness

Disease was the leading cause of death on the trail, with cholera being the most lethal. Overlanders carried diseases with them into Oregon.[555] The continued reintroduction of diseases by overlanders—including smallpox, measles, and typhoid fever—impacted Indigenous communities that had already been greatly reduced by previous epidemics.[556] Some overlanders arrived in the Willamette Valley weakened by such illnesses and others succumbed to disease within their first year. Everyone in James Akin, Jr.'s 1853 wagon party, for example, arrived in Portland sick with malaria, and his father died two weeks after reaching the city.[557] Family friend Stuart Richey wrote of James Akin, Sr.'s death, along with the death of his own daughter:

> My little girl, Eliza Ann, departed this life September 9th. She was sick eight days of fever. She told me when she was sick that she was going to die, and said it with much sorrow. This is a hard task to write, though I intend to try it, after so long a time. I hope this may find you all in good health and alive. I assure you that we are all in the enjoyment of it, and we still have hard times. We were during the month of October distressed with sickness, sorrow, pain and death. It is of no use for me to tell you of our troubles, for words would fail. These are the names of the dead, viz., Louisa Richey, Eliza Akin, James Akin, Sen., Elva Ingram, Miranda Jane Richey, Eliza Ann Richey and Mary Ann Akin. The four last names are children. James Akin, Sen., died the 8th of November of malarial fever. His children and mine are living together in

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[553] "Oregon Fish," *Oregon Spectator*, March 4, 1853, 2.

[554] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, May 17, 1914, 14.

[555] Unruh, *Plains Across*, 408.

[556] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, January 8, 1914, 8.

[557] Robert Boyd, "Disease Epidemics among Indians, 1770s–1850s," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed April 10, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/disease_epidemics_1770s-1850s.

> Portland. Elizabeth and John Akin are slowly on the mend. Caleb is mending slowly. I have a bad cough. It has rained three weeks out of the last four.[558]

Elizabeth Butler Hutchinson and her husband Thomas also caught malaria during the journey, but both eventually recovered:

> while on the road Mr. Hutchinson took the ague and a few days after we stopped I took it also. there we were both sick with our little babe four weeks old and living in a house without a door floor or chimney and cracks in the wall large enough for a dog to creep through. Well I had several hard shakes and then got well, but Mr. Hutchinson had it five months.[559]

The greater the number of people on the trail, the more easily diseases could spread among parties and be carried into Oregon. Heavy trail travel occurred in 1850, 1852, 1853, and 1854. Reports of overlander deaths caused by smallpox, cholera, and other highly transmittable diseases appeared frequently in the *Oregon Spectator* during the early 1850s:

> From recent arrivals across the plains, we learn that the later portion of the emigration to California and Oregon, has suffered very much with the cholera, and that a large number of deaths, for the want of proper medical assistance, have occurred. Last week we recorded the death of a father and two children; this week he have to add an equally distressing instance, that a father and mother both died and have left several children to the mercy of strangers; to prosecute, as they best could, the remainder of their journey, which was over 1000 miles, and by far the most difficult part of the route. They were directed to a friend in this city, where they arrived a few days ago.
>
> *Still another*.—We have been informed of another still more distressing; where a mother had died leaving a husband and seven children, the youngest being only about five months old.[560]

Many 1852 overlander diaries and journals, as well as later reminiscences, contain references to the cholera epidemic that spread across the trail that year, in some instances killing entire families and wagon trains.[561] While en route to Oregon, William Cornell recorded in his journal, "Saw a man about dying with Cholrea [sic] and six or seven fresh graves. It seems that death is doing his office about as fast here as anywhere."[562] Years later Dr. C. H. Raffety, who lost both his mother and grandmother to cholera during the westward journey, remembered, "if you have ever talked to the old pioneers you will know that 1852 was not only the year of the big immigration, but it was the year when the cholera was so bad."[563]

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[558] Stuart Richey to James Richey, November 26, 1853, in *Transactions of the 40th Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association, Portland, June 20, 1912* (Portland, OR: Chausse-Prudhomme Co. Printers, 1915), 599.

[559] Holmes, *Covered Wagon Women: Volume 3*, 25.

[560] [no title], *Oregon Spectator*, September 26, 1850, 2.

[561] Moore, *Sweet Freedom's Plains*, 145–46.

[562] Karen M. Offen and David C. Duniway, "William Cornell's Journal, 1852, with His Overland Guide to Oregon," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 79, no. 4 (Winter 1978): 358–93, esp. 374.

[563] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, January 8, 1914, 8.

Weather

Arriving in Oregon during the rainy season contributed to illness and other hardships, as John Addison Slavin commented in an 1850 letter:

> I landed in Portland, wages being pretty fair, I commenced work at seven dollars a day. I continued about two weeks when I took sick from exposure in the rain. Finally got well, as I thought, worked a short time and relapsed which lasted until spring, very near. A great many persons thought I would not live, for a long time, but finally I got well and fat.[564]

Arriving in Oregon during the rainy season may have tempered some overlanders' expectation that the Willamette Valley would be a second Eden. As the *Oregonian* newspaper noted in July 1852, most arrived their first year "when all things wear a gloomy appearance—when a deep melancholy appears to pervade the face of nature."[565] The *Oregon Spectator* commented on the weather and its impact on those new to the territory:

> Pretty copious showers of rain have visited us lately, which have had a tendency to partially dispel the illusion into which, we have been drawn lately, by the bright sunshine, encouraging the belief that the rainy season was still far in the future. We do not wish to frighten the "new comers" by the predication that "winter in Oregon" is near at hand; but we give out the opinion in order that they who are illy prepared for winter may take timely warning—that the bachelors scattered abroad over the land, may set to work putting rooves on and chimneys to their houses. A word to the wise, &C.[566]

Although new arrivals should have been aware of such wet weather, through reading published guidebooks, newspaper coverage, or correspondence with more established settlers, some were still shocked by the climate. Marilla R. Washburn Bailey, who traveled on the trail in 1852, later wrote, "My most vivid recollection of that first winter in Oregon is of the weeping skies and of Mother and me also weeping."[567]

The constant rain presented many challenges to those newly arrived in Oregon. Heavy rains, coupled at times with snowfall, caused flooding of rivers and streams, particularly the Willamette, which flooded during the winter of 1852–1853.[568] Rain also turned city streets and rural wagon roads into mud and made them practically impassable.[569] Sodden conditions made it difficult for overlanders to find land or housing upon their arrival in Oregon. Some, like 1853 overlander Amelia Stewart Knight, lived in temporary shelter, which afforded little protection from the elements. She

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[564] John Addison Slavin to Sarah Slavin, Undated [1853?], contributed by Joan M. Aldrich, http://www.oregonpioneers.com/Slavin_letter.htm.

[565] William G. Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise: The Oregon Story, 1800−1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 92.

[566] [no title], *Oregon Spectator*, October 7, 1851, 2.

[567] Butruille, *Women's Voices from the Oregon Trail*, 121.

[568] E. Ruth Rockwood, "Letters of Charles Stevens," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (June 1936): 137–59, esp. 155–56.

[569] "Local," *Oregon Spectator*, December 30, 1851, 2.

wrote, "here we are in Oregon making our camp in an ugly bottom, with no home, except our wagons and tent, it is drizzling and the weather looks dark and gloomy."[570]

Charles Stevens, an 1852 overlander, summarized his less than favorable impressions of Oregon's weather in a letter to his brother:

> It has been very wet ever since we have been here. The rivers have been so high that it was almost impossible to get about, the Willamette has been clear up so that it has done some damage in its course, then two weeks ago yesterday it commenced snowing and it has snowed every day but one since, and the snow was from two or three feet deep all through the country, and last night it began to rain, so the snow is now fast going off, and we expect it will rais the streams wors than ever. A great many cattle have died and no doubt there will many more die before spring, unless the snow goes off and stays off.
>
> If you hear any statements, or see any, about the mild winter this winter you can just tell them for me that they are infernal liars. Everybody says that this winter is an exception for the oldest settlers say that they never see so hard a winter before. The cold came on very gradual and appears to be going off the same way, we have no heavy winds here or at least have not had since we have been here, and it has not been cold enough to freeze the Willamette over above Portland yet, but the Columbia is frozen over (I have been told) six inches thick. We have felt the cold as much this winter as we used to in the Houses in Illinois, but the reason is, there is but a very few houses that are even sealed on the inside, and the wind can blow through anywhere.[571]

Hunger

Some overlanders ended their western journeys with few or no provisions. This was especially common for late arrivals, some of whom were delayed by weeks or a month by inclement weather or rugged terrain. Sometimes more established residents assisted the arriving wagon trains, as Elizabeth Laughlin Lord later recalled:

> As soon as the immigration began to arrive, father began butchering and selling beef to them, and buying their poor cattle, of course at very small prices. Some of them were so poor they could scarcely be driven out to grass.
>
> The poor starved people were crazy for anything for a change of diet. I don't mean literally starving. Everything we could spare, butter, milk, especially buttermilk, vegetables, pickles, eggs, all were sought for at any price asked.[572]

Ability to obtain food when an overlander arrived in the Willamette Valley depended on several factors, such as the availability of local versus imported goods, the financial means of the new arrival, and even the year of arrival. In years when many people traveled west to Oregon, such as

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[570] Butruille, *Women's Voices from the Oregon Trail*, 122.

[571] Rockwood, "Letters of Charles Stevens," 151.

[572] Elizabeth Laughlin Lord, *Reminiscences of Eastern Oregon* (Portland, OR: The Irwin-Hodson Co., 1903), 91–92.

1852 and 1853, the supply of food and other goods could not meet demand. Thornton McElroy noted this when he arrived in 1853: "So many people have come into Oregon during the last six months that provisions are very scarce and very high, in fact there is scarcely anything to eat in the country."[573]

Money was, of course, a significant factor, particularly in the years immediately following the discovery of gold. The California gold rush of the late 1840s, followed by the discovery of gold in Oregon in the early 1850s, inflated the prices of provisions. Even for those who were able to find work upon arriving in Oregon, wages were typically too low to pay the high cost of various food stuffs. Martha S. Read, an 1852 overlander, wrote to her family back east about such price hikes:

> it is rather hard times for emigrants that have come in here with nothing. provisions are so high there is such a call from the mines that it has raised provisions to a right rate flour is worth 12 dollars a hundred, wheat 3 dollars per bushel beef 8 dollars pork 10 potatoes 12 shilling per bushel onions 4 dollars and other vegitables accordingly. they raise the best kind of vegitables here butter is worth 50 cts per lb cheese from 40 to 50 chickens $1 a piece eggs 81 per dozen groceries and clothing are not much higher than they are[.] there is wool worth 50 cts per lb socks at 1 to 8½ per pair gloves from 40 to 100 dollars a piece. stock is high horses from 3 to 500 hundred dollars a span oxen from 100 to 150 dollars a yoke cows from 60 to 125 dollars a head money is very plenty.[574]

Expectations vs. Reality

Overlanders who arrived in the early 1850s, much like those who had come in the 1840s, had mixed reactions to their first year in Oregon. The range of impressions can be seen in letters they wrote to friends and family back east. Some, like Kate Morris, wrote effusive praise about Oregon, particularly when comparing the destination to the journey:

> I can't hope to explain to you how happy we all were. Father and mother and all eight of us children had crossed the plains in good health. We children were particularly happy, for instead of having to strike out each morning and walk barefooted in the dust, where we stubbed our toes, stepped on cactus and watched out that we didn't step on any rattlesnakes, we were in a country where grass was belly-deep for the cattle and when the sea breezes made it wave it looked like waves of changeable green silk. We didn't have to worry about the Indians running off our stock. No longer did we have to eat bacon, beans and camp bread, and not get as much of them as we wanted, for here we had found a country of beauty, where we could have all the vegetables we wanted, where the hills were full of deer and the streams full of trout, where, when we looked to the westward, instead of seeing nothing but a long winding train of prairie schooners with a cloud of dust hanging over all, we saw waving grass and vividly green fir trees. We looked up at a blue sky

[573] Jacqueline Williams, "Much Depends on Dinner: Pacific Northwest Foodways, 1843–1900," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 90, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 68–76, esp. 70.

[574] Kenneth L. Holmes, ed., *Covered Wagon Women: Diaries & Letters from the Western Trails, 1852, Volume 5* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 249–50.

with white clouds, and to the eastward we could see Mount Hood, clean and clear and beautiful and so wonderful that it almost took your breath.[575]

For others, like Mary M. Colby, it took a few years to get accustomed to life in the Northwest:

> It is a long time since we have seen each other but I have not forgotten you altho many miles of land and water separate us yet I often wish I could se you and your family and many dear friends in Haverhill I supose you would like to here how we like this country and how we prosper in the first of our living here I did not like verry well but after we had taken our claim and become settled once more I began to like much better and the longer I live here the better I like the summer is beautiful not but a very little rain tho it is not so warm in the summer here as it is in the States the nights cool and comfortable and I can sleepe like a roack. the winters is rather rainy but is not cold and so bad getting about as it is in the States. . . . as to our prosperity we are getting along as well as one could expect we have a section of land one mile square in the best part of Oregon it is prairie all except a strip of timber on two sides of it with a stream of water runing through each piece of timber. . . . I cannot say that I wish to go back to the States to live at present if ever I know when one gets comfortably fixed here they can live as well as they can any where else and with one half of the labour that you do in the States. . . . I do not wish to brag but I think we shall ere long be as well of for property as some of the rest of the family think they are and if I do not get what honestly belongs to me Our health is good and has been for the most of the time since we have been here the children are healthier than when in Ohio. . . . we live in a log cabbin it has two rooms and is verry comfortable is as good as the rest of our neighbors have so I am content with it till we can have a better one I had rather live in a log cabin and have enough to eat drink and wear than have a large house and fine furniture.[576]

Still others, like Caleb and Alice Richey, found Oregon lacking and discouraged their friends and relations from traveling west:

> I trust it is with a degree of gratitude that I can state to you that we are all well at present and hope that this may find you all enjoying the same blessing. I presume it is not necessary for me to state to you our many misfortunes since I saw you, as I wrote to father stating the deaths, except James Akin's. . . . Owing to misfortune, of the Road, hard winter, high prices for provisions, many of the emigrants, have become dissatisfied and long for their old home, but like myself, have not had an opportunity of looking at the country. Stuart seems to be much dissatisfied—wages are low and not much to do. Flour $20 a hundred pounds, beef 15 cents to 20 cents a pound, pork 25 cents a pound, lard 40 cents, butter $1 a pound, eggs $1.25 a dozen, potatoes $2.50 per bushel. Owing to sickness I left my cattle at the Cascades, on the Columbia,: and have not heard from them since. I fear they, with thousands

[575] Lockley, *Oregon's Yesterdays,* 166.

[576] Kenneth L. Holmes, ed., *Covered Wagon Women: Diaries & Letters from the Western Trails, 1850, Volume 2* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 49–52.

of others, have fared badly, owing to the hard Winter. Owing to the many difficulties attending emigrants, I would not induce anybody to come.[577]

Conclusion

Overlanders who arrived in Oregon between 1850 and 1855 found a region dominated by American politics, society, and economy. Many new arrivals now had friends and relations in the territory who could assist them during their first year. Private interests, fueled in part by the discovery of gold in California and Oregon, improved roads, launched steamships, established ports, and built up towns into urban centers.

The DLCA brought tens of thousands of people to the Pacific Northwest. As the Willamette Valley became crowded with both old and new settlers, some overlanders traveled farther south during their first year, finding land in the Umpqua and Rogue River valleys. In total, overlanders laid claim to more than 2.5 million acres by the time the act expired in 1855. The federal government would open more land to the public domain in the second half of the 1850s, as it negotiated treaties and ceded Indigenous title in lands both west and east of the Cascade Mountains.

[577] Caleb and Alice Richey to Brother, January 12, 1853, in *Transactions of the 40th Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association, Portland, June 20, 1912* (Portland, OR: Chausse-Prudhomme Co. Printers, 1915), 595–99, esp. 595–97.

Chapter 4: First Year for Overlanders Arriving during the Reservation Era and Early Statehood (1856–1861)

As the White population of the Willamette Valley grew in the 1850s, fewer overlanders arrived in Oregon. Those who did arrive followed in the footsteps of many others, making their arrival seem less novel to other Americans and even to the overlanders themselves. Therefore, fewer individuals documented their early days in the area. Settlement was also more dispersed, as overlanders opted for parts of Oregon and the Pacific Northwest outside the Willamette Valley. This and the following chapter therefore have fewer detailed accounts from overlanders. Instead, these chapters piece together information from other sources to explain what life was like for overlanders who arrived in later years.

Settler Interactions with Indigenous People

The US government's forced removal of Indigenous people from the Willamette Valley to reservations meant that fewer White settlers in the valley depended on or interacted regularly with Indigenous individuals. In addition to the geographic separation, racist attitudes grew in conjunction with government-sponsored wars against Indigenous people and cultural eradication campaigns. Collaboration between overlanders and Indigenous people declined in comparison to the 1840s. Many people of partial Indigenous descent lived in Oregon's towns, but many of those individuals sought to pass as White and culturally assimilate as a survival strategy. This was the next stage of settler colonialism: by forcefully removing Indigenous people from their land or requiring assimilation, settlers marginalized Indigenous individuals, rendering them invisible within White settlements and appearing to fulfill the "vanishing Indian" myth.[578]

Treaties and Reservations

After negotiating treaties with Tribes in the region (see Chapter 3), the US government forced Indigenous people to move from the Willamette Valley to newly established reservations. This served the government's aim of opening up more farmland for White settlers.[579] Archeologist Ian Edward Kretzler explained the US government's theory behind reservations:

> Native peoples would exist within the boundaries of the United States, but they would be carefully controlled until the termination of Native languages, lifeways, and connections to land had been achieved. This assimilationist campaign depended on

[578] For more on this, see Matthew Dennis, "Natives and Pioneers: Death and the Settling and Unsettling of Oregon," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 115, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 282–97; Jeffrey Ostler and Nancy Shoemaker, "Settler Colonialism in Early American History: Introduction," *William and Mary Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (July 2019): 361–68; Carmen P. Thompson, "Expectation and Exclusion: An Introduction to Whiteness, White Supremacy, and Resistance in Oregon History," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 120, no. 4 (Winter 2019): 358–67; David G. Lewis and Thomas J. Connolly, "White American Violence on Tribal People on the Oregon Coast," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 120, no. 4 (Winter 2019): 368–81.

[579] Robbins, "This Land, Oregon."

> reservations. . . . On federal reservations . . . Native peoples would be exposed to settler schooling, agriculture, religion, settlement patterns, and gender roles.[580]

After the establishment of reservations, settlers sometimes countered Indigenous peoples' attempts to practice traditional lifeways with violence, such as when White settlers attacked Molalla, Clackamas, and Clowella people who returned to Willamette Falls to catch salmon in the late 1850s and early 1860s.[581]

In 1855, Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Oregon Territory Joel Palmer oversaw the forced removal of people of the Willamette Valley and Southwestern Oregon—including Tualatin Kalapuya, Southern Kalapuya, Umpqua, Rogue River, and Chasta (sometimes spelled Shasta) people—to the Grand Ronde Valley, west of Salem, in order to empty more land for White settlement.[582] Their descendants call the forced march to the valley a "trail of tears." Many individuals died along the journey, which occurred from January to March 1856. Eventually, members of over twenty-seven Tribes from western Oregon were forced to live on the Grand Ronde Reservation, which included more than 61,000 acres of former DCLA allotments.[583] The US government significantly reduced the size of the reservation in 1865.[584]

Palmer also directed federal Indian agents to forcibly move other people living in the Rogue River Valley to the Table Rock Reservation; the Cow Creek Umpqua people to a temporary reservation in the Umpqua Valley; and the people living in the Rogue River Valley and Cow Creek drainage areas to the Coast Reservation, also known as the Siletz Reservation, comprising of over a million acres of land west of the Coast Range (see Figure 34). The federal government initially intended for the Coast Reservation, established by presidential order in 1855, to be the only reservation in western Oregon, and intended for Tribes from the Oregon Coast, Willamette Valley, and southwestern Oregon to be removed there. However, the US government reduced the size of the Coast Reservation in 1865. Then, in 1875, the government removed most of the remaining land from the reservation and forced the majority of residents to the Grand Ronde Reservation, which had been established by presidential executive order in 1857 and bordered the Coast Reservation.[585]

On the Columbia River Plateau, several gold rushes and accompanying settlement and trade contributed to the US government negotiating treaties with Tribes in that region in 1855. In May of that year, Palmer and Isaac Stevens, governor and superintendent of Indian affairs for the Washington Territory, met with Tribal leaders from the Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla, Nez Perce, and Yakama to begin negotiations.[586] The government's representatives initially proposed removing the

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[580] Ian Edward Kretzler, "An Archeology of Survivance on the Grand Ronde Reservation: Telling Stories of Enduring Native Presence," PhD diss., University of Washington, 2019, 22–24.

[581] Taylor, "Making Salmon," 213–14.

[582] David Lewis, "Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed April 7, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/coast_indian_reservation.

[583] Lewis, "Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde."

[584] Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, "Our Story," accessed June 24, 2021, https://www.grandronde.org/history-culture/history/our-story/; Lewis, "Willamette Valley Treaties"; Whaley, "Creating Oregon from *Illahee*," 357–58; Lewis, "Kalapuyan Tribal History"; Lewis, "Coast Indian Reservation."

[585] Lewis, "Coast Indian Reservation"; Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, "Our History," accessed May 4, 2021, http://www.ctsi.nsn.us/chinook-indian-tribe-siletz-heritage/our-history.

[586] Karson, ed., *wiyáxayxt / wiyáakaaʔawn / As Days Go By*, 66.

Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla to the Nez Perce Reservation, but the Tribal representatives refused.[587] In exchange for the Umatilla and Walla Walla ceding all their lands, the government created the Umatilla Indian Reservation on Cayuse Territory in northeastern Oregon.[588] The signing of treaties with Tribes in the Columbia River Plateau opened up the river, as well as Washington Territory, to White settlement.[589]

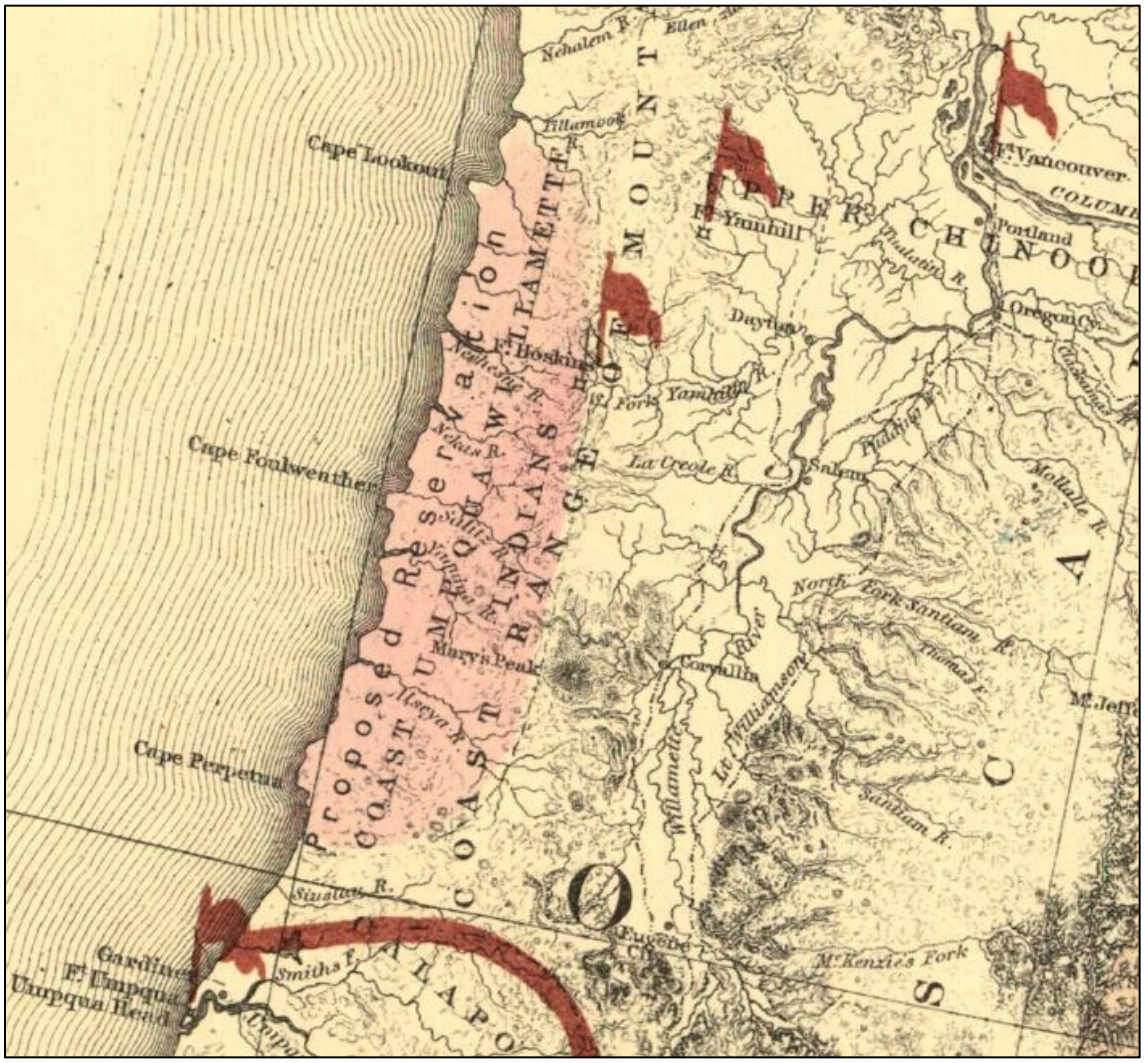

Figure 34. This segment of an 1858 US War Department Map shows the proposed location of the Coast Reservation, as well as several US military outposts in the area (Fort Vancouver, Fort Yamhill, Fort Hoskins, and Fort Umpqua). Map by Gouverneur Kemble Warren and Selmar Siebe.

Source: Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

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[587] Karson, ed., *wiyáxayxt / wiyáakaaʔawn / As Days Go By*, 67–69.

[588] Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), "A Brief History of CTUIR," accessed May 4, 2021, https://ctuir.org/about/brief-history-of-ctuir; Cliff Trafzer, "Native American Treaties, Northeastern Oregon," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed April 7, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/native_american_treaties_eastern_oregon.

[589] CTUIR, "A Brief History of CTUIR."

Palmer then traveled down the Columbia River to negotiate a treaty with the so-called Middle Oregon Tribes—the Tenino, Tyigh, Wyam, Dockspuse, and Wasco. Increasing numbers of overlanders had passed through the homelands of these Tribes—from 1,000 in 1843 to 4,000 in 1847 to 12,000 in 1852 (see Table 1-1, above). As with other Tribes in Oregon, the US government tasked Palmer with clearing these Indigenous people from their lands. In June 1855, the Middle Oregon Tribes signed a treaty with the US government. Palmer then forcibly moved them to the Warm Springs Reservation.[590] Congress ratified the treaty, along with treaties with Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla and Nez Perce, on March 8, 1859, just weeks after Oregon became a state.[591]

"Indian Wars"

As White settlement in Oregon expanded both numerically and geographically, violence against Indigenous people also grew. Newly arriving overlanders were influenced by, and perpetuated, racist stereotypes of Indigenous people. This caused them to misunderstand, exaggerate, or even invent conflicts, thereby giving themselves justification to perpetuate violence against Indigenous peoples. In Southwestern Oregon, hundreds of Indigenous people (and relatively few White settlers) were killed during the ongoing Rogue River Wars, triggered by settlers' desire for land and minerals.[592] Meanwhile, violence occurred between settlers and Columbia River Plateau Tribes, such as the so-called Yakama War, as the Tribes resisted White encroachment and protested recently signed treaties.[593]

Newspapers in Oregon towns regularly reported on violence that White settlers perpetrated against Indigenous people.[594] The papers often called Indigenous killings of White people "massacres," while justifying White violence towards Indigenous individuals as necessary and reasonable.[595] White men sometimes attempted to avenge "massacres" by rounding up armed groups to kill Indigenous people who had killed—or supposedly killed—White settlers. Historian Marc James Carpenter explained the mindset underlying these vigilante efforts:

> In southern Oregon between 1849 and 1856, Euro-Americans practiced workaday violence and occasionally launched pogroms against the "Indians" whom they often grouped together as a single, hostile mass. . . . The cascades of reciprocal violence

[590] Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, "History," accessed May 4, 2021, https://warmsprings-nsn.gov/history; Stephen Dow Beckham, "History Since 1846," in *Plateau*, vol. 12, ed. Deward E. Walker, Jr., in *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1998), 154; Trafzer, "Native American Treaties, Northeastern Oregon."

[591] Beckham, "History Since 1846," 154.

[592] Taylor, "Making Salmon," 68; Boag, "Calapooian Matrix," 154–55; E. A. Schwartz, "Rogue River War of 1855–1856," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed May 5, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/rogue_river_war_of_1855-1856.

[593] Trafzer, "Native American Treaties, Northeastern Oregon."

[594] "Another Indian Outbreak in Rogue River Valley," *Oregon Argus*, August 18, 1855, 2.

[595] See letters and newspaper clippings available via Southern Oregon History, *Revised*, "Tyee George and Skookuym John and the Massacre of the Ledford Party," 1856–1863, https://truwe.sohs.org/files/tyeegeorge.html; "Rancheria Prairie Graves," Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties, Jackson County, October 24, 1991.

> that became "Indian wars" often began with individual acts of racially charged violence that some pioneers thought of as their right.[596]

One such example is the "Ledford Massacre" of 1856, an incident in which Modoc men allegedly killed overlanders.[597] Despite uncertainty over whether the event even happened— US Bureau of Indian Affairs Sub-Indian Agent G. H. Abbott acknowledged that there were conflicting accounts and that a Modoc leader had denied the allegations—Abbott recommended additional military presence in the area:

> I learn that the Indians that are supposed to have perpetrated the massacre are a party of Indians that have been skulking in the mountains since the removal of the various tribes to the reservation and a few of the La Lake tribe of Klamath Lake, who are connected with the mountain band by marriage. This I was told by an Indian of the La Lake tribe who was with me. . . .
>
> The citizens of Jacksonville and vicinity have organized a party to make search for the missing men and follow the trail of the Indians and if possible secure the offenders.
>
> The missing party number five men with seven horses. The Indians supposed to be connected with the massacre of the party number about fifteen. I would earnestly recommend that you use every exertion to procure a military force for the Klamath Lake country, as it is only removed by a few miles from the settlements of this valley, and the Indians are in my judgment not to be considered entirely friendly.[598]

Undeterred by inconclusive evidence, White Oregonians killed several Indigenous men they considered to be suspects, including Tyee George and Skookum John.[599]

Statehood

White Oregonians further embedded discrimination against non-White people into law when Oregon Territory transitioned to statehood. During the 1857 Oregon Constitutional Convention, the majority of the constitutional convention delegates decided that Oregon should outlaw slavery. However, the delegates agreed that women and people they identified as "negro," "mulatto," or "Chinamen" should be excluded from the electorate, reserving the right to vote for White men. Legislators also debated whether Black people would be allowed even to enter the state. Historian

[596] Marc James Carpenter, "Pioneer Problems: 'Wanton Murder,' Indian War Veterans, and Oregon's Violent History," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 121, no. 2 (Summer 2020): 156–85, esp. 161–62.

[597] "From the South: Return of Abbott's Party," *Oregon Argus*, November 5, 1859, 2.

[598] G. H. Abbott, Sub-Indian Agent, to J. W. Nesmith, Superintendent Indian Affairs, May 10, 1859, Records of the Oregon Superintendency of Indian Affairs 1848-1873, Reel 17; Letters Received, 1859, No. 79, National Archives and Records Administration, available online via Southern Oregon History, *Revised*, "Tyee George and Skookuym John and the Massacre of the Ledford Party."

[599] Anne Weatherford, "Mystery of the Oregon Prairie Massacre Even After a Century the Brutal Rancheria Murders Remain Unsolved," *Real West* (September 1965): 15–18, available at Southern Oregon History, *Revised*, "Tyee George and Skookuym John and the Massacre of the Ledford Party."

Jacki Hedlund Taylor explained how this debate intertwined with attitudes toward Indigenous people:

> Legislators asserted that if Oregon permitted black individuals in the region, they would "mix up with the aboriginees [sic] and create the most vilest race on earth." Democrat La Fayette Grover argued, "the cross between the Indians and the negro produced bad blood — a clan liable to become hostile to the white settlers." . . . Oregon legislators used the fear of war with American Indians to criminalize relationships between Indians and black immigrants. Hostilities between white inhabitants and American Indians, viewed in that context, served as a justification for the exclusion of free black individuals from their future state.[600]

Lawmakers decided to put the question to the voting citizenry of Oregon (i.e., White men) via referendum. Through the process, 74 percent of the electorate voted against slavery in Oregon, while 89 percent voted to ban "free negroes." The Oregon Constitution therefore outlawed both slavery and the entry of Black individuals into the state. At the same time, the constitution's writers allowed foreign-born White men to vote. Oregon's Black exclusion law created controversy that threatened statehood, but Congress overlooked the discriminatory law and admitted Oregon into the union. Oregon became the nation's thirty-third state—a "free" state but one only for White people—on February 14, 1859.[601] It also became the only state in the union with a Black exclusion clause in its constitution.[602]

Demographics of Settlement

Overlanders continued to flow into Oregon and Washington in the late 1850s thanks to the economic boom that reverberated through the region's economy after the discovery of gold in California and Oregon. More overlanders were ending their journey in California than in the Pacific Northwest, but the latter still continued to grow in population.[603] A majority of those who traveled to Oregon and Washington were White, as a result of the Black exclusion clause and other discriminatory language written into Oregon's constitution. Little was done legally to enforce such discrimination, but it had the desired effect of limiting non-White settlement in the state.[604]

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[600] Jacki Hedlund Tyler, "The Unwanted Sailor: Exclusions of Black Sailors in the Pacific Northwest and the Atlantic Southeast," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 117, no. 4 (Winter 2016): 506–35, esp. 528–30.

[601] Pierce, *Making the White Man's West*, 134–35; Kimberly Jensen, "Significant Events in the History of Oregon Women and Citizenship," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 113, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 500–504, esp. 500; Whaley, "Creating Oregon from *Illahee*," 280; Cain Allen, "Draft of Oregon State Constitution," *Oregon History Project*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/draft-of-oregon-state-constitution; Greg Nokes, "Black Exclusion Laws in Oregon," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/exclusion_laws; "Arrival of the Great Overland Mail! Two Days Later News! Oregon Admitted into the Union!" *Oregon Argus*, March 19, 1859, 2.

[602] Nokes, "Black Exclusion Laws in Oregon." The Black exclusion clause in the Oregon Constitution became moot with the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution in 1868. The clause was repealed by Oregon voters in 1926. Other racist language in the state constitution was removed in 2002.

[603] Boag, "Calapooian Matrix," 283–86.

[604] Robert Bussel and Daniel H. Tichenor, "Trouble in Paradise: A Historical Perspective on Immigration in Oregon," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 118, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 460–87, esp. 462–64.

Fewer people made the overland trek in this period, due to perceived danger of traveling through Indigenous territories along the overland trails. John Unruh estimated that only 1,000 to 2,000 people per year traveled overland to Oregon from 1855 to 1860—far fewer than the 6,000 to 10,000 per year arriving in the early 1850s (see Table 1-1, above).[605] Those who did make the journey often had more financial resources than those who preceded them, and many brought domestic servants to help with the journey. Their journey became easier as well, as settlers constructed trading posts, stagecoach stations, telegraph lines, and White settlements along the route.[606]

TABLE No. 4.—POPULATION, NATIVE AND FOREIGN, BY COUNTIES.

COUNTIES.	UNITED STATES.									Total native born.	FOREIGN COUNTRIES.									Total foreign born.	Aggregate population.
	WHITE.			BLACK.			MULATTO.				WHITE.			BLACK.			MULATTO.				
	M.	F.	Total.	M.	F.	Total.	M.	F.	Total.		M.	F.	Total.	M.	F.	Total.	M.	F.	Total.		
Benton	1,608	1,208	2,816	5	3	8	.....	2	2	2,826	203	45	248	....	....	.....	....	....	.....	248	3,074
Coos	193	113	306	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	306	117	22	139	....	....	.....	....	....	.....	139	445
Clackamas	1,789	1,402	3,191	.....	1	1	.....	.....	.....	3,192	192	82	274	....	....	.....	....	....	.....	274	3,466
Clatsop	235	165	400	2	.....	2	.....	.....	.....	402	72	24	96	....	....	.....	....	....	.....	96	498
Columbia	290	179	469	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	469	44	19	63	....	....	.....	....	....	.....	63	532
Curry	204	85	289	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	289	89	15	104	....	....	.....	....	....	.....	104	393
Douglas	1,840	1,205	3,045	3	5	8	.....	.....	.....	3,053	132	17	149	1	....	1	....	....	.....	150	3,203
Jackson	1,990	833	2,829	10	2	12	14	14	28	2,869	795	70	865	2	....	2	....	....	.....	867	3,736
Josephine	821	290	1,111	.....	.....	.....	3	1	4	1,115	470	38	508	....	....	.....	....	....	.....	508	1,623
Lane	2,665	2,018	4,683	1	.....	1	.....	.....	.....	4,684	70	26	96	....	....	.....	....	....	.....	96	4,780
Linn	3,610	2,934	6,574	1	2	3	1	3	4	6,581	148	43	191	....	....	.....	....	....	.....	191	6,772
Marion	3,517	2,906	6,423	5	2	7	7	6	13	6,443	501	144	645	....	....	.....	....	....	.....	645	7,088
Multnomah	1,858	1,427	3,285	9	6	15	1	1	2	3,302	590	258	848	....	....	.....	....	....	.....	848	4,150
Polk	1,991	1,493	3,484	2	.....	2	.....	.....	.....	3,486	113	26	139	....	....	.....	....	....	.....	139	3,625
Tillamook	51	33	84	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	84	10	1	11	....	....	.....	....	....	.....	11	95
Umpqua	660	481	1,141	.....	.....	.....	1	2	3	1,144	86	20	106	....	....	.....	....	....	.....	106	1,250
Wasco	879	477	1,356	1	1	2	4	1	5	1,363	281	43	324	1	....	1	1	....	1	326	1,689
Washington	1,448	1,186	2,634	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	2,634	115	52	167	....	....	.....	....	....	.....	167	2,801
Yam Hill	1,694	1,405	3,099	1	.....	1	.....	.....	.....	3,100	108	37	145	....	....	.....	....	....	.....	145	3,245
Total	27,379	19,840	47,219	40	22	62	31	30	61	47,342	4,136	982	5,118	4	....	4	1	....	1	5,123	52,465

NOTE.—52 male and 97 female Indians, 12 male and 16 female half-breeds, 405 male and 20 female Chinese are included in white population.

Figure 35. This table, included in 1860 US Census results, shows the population of Oregon by county and by race. A note at the bottom explains, "52 male and 97 female Indians, 12 male and 16 female half-breeds, 405 male and 20 female Chinese are included in the white population."

Source: US Census Bureau.

Census data, while problematic in its undercounting of non-White individuals (as noted in Chapter 3), recorded a population of 52,465 people in Oregon in 1860, 99.4 percent of whom were White. Men still outnumbered women in Oregon's settler population, 60 percent to 40 percent.[607] There were only 128 "Free Colored" people and 177 Indigenous people counted in the census.[608] The undercounting of Indigenous people is due to an 1860 Bureau of Census instruction only to count Indigenous people living in settler communities, while excluding "Indians not taxed," a term that referred to Indigenous individuals living in their own communities or on reservations created by

[605] Unruh, *Plains Across*, 119.

[606] Unruh, *Plains Across*, 298; Schlissel, *Women's Diaries of the Western Journey*, 104, 118.

[607] US Census Bureau, "Population of the United States in 1860: Oregon," accessed May 5, 2021, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1860/population/1860a-29.pdf.

[608] US Census Bureau, "Population of the United States in 1860: Oregon," 400–402.

the US government.[609] Other undercounting came from census counters including Chinese and mixed-race people in the White population (see Figure 35).[610] Hawaiians and Chinese individuals were not enumerated separately, despite significant Hawaiian and Cantonese populations in the mining communities in Jackson and Josephine counties.[611]

A large majority of the counted population was American-born, with around 40 percent of them coming from the states that had represented the largest share of overlanders since the 1840s—Missouri, Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, and Tennessee. By 1860, over 30 percent of Oregon's counted (and therefore primarily White) population was born in Oregon, evidence that White settlers had been in the state long enough to have expanded the White population by having children.[612] Historian Jason E. Pierce explained how the demographics of overlanders who settled in Oregon contributed to the exclusion of Black people from the state:

> Excluding children, most Oregonians had emigrated from older sections of the country—many from the Midwest. According to the 1860 census, 23 percent of Oregon's population hailed from the Old Northwest and another 17 percent from the border states of Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee. A full 43 percent were either foreign-born or children born in the West; the remainder were from the Deep South (5 percent), New England states (4 percent), and Mid-Atlantic states (8 percent). The majority of whites from Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee also owned no slaves. Thus, in a very real sense, Oregonians reflected the attitudes of midwesterners in their desire to prevent both slavery and the presence of blacks.[613]

Less than 10 percent of the counted 1860 population came from countries outside of the United States, with close to half of them coming from Ireland or Germany (keep in mind that Chinese individuals were undercounted). Oregon's leaders encouraged European immigration while discouraging Chinese immigration or Black Americans from coming to the state—distinguishing "between 'desirable' and 'undesirable' immigrants."[614]

Oregonians encouraged White migration to the state, regardless of whether those White people were Americans. The Oregon Constitution allowed European-born White men to own land and become citizens, whereas American-born Black men could not. Business endeavors were open to European immigrants because they were White; the issue Oregon's leaders had with immigrants was not foreignness, but rather non-Whiteness. Successful European immigrants included Thomas Paulson, who was born in Denmark, traveled overland from Omaha to Portland in 1861, and worked as a printer in Oregon. Similarly, Andrew Hurgren, a Swedish cabinetmaker, arrived in

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[609] James P. Collins, "Native Americans in the Census, 1860–1890," *Genealogy Notes* 38, no. 2 (Summer 2006), https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2006/summer/indian-census.html; US Census Bureau, "Censuses of American Indians," accessed June 18, 2021, https://www.census.gov/history/www/genealogy/decennial_census_records/censuses_of_american_indians.html.

[610] US Census Bureau, "Population of the United States in 1860: Oregon."

[611] Chelsea Rose, "Lonely Men, Loose Women: Rethinking the Demographics of a Multiethnic Mining Camp, Kanaka Flat, Oregon," *Historical Archaeology* 47, no. 3 (2013): 23–35, esp. 28; Lee, "Chinese Americans in Oregon"; Rose and Johnson, "Rising from the Ashes," 16.

[612] US Census Bureau, "Population of the United States in 1860: Oregon"; Coleman, *Dangerous Subjects*, 71.

[613] Pierce, *Making the White Man's West*, 130.

[614] Bussel and Tichenor, "Trouble in Paradise," 460–87, esp. 462–64.

Oregon sometime before 1860 and eventually opened a furniture and mattress store in Portland (see Figure 36).[615]

Figure 36. White Oregonians encouraged Europeans to immigrant to Oregon as they discouraged Chinese and Black individuals from coming to the state. Pictured here are two Europeans who found success in Oregon after their arrival: Thomas Paulson (*left*), who was originally from Denmark, and Andrew Hurgren (*right*) who was originally from Sweden.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

Oregon settlers wanted to entice White people from eastern states and Europe to settle in the region, and they especially sought to attract families and not just "unsettled" young men.[616] To encourage White settlement, earlier arrivals created aid associations. White settlers in California created the Pacific Immigrant Association sometime around 1857 to boost movement to the West Coast. The association supported legislation and wagon road improvements. It also printed educational materials to facilitate travel to the Pacific region. In an address to the residents of Oregon, Washington, and California, the leaders of the group hoped to influence greater White immigration to these states:

> But the tide of immigration has almost ceased.—Unwonted efforts have been made, and are now making, in all the Western States, to influence and direct the tide of population pouring forth from the East and Europe.[617]

An earlier overlander noted that the US military's violent confrontation with Indigenous people in the Great Plains following treaty- and reservation-making had deterred White immigration to Oregon. He concluded that to entice White settlers to the area, many would need to come from Europe or the Atlantic seaboard by boat, rather than making the overland journey:

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[615] "Hurgren, Andrew," and "Paulson, Thomas," Oregon Historical Society, Digital Collections, https://digitalcollections.ohs.org/hurgren-andrew-2; https://digitalcollections.ohs.org/paulson-thomas-2;

[616] A., "Slavery in Oregon," letter to the editor, *Oregon Argus*, January 31, 1857, 1.

[617] J. H. Puskitt, Joshua P. Haven, and John H. Saunders, "Address of the Pacific Immigrant Aid Association of California to the People of the State of California and of Oregon and Washington Territories," *Oregon Argus*, May 16, 1857, 2.

> The Indians and their instigators are not only troublesome, but *dangerous* to any train of emigrants, however large. We cannot expect emigration from the Western States [what we now call the Midwest] over the Plains for the next five years.
>
> We must look to the Eastern States or to Europe for emigrants to Oregon. It may be remarked that it will be very difficult to induce people in Europe to emigrate directly to Oregon. . . . Practically our hope of emigrations to this Territory is limited to the Eastern States. But it is very expensive, though not difficult, for Eastern emigrants to come. The farm laborers, the artisans, the manufacturers, the female help, and the families, which we need, have not in many cases the money to pay their fare by steamship or by clipper. . . . And yet we are told that there are multitudes of laborers, male and female, seeking work daily without success, in our large cities, especially in New York city. . . . We are also informed that the present financial crisis has already resulted in turning a hundred thousand laborers of all sorts out of employ. . . . Is it not possible to benefit those people by bringing some of them to Oregon, and to benefit ourselves also?[618]

Although they did not always say so explicitly, White settlers in Oregon sought other settlers like themselves: White Americans or Europeans who would establish farms and businesses or provide wage labor to help make Oregon prosperous.

Existing Communities and Settlement Trends

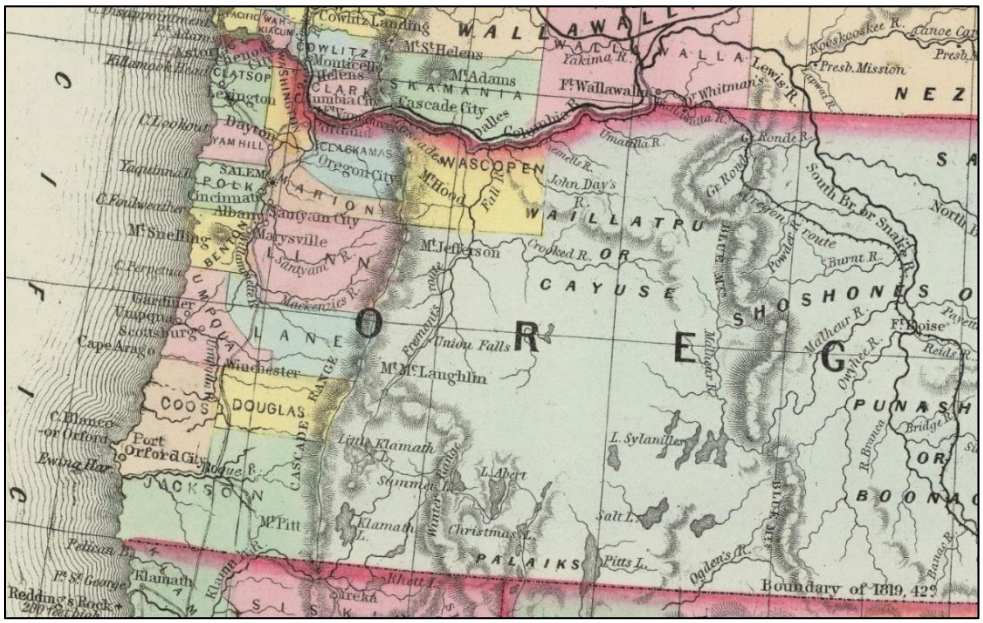

Figure 37. Oregon settlers created new counties in the 1850s, as seen here in an 1857 map by Samuel Augustus Mitchell.

Source: David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries.

[618] The "present financial crisis" refers to the Panic of 1857. An Old Oregonian [name used for the author], "The Need and the Means of Securing an Increase of Laborers for Oregon," *Oregon Argus*, December 12, 1857, 1.

By the late 1850s, White settlers had claimed most of the lowlands in the fertile Willamette Valley. This made purchasing land in the valley prohibitively expensive for many newer settlers.[619] Settlers arriving in the late 1850s therefore often moved to other regions in the state, especially the Umpqua and Rogue River valleys in southwestern Oregon, the coastal lowlands, and higher-elevation regions in western Oregon.[620] As of 1860s, only 68 percent of Oregon's settler population resided in the Willamette Valley, while 20 percent was in the southern portion of Oregon.[621] As settlers fanned out in Oregon, they created new counties to govern their communities.

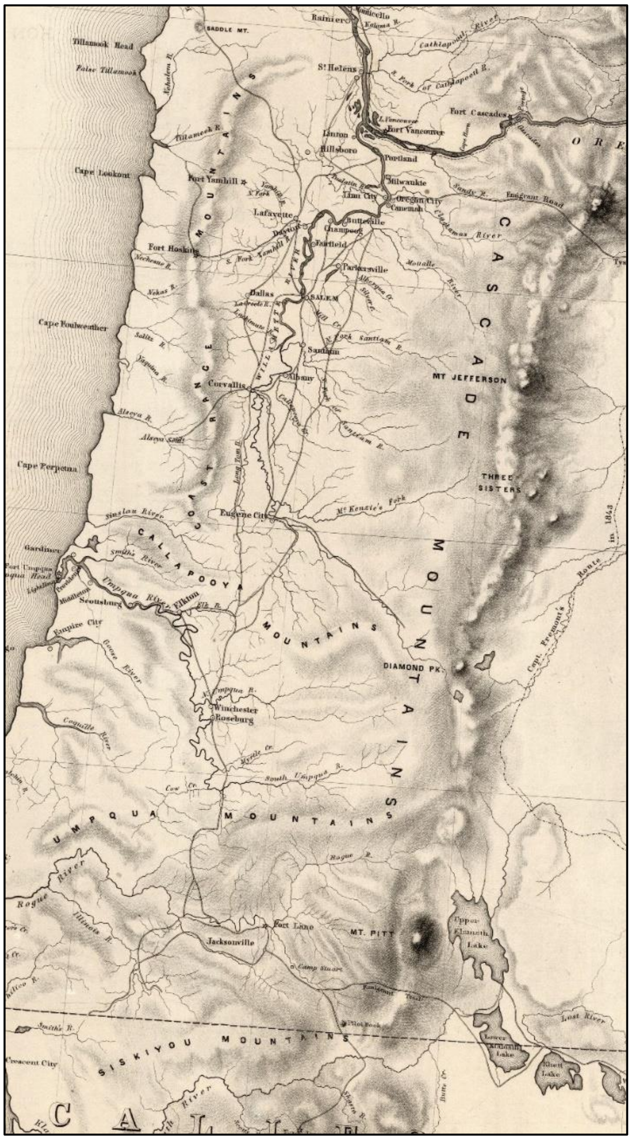

Figure 38. Improved roads enabled overlanders to settle in increasingly widespread areas of the Pacific Northwest. Here, a US War Department map from 1859 depicts the many settler-established roads within the Willamette Valley (note that nearly all roads were based on long-established Indigenous routes).

Source: David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries.

619 Juliet Pollard elaborates, "In 1848, $100 to $200 was believed sufficient to buy a 640 acre claim in the central part of the fertile Willamette Valley, but, by 1859, it took more than $1,500 to buy a fraction less than a section in more moderately developed regions of the valley." Pollard, "Making of the Metis Children," 438.

620 Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise*, 91.

621 Schlissel, *Women's Diaries of the Western Journey*, 118.

Improved roads made settling in other parts of the Pacific Northwest easier for both recent overlanders and more established residents (see Figure 38). Oregon papers reported on investments made by communities or the US government to improve roads across the region. In 1858, the *Oregon Argus* noted,

> the pack trail through the mountains starting at Vancouver is finished . . . . It is only 70 miles by this trail to the open country beyond the mountains, and we have no doubt that it is the best route to the Yakima country yet found.—We hear that the Government supplies for Fort Simcoe will be transported by this route.[622]

Overlanders in the Puget Sound began using an Indigenous trail over Snoqualmie Pass, which was difficult for wagons to traverse, but the *Argus* reported that the pass "is said to be in good condition, and good horses can pack 250 lbs. over it. It is said to be only forty-five miles from Seattle to the summit of the mountains."[623]

The US military investigated potential new routes, some of which became roads and some of which did not. Most roads that the military developed were Indigenous routes that the military simply widened or marked.[624] One significant project was a road from Salem to Astoria that the US Army began constructing in 1856. Federal funding dried up in 1860s during the Civil War, and counties raised funds for the completion of most of the road. Roads built by the US military became important for opening areas outside of the Willamette Valley to White settlers.[625]

Steamboats, introduced in Oregon in the early 1850s and more widely available by 1860, also facilitated travel within the Pacific Northwest (see Figure 39). Gold discoveries at Colville, Orofino, Pierce, and Wallace were accessible from the Willamette Valley via the Columbia and Snake rivers. These gold rushes increased demand for steamboat travel on the Columbia and Snake rivers, which led The Dalles, Wallula, and other Columbia River settlements to boom.[626] Entrepreneurs built steamships and railroads at choke points along the Columbia to offer, for a fee, safe passage for those in the Willamette Valley who wanted to try their luck at the mines upstream. The Oregon Steam Navigation Company (OSNC) formed in 1860 and bought up smaller steamship and railroad companies along the Columbia River and its tributaries (see Figure 40). The OSNC offered steamboat and rail travel on the Columbia, Willamette, Snake, and Yamhill rivers, helping to expand settlement in Oregon.[627]

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[622] [No title], *Oregon Argus*, July 31, 1858, 2.

[623] "Gold News," *Oregon Argus*, July 17, 1858, 2. For more on the development of the road over Snoqualmie Pass, see John Caldbick, "Three Ellensburg men incorporate the Seattle and Walla Walla Trail and Wagon Road Company on March 13, 1883," October 15, 2013, https://www.historylink.org/File/10619.

[624] Gonzales and Young, *Overlanders in the Columbia River Gorge*, 134–38, 158–59; Cain Allen, "Reconnaissance for a Military Road," *Oregon History Project,* accessed May 18, 2021, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/reconnaissance-for-a-military-road.

[625] John Barnes, "Salem-Astoria Military Road," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed May 18, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/salem_astoria_military_road.

[626] Adam J. Heineman and Judith Richardson, *So That Ships May Pass: Historical Structural, and Operational Development of Navigation—Lower Columbia and Willamette Rivers* (Portland, OR: The Port of Portland Commission, 1968), 21; Northwest Power and Conservation Council, "Gold," accessed September 14, 2021, https://www.nwcouncil.org/reports/columbia-river-history/gold.

[627] Gonzales and Young, *Overlanders in the Columbia River Gorge*, 81–84, 127–38.

Figure 39. Steamships facilitated travel between points in the Northwest. Pictured here, the steamship Oneonta on the Columbia River. Photograph by Carleton E. Watkins, 1867.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

Figure 40. The Oregon Steam Navigation Company, whose office in The Dalles is pictured here with several men, supplied steamboat and early rail travel along the Columbia River. Photograph by Carleton E. Watkins, 1867.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

Willamette Valley Settlements

During the 1850s, Portland overtook Oregon City as the primary White settlement in the Willamette Valley, thanks to the advent of steamships, better roads, and the town's more advantageous position at the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia rivers (see Figure 41).[628] Portland's population grew from 805 in 1850 to 2,874 in 1860—an increase of 257 percent. In that same period, Oregon City's population declined, from 933 in 1850 to 889 in 1860—a decrease of 5 percent.[629] Water routes connected Portland to established towns and cities, as well as emerging settlements in California, Washington, and Idaho. Newcomers to Portland created industries that

[628] Engeman, "Wooden Beams and Railroad Ties."

[629] Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise*, 102.

supplied interior gold mines, Willamette Valley farmers, and other settler needs. This explosion in settler-managed industry is evident in census data: Portland grew from having 16 merchants in 1850 to 146 in 1860. As the Portland population increased, new Portland residents established churches, schools, fraternal organizations, and a municipal government.[630]

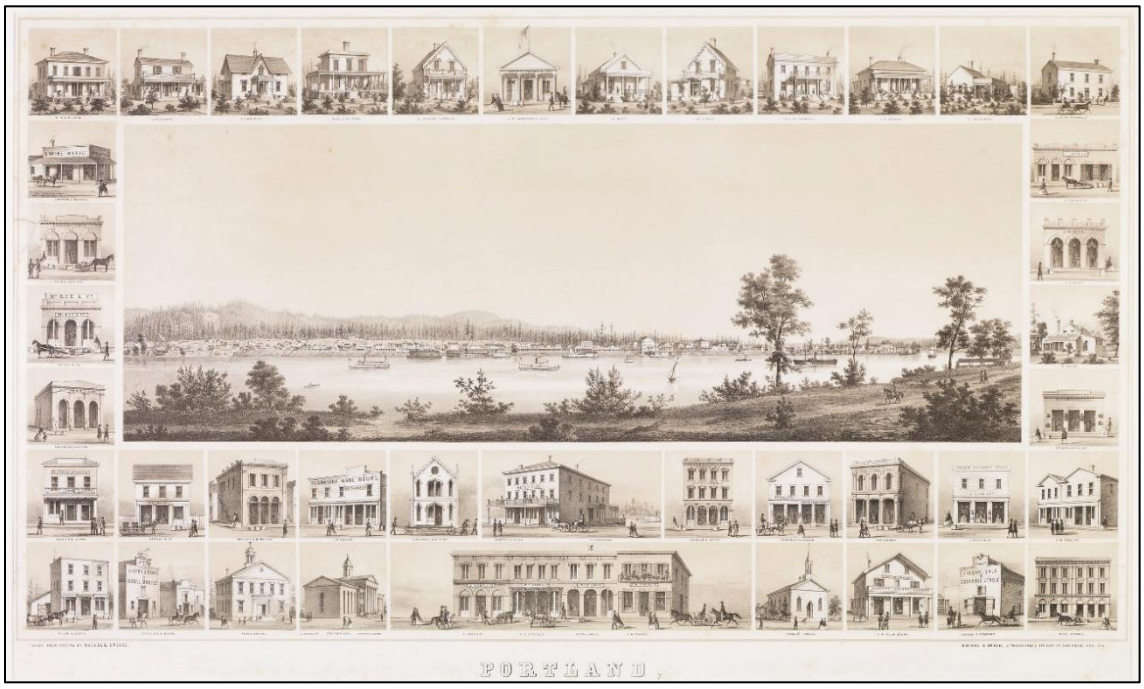

Figure 41. Portland, Oregon, overtook Oregon City in size and importance to White settler society during this period. This ca. 1858 lithograph by Kuchel and Dresel depicts "Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon," and the many buildings that had been erected there. Printed by Britton & Rey.

Source: Amon Carter Museum of American Art.

Salem, Eugene, Albany, and other towns in the Willamette Valley were opened to further settlement by overlanders after the US government's removal of Kalapuyan and other Indigenous people in the valley to reservations. Salem's census-counted population more than doubled in a decade, from 291 in 1850 to 625 in 1860, while Eugene, which was first platted in 1852, had a population of 1,183 by 1860. Salem became the state's first capital, de facto as of 1859 and then through popular vote in 1864. These growing towns provided opportunities for new arrivals to make homes and create businesses.[631]

Beyond the Willamette Valley

Overlanders traveling to Oregon in the late 1850s aimed for areas beyond the Willamette Valley, where land was often cheaper and more readily available. Some headed to the gold rush towns of Jacksonville and Roseburg, whose populations swelled to 892 and 835, respectively, by 1860 (see

[630] Carl Abbott, *Portland in Three Centuries: The Place and the People* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2011), 29–31.

[631] Lewis, "City of Salem"; Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise*, 102; Steve McQuiddy, "Eugene," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed April 7, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/eugene; US Census Bureau, "Population of the United States in 1860: Oregon."

Figure 42).[632] Others, after arriving in Portland or Oregon City, made their way on steamboats up the Columbia and Snake rivers and then took the area's new military roads to try their luck at the Colville (Washington) or Orofino (Idaho) mines. Settlers looking for farmland or rangeland followed them, as a steamboat worker in the Palouse area wrote in 1859:

> The country presents a most barren appearance all the way along the river, and stock-raising is about all it is fit for. Several immigrants from the Willamette Valley, with their stock, are settling in different parts of the country. There may be some 'society' here after a while—in fact, we are looking for quite an addition at this point soon, from your 'neck of woods.'[633]

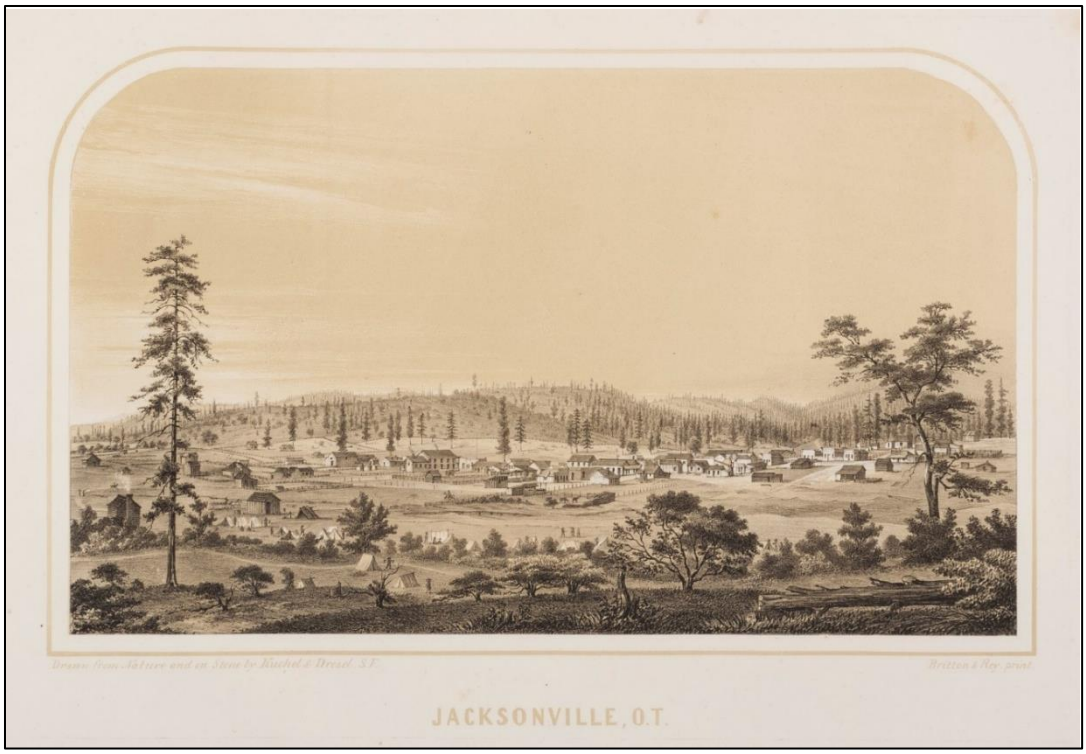

Figure 42. Jacksonville, Oregon, boomed during Southwestern Oregon's 1850s gold rush. Lithograph of Jacksonville, Oregon, by Kuchel & Dresel, ca. 1856. Printed by Britton & Rey.

Source: Amon Carter Museum of American Art.

Rather than travel directly to Oregon, more settlers took overland trails to California, Utah, or Washington, whether to avoid the violence between settlers and Indigenous people, or for promises of better land or religious freedom. Some settlers who had previously arrived in Oregon headed to Puget Sound, British Columbia, or California, to try their luck at finding gold.[634] The *Oregon Sentinel* advised gold-seekers to resist the lure of these other places, perhaps to keep miners from leaving Jackson County:

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[632] Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise*, 103.

[633] Leo, "From Snake River," letter to the editor, *Oregon Argus*, July 16, 1859, 2.

[634] [no title], *Oregon Argus*, July 10, 1858, 2.

> *Hombres* who are over-sanguine and rush away with barely sufficient money to take them to Frazer River, may possibly find themselves completed to work in the Bellingham Bay coal mines or at the lumber mills on the Sound, at very low wages, to procure means to enable them to come back. the Puget Sound papers have heretofore gained some notoriety by their unscrupulous efforts to cause travel through, or immigration to the Sound country. We think there will be nothing lost, at least, by waiting a few weeks, for further news from that quarter.[635]

Finding a Home

Overlanders arriving in the Willamette Valley in the late 1850s found a developed, settler-run economy that provided opportunities to acquire improved land and build permanent homes. New arrivals could purchase land for $1.25 an acre, according to modifications in the DLCA.[636] Since much of the best farmland had been claimed under the DLCA, later overlanders often purchased land that had been occupied and improved by earlier claimants. For instance, in 1857, Michael and Martha Hanley purchased a plot claimed under the DLCA by David Clinton. The Hanleys had already lived in other parts of Oregon, and Michael had tried his luck at California gold mines, but their 1857 move was their first year in Jackson County.[637]

Other settlers returned to Oregon a second time with their families and then built a house. This was the case for William McLagan, a son of Scottish immigrants who was born in New York. McLagan first came to Portland by himself in 1850–1851 and stayed in Oregon for several years. He then returned to New York and made the overland trek with his family in 1858. He purchased lots in Corvallis and constructed his home that same year. McLagan was a trained carpenter and built much of the house himself. He and his wife had three children there, planted fruit trees, dug a "deep" well, constructed a barn, and built a "good sturdy fence."[638]

By the late 1850s, there were sufficient lumber mills in the Willamette Valley for settlers to build wood-framed houses.[639] Settlers often only constructed such permanent residences several years after arriving in Oregon. For instance, Hiram Straight, who came to Oregon in 1843, built his house around 1856 on his original donation claim.[640] And George Jerome, a steamboat pilot, came to Oregon in 1852 and built a home in 1858 in Canemah.[641] John P. Walker constructed a clapboard house with a brick chimney near Ashland Mills (present-day Ashland), thanks to the local sawmill that produced wooden boards (see Figure 43). Walker had come to Oregon in 1853 and built the

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[635] "Don't Rush," *Oregon Sentinel*, May 8, 1858, 1.

[636] Gray H. Whaley, "Oregon, Illahee, and the Empire Republic: A Case Study of American Colonialism, 1843-1858," *Western Historical Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 157–78, esp. 174–75.

[637] "Hanley, Michael Springhouse," Jackson County Cultural and Historic Resource Survey, 1979, amended 1991.

[638] Stephen Dow Beckham, "William McLagan House," Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties, Benton County, June 26, 1976.

[639] Mary K. Gallagher and May Dasch, "Irwin Macy House," Oregon Historic Sites and Buildings Inventory, October 11, 1989; Carter, "Settlement-era Dwellings, Barns and Farm Groups," E15–E16.

[640] Jeff Lohr, Clackamas County Historical Society, "Hiram Straight House," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, July 30, 1977.

[641] Erigero, "Captain George Jerome House."

house sometime between 1856 and 1858.[642] Irwin Macy had someone build him a wood-frame house in Harrisburg in 1857 or 1858, using sawn lumber.[643]

Figure 43. Ashland, Oregon, had several functioning mills by 1860. Here, an image of Eagle Mill, which opened in 1854. Photograph by Charles W. Logan, ca. 1880s.

Source: Southern Oregon University.

Even log cabins utilized products from sawmills, such as the one that Horace Baker built after purchasing "12" x 12" square milled logs that were planed in a local sawmill." Baker, who arrived in Oregon in 1846 and built this house perhaps in 1856 (although it could have been as late as 1870—the date is disputed), farmed, manufactured well pumps, and operated a rock quarry.[644] Robert F. Hoeberg, who was born in Germany in 1827 and came to the United States from Denmark, "bought 208 acres on the north bank of the Willamette River" in 1852. He constructed a temporary house on that land, then built a more permanent structure in 1857, which still stands today.[645] William A. Masterson built a one-and-a-half-story building using sawn lumber, with a central brick chimney and clapboard siding, in south Eugene on his 160-acre claim. Masterson had come to Oregon in 1851 from Kentucky where he was a contractor, millwright, and where he owned enslaved people. He operated a kiln in Eugene, which supplied the bricks for his house's chimney.[646]

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[642] Vivian Locke, "John P. Walker House," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, February 9, 1978.

[643] Gallagher and Dasch, "Irwin Macy House."

[644] Robert K. Sutton, Oregon State Parks and Recreation Branch, "Horace Baker Cabin," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, July 1, 1976.

[645] Borge/Pinger [no first names indicated], "Kruse Residence #1," Clackamas County Cultural Resource Survey Form, April 1984.

[646] Stephen Dow Beckham, "William A. Masterson House," Oregon Historic Sites and Buildings Inventory, May 17, 1976.

Those who could afford to paid builders to construct their homes, which provided work opportunities for others. Benjamin Biddle, who arrived in Oregon in 1853, commissioned Hamilton Campbell to build a Tudor-style house in 1856 for the Biddle family.[647] Carmen Waters, who came to Oregon in 1850 and staked a claim in 1852, hired C. W. Bryant to build his house in Lake Oswego from 1856 to 1857.[648] Horace Dibble, who arrived in Oregon in 1852, hired someone (possibly a man named "Phillips," based on historic documentation) to build a house on his land claim in 1859, in exchange for 320 acres of land.[649]

Few of the houses and barns built in the late 1850s are still standing, and those that remain were built by the few settlers with enough money to build relatively extravagant houses.[650] Some settlers constructed these houses after returning from the California gold rush, as William and Sara Case did. The Cases arrived in the Willamette Valley in 1844, where they lived until William went to the California gold fields in 1849 and worked as a trader. He "returned to Oregon in the same year with $2,800 and the equipment for a sawmill." The Cases finished construction of a relatively lavish house upon his return.[651]

Sam Brown similarly made money in the California gold rush—over $20,000 through placer mining—and had a house built on 2,000 acres, some of which he had claimed and some of which he had purchased. Brown and his family lived in a log cabin on the property while they waited for the house to be finished, which happened around 1856.[652] After returning from the California gold rush in 1854, James Bybee built an "unusually lavish" house on land he had claimed on Sauvie Island (construction occurred between 1856 and 1858, see Figure 44) .[653] Charles and Melinda Applegate constructed their home in Douglas County (near Yoncalla) between 1852 and 1857. Some of the materials had been brought overland in

Figure 44. James Bybee built this house, which was extravagant for the time and place, on Sauvie Island between 1856 and 1858, after returning from the California gold rush.

Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Figure 45. Charles and Melinda Applegate constructed this large home in Douglas County between 1852 and 1857.

Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

[647] J. Sanders Chapman, "Benjamin Biddle House," Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties, Benton County, May 12, 1984.

[648] City of Lake Oswego, "Waters Carmen Century Farm," Cultural Resources Inventory Field Form, 1988–1989, LO-5-C1.

[649] Paul Hartwig, "Horace L. Dibble House," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, July 17, 1974.

[650] Carter, "Settlement-era Dwellings, Barns and Farm Groups," E20–21.

[651] Paul Hartwig, "William Case House," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, February 1973.

[652] Paul Hartwig, "Sam Brown House," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, July 17, 1974.

[653] Oregon Historical Society, "Bybee-Howell House," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, 1934.

1843, some were shipped to Oregon around Cape Horn, and others that were locally made (see Figure 45).[654]

Economic Realities

New discoveries of gold in southwestern Oregon drew overlanders to the area, especially to Jackson and Josephine counties (see Figure 46). Overlanders came not only to find gold but also to start businesses catering to miners. Many of the new arrivals doing the hardest mining work were Chinese.[655] In the later 1860s, even larger influxes of Chinese immigrants, mostly men, came to work in the goldfields of eastern Oregon (see Chapter 5).

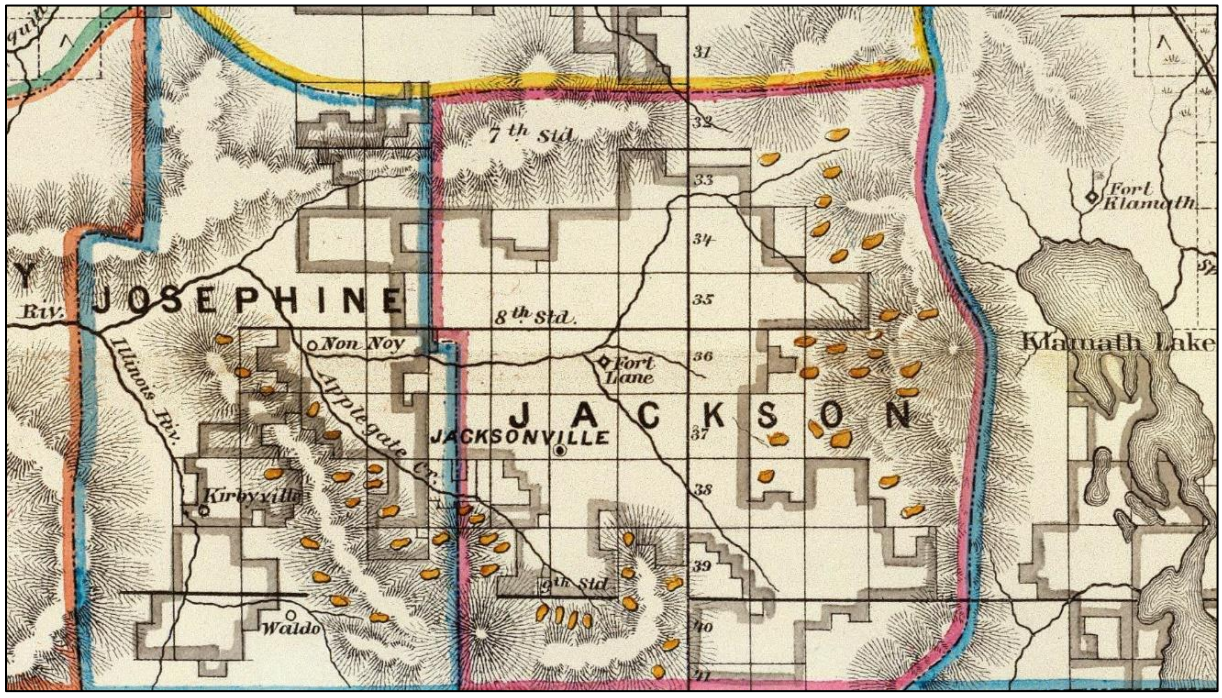

Figure 46. Gold rushes in Josephine and Jackson counties drew many immigrants to Jackson County. Many of the men who worked in mines were Chinese. Here, a US General Land Office map from 1866 depicts the gold deposits found in the two counties.

Source: David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries.

In Jacksonville and Roseburg, settlers arrived and created new businesses to feed, lodge, and supply men working in the mines. In Jacksonville, settlers opened up clothing and supply stores.[656] German immigrants opened the Table Rock Bakery in downtown Jacksonville in 1857, which they

[654] Paul Hartwig, Oregon State Highway Division, "Charles Applegate House," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, July 26, 1974.

[655] Rose and Johnson, "Rising from the Ashes," 16.

[656] Stephen Dow Beckham, "Fisher Brothers Store," Jackson County Cultural and Historic Resource Survey, August 27, 1976; Stephen Dow Beckham, "Anderson & Glenn Gen. Merchandise Store," Jackson County Cultural and Historic Resource Survey, August 28, 1976.

later turned into a billiard saloon.[657] Dr. Salathiel Hamilton, who came to Douglas County in 1852, opened a drug store in Roseburg in 1856, after volunteering for the Oregon militia during the 1855–1856 campaign against Indigenous Tribes in Eastern Oregon.[658] Dentists and physicians set up shop, such as G. W. Cool, who arrived in Jacksonville around 1858 or 1859, and C. H. Mack, who practiced in Portland (see Figure 47).[659]

In other towns, the boom of the Oregon and California gold rushes created new business opportunities, to supply the needs of both miners and settlers. In Corvallis, the J. C. Avery Building was built circa 1856, and it "served as a supply headquarters for miners heading south to the gold fields."[660] Northrup-Blossom Hardware Company opened in Portland in 1858 and various outfitting companies opened in Portland to supply miners.[661] Settlers established gristmills, sawmills, and woolen mills to manufacture flour, lumber, and clothes to serve miners and other settlers. The Willamette Woolen Manufacturing Company, which opened in Salem in 1857, was the first woolen mill in Oregon.[662] Some mills employed White and Chinese workers.[663]

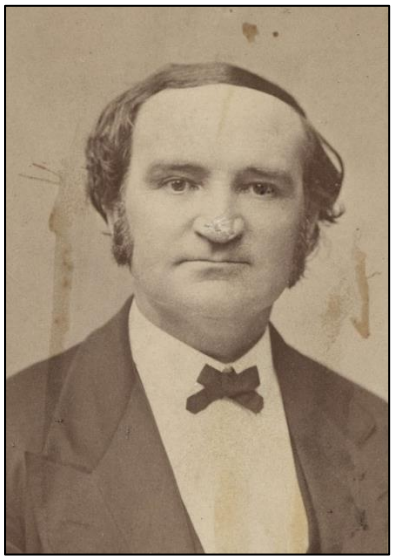

Figure 47. More dentists and physicians settled in Oregon and opened offices in the 1860s. Pictured here, ca. 1870, is Dr. C. H. Mack, who practiced dentistry in Portland from 1863–1873.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

The proliferation of new businesses meant that newly arrived overlanders had ample job opportunities, and the number of available workers could not keep up with demand. Shortages existed in domestic labor, carpentry, masonry, painting, and farmhand labor, as a local resident wrote to the *Oregon Argus* in 1857:

> It is well known that the need of help in the house, in the shop, in the manufactory, and on the farm, has been severely felt during the last two or three years.—Since immigration from the Western States ceased, Oregon has but slowly increased in population and in the development of her resources. In fact, we may say there has never been a development of her resources. There have been a few samples of

[657] Gail E. H. Evans, "Table Rock Bakery," Jackson County Cultural and Historic Resource Survey, November 1979.

[658] Terry Harbour, "Hamilton Drug Company Store #1," Roseburg Cultural and Historical Resource Inventory, March 8, 1983.

[659] Gail E. H. Evans, "G. W. Cool House," Jackson County Cultural and Historic Resource Survey, December 1979.

[660] Mary K. Weber, "J. C. Avery Building," Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties, Benton County, April 21, 1984.

[661] City of Portland, Historic Resource Inventory, Northrup, Blossom & Fitch Building, 53–55 SW Yamhill St., 0-310-00731.

[662] "Salem Ditch," Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties, Marion County; Cain Allen, "Ashland Woolen Mills," *Oregon History Project*, accessed May 12, 2021, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/ashland-woolen-mills.

[663] Paul Hartwig, "William Case House," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, February 1973.

development; a few farms, a few orchards, or a few gardens, showing that our soil if well tilled has an immense productive power, and that tens of thousands of acres, now useless, could be made to pay the interest of money invested at two hundred dollars per acre. But we have not the laborers out of doors or in doors to cultivate our soil or care for our dairies. We may safely estimate that *three thousand families* in Oregon need the help of one or more persons in the house or on the farm. They need this help now. They need it steadily for a year or two to come. . . . In a word, the demand for male and female laborers will be constant and increasing beyond the natural supply among us. If the demand is to be supplied—and it *must* be if we are to progress as a Territory instead of standing still—the supply must come from abroad.

. . . We pay fifteen, twenty, thirty, and forty dollars a month for help in the house; we pay thirty, forty, and fifty dollars a month for men on the farm; we pay fifty, sixty, seventy, and eighty dollars a month for hands in the shop. The carpenter receives from three to five dollars per day, the stone-mason and painter from three to five, and the brick-mason from four to eight per day. a man received two dollars a cord for cutting four feet wood, and two dollars per cord for sawing it up to burn. How speedily at these rates a man can pay for his passage to Oregon, and support himself meanwhile![664]

Some skilled laborers came to Oregon because of the demand for workers in their industries (see Figure 48). As steamship operations expanded, trained steamboat pilots and engineers moved to Oregon from other parts of the United States. and Europe. George Marshall, born in England, arrived in Oregon in the early 1850s and then moved to Canemah around 1856, "where he worked as an engineer and machinist in the steamboat industry."[665]

Figure 48. New arrivals to the Northwest who were skilled in a trade could find work easily by the 1850s. Here, a blacksmith in Skamania County, Washington, ca. 1867. Photograph by Carleton E. Watkins.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

[664] An Old Oregonian [name used for author], "The Need and the Means of Securing an Increase of Laborers for Oregon," *Oregon Argus*, December 12, 1857, 1.

[665] Patricia Erigero, "George Marshall House," Oregon Historic Resource Inventory Form, 1983.

Agriculture

New arrivals to Oregon could find work as farmhands at one of the many farms run by more established overlanders. While wheat remained the dominant crop, farmers diversified: for example, the 1860 census reported 493 pounds of hops from Oregon, while other farmers planted nut- and fruit-tree orchards.[666] Other crops counted in the 1860 census included barley, buckwheat, peas and beans, Irish potatoes, very few sweet potatoes, a little tobacco, and some sorghum. The dairy industry expanded significantly, with Oregon dairies producing over one million pounds of butter and 105,379 pounds of cheese. And Oregon ranchers were now grazing sheep and producing 219,012 pounds of wool, over seven times the 1850 wool output. The cattle industry also grew in the same decade.[667] Starting in the late 1850s, overlanders increasingly arrived with large herds of cattle and sheep. This increased further in the 1860s and is covered in Chapter 5.[668]

Churches, Cemeteries, and Communal Societies

In the 1850s, newly arrived settlers often held church services in houses or buildings intended for other uses. For instance, members of the Tenmile Methodist Church in Douglas County gathered in a log schoolhouse on Porter Creek or at homes of members. Congregants of the church did not raise funds to build a dedicated building until 1869.[669] Members of another Methodist church in Canyonville began meeting in 1858 but did not begin construction of a physical church building until 1864.[670]

A few citizens raised funds to erect church buildings in 1850s, such as the Methodist Episcopal Church in Portland (see Figure 49) and the Pleasant Grove Presbyterian Church in Marion County. Pleasant Grove's first pastor, Philip Condit, arrived in Marion County in 1854, formed a congregation sometime over the following two years, and passed away of Rocky Mountain fever before the building could be constructed. His son led the construction of a "small, single-story meeting house" in 1857 and 1858.[671] From 1858 to 1859, the Cumberland Presbyterian Congregation built Spring Valley Church, the oldest extant church in Polk County. Congregants donated materials, land, and labor to build the church and adjacent cemetery.[672] During those same years, Catholic settlers built St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Jacksonville, which remains one of the

[666] Borge/Pinger, "Kruse Residence #1"; Elaine C. Smith, "Jenks House," Linn County Inventory of Historic Resources, May 24, 1984; Peter A. Kopp, "'Hop Fever' in the Willamette Valley: The Local and Global Roots of a Regional Specialty Crop," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 112, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 406–33, esp. 411.

[667] US Census Bureau, "Agriculture of the United States in 1860," 1860, cxi, cxiii, cxvii.

[668] Kenneth L. Holmes, ed., *Covered Wagon Women: Diaries & Letters from the Western Trails, 1854–1860, Volume 7* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 10.

[669] Chuck Perino, "Tenmile Methodist Church," Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties, Douglas County, September 1, 2002.

[670] Virginia H. Proctor, "Canyonville Methodist Church," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, July 14, 1983.

[671] Bruce Wulf, "Pleasant Grove Presbyterian Church," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, October 1986; Ulrich H. Hardt, Raymond Balcomb, "First Methodist Church (Portland)," *Oregon Encyclopedia,* September 16, 2020, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/first_methodist_church_portland.

[672] "Spring Valley Presbyterian Church (or Zena) Cemetery," Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties, Polk County, August 19, 1991; Paul Hartwig, "Spring Valley Presbyterian Church," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, August 1973.

oldest extant Catholic churches in Oregon. It served Catholics who had arrived in the area during gold rush.[673]

As the population of Oregon increased, so did the number of deaths, necessitating the creation of cemeteries and providing business opportunities for undertakers (see Figure 50). Since few churches had dedicated buildings, churchyard cemeteries were not yet commonplace in the 1850s. Families tended to bury relatives on their own land and often made their own caskets. If families had servants or enslaved people working for them, they often buried those individuals in unmarked graves, or with wooden markers that have since decayed.[674]

Figure 49. Rev. William Scott Lewis was a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Portland, located on Taylor Street. Here, Lewis is pictured with his wife, Julia Lewis (née Pierce), ca. 1856.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

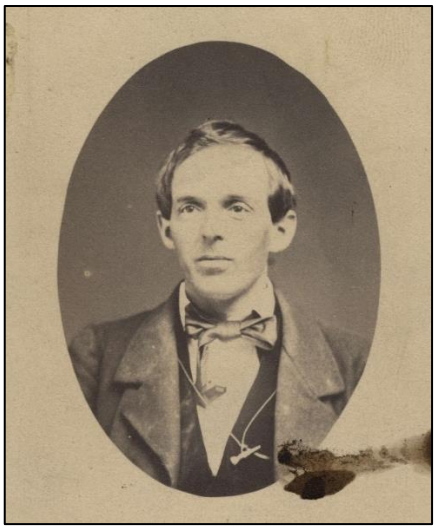

Figure 50. As more Americans settled in Oregon, there were correspondingly more deaths among the populace. Overlanders established cemeteries and individuals found work as undertakers. Pictured here (ca. 1868) is John Brainerd Garrison, who came to Oregon overland in 1852 and worked as a cabinet maker and undertaker in Portland.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

[673] Gail E. H. Evans, "St. Joseph's Catholic Church," Jackson County Cultural and Historic Resource Survey, December 1979.

[674] "Whittaker Family Cemetery," Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties, Polk County, July 25, 1991.

Some family burial grounds from the late 1850s remain today. One such example is the Wigle Cemetery in Linn County. The Wigle family came overland to Oregon in 1852, and the first recorded burial in their family plot was in 1857 (though there may have been one as early as 1853).[675] Another is the Whitaker Cemetery, in Polk County, which that family began around 1856.[676] In nearby Pedee (also in Polk County), Joseph Edwards and Ann Ritner started the Edwards Cemetery by donating five acres of their land claim for a cemetery, and it became a burying place for other overlanders who settled in the area.[677]

Community-wide cemetery establishment in western Oregon picked up in the late 1850s and early 1860s. While some cemeteries were affiliated with churches, most were started by fraternal organizations or by specific ethnic groups.[678] In Linn County, the Odd Fellows established a cemetery in the 1860s, but the earliest grave in the plot was from 1856.[679] Masons established a cemetery in Eugene in 1859 on a site that had been used for burials since 1854. Non-Masons could also be buried there.[680]

Other settlements looked to government entities to establish cemeteries, rather than private groups. In Jacksonville, the city raised money for the cause. The resulting cemetery was subdivided into eight areas based on community affiliation and racial identity, as noted in an 1880 article: "We have here the Odd Fellows, the Masonic, the Jewish, the Catholic, the Protestant, the American and German Red Men, and the Potterfield or China graveyard."[681] The first recorded burial there was Margaret Love on October 23, 1859, several months before the *Oregon Sentinel* ran an article entitled, "Jacksonville Cemetery!" that proclaimed,

> Notice is hereby given, That the CEMETERY GROUNDS have been completely surveyed, fenced in, and divided into appropriate lots. from and after this date, interments will not be permitted until application is had to Messrs. BURPEE & LINN, Jacksonville.[682]

Around this time, the US government established a cemetery for Indigenous people of the Willamette Valley who had been forced to move to the Grand Ronde Reservation. The earliest burials there were from 1857, only a year after its establishment.[683]

Some overlanders came to Oregon specifically to establish new outposts of communal societies. One of these was the Aurora Colony, founded by Dr. William Keil. A Prussian immigrant, Keil led a party of 250 followers across the Oregon Trail in 1855. He initially chose Willapa Bay in the Washington Territory as the site for his Christian communal society, but he became unhappy with

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[675] Grace Wigle Miller, "Wigle Cemetery," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, January 2004.

[676] "Whittaker Family Cemetery," Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties, Polk County, July 25, 1991.

[677] "Edwards Family Cemetery," Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties, Polk County, August 28, 1991.

[678] Miller, "Wigle Cemetery."

[679] "Lebanon Odd Fellows and Masonic Cemetery," Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties, Linn County.

[680] James M. Hamrick, Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, "Masonic Cemetery and Hope Abbey Mausoleum," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, February 10, 1980.

[681] Gail E. H. Evans, "Jacksonville Cemetery," Jackson County Cultural and Historic Resource Survey, March 1980.

[682] "Jacksonville Cemetery!" *Oregon Sentinel*, January 28, 1860, 3.

[683] "Grand Ronde Indian Cemetery," Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties, Polk County, July 24, 1991.

the location. In 1856, he moved his community south, purchasing a donation land claim on the Pudding River in Marion County, Oregon.[684] Keil's home in the Aurora Colony later became a regular stop for overland travelers arriving in the region.[685]

Conclusion

While fewer overlanders arrived during this period than in the 1840s and early 1850s, those who made the journey encountered a different Oregon from that experienced by earlier arrivals. In the Willamette Valley, the US government had confined Indigenous people to reservations. Taking advantage of greater access to land and financial resources, White Oregonians built an increasingly complex settler-run economy with plenty of opportunities for work and lots of services for new arrivals. Improved transportation networks, built upon long-established Indigenous thoroughfares, facilitated outward migration of overlanders from the Willamette Valley. In these new areas of White settlement—especially southwestern and coastal Oregon—new arrivals started farms, towns, and businesses. These arrivals were overwhelmingly White, due to legal structures built by Oregon leaders during the state's constitutional convention, which led to Oregon becoming the first state with a law excluding Black people.

[684] Jim Kopp, "Aurora," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, December 12, 2019, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/aurora.

[685] Paul Hartwig, "Aurora Colony Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, November 1973.

Chapter 5: First Year for Overlanders Arriving during the Homestead Act Era (1862–1869)

By 1862, those bound for Oregon could travel via improved overland trails (a journey of four to six months), by sea around Cape Horn (six to eight months), or by sailing to Panama, crossing the isthmus by railroad, and then continuing by boat (one month).[686] Many of those opting for the overland route often ended up in Utah, California, or Washington, with proportionately fewer settling in Oregon compared to earlier periods. Wherever their end destination, fewer overlanders kept accounts of their journeys or their early days in their new home. This could be for many reasons—perhaps because the trip was more commonplace, because improved roads made the trek easier, or because the journey seemed uneventful after so many had already completed it. It is also possible that more accounts exist from this era that have not yet come to light.[687]

Whatever the reason, the lack of materials regarding overlanders who ended their journey in Oregon means that there are few personal accounts of overlanders' first year in Oregon between 1862 and 1869. Like Chapter 4, this chapter uses newspapers, secondary sources, and other accounts to explain what life was like for new arrivals to Oregon. Increasingly in the 1860s, like the second half of the 1850s, overlanders settled in regions outside of the Willamette Valley, leading to continued population growth in southwestern Oregon. Increasing numbers of White settlers, including recent arrivals and more established residents, claimed land east of the Cascade Mountains, particularly in northeastern Oregon.

The Flood of 1861-1862

Those who arrived in the Willamette Valley before the winter of 1861–1862 experienced a major flood that shaped future patterns of American settlement in the valley by wiping communities like Linn City and Champoeg off the map and weakening Oregon City at a time when rival Portland was already challenging its preeminence.

From December through early January, the Willamette River and its tributaries—the Umpqua, Rogue, Colville, and other rivers—overflowed their banks. Rain melted snow in the mountains, and the meltwater ran through valleys in torrents.[688] One observer later remarked that during the flooding, "the whole Willamette valley was a sheet of water."[689] Another claimed that the water level of the Umpqua River was higher than the 1853 floods, which had been "higher than ever before in

[686] The Panama Railroad opened in 1855, which meant travelers could take this route as early as the 1850s, and it was common in the 1860s. Frank Norris and Lee Kreutzer, "Trails & Rails: The Impact of Railroad Construction on the Overland Trails, 1863–1869," *Overland Journal* (Summer 2017): 56–77, esp. 57–58, 62.

[687] Norris and Kreutzer, "Trails & Rails," 56–77, esp. 69.

[688] Edward Lansing Wells, "Notes on the Winter of 1861–2 in the Pacific Northwest," *Northwest Science* 21 (1947): 76–83, esp. 76–79.

[689] Albert G. Walling, *Illustrated History of Lane County, Oregon* (Portland: A. G. Walling, 1884), 337.

the memory of the oldest Indians."[690] In Salem, the Willamette rose at the rate of a foot per hour on December 2, according to the *Oregon Statesman*, and the following day "the water was then flowing through town in a channel three to four feet deep, and more than a quarter mile in breadth."[691]

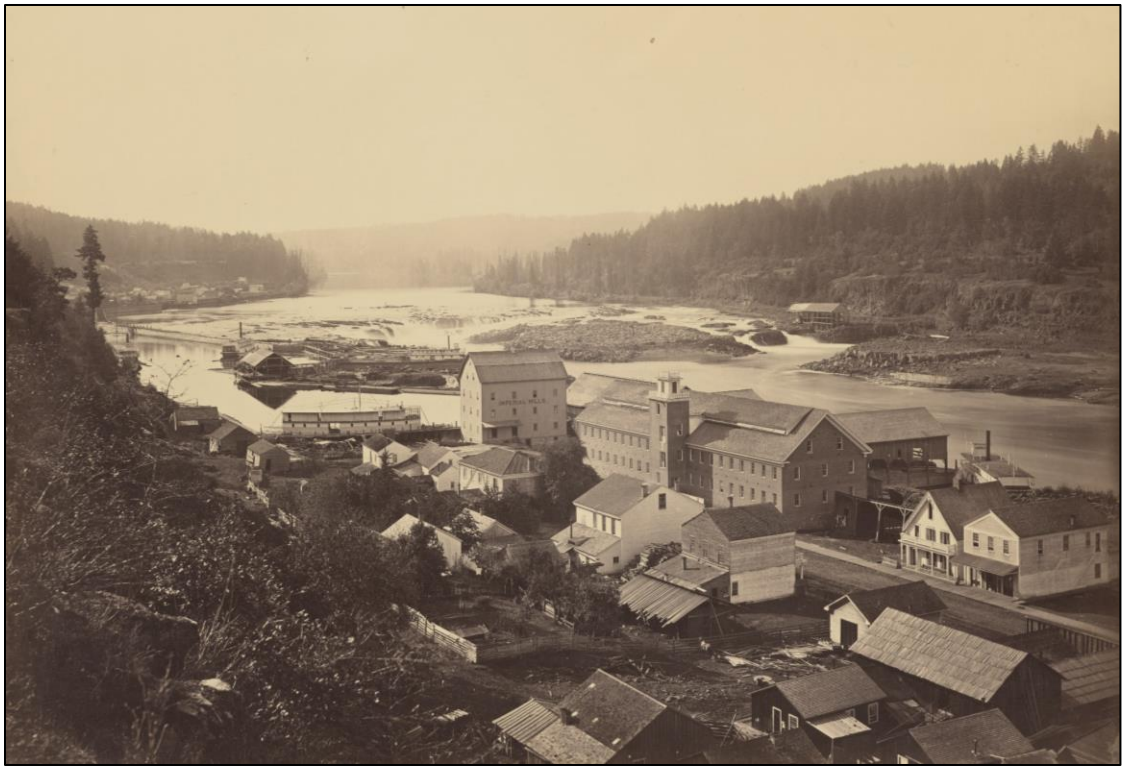

Figure 51. Floods in the winter of 1861–1862 hit Oregon City especially hard. Here, mills in Oregon City are shown after the floods, with the Imperial Flour Mills and Oregon Woolen Mills buildings both visible in the image. Photograph by Carleton E. Watkins, 1867.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

Whole settlements washed away in the flood. The Eugene *State Republican* reported, "Lower Scottsburg is entirely swept away. Lard & Peters' store was carried away from upper Scottsburg, taking thirty tons of freight belonging to others. Two tons of coffee were lost."[692] Oregon City was particularly hard-hit, as the *Argus* reported (see Figure 51):

> The Island Mill was kept running Monday and through the night . . . But the crash of the falling bridge just before daylight on Tuesday morning, destroying all egress to the main land, roused them to a consciousness of immediate danger . . . Tuesday [afternoon] a large part of the breakwater at the warehouse on the opposite side of the river succumbed to the immense pressure of water, and at intervals great masses of timbers composing the crib-work would burst up and be swept away by the mighty torrent.

[690] Wells, "Notes on the Winter of 1861–2 in the Pacific Northwest," 78–79.

[691] George R. Miller, "The Great Willamette Flood of 1861," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 100, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 182–207, esp. 190–91.

[692] "Friend Burknapp . . .." *State Republican*, January 11, 1862, 2.

> Tuesday evening's gloom settled on a scene such as probably never was witnessed in our valley before.—The ceaseless roar of the stream made a fearful elemental music widely different from the ordinary monotone of the Falls; while the darkness was only made more visible by the glare of torches, and hurrying lights, which with the shouts of people from the windows of houses surrounded by the water, all conspired to render the hour one of intense and painful excitement. The flood has covered the highest mark of January '53, and is still rapidly rising. . . .
>
> The light of Wednesday morning revealed a scene of desolation terrible in its extent, no less than in its completeness. The Oregon City, and Island Mills; the Willamette Iron Works, Foundry and Machine Shop; all the Breakwaters designed to protect the mills and upper end of Oregon City excepting one short piece are carried away, and over where they stood now sweeps a foaming current against which no building unprotected by a solid breakwater as a defense could possibly stand. Lower down, a number of dwellings and warehouses have disappeared, while others are trembling on their foundations. . . . An immense amount of drift has passed and apparently the debris of many houses . . . .
>
> Thursday morning, Dec. 5th, Gov. Abernethy's old brick store fell last night, a large timber striking the upper side, and causing the building to fall with a lurch up stream. . . . Our macadamized street stood the test of a heavy current well, and doubtless prevented the destruction of property which would otherwise have been greater.[693]

Orleans (across from Corvallis) and Linn City were also devasted by flood waters; in Linn City, only two houses withstood the waters.[694] Champoeg was practically wiped out. The *Oregon Argus* reported, "It is probable that Champoeg next to Oregon City, lost more than any other single point, by the flood."[695] A survivor later reflected on the destruction of Champoeg:

> . . . a morning dawned when there was not a sign of civilization left to tell where Champoeg had stood. Stores, warehouses, dwellings, homes, had disappeared in the maelstrom of waters; fences, outbuildings, supplies and stores of all kinds; all the stock kept near the river—horses, cattle, oxen and swine, poultry, sheep—everything that made Champoeg habitable and lent it hope and peace and civilization were swept away in one common vortex of rain and despair.[696]

Across the valley, steamboats, docks, sawmills, gristmills, warehouses, and fences were either swept away or ruined.[697] The price of flour skyrocketed in the aftermath, as grain stores in warehouses and flour mills were destroyed.[698]

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[693] "The Great Flood of 1861," *Oregon Argus*, December 14, 1861, 2.

[694] Wells, "Notes on the Winter of 1861–2 in the Pacific Northwest," 78; Miller, "Great Willamette Flood of 1861," 197–198; Cain Allen, "The Great Flood of 1861," *Oregon History Project*, accessed May 5, 2021, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/the-great-flood-of-1861.

[695] "Losses at Various Points, By the Freshet," *Oregon Argus*, December 21, 1861, 2.

[696] Miller, "Great Willamette Flood of 1861," 197; original source: *Oregonian*, February 21, 1888.

[697] "Effects of the Flood Elsewhere" *Oregon Argus*, December 14, 1861, 2.

[698] Miller, "Great Willamette Flood of 1861," 193, 203.

Communication between settlements ceased as roads became impassable, even for mail service.[699] An observer in Scottsburg reported to the *Oregon Sentinel*, "The bridges are all destroyed, in many places the road is badly washed away or filled with large heaps of driftwood."[700] That was only the beginning of the damage to the transportation network, the *Sentinel* reported:

> North, all the bridges on Butte Creek have been swept away, and the bridge and saw-mill at the mouth of Evans Creek have also been lost. On Rogue River, Hunter's ferry boat has gone down stream; also, Pelton's boat, near Table Rock.
>
> South, a number of bridges are gone between this place and Yreka. The Yreka Ditch has been damaged to such an extent that it will require $20,000 to put it in repair. The bridge over Shasta River is gone, and the race course was entirely submerged.
>
> The middle abutment of Klamath bridge has been moved down three feet. Well's Mills, on Applegate, has been so seriously damaged as not to admit of repair. The bridge is gone.[701]

Destruction of mining operations led miners to seek other lodes, at least temporarily, the *Oregon Sentinel* speculated:

> The floods have done more in the way of "cleaning out" than the miners. They have even washed off bridges with liens and heavy mortgages on them, rented farms, razed crops of potatoes, and rushed the bottoms out of our roads. And while all this has been doing, many of our citizens, washed out of debt, have left the country and gone to the fabled Carriboo or Salmon river mines. But it is predicted by some that next Spring will be a great season to find *salmoned* miners in that northern country.[702]

Although the floodwaters did not cause widespread death, they destroyed property of settlers, including houses, barns, livestock, agricultural produce, bridges, and other built structures.[703] Altogether, according to later US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) estimates, the flood likely caused damages of approximately $44 million, or $486 million in 2020 dollars.[704]

Claiming Land After the Homestead Act of 1862

Less than a year after the flood, Congress passed the 1862 Homestead Act, providing new opportunities for Oregon settlers to acquire land.[705] Modeled in part on the DLCA, the Homestead Act provided that any citizen of the United States or immigrant who had filed a declaration to become a citizen could claim up to 160 acres of land, if they paid a $10 entry fee, and then either

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[699] Wells, "Notes on the Winter of 1861–2 in the Pacific Northwest," 78–79; Miller, "Great Willamette Flood of 1861," 189.

[700] "Pluvius" to the editor, December 11, 1861, published in the *Oregon Sentinel*, December 28, 1861, 3.

[701] "The Late Floods," *Oregon Sentinel*, December 7, 1861, 3.

[702] "Josephine County Correspondence," *Oregon Sentinel*, February 1, 1862, 2.

[703] Miller, "Great Willamette Flood of 1861," 183, 196–99; Wells, "Notes on the Winter of 1861–2 in the Pacific Northwest," 78–79.

[704] Miller, "Great Willamette Flood of 1861," 203.

[705] Homestead Act of May 20, 1862 (12. Stat. 392).

lived on it for five years or paid $1.25 an acres after living on it for six months.[706] Women could apply, provided that "they be at least twenty-one years old, single, widowed, divorced, or head of a household" (see Figure 52).[707]

Figure 52. A farmstead on Government Island, near Vancouver. This is the home of the Knight Family. Photograph by Carleton E. Watkins, 1867.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

The act's citizenship provision meant people living in the American Southwest—many of whom were Hispanic or Latino—could claim land, since the United States granted residents of that region citizenship under the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Black Americans could claim land after the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment in 1865, and European immigrants were eligible for citizenship and therefore could also claim land under the act. Those excluded from American citizenship, such as Indigenous peoples and Chinese immigrants, could not claim land under the act.[708] Although the Homestead Act lacked the racial restrictions of the DLCA, Oregon's Black exclusion laws remained on the books and, despite not being vigorously enforced, they accomplished White Oregonians' goal of minimizing the number of Black settlers who claimed land in Oregon.[709] The few Black people who could afford to make the expensive overland journey to western states often confronted an environment of extreme racism upon arrival.[710]

In Oregon, the Homestead Act provided a mechanism for eligible settlers to claim land not already claimed through the DLCA. This was big news: the Eugene *State Republican* published the full

[706] Douglas W. Allen, "Homesteading and Property Rights: Or, 'How the West Was Really Won,'" *Journal of Law & Economics* 34, no. 1 (April 1991): 1–23, esp. 8.

[707] Sherry L. Smith, "Single Women Homesteaders: The Perplexing Case of Elinore Pruitt Stewart," *Western Historical Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (May 1991): 163–83, esp. 163.

[708] Margaret E. Montoya, "Latinos and the Law," in *American Latino Theme Study: Law*, published by US National Park Service (NPS), accessed June 22, 2021, https://www.nps.gov/articles/latinothemestudylaw.htm; US Constitution, amend. 14, sec 1; Coleman, "We'll All Start at Even," 427–428; Pierce, *Making the White Man's West*, 143.

[709] Historian Kenneth Coleman theorized, "The absence of racial qualifications for the 1862 Homestead Act is probably due to the influence of Radical Republican lawmakers like Galusha Grow and Edward Wade." Coleman, "We'll All Start at Even," 437; Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*; *The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 288, 296.

[710] Pierce, *Making the White Man's West*, 124, 143–44.

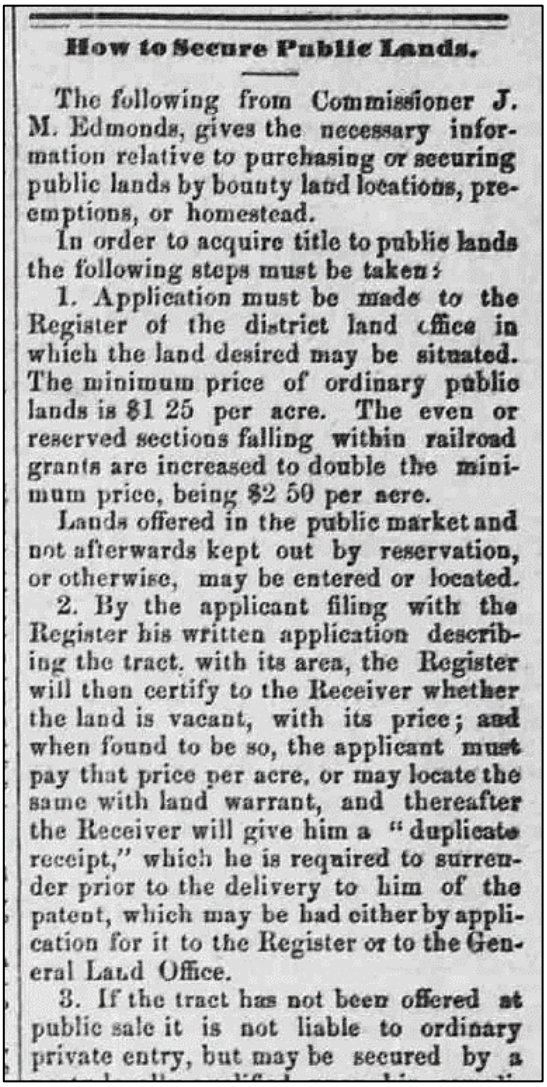
text of the act following news of its passage.[711] The Albany *States-Rights Democrat* republished for settlers a "how-to" guide for claiming land under the act (which had originally been published in a California paper):

> We are asked, both personally and by letter, so many questions about the Homestead Law, that we have thought best to publish the outlines of the law and the process for securing a home. The principal object is to furnish a permanent home for settlers. It is not intended to be used for purposes of speculation.
>
> A homestead is secured by filling in the District Land Office, an application for the same, with an affidavit setting out that he or she is a citizen of the United States . . . and that the application is made for his or her exclusive use and benefit and for actual settlement and cultivation. The applicant must also be either a married person or of lawful age. Upon receiving this application, if there is no conflicting claim, and upon the payment of the legal fee and commissions, which amount to sixteen dollars, the Register enters the application upon the books and plats of the office, and reports the entry to the General Land Office, as a 'Homestead Entry,' and from that time, until it is abandoned or legally cancelled, no person, either 'for love or money' is allowed to interfere with or dispossess the claimant. Within six months the homestead must be actually occupied or cultivated as the home of the claimant, except that when a person owns less than 160 acres of land, he may take as a Homestead Entry sufficient land to constitute (with that already owned) 160 acres, without actually moving upon the premises so taken, they becoming a part of the actual home of the settlers. From the time of filing the application, the land must not be abandoned for six months at any one time, no part of it can be sold or bargained away, it is not subject to forced sale for debt of any character, and is not transferable property in any sense. It is doubtful is a proposition, even, to sell any part of a Homestead Entry does not vitiate the Homestead right. This right can only be enjoyed once. . . .
>
> The claimant of a homestead may prove up and enter his homestead at the minimum price ($1 25 per acre) at any time after he has made the necessary improvements thereon . . .
>
> Persons wishing to claim lands which have been taken as homesteads, but which they believe have been abandoned, must set out in an affidavit that the premises have never been occupied or have been abandoned by the claimant for more than six months last past. . . .
>
> These rules may be somewhat modified by circumstances . . . but the great principles, that a homestead must be taken for a home, and must be made the actual residence of the claimant, will be invariably adhered to. At the end of five years the claimant makes proof of continuous occupancy and receives a patent, and then his title is perfect.[712]

[711] "The Homestead Bill," *State Republican*, July 19, 1862, 1.

[712] "Homestead Law," *States-Rights Democrat*, October 13, 1866, 1.

Other papers also published homestead how-to guides (see Figure 53). Lawyers and notaries took out advertisements in Oregon papers, promoting their ability to assist settlers with homestead paperwork.[713] The volume of claims was significant: during just the second quarter of 1869, the Oregon City Land Office processed 9,880 claims of 45–100 acres, sold 1,561 acres for cash, and processed 39 preemption claims.[714]



How to Secure Public Lands.

The following from Commissioner J. M. Edmonds, gives the necessary information relative to purchasing or securing public lands by bounty land locations, preemptions, or homestead.

In order to acquire title to public lands the following steps must be taken:

1. Application must be made to the Register of the district land office in which the land desired may be situated. The minimum price of ordinary public lands is $1 25 per acre. The even or reserved sections falling within railroad grants are increased to double the minimum price, being $2 50 per acre.

Lands offered in the public market and not afterwards kept out by reservation, or otherwise, may be entered or located.

2. By the applicant filing with the Register his written application describing the tract, with its area, the Register will then certify to the Receiver whether the land is vacant, with its price; and when found to be so, the applicant must pay that price per acre, or may locate the same with land warrant, and thereafter the Receiver will give him a "duplicate receipt," which he is required to surrender prior to the delivery to him of the patent, which may be had either by application for it to the Register or to the General Land Office.

3. If the tract has not been offered at public sale it is not liable to ordinary private entry, but may be secured by a

Figure 53. Oregon newspapers published how-to guides with instructions for settlers on how to navigate claiming land under the Homestead Act. Here, the beginning of such a guide published in the Albany *States-Rights Democrat*, February 15, 1868, page 1.

Source: Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

The concern about speculation reported by the *States-Rights Democrat* was not unfounded. Historians have conjectured that a considerable acreage distributed through the Homestead Act, while intended for individuals, went to railroad companies and land speculators.[715] Individuals also

[713] "Russell & Elkins," advertisement, *Albany Register*, April 10, 1869, 4.

[714] "Land Office Business," *Weekly Enterprise*, July 3, 1869, 2.

[715] Richard Edwards, "Changing Perceptions of Homesteading as a Policy of Public Domain Disposal," *Great Plains Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 179–202; Rodney J. Valentine, "Pioneer Settlers' Abuse of Land Laws in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of the Boise River Valley, Idaho," *Agricultural History* 67, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 47–65; Sean M. Kammer, "Railroad Land Grants in an Incongruous Legal System: Corporate Subsidies, Bureaucratic Governance, and Legal Conflict in the United States, 1850–1903," *Law and History Review* 35, no. 2 (May 2017): 391–432.

committed fraud under the bill. Historian William G. Robbins uncovered the schemes of Peter French, a stockman in southwestern Oregon, who used provisions of the Homestead Act and other laws (the Swamp Land Act and the Desert Land Act) to claim far more than the allowed acreage. Robbins explained,

> French initially filed (for his California boss, Hugh Glenn) a homestead claim to 160 acres of alluvial land where the Blitzen River emerges from the western slope of Steens Mountain. That claim was the first in a series of moves French made to expand his operation. French and Glenn purchased 48,570 acres of "swampland" and livestock in the adjacent Diamond Valley from A.H. Robie in 1877. Title to the property was in limbo, however, because the Department of Interior had not yet classified the property as swampland. Nevertheless, by the end of the decade, French was running some 20,000 head of cattle on the expanding properties.
>
> In piecing together his ranching empire, French made use of dummy entrymen, a practice through which his employees would file for a 160-acre homestead claim, reputedly live on the property to obtain legal ownership, and then sign over the title ("commutation") to French for a small fee. With many of the claims filed along waterways, French fraudulently gained a monopoly over riparian zones on streams flowing from Steens Mountain, especially the Blitzen River. Between 1882 and 1889, French acquired more than 26,000 acres, with employees responsible for commuting to the company more than half of the acreage. French also made liberal use of the Swamp Land Act—federal lands given to states to encourage citizens to reclaim marshes and tidelands for agricultural purposes. Although all large operators made widespread fraudulent purchases of swampland claims, The Dalles *Weekly Mountaineer* charged that the French-Glenn interests were particularly aggressive, using the Swamp Act to gain control of streams to "effectually keep settlers out as if they had a patent to the whole region."[716]

Other settlers acquired land by challenging previously laid claims. This practice was common, with many formal notices published in Oregon newspapers. The challenger would charge that someone had abandoned a homestead and give them thirty days' notice to make good on their claim before the challenger could take over the land (see Figure 54).[717] Others challenged homestead claims by contesting the rights of heirs after someone died.[718]

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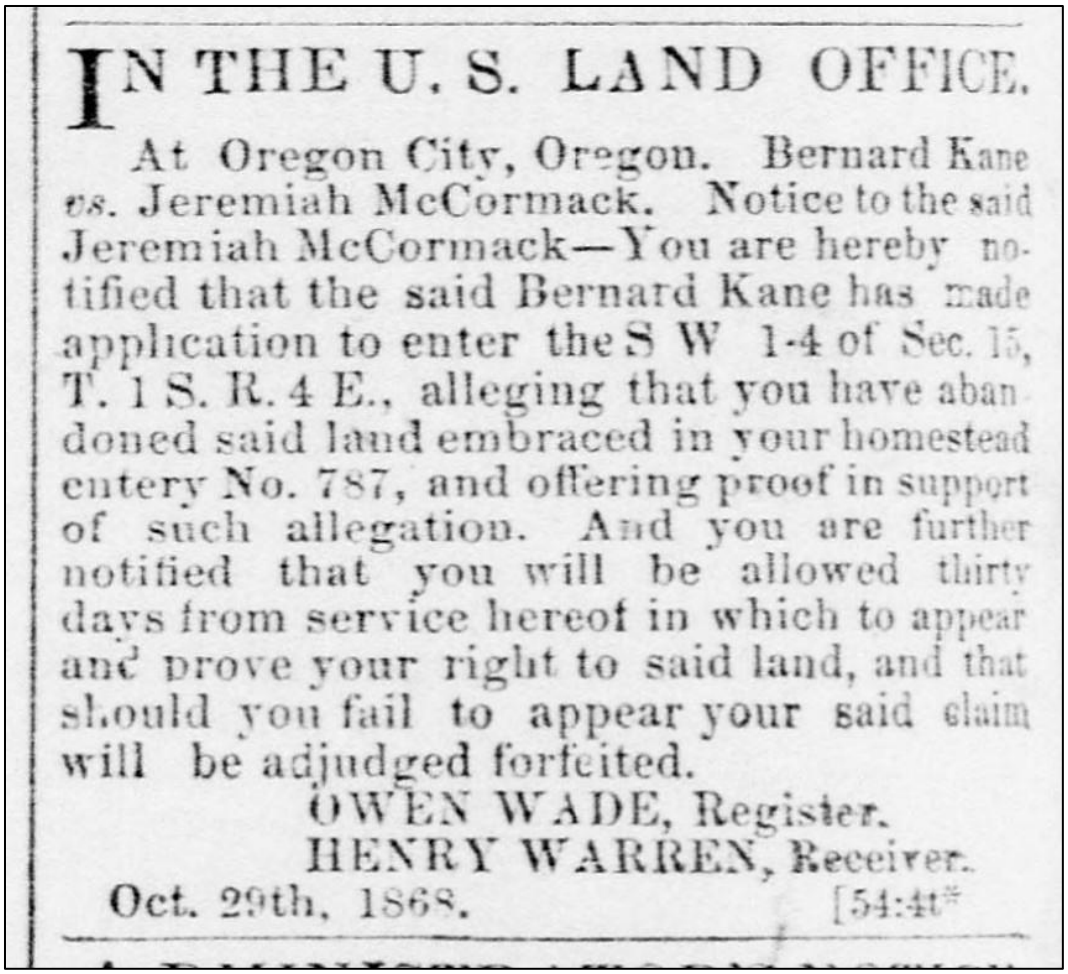
[716] William G. Robbins, "The Malheur Occupation and the Problem with History," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 117, no. 4 (Winter 2016): 574–603, esp. 581.

[717] John Kelly, Register, and Addison R. Flint, Receiver, "Notice to John Hutchins, a Homestead Settler," notice, *Oregon Sentinel*, November 30, 1867, 4; John Kelly, Register, and Addison R. Flint, Receiver, "Notice to L. F. McHenry, a Donation Claimant" notice, *Oregon Sentinel*, December 21, 1867; Owen Wade, Register, Henry Warren, Receiver, "In the U.S. Land Office," notice, *Oregon City Enterprise*, October 10, 1868, 2; Owen Wade, Register, Henry Warren, Receiver, "In the U.S. Land Office," notice, *Weekly Enterprise*, November 14, 1868, 4.

[718] Owen Wade, Register, Henry Warren, Receiver, "In the U.S. Land Office," notice, *Weekly Enterprise*, November 21, 1868, 4.



IN THE U. S. LAND OFFICE.

At Oregon City, Oregon. Bernard Kane *vs.* Jeremiah McCormack. Notice to the said Jeremiah McCormack—You are hereby notified that the said Bernard Kane has made application to enter the S W 1-4 of Sec. 15, T. 1 S. R. 4 E., alleging that you have abandoned said land embraced in your homestead entery No. 787, and offering proof in support of such allegation. And you are further notified that you will be allowed thirty days from service hereof in which to appear and prove your right to said land, and that should you fail to appear your said claim will be adjudged forfeited.

OWEN WADE, Register.
HENRY WARREN, Receiver.

Oct. 29th, 1868. [54:4t*

Figure 54. If individuals did not fulfill the obligations of the Homestead Act, other eligible claimants could challenge the original claim. Notices of such challenges ran regularly in Oregon's papers.

Source: Owen Wade, Register, Henry Warren, Receiver, "In the U.S. Land Office," notice, *Weekly Enterprise*, November 14, 1868, 4. Available digitally via Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

Land speculation in Oregon often occurred near cities or along potential railroad routes, which provided additional opportunities for new arrivals to purchase smaller lots with connections to mercantile centers. The East Portland Homestead Company sold lots on credit in 1869, while building a railroad through the area. The company ran ads in local papers to appeal to speculators:

> The object of the Company is to afford every facility to the Actual Settler to obtain a Homestead according to his means. LOANS will be made by the East Portland Savings and Loan Bank on the same terms, so as to assist the purchaser of a Lot or Block to build a house. An opportunity is thus offered to every head of a family to procure a Homestead.
>
> The Land offered for sale will more than double in value, as soon as the Oregon Central Railroad will be in running order to Oregon City.

> The Portland Bridge Company . . . contemplate erecting a Bridge across the Willamette river, the terminus of which will be in the centre of the new Town site.
>
> The Odd Fellows, Masonic and Good Templar lodges each own a lot and will soon build Halls on the same.
>
> The present excellent school facilities will be increased by the early establishment of a Graded School.
>
> Mr. James B. Stephens will start for the East at an early day to procure the necessary appliances to supply the place with an abundance of pure water, that is obtainable from the various springs back and on the town site. . . .
>
> For further particulars apply to or address Hamilton Boyd at Messrs. La[?]d & Tilton's, Portland; or to A. M. Loryea, at the East Portland Bank, in East Portland.[719]

They ran ads in the Albany *States-Rights Democrat* the same day.[720] That paper talked up the same company in a news item:

> In another column will be found an advertisement of the East Portland Homestead Company, offering great inducement to persons desiring to procure valuable homesteads without being necessitated to pay a very great amount of cash down, which is certainly a very important item in Oregon at the present time, while a great amount of our money is locked up in the State Treasury or is being used by speculators at Salem. Laboring men, mechanics, speculators and every body else should read the advertisement of the Homestead Company.[721]

The available land, 100 acres total, fronted a newly macadamized road. Shares in the company cost $250 each (which could even be purchased on credit).[722] The Oregon City *Weekly Enterprise* promoted the investment, claiming, "The scheme is a perfectly safe one and parties in want of a small homestead might find it to their advantage to look after the few remaining shares. Call on Mr. R. E. Chatfield."[723]

Other organizations subdivided lots to capitalize on the increasing price of land around Portland.[724] Some of them later entered into right-of-way agreements with railroad companies to lay tracks on the land.[725] Others subdivided their land to sell directly to residents, as the Oregon City *Enterprise* reported:

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[719] "Valuable Homestead Property for Sale! Stevens' Addition to East Portland," *Polk County Times*, June 26, 1869, 2.

[720] "Valuable Homestead Property for Sale in Stephens' Addition to East Portland," *States-Rights Democrat*, June 26, 1869, 2.

[721] "Homesteads," *States-Rights Democrat*, June 26, 1869, 3.

[722] "The Portland Homestead Association," advertisement, *Weekly Enterprise*, November 14, 1868, 4.

[723] [no title], *Weekly Enterprise*, November 21, 1868, 2.

[724] Merridawn Duckler and Bryan Baisinger, "Smith, Alfred H. and Mary E., House," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, 2007.

[725] Lewis v. Oregon Central R. Co, 12 Chi. Leg. News, 1; 8 Reporter, 358. 1879, https://law.resource.org/pub/us/case/reporter/F.Cas/0015.f.cas/0015.f.cas.0490.2.html#f1.

> Messrs. J. C. Trullinger & Co. of Oswego, have had their land claim surveyed and laid off into lots, along the river, which are now selling at very reasonable rates. The high prices asked for lots in Oregon City in the early days, is what gave the town *twelve miles below* such a sudden start. Messrs. Trullinger & Co. realize what the future of Oswego is to be, very likely, and will not put an obstacle in the way of its prospects by taxing the newcomer so heavily as to forever drive him away.[726]

Subdivisions similar in concept to those of the twentieth century began to pop up. On a claim not far from Oregon City that had originally been filed by J. L. Stout, developers divided the acreage, rebranded it as the "Ringgold Settlement," and sold it lot by lot.[727]

The Civil War

Although no battles of the Civil War occurred in Oregon, the political tensions and military buildup of the period shaped life in the state.[728] Willamette Valley residents split loyalties between Republicans (predominantly northerners, anti-slavery, and pro-Lincoln) and Democrats (southerners, pro-slavery). In general, pro-Union politicians dominated the northern valley, Confederate sympathizers were more abundant in the southern valley, and much of the middle did not lean strongly either way. Oregon settlers raised regiments to fight in the war, women drummed up enlistments and assisted with medical care, and Union clubs formed.[729] Oregonians remained both strongly anti-slavery and strongly against allowing Black people to live in Oregon. Historian Jim Labbe explained White Oregonians' stance on race during the Civil War:

> In Oregon, White supremacy dominated anti-slavery politics, with many opponents of slavery accepting or even advocating for its continuance or expansion elsewhere, as long as Oregon was preserved for the White race. Other anti-slavery men in Oregon, like many Northerners, came to morally condemn slavery and support its nationwide demise but either could not fathom or remained ambivalent about the prospect of a multi-racial democracy in the United States.[730]

[726] "Town Lots," *Oregon City Enterprise*, October 27, 1866, 3.

[727] "Valuable Land for Sale Cheap," advertisement, *Weekly Enterprise*, April 17, 1869, 2.

[728] For an overview on scholarship regarding the Civil War in the American West, see Stacey L. Smith, "Beyond North and South," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 6, no. 4 (December 2016): 566–91. On the memory of the Civil War in Oregon, see Stacey L. Smith, "Oregon's Civil War: The Troubled Legacy of Emancipation in the Pacific Northwest," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 115, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 154–73. For a deeper dive on Oregon history during this era, see Richard W. Etulain, *Lincoln and Oregon Country Politics in the Civil War Era* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2013).

[729] G. Thomas Edwards, "Six Oregon Leaders and the Far-Reaching Impact of America's Civil War," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 100, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 4–31, esp. 11–19, 29. See also Robert W. Johannsen, *Frontier Politics and the Sectional Conflict: The Pacific Northwest on the Eve of the Civil War* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1955), 151.

[730] Jim M. Labbe, "The Colored Brother's Few Defenders: Oregon Abolitionists and their Followers," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 120, no. 4 (Winter 2019): 440–67, esp. 441–42, 444.

Fewer families traveled overland during the Civil War due to fears of violence.[731] When the Civil War began, the U.S. military called to eastern war zones the troops who had, for over a decade, protected settlers on sections of the Oregon Trail that passed through Indigenous lands. In response to the lack of federal troops, state leaders recruited militia forces.[732] Newspapers helped with the recruitment effort, pointing out that enlisting in the militia could be a good opportunity for young men: a chance to be clothed and fed and make some money.[733] Soldiers in the Oregon militia (see Figure 55), in partnership with some remaining US Army troops, continued the practice of building forts to protect settlers from Indigenous people that had begun as early as the 1840s. Forts existed along major travel routes (such as Fort Lapwai in Idaho, Camp Harney in southeast Oregon, and Fort Cascades, Fort Rains, and Fort Lugenbeel along the Columbia River), near mining centers (Fort Boise and Fort Klamath), in places where White settlers were actively fighting Indigenous people (Camp Alvord and Camp Wright), and at strategic coastal locations (Fort Stevens).[734] Oregon volunteer militia troops constructed several short-lived forts in eastern Oregon—which were built during the war but then abandoned soon after.[735]

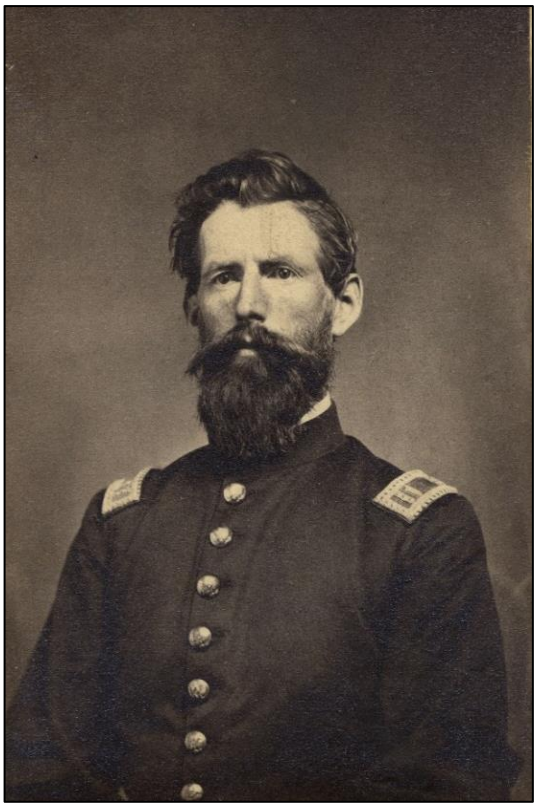

Figure 55. Clark P. Crandall, who was a captain in the Oregon militia and worked for newspapers in Portland.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

Settler Interactions with Indigenous People

Indigenous people in eastern Oregon encountered more and more White settlers in the 1860s, as the latter moved east in search of gold. This influx of people continued to interrupt traditional lifeways for Umatilla, Cayuse, Walla Walla, Nez Perce, John Day, Deschutes, and other Indigenous

[731] Pekka Hämäläinen, "Reconstructing the Great Plains," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 6, no. 4 (December 2016): 481–509; Michael L. Tate, *Indians and Emigrants: Encounters on the Overland Trail* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006).

[732] Jeff LaLande, "'Dixie' of the Pacific Northwest: Southern Oregon's Civil War," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 100, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 32–91, esp. 49–55; Edwards, "Six Oregon Leaders," 12–13.

[733] "Recruiting in Oregon," *State Republican,* March 14, 1863, 2.

[734] Gonzales and Young, *Overlanders in the Columbia River Gorge*, 132; Edwards, "Six Oregon Leaders," 22–25; Elisabeth Walton, "Fort Stevens Military Reservation," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, June 1971; Gregory P. Shine, "Camp Harney," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed May 12, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/fort_harney; Kurt Nelson, "Fort Klamath," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed May 12, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/fort_klamath.

[735] Royal G. Jackson and Jennifer A. Lee, "Camp Wright Site," Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties, Harney County, 1978; Oregon National Guard, "Forts – Camps – Roads, 1805–1976," (July 1976), Oregon State Library.

peoples along the Columbia River and on the Columbia River Plateau. In response, some Indigenous people resisted the entry of these intruders onto their lands. In 1863, William P. Dole, the commissioner of Indian affairs reported, "In Oregon the Indians west of the Cascade Mountains are at peace, but east of those mountains they are all engaged in active hostilities."[736]

Conflicts worsened as armed men with Oregon's militia or the US military fanned out across the state, buoyed by the perception that violence was an acceptable avenue for taking land from Indigenous peoples for the use of White settlers.[737] Violent confrontations ensued between armed settler militias and Northern Paiute, Bannock, Shoshone, Modoc, Klamath, and Nez Perce peoples in southeastern Oregon and southern Idaho. White residents called these conflicts the "Snake Indian Wars."[738] Northern Paiute peoples who survived these conflicts signed a treaty with the United States in 1865 and later were removed to the Malheur Reservation.[739]

In the context of this violence, and under pressure to gain legal control of land on which settler-run mining or grazing operations had already begun, the US government began treaty negotiations with Indigenous peoples in south-central Oregon and northern California in 1864. That year, the Klamath, Modoc, and Yahooskin Paiute peoples signed a treaty with the US government, which lumped them together under the name "Klamath Tribes." The treaty required members of those communities to cede twenty-three million acres of their land to the federal government and consolidate onto land reserved to them under the treaty (the Klamath Indian Reservation) (see Figure 56).[740]

[736] "Indian Affairs: Report of the Commissioner," *New York Times*, December 11, 1863, 8.

[737] Cain Allen, "Report by William H. Rector, 1862," *Oregon History Project*, accessed May 12, 2021, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/report-by-william-h-rector-1862.

[738] Edwards, "Six Oregon Leaders," 22–25; Melinda Jetté, "Broadside, To Arms!," *Oregon History Project*, accessed May 12, 2021, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/broadside-to-arms; Warren Aney, "1st Oregon Volunteer Infantry," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed May 12, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/1st_oregon_volunteer_infantry.

[739] Rebecca Dobkins, Susan Stevens Hummel, Ceara Lewis, Grace Pochis and Emily Dickey, "Tribes of the Oregon Country: Cultural Plant Harvests and Indigenous Relationships with Ancestral Lands in the Twenty-first Century," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 118, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 488–517, esp. 504; Jeff LaLande, "High Desert History: Southeastern Oregon," *Oregon History Project*, accessed May 18, 2021, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/narratives/high-desert-history-southeastern-oregon/resettlement/americans-return-to-the-oregon-country; Melinda Jetté, "Treaty with the Snake (Northern Paiute), 1865," *Oregon History Project*, accessed May 12, 2021, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/treaty-with-the-snake-northern-paiute-1865.

[740] The Klamath Tribes (Klamath-Modoc-Yahooskin), "Klamath Tribes History," accessed June 23, 2021, https://klamathtribes.org/history/.

Figure 56. This 1873 U.S. General Land Office map shows Indian Reservations in Oregon, southern Washington, and western Idaho (the Coast, Grand Ronde, Warm Springs, Klamath, Yakima, Umatilla, Nez Perce, and Snake Reservations) as they existed in 1870, after the US government had already reduced the size of several of the original reservations.

Source: Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division

Newspapers outside of Oregon reported on violence between White settlers and Indigenous people, often from a perspective that was hostile to Indigenous people and ignored the disruption that such settlers were causing to these communities.[741] In January 1867, the *New York Times* reported, "The Indians in the Owyhee and Boise Country continue their depredations upon stock, and fights with the savages are reported in every paper from that section."[742] The *Times* ran a letter later that year, written from someone with the military in south-central Oregon, that casually described violence perpetrated against Indigenous people:

> We started from Camp Warner, Oregon, on the 22d of August, marching west, halting for a few days west of Warner Lake; from there we struck out northwest, scouting the country in all directions, our scouts occasionally getting on to small parties of Snakes, or Pah-u-tes, and killing them.[743]

Violence continued in part because White settlers took land illegally, in violation of treaties negotiated by the US government. For instance, Nez Perce leaders had originally signed a treaty with the US government in 1855, but they found their land inundated with settlers following gold discoveries on the Clearwater River.[744] Historian Melinda Jetté explained the consequences for the Nez Perce:

> While some Nez Perce initially benefited from assisting and trading with the miners, many later became the victims of fraud, theft, physical assaults, and the loss of hunting grounds and natural resources. Perhaps the most marked injustice was the withdrawal of millions of dollars of gold from the reservation without compensation to the Nez Perce. As a direct result of the mineral strikes on the Clearwater River, and a later strike in Powder River Valley, the Nez Perce Reservation was reduced to a fraction of its original size in treaties signed in 1863 and 1868. These events led to a split between treaty and non-treaty Nez Perce—those leaders who had refused to sign the treaties.[745]

The US government similarly shrank other reservations in response to economic pressure from White settlers, miners, and others. It reduced the Coast Reservation in 1865 and decreased the size of other reservations in the Pacific Northwest in later years.[746]

Underfunding, broken promises, and continued reductions in Indigenous peoples' land base exacerbated disease and poverty on Oregon Indian reservations. Diseases introduced by settlers, including dysentery, whooping cough, cholera, smallpox, measles, and tuberculosis, continued to kill

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[741] "Indian Fight in Oregon—Twenty-six Indians Killed and Fifteen Captured," *New York Times*, September 29, 1867, 5; "The Pacific Coast.: Fight with Indians in Oregon—Numbers Killed on Each Side . . .," *New York Times*, December 12, 1866, 8; "The Oregon Steam Navigation Company – Fight with the Snake Indians," *New York Times*, January 7, 1867, 5.

[742] "Idaho: Proposed Division of the Territory—Continued Trouble with the Indians," *New York Times*, January 7, 1867, 5.

[743] "An Indian Fight: A Severe Engagement with the Indians in Oregon," *New York Times*, November 17, 1867, 1.

[744] Nez Perce Tribes, "History," accessed June 23, 2021, https://nezperce.org/about/history/.

[745] Melinda Jetté, "Broadside, Express to Nez Perces!," *Oregon History Project*, accessed May 12, 2021, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/broadside-express-to-nez-perces.

[746] Lewis, "Coast Indian Reservation."

many Indigenous people who lacked immunity to them.[747] Inadequate food, shelter, and medical care, and lack of access to traditional lifeways combined with diseases to dramatically decrease the numbers of Indigenous people living on the Grand Ronde and Siletz Reservations.[748]

Demographics of Settlement

The growth rate of Oregon's settler population slowed during the 1860s, as more overlanders chose to go to California rather than Oregon. Oregon's gold strikes attracted some newcomers, but the state had less land available than California, in part because so much had been claimed by White settlers through the DLCA.[749] Although the population grew more slowly, it still increased 73 percent from 1860 to 1870, to 90,923 total. The 1870 counted population broke down this way:

- "White": 86,929 (95.6 percent of total population)
- "Colored": 346 (0.4 percent of total population)
- "Indian": 318 (0.3 percent of total population)
- "Chinese": 3,330 (3.7 percent of total population)[750]

Counties with the highest Chinese populations were in mining regions of northcentral and northeastern Oregon (24 percent of Baker County's population were of Chinese descent, and 43 percent of Grant County) or southwestern Oregon (13 percent of Jackson County's population and 19 percent of Josephine County). Chinese residents comprised only 4 percent of the population of Multnomah County, home to Portland.[751]

Multnomah County had the highest number of counted Black residents (163, which represented 47 percent of the state's total), followed by Marion County (62), and Jackson County (28).[752] The Black exclusion clause in Oregon's constitution remained in effect, but Black families and individuals continued to move to the state.[753] Some arrived against their will, such as an enslaved husband, wife, and twin ten-year-old boys who came from Texas with a White man.[754]

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[747] Taylor, "Making Salmon," 63.

[748] Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise*, 85; Robbins, "This Land, Oregon."

[749] Boag, "Calapooian Matrix," 283–86.

[750] US Census Bureau, "Population of the United States in 1870: Oregon," accessed May 12, 2021, https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1872/dec/1870a.html.

[751] Scott Corbett and Nancy Parker Corbett, "The Chinese in Oregon, c. 1870–1880," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 78, no. 1 (March 1977): 73–85, esp. 73; US Census Bureau, "Population of the United States in 1870: Oregon;" Chelsea Rose and Mark Axel Tveskov, "The Carolina Company: Identity and Isolation in a Southwestern Oregon Mountain Refuge," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 118, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 74–107, esp. 79; Lee, "Chinese Americans in Oregon."

[752] US Census Bureau, "Population of the United States in 1870: Oregon;" US Census Bureau, "Population of the United States in 1860: Oregon."

[753] As mentioned in Chapter 4, the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1868 made the Oregon Constitution's Black exclusion clause moot. However, a history of racist and discriminatory legislation, beginning with the Provisional Government in 1843, created a generally unwelcoming region to Black overlanders and other people of color.

[754] "Emigrants," *Oregon Sentinel*, August 15, 1863, 2.

Douglas County had the highest number of counted Indigenous people (60), followed by Jackson County (52), and Washington County (39).[755] The enumerated Indigenous population, as in the 1860 census, was likely undercounted because of instructions to include only Indigenous people living in White settlements. In 1870, the Bureau of the Census instructed census-takers to count people with mixed Indigenous-White ancestry as White, if they acted like White settlers did:

> Where persons reported as "Half-breeds" are found residing with whites, adopting their habits of life and methods of industry, such persons are to be treated as belonging to the white population. Where, on the other hand, they are found in communities composed wholly, or mainly of Indians, the opposite construction is taken.[756]

David Hobart Taylor, a member of the Oregon cavalry, passed through Marion County in 1862 and described a Métis community around present-day Jefferson (using offensive language):

> The Settlers in this neighborhood are French & all married Squaws. Lots of pretty half breeds with their raven hair, black Eyes, and Brunette complexion. Passed a School house where all the girls were of French & Indian, and all of them were out viewing the soldiers as they passed.[757]

White residents debated how best to convince more overlanders to come to Oregon, with a shared understanding about who the "right" type of settlers were: White people. And not necessarily just White Americans—White Oregonians, as in previous years, were not against immigrants if the foreigners were White. Portland businessmen actively recruited people from northern and central Europe in efforts to recruit a "farming population" to Oregon.[758] In 1869, the Albany *States-Rights Democrat* bemoaned the need for more settlers: "Linn county needs immigrants—needs advertising to procure them. And now let us go about it."[759] Yet, on the same page, the paper complained of Oregonians who supported Chinese immigration (using an offensive term):

> Instead of insisting that the coolies are the most desirable and necessary addition that could be made to the population of the Pacific coast, the Radical papers here had better take a lesson or two from such papers as *Harpers' Weekly*, which, in its issue of Aug. 14, says: "America has an endless welcome for the industrial laborer who comes hither to secure larger opportunities for himself and his children, but no country welcomes an inundation of foreign barbarism . . . . . It is not the number of a

[755] US Census Bureau, "Population of the United States in 1870: Oregon."

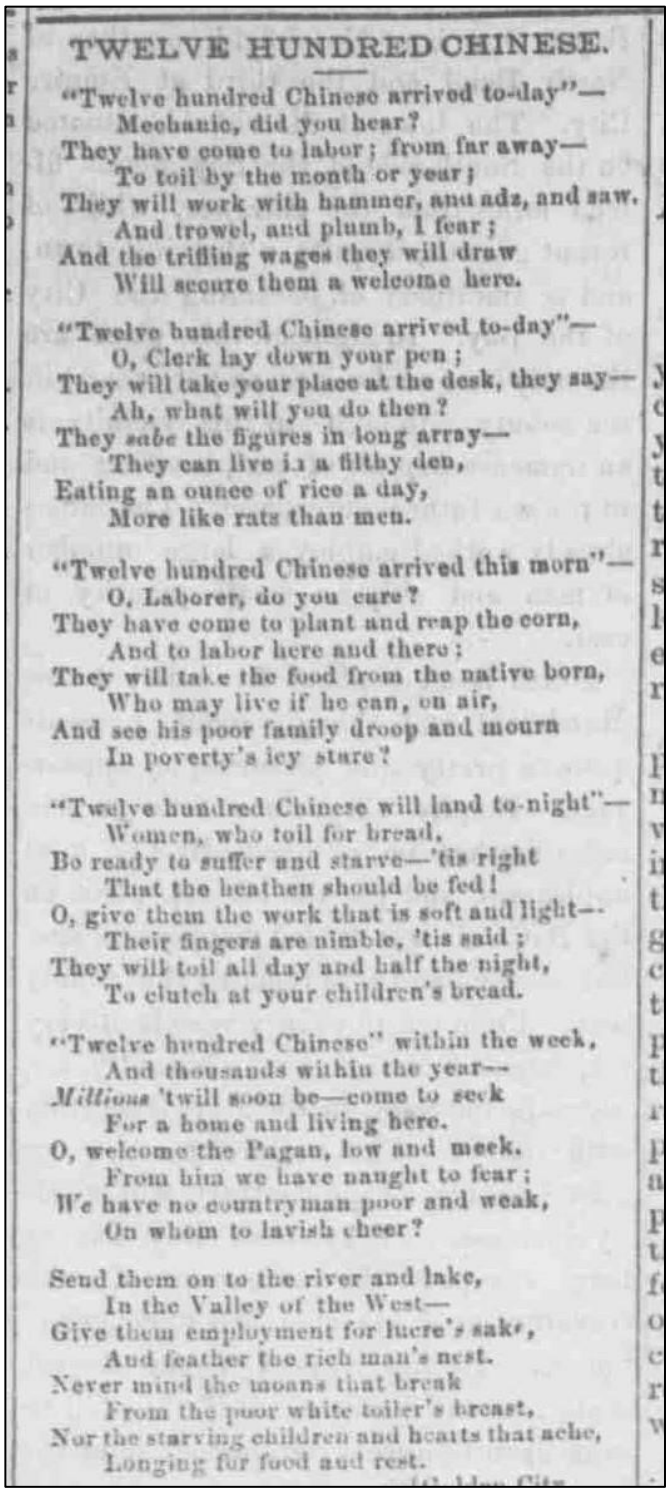
[756] *Ninth Census—Volume I, The Statistics of the Population of the United States* (Washington, DC, 1872), quoted in James P. Collins, "Native Americans in the Census, 1860–1890," *Genealogy Notes* 38, no. 2 (Summer 2006), https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2006/summer/indian-census.html; US Census Bureau, "Censuses of American Indians," accessed June 18, 2021, https://www.census.gov/history/www/genealogy/decennial_census_records/censuses_of_american_indians.html.

[757] James Robbins Jewell, "Oregon Voices: 'Doing Nothing with a Vengeance': The Diary of David Hobart Taylor, First Oregon Cavalry, January 1 through May 31, 1862," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 110, No. 4 (Winter 2009): 598–622, esp. 614.

[758] Bussel and Tichenor, "Trouble in Paradise," 462–64.

[759] "Immigration Committee," *States-Rights Democrat*, August 21, 1869, 2.

population but its quality that makes a great nation; nor do abundant labor and cheap wages announce an imminent millennium."[760]



TWELVE HUNDRED CHINESE.

"Twelve hundred Chinese arrived to-day"—
Mechanic, did you hear?
They have come to labor; from far away—
To toil by the month or year;
They will work with hammer, and adz, and saw,
And trowel, and plumb, I fear;
And the trifling wages they will draw
Will secure them a welcome here.

"Twelve hundred Chinese arrived to-day"—
O, Clerk lay down your pen;
They will take your place at the desk, they say—
Ah, what will you do then?
They *sabe* the figures in long array—
They can live in a filthy den,
Eating an ounce of rice a day,
More like rats than men.

"Twelve hundred Chinese arrived this morn"—
O, Laborer, do you care?
They have come to plant and reap the corn,
And to labor here and there;
They will take the food from the native born,
Who may live if he can, on air,
And see his poor family droop and mourn
In poverty's icy stare?

"Twelve hundred Chinese will land to-night"—
Women, who toil for bread,
Be ready to suffer and starve—'tis right
That the heathen should be fed!
O, give them the work that is soft and light—
Their fingers are nimble, 'tis said;
They will toil all day and half the night,
To clutch at your children's bread.

"Twelve hundred Chinese" within the week,
And thousands within the year—
Millions 'twill soon be—come to seek
For a home and living here.
O, welcome the Pagan, low and meek,
From him we have naught to fear;
We have no countryman poor and weak,
On whom to lavish cheer?

Send them on to the river and lake,
In the Valley of the West—
Give them employment for lucre's sake,
And feather the rich man's nest.
Never mind the moans that break
From the poor white toiler's breast,
Nor the starving children and hearts that ache,
Longing for food and rest.

Figure 57. The Albany *States-Rights Democrat,* like other Oregon newspapers, furthered White economic anxiety and encouraged discrimination against Chinese immigrants.

Source: Albany *States-Rights Democrat*, November 6, 1869, 1. Available digitally via Historic Oregon Newspapers, University of Oregon Libraries.

[760] "Radical Stupidity," *States-Rights Democrat*, August 21, 1869, 2.

Settler-run newspapers tried to convince White workers that they would be replaced by Chinese laborers (see Figure 57).[761] Oregon City's *Weekly Enterprise* added that Chinese immigration to Oregon led to decreasing wages for White workers.[762] The *Weekly Enterprise* piled onto the fearmongering when it reprinted an article from the San Francisco *Herald* that stated,

> one hundred Chinamen will perform the work of fifty white men; the white men are out of employment; they have been discharged, and their places filled with cheap Chinese laborers. The white laborers must seek employment elsewhere, and their families go with them.[763]

The Albany *States-Rights Democrat* similarly argued, "If they [Chinese people] are permitted to live here they will compete with our white population, and thus degrade and lower white labor."[764]

In 1858, Oregon had passed a law, modeled after a California law, that required any Chinese miner or merchant to obtain a four-dollar license every month—effectively taxing Chinese people for working in the state.[765] White settlers debated continuing or raising this tax in the 1860s, as a way to keep out Chinese immigrants. An 1866 article in the *Oregon Sentinel* commented on the issue, again using racist and offensive language:

> . . . we hope that during the present legislative session, the very important question of taxing the Chinese miners will not be overlooked. … It seems unwise policy to allow a race of brutish heathens who have nothing in common with us, to exhaust our mineral lands without paying a heavy tax for their occupation. These people bring nothing with them to our shores, they add nothing to the permanent wealth of this country and so strong is their attachment to their own country they will not let their filthy carcasses lie in our soil. Could this people be taxed as to exclude them entirely, it would be a blessing.[766]

The Albany *States-Rights Democrat* advocated repeatedly for taxing Chinese workers, as well as promoting measures that favored White workers:

> Now, if that additional amount of tax is enough to keep 'John Chiman' out—if there is in Oregon only thirty-two dollars per year between the lower laborer and starvation, is not that magnificent sum a splendid bonus to offer the white laborer to come in.[767]

In addition to the tax on Chinese workers—and despite White settlers' continued complaints that they needed laborers—Oregonians continued to pass legislation to discourage non-White

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[761] "Things to be Kept in Remembrance," *Oregon Sentinel*, February 6, 1869, 2.

[762] "Misrepresentation," *Weekly Enterprise*, December 11, 1869, 1.

[763] "A Point Well Put," *Weekly Enterprise*, August 28, 1869, 4.

[764] "Chinese Immigration," *States-Rights Democrat*, August 8, 1868, 2.

[765] Kerry Abrams, "Polygamy, Prostitution, and the Federalization of Immigration Law," *Columbia Law Review* 105, no. 3 (April 2005): 641–716, esp. 672.

[766] Quoted in Rose and Johnson, "Rising from the Ashes," 20.

[767] "A Splendid Inducement," *Oregon Sentinel*, June 22, 1867, 2. Two years later, the *States-Rights Democrat* wrote about Chinese immigrants, "If they are permitted to live here they will compete with our white population, and thus degrade and lower white labor." "Chinese Immigration," *States-Rights Democrat*, August 8, 1868, 2.

people from coming to Oregon and to prevent them from participating fully in society. During the Civil War, Oregon instituted a five-dollar annual poll tax on Black, Hawaiian, Chinese, and "mulatto" individuals.[768] Oregon also passed anti-Black sailor laws that were similar to "Negro Seamen Acts" passed in southeastern states.[769] Such laws forbade Black people who arrived in Oregon on boats to leave port, in an attempt to prevent Black immigration via water.[770] In 1862, the Oregon State Legislature passed legislation "banning marital unions between white persons and persons with a quarter or more of 'Negro blood.'" Four years later, the legislature passed a law prohibiting intermarriage between White people and anyone who was Black, of Chinese or Hawaiian descent (defined as having at least one grandparent who was Chinese or Hawaiian), or Indigenous (defined as anyone who had at least one Indigenous parent).[771] Individuals entering such a marriage—and even clerks or officiants—faced criminal sanctions.[772]

Existing Communities and Settlement Trends

The trend of American settlement in Oregon in the 1860s was increasingly to northeastern Oregon, where settlers sought rangeland on the Columbia Plateau or settled in towns on the way to mines in eastern Oregon, Idaho, and Montana. Table 5-1 shows the growth in overlander populations in northeastern Oregon (Baker, Grant, Umatilla, and Union counties) and southwestern Oregon (Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson, and Josephine counties), as well as the trend towards urbanization in Multnomah County, where Portland continued to expand.[773] As in the late 1850s, settlers continued to move from the Willamette Valley to other parts of Oregon, Washington, California, Idaho, Montana, or British Columbia to make land claims or try their luck at mining.[774] The Oregon City *Weekly Enterprise* remarked in 1868 on the growing population across the region:

> The total number of post offices in operation in Oregon is 143; in Washington Territory 78; in Idaho 34. No better indication can be given of the rapid increase and prosperity of our State and Territories than is shown by the above statement.[775]

[768] Rose and Johnson, "Rising from the Ashes," 20; Millner, "Blacks in Oregon."

[769] Tyler, "Unwanted Sailor," 508–9.

[770] Tyler, "Unwanted Sailor," 508–9.

[771] The decreased requirements for people with some Indigenous ancestry was perhaps due to the commonplace nature of earlier settlers, especially those in the fur trade, intermarrying with Indigenous women in the 1830s and 1840s. Sara Paulson, "Act to Prohibit the Intermarriage of Races, 1866," *Oregon History Project*, accessed May 12, 2021, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/act-to-prohibit-the-intermarriage-of-races-1866.

[772] Jensen, "Significant Events in the History of Oregon Women and Citizenship," 500.

[773] Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise*, 102; Hines, *Oregon and its Institutions*, 62–68, 70, 72–73, 75–78, 81, 97, 103, 113–22, 124–26.

[774] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, October 6, 1913, 6.

[775] [no title], *Weekly Enterprise*, November 21, 1868, 2.

Table 5-1. Total Population of Oregon according to 1860 and 1870 U.S. Census data.[776]

County	**1860 Population**	**1870 Population**
Baker County	n/a (not yet established)	2,804
Benton County	3,074	4,584
Clackamas County	3,466	5,993
Clatsop County	498	1,255
Columbia County	532	863
Coos County	445	1,644
Curry County	393	504
Douglas County	3,203	6,066
Grant County	n/a (not yet established)	2,251
Jackson County	3,736	4,778
Josephine County	1,623	1,204
Lane County	4,780	6,426
Linn County	6,772	8,717
Marion County	7.088	9,965
Multnomah County	4,150	11,510
Polk County	3,025	4,701
Tillamook County	95	408
Umatilla County	n/a (not yet established)	2,916
Umpqua County	1.250	n/a (absorbed into Douglas County)
Union County	n/a (not yet established)	2,552
Wasco County	1,689	2,509
Washington County	2,801	4,261
Yamhill County	3,245	5,012
Total	**52,465**	**90,923**

[776] US Census Bureau, "Population of the United States in 1870: Oregon."

Roads

Roads to Oregon, and from Oregon to other parts of the Pacific Northwest, facilitated overlanders' settlement elsewhere in the region. In the 1860s, the main overland route to Oregon began to be utilized as a stagecoach road, frequently traveled by contractors carrying mail for the US Post Office Department.[777] Operators of this and other stagecoach roads raised much of the money needed for maintenance and improvement through US mail contracts.[778] Contractors found ways to speed up mail service in Oregon, opening new offices in towns along the Columbia River.[779] By 1867, the overland stagecoach road was reliable enough that all mail from Oregon to points east went overland, unless postmasters marked letters or packages "Steamer."[780] Dependable mail service, coupled with an overland telegraph line, sped immigration and communication between Oregon and eastern states.[781]

Within Oregon, private companies and local government funded construction of new roads, which facilitated settlement in far-flung sections of the state.[782] Two roads, the Scott Trail (completed in 1862) and the Santiam Wagon Road (1868), provided important connections from the Willamette Valley to eastern Oregon.[783] The Scott Trail enabled overlanders to more easily cross McKenzie Pass in the Cascades Mountains.[784] A group of investors formed the Willamette Valley and Cascade Mountain Wagon Road Company to build the Santiam Wagon Road (completed 1868), which connected Albany with eastern Oregon. Like most settler-built roads, these roads followed the routes of long-established Indigenous trails.[785]

Corporations formed to build shorter wagon-accessible roads, often connecting increasingly populous towns and making it easier for new arrivals to reach them (see Figure 58). The Portland and Milwaukie Macadamized Road Company constructed a toll road between Portland and Milwaukie, which it completed in 1865.[786] In Auburn, Oregon, the "Munds & Company's Wagon Road" formed as a shareholding company with the aim of building a road.[787] Town governments pitched in to pay for roads and bridges, such as when the town of Jacksonville board of trustees paid

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[777] "Telegraph News," *Oregon City Enterprise*, May 18, 1867, 2; Abbott, *Portland in Three Centuries*, 38.

[778] Norris and Kreutzer, "Trails & Rails," 77.

[779] "The New Overland Mail," *Oregon City Enterprise*, December 22, 1866, 2.

[780] Quincy A. Brooks, Special Agent P. O. Dept. Portland, Oregon, "Notice to Postmasters in Oregon Washington and Idaho," *States-Rights Democrat*, July 6, 1867, 2.

[781] "By Overland Telegraph," *Oregon Sentinel*, September 30, 1863, 1.

[782] John E. Ross, "Jacksonville and Salmon River Wagon-Road Expedition," *Oregon Sentinel*, July 5, 1862, 2; Patrick Masterson, "'Old Coast Road' – Cape Blanco," Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties, Curry County, May 1983.

[783] Ward Tonsfeldt and Paul G. Claeyssens, "Central Oregon: Adaptation and Compromise in an Arid Landscape," *Oregon History Project*, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/narratives/central-oregon-adaptation-and-compromise-in-an-arid-landscape/finding-central-oregon/euro-american-immigrants.

[784] Gerald W. Williams, "McKenzie Pass," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed May 17, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/mckenzie_pass; *Oregon State Journal*, May 14, 1864; Robert W. Sawyer, "Beginnings of McKenzie Highway, 1862," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (September 1930): 261–68, esp. 261–64.

[785] Glenn Harrison, "Santiam Wagon Road," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed May 17, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/santiam_wagon_road.

[786] "Portland and Milwaukie Macadamized Road Co. records, 1862–1865," Finding Aid, university of Oregon, Special Collections and University Archives; "The Portland Homestead Association," advertisement, *Weekly Enterprise*, November 14, 1868, 4.

[787] Wm. Munds, John Cox, and Lester McKray, "Notice," *Daily Mountaineer*, March 18, 1864, 1.

someone to construct a "foot-bridge over Jackson creek" in 1868.[788] In mining communities, developers constructed roads to connect mines with other transportation networks, like the toll roads that Silas Skinner built connecting the Idaho mines to existing roads in Oregon and California.[789] And the road on the Washington side of the Columbia River, based on an Indigenous trail and then a military road, was used to move overlanders and mining supplies starting in 1864.[790]

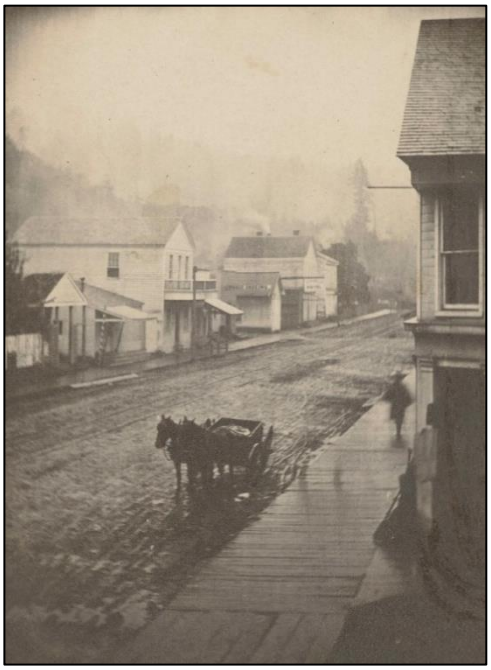

Figure 58. By the 1860s, new arrivals to Oregon had access to more roads that could accommodate wagons. Here, "Street in Oregon City, Oregon," by H. J. Wallace Studio, 1866.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

Congress authorized the funding of five wagon roads in Oregon between 1865 and 1869: the Coos Bay Wagon Road (Roseburg to Coos City), the Oregon Central Military Wagon Road (Eugene to Boise), Willamette and Cascade Mountain Military Wagon Road (Albany to Boise), and the Dalles-Boise Military Wagon Road (The Dalles to Boise). Private companies constructed these roads with substantial financial support from congressional appropriations. Justification for the roads came from the government's aim to protect overlanders from Indigenous peoples upon whose land they settled, and the roads often connected new or existing military forts with one another and with other White settlements (see Figure 59).[791]

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[788] "Board of Trustees, February 14, 1868," *Oregon Sentinel*, February 22, 1868, 3.

[789] Sarah Munro, "Jordan Valley," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed May 17, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/jordan_valley.

[790] "Washington Wagon Road from Portland to the Cascades," advertisement, *Daily Mountaineer*, March 18, 1864, 1; Gonzales and Young, *Overlanders in the Columbia River Gorge*, 158–59.

[791] Kathryn Toepel, "Coos Bay Wagon Road," Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties, Coos County, May 2003; Keith Clark, "Camp Polk," Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties, Deschutes County, August 31, 1983; LaLande, "High Desert History: Southeastern Oregon"; Royal G. Jackson and Jennifer A. Lee, "Willamette Valley Cascade Mountain Military Road," Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties, Harney County, 1978; Royal G. Jackson and Jennifer A. Lee, "Camp C. F. Smith Site," Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties, Harney County, 1978; William L. Lang, "John Mullan (1830–1909)," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed May 17, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/mullan_john.

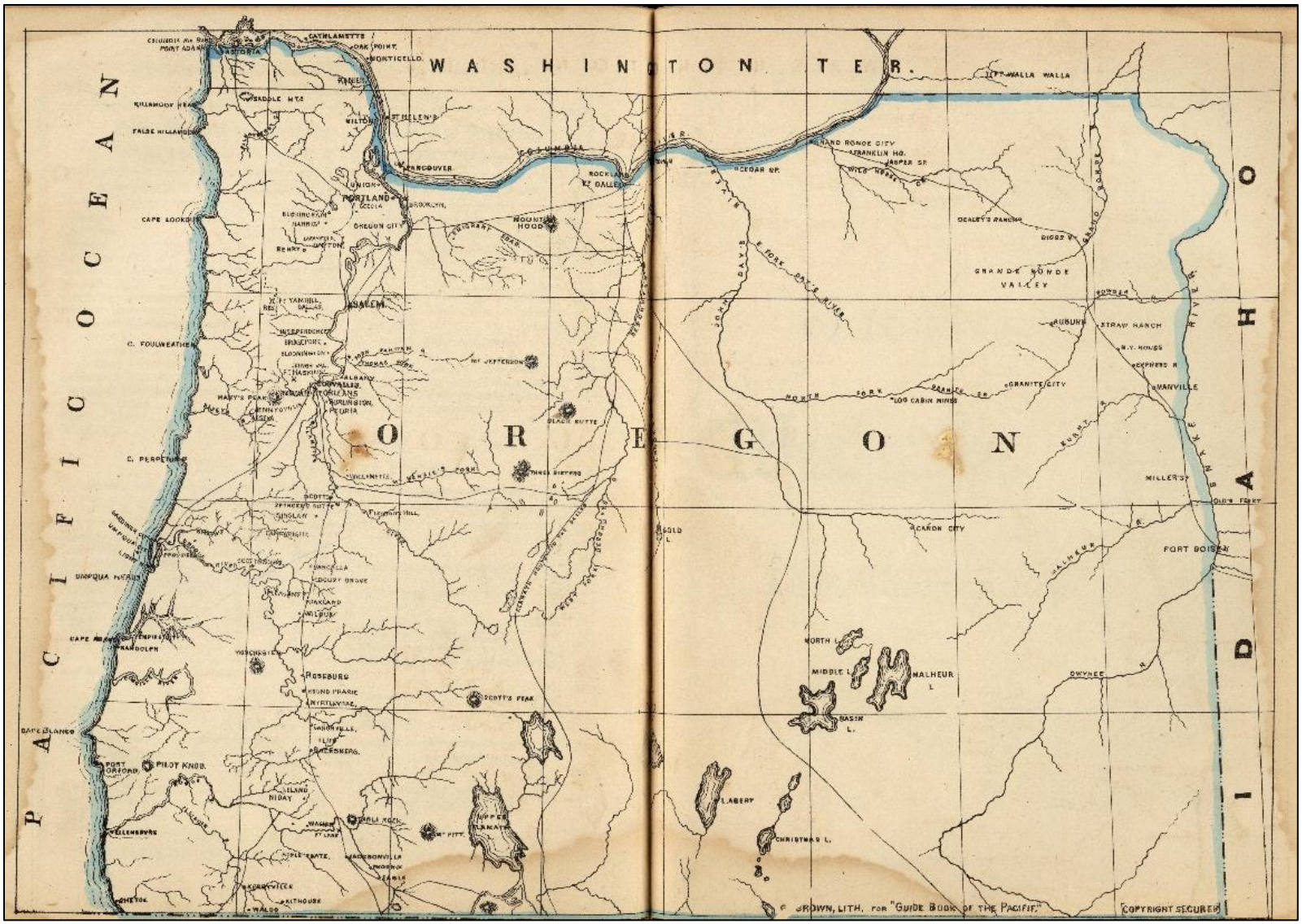

Figure 59. This 1866 map depicts the many towns and roads that White settlers had built across Oregon. Map by Sterling M. Holdredge.

Source: David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries.

Railroads

Congress passed the Pacific Railroad Act in 1862, which prompted surveying of potential rail lines across the nation in search of a transcontinental route.[792] Although the original transcontinental line did not come to Oregon, railroad speculation and building ran rampant in the late 1860s.[793] The OSNC constructed the Dalles-Celilo Portage Railroad past the Dalles Rapids on the Columbia River in 1863 (see Figure 60), and several individuals built small railroads (and sawmills to support construction of those railroads) around the Cascades rapids in the 1860s (see Figure 61).[794] In 1863, S. G. Elliott surveyed a potential route from Marysville, California, to Portland, Oregon, and estimated its cost of construction as $30,472,000 for 635.5 miles.[795] Five years later, the Oregon and California Railroad Company began construction of that railroad, with Chinese immigrants doing most of the work. The tracks connected Portland with Oregon City in 1869, but the rest of the line was not built until the 1870s (see Figure 62).[796]

Figure 60. The Dalles-Celilo Portage Railroad opened in 1863 and brought passengers around obstructions on the Columbia River. Pictured here, 1867. Photograph by Carleton E. Watkins.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

[792] Norris and Kreutzer, "Trails & Rails," 58–59.

[793] John Tilson Ganoe, "The History of the Oregon and California Railroad," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 25, no. 3 (September 1924): 236–83, esp. 276–78.

[794] Gonzales and Young, *Overlanders in the Columbia River Gorge*, 58–59, 82–84, 134–38.

[795] Herbert O. Lang, *History of the Willamette Valley, Being a Description of the Valley and its Resources, with an account of its Discovery and Settlement by White Men, and its Subsequent History: Together with Personal Reminiscences of its Early Pioneers* (Portland, OR: Geo. H. Hines, Book and Job Printer, 1885), 492.

[796] Ganoe, "History of the Oregon and California Railroad," 236–83; Elizabeth J. O'Brien, "Southern Pacific Railroad Willamette Valley Main Line," Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties, Clackamas County, November 2006; "Railroad Items," *Oregon City Enterprise*, August 15, 1868, 2; Lang, *History of the Willamette Valley*, 494; Cain Allen, "Oregon and California Railroad," *Oregon History Project*, accessed May 18, 2021, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/oregon-and-california-railroad.

Figure 61. As companies built Oregon's first railroads, they built accompanying infrastructure to support the construction of those railroads. Here, the Oregon Steam Navigation Company's Eagle Creek Sawmill, near the Columbia River's Cascades rapid. Photograph by Carleton E. Watkins, 1867.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

Figure 62. Construction of the Oregon and California Railroad began in the 1860s, but most of the line was built in the 1870s. Chinese immigrants performed much of the labor. Here, an Oregon and California Railroad Company locomotive built in 1884.

Source: Northeastern California Historical Photograph Collection, California State University, Chico.

Established overlanders wanted railroads to help develop markets for agricultural products and manufactured goods. The Albany *States-Rights Democrat* proclaimed in 1869,

> A railroad is very desirable . . . . A road will bring our merchants into competition with Portland merchants, and it will take large quantities of the produce that now comes to Albany and are exchanged for merchandize, the market by a more direct route. . . . In perhaps a few months a railroad will be completed through the center of this magnificent landscape, on a line as straight as an arrow for forty miles. This will be followed by a greatly increased population and a greatly increased demand for such manufactured articles as we are now importing. Salem, Oregon City and Portland are all turning attention to these interests; why shall we not do the same

> thing? . . . Let us invite enterprise here and assist in an earnest way to lay the foundation for a substantial prosperity. We are already manufacturing soaps and large oil; patronize and encourage that enterprise. We should make our wooden buckets, brooms, and above all our Reapers, Headers and Thrashers.[797]

While the appetite for railroads was strong in the late 1860s, Oregon did not become well-connected by extensive rail networks until the 1870s and 1880s.

Willamette Valley Settlements

Figure 63. By the 1860s, Portland had boomed. It served as the commercial gateway to the Pacific Northwest. Pictured here, 1867. Photograph by Carleton E. Watkins.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

As Willamette Valley communities recovered from the 1861–1862 flood, local elected officials focused on improving the Willamette and Columbia rivers for navigation. Abundant sail and steamboats on the Columbia and Willamette rivers connected Portland with points as close as the Cascades Rapids and as far as San Francisco and British Columbia. Portland became the shipping center for agricultural goods coming out of the Willamette Valley and the supply depot for inland mining and timber-production areas.[798] The city's growing importance in shipping wheat to international markets prompted the federal government to fund navigational improvements on the Willamette River, constructed by the USACE, in the late 1860s. Among the improvements, the

[797] "Shall We Help Ourselves," *States-Rights Democrat*, August 21, 1869, 2.

[798] Abbott, *Portland in Three Centuries*, 36; Gregg Olson and Robert Sutton, "Portland Yamhill Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, March 12, 1976.

USACE deepened a 110-mile-long navigation channel between Portland and the mouth of the Columbia. Between 1868 and 1875, the Corps dredged the channel to a depth of seventeen feet.[799]

Navigational improvements enhanced Portland's strategic location near the confluence of the Columbia and Willamette rivers, making it the main gateway of the Northwest (see Figure 63). Benjamin Ross Cauthorn wrote about the city as he passed through in 1865:

> Portland is the metropolis of Oregon. Here also they are improving rapidly and good substantial buildings are going up while the streets are being vastly improved by laying new bricks, etc.
>
> The county around Portland is hilly and very rough and not much adapted to cultivation. Sailors and steamers run into Portland at most all seasons of the year, but a sand bar at the mouth of the Willamette is now giving them trouble. They have a dredging machine at work there now.[800]

The increase in commercial shipping traffic permitted longtime residents and newly arrived overlanders in Portland to establish additional mills, warehouses, and stores, which enabled Portland's population to grow 189 percent from 1860 to 1870.[801] In 1868, Rev. Gustavus Hines (see Figure 64) called Portland "the present commercial emporium of the state of Oregon," and he noted that "in proportion to its population, it is the wealthiest city on the Pacific coast" [802]

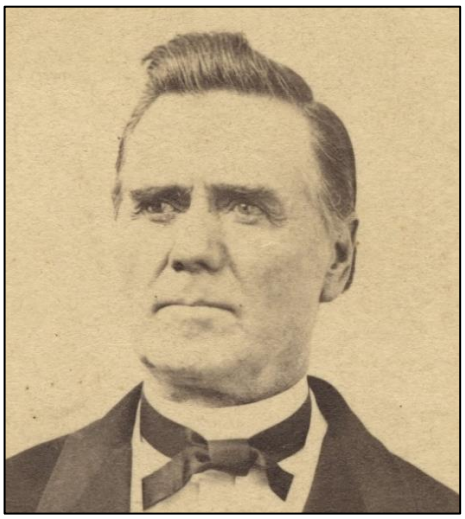

Figure 64, Gustavus Hines, pictured here ca. 1870, was a Methodist missionary who first came to Oregon in 1840 via ship, bound for the Willamette Mission. His 1868 book, *Oregon and its Institutions: comprising a full history of the Willamette University*, includes detailed descriptions of Oregon at the time.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

[799] Heineman and Richardson, *So That Ships May Pass*, 26, 32; William F. Willingham, "U.S. Army Corps of Engineers," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed May 18, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/u_s__army_corps_of_engineers; William G. Robbins, "Willamette River," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed May 18, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/willamette_river.

[800] Benjamin Ross Cauthorn, "Trip to Montana by wagon train, 1865 April 14 – November 9," 150–56, Merrill J. Mattes Collection, OCTA. Original journal available online via Brigham Young University Library Digital Collections, https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/Diaries/id/4585/rec/8.

[801] Edwards, "Six Oregon Leaders," 23; Abbott, *Portland in Three Centuries*, 35; Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise*, 102; Robbins, "Willamette Valley."

[802] Hines, *Oregon and its Institutions*, 29, 97–98.

Oregon City's economy continued to be driven by mills (making flour, wool, lumber, and paper), but the presence of the Willamette Falls, and the navigational hazards it created, precluded it from being as important for commercial shipping as Portland had become.[803] Gustavus Hines explained the importance of the falls to Oregon City's mills:

> At this place the Willamette River rushes over a precipice of rocks thirty feet perpendicular. This is a most beautiful cataract, and the hydraulic privileges which it affords are almost boundless. A woolen factory built of brick, presenting a noble and most substantial appearance, running six sets of machinery, and employing one hundred and fifty hands; a paper mill, a foundery [sic], and extensive flouring mills, together with other manufacturing establishments, have already given to this city the soubriquet of the 'Lowell of Oregon.'[804]

Hines was not the only one who compared Oregon City to eastern manufacturing towns; a few years earlier, Cauthorn had called it "the Pittsburg of Oregon" when he traveled through.[805]

Other Willamette Valley towns grew at a pace more like that of Oregon City than of Portland. Salem's enumerated population was 1,139 in 1870 (an increase of 82 percent over 1860), while the newer towns of Albany and Eugene had 1,722 and 861 residents, respectively.[806] Salem became the official state capital in 1864, having already served as the de facto state capitol since 1859.[807] Cauthorn wrote of Salem, "The streets are wide and commodious. It is situated on a level piece of country and is accessible at all seasons of the year for boats."[808] Hines also discussed Salem's promise:

> . . . Salem is blessed with extensive lumbering manufactories, sash factories, foundries, machine shops, and every other branch of mechanism and industry which the necessities of the country demand. Stores of all kinds — hotels, livery stables, photograph galleries, saloons, meat markets, druggists, booksellers — and all other business establishments which are requisite to give life, energy, and activity to a growing town, abound in all parts of the city of Salem. Merchandising especially, as Salem is the center for a large extent of country, rich in every agricultural resource, is carried on very extensively, and becomes the medium through which men beginning with a small capital in a few years raise themselves to independence.[809]

The capital town, according to Hines' count, had many lawyers and doctors, three papers (*Daily Record*, *Capital Chronicle*, and *American Unionist*), several schools, many churches, and Oregon's state library.[810]

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[803] Ballestrem, "Oregon City."

[804] Hines, *Oregon and its Institutions*, 32–33.

[805] Cauthorn, "Trip to Montana by wagon train, 1865 April 14 – November 9," 150–56.

[806] Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise*, 103.

[807] Lewis, "City of Salem."

[808] Cauthorn, "Trip to Montana by wagon train, 1865 April 14 – November 9," 150–56.

[809] Hines, *Oregon and its Institutions*, 84.

[810] Hines, *Oregon and its Institutions*, 85–93.

Outside the Willamette Valley

Southwestern Oregon continued to boom as a result of ongoing mining in the region. Jackson County's mines remained productive, as Hines noted in 1868:

> This county has been of immense value to the Pacific coast, and especially to the state of Oregon, from the immense amount of gold which has been taken annually from its gulches and hill-sides. The yield of gold has varied somewhat from year to year; but the experience of sixteen years of mining in this locality abundantly proves the durability of the Jackson County mines. Besides this the county is rich in agricultural, pastoral, and manufacturing resources, so that if the mines were to fail, of which there is no ground for fear, the county would still constitute an important part of the state of Oregon.[811]

Better roads connected Jackson County's mines with markets and supplies in other parts of the state, as Jacksonville's *Oregon Sentinel* reported in 1869:

> Jackson County is now provided with good roads and means of communication with Portland on the north and Sacramento on the south, by a daily line of stages and mail coaches running between these two places. The enterprising citizens of this county have also opened a wagon road by which the immigrant of the plains can come by the way of Humboldt, Goose Lake, and Klamath Lake route from the east. Pack trails and wagon roads have also been opened westward through the Coast Range mountains to Port Orford and other points along the Pacific Coast.[812]

In Douglas County, miners discovered nickel deposits in 1865. Roseburg attracted farmers and ranchers to feed the growing population of the region.[813]

On the Oregon Coast, Astoria grew in commercial importance in the late 1860s as shipping traffic on the Columbia increased, further spurred by the deepening of the navigation channel.[814] The Dalles *Daily Mountaineer* noted in 1865 that Tillamook was growing but remained constrained by a lack of accessible roads:

> Tillamook seems to be getting her share of the new emigranes [*sic*] . . . . It is said that over fifty families have gone over into Tillamook valley this fall, and yet there is room for many more. There is now a good trail leading from Simmons' ranch, near the head of Panther creek, in Yamhill county, across the coast chain of mountains. The trip can be made across on horseback in a day. No wagon road is yet opened, but those who have traveled over the trail say a good road can be made. There is a toll gate on the trail, where one dollar is collected of each man and horse, that is if

[811] Hines, *Oregon and its Institutions*, 80.

[812] "Jackson County," *Oregon Sentinel*, July 31, 1869, 1.

[813] Terry Harbour, "Nickel Mountain," Douglas County Cultural and Historical Resource Inventory, July 15, 1981; Hines, *Oregon and its Institutions*, 68, 74, 78–79.

[814] Heineman and Richardson, *So That Ships May Pass*, 21.

> the pioneer doesn't dodge the toll gatherer, as they not unfrequently do to save their dollar.[815]

Other papers promoted towns on the coast. In 1869, for example, the Oregon City *Weekly Enterprise* advertised coastal counties that settlers could do well in, highlighting various resources and opportunities to make money in them.[816]

The gold and silver rushes in eastern Oregon, western Idaho, and eastern Washington—areas accessible via the Columbia and Snake rivers and their tributaries—transformed the region's population from mostly Indigenous to increasingly White: some 30,000 non-Indigenous settlers arrived in these areas by 1863 seeking fortunes from gold and silver mines (see Figure 65).[817] They traveled along the Columbia River to get there, leading to improvements in transportation along that route.[818] The towns of The Dalles and Walla Walla, both accessible via water travel on the Columbia River or by established wagon roads, had been the primary centers of White settlement in the area for several decades, but now, new gold rush towns popped up.[819] Auburn and Canyon City, for example, ballooned into boomtowns, with around 5,000 miners each by 1862.[820] Auburn boasted "general stores, saloons, lumber mills, blacksmith shops, butcher shops, hotels, and a school" in 1862. Yet, only two years later, fewer than 200 people lived there, as miners moved on to areas of greater rumored production.[821] By the mid- to late 1860s, gold mines in Montana encouraged overlanders who had originally settled in the Willamette Valley to migrate even farther east into the interior and triggered construction of better roads to the region.[822] Portland was an important supply depot for these increasingly distant mining centers.[823]

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[815] "Emigrants for Tillamook," *Daily Mountaineer*, December 3, 1865, 4.

[816] A. J. Dufur, "Our Own Oregon: Agricultural and Geographic Statistics," *Weekly Enterprise*, January 23, 1869, 1.

[817] Elliott, "Dalles-Celilo Portage," 156; Cain Allen, "Mining Sections of Idaho and Oregon, 1864," *Oregon History Project*, accessed May 12, 2021, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/mining-sections-of-idaho-and-oregon-1864; Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise*, 91, 142.

[818] Gonzales and Young, *Overlanders in the Columbia River Gorge*, 59.

[819] Antone Minthorn, "Wars, Treaties, and the Beginning of Reservation Life," in Karson, ed. *wiyáxayxt / wiyáakaaʔawn / As Days Go By*, 61–92; Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise*, 86.

[820] Taylor, "Making Salmon," 73–74.

[821] Cain Allen, "Auburn, Oregon, c. 1861," *Oregon History Projec*t, accessed May 12, 2021, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/auburn-oregon-c1861; David Peterson del Mar, "The World Rushed In: Northeastern Oregon," *Oregon History Projec*t, accessed May 12, 2021, https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/narratives/the-world-rushed-in-northeastern-oregon/bonanza-times-and-after/law-order-and-diversity.

[822] "From White Bluffs," *Daily Mountaineer*, June 6, 1866, 2; "The Road to Montana," *Daily Mountaineer*, January 7, 1866, 2.

[823] W. Turrentine Jackson, "Portland: Wells Fargo's Hub for the Pacific Northwest," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 86, no. 3 (Fall 1985): 229–66, esp. 246.

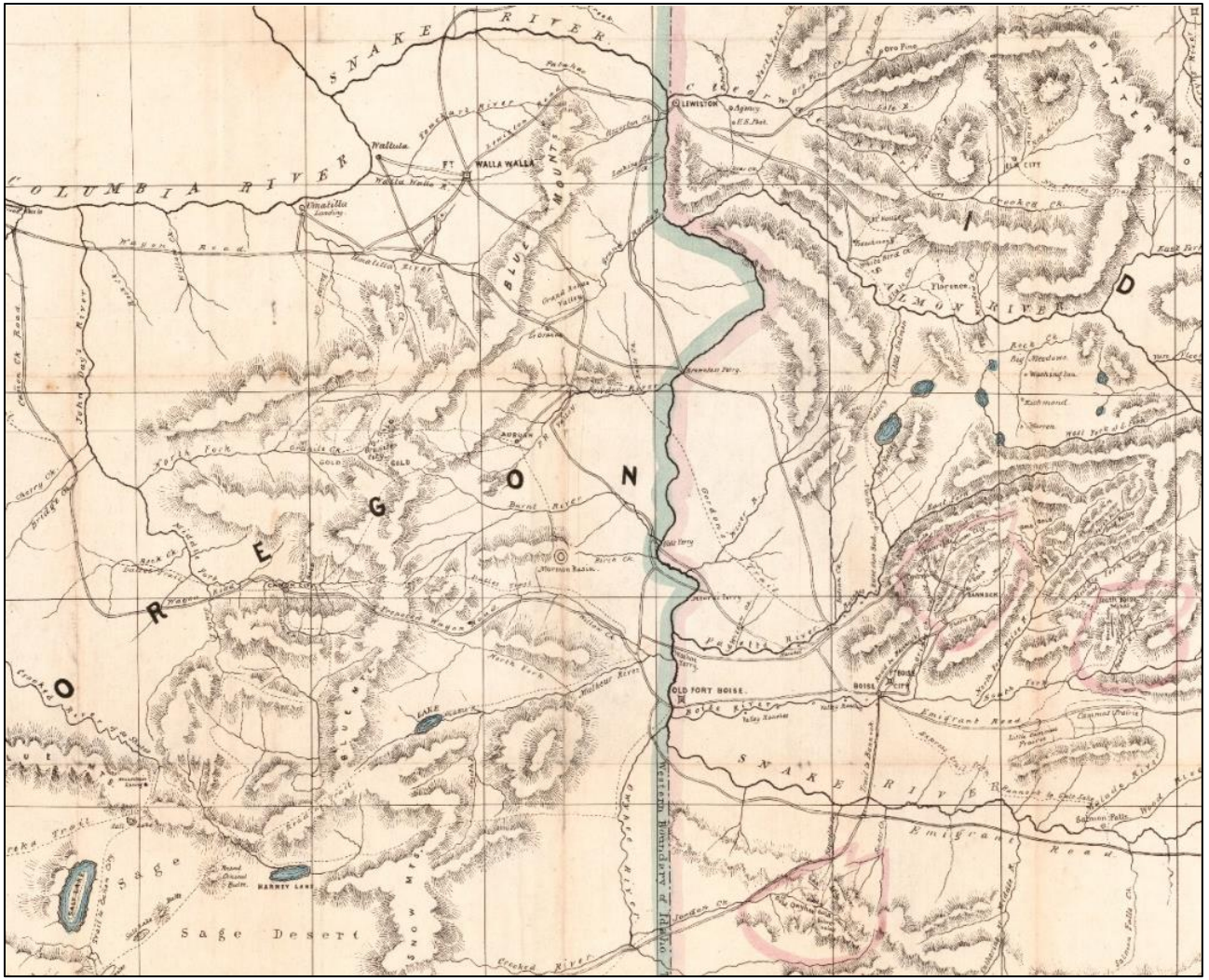

Figure 65. Gold and silver discoveries brought tens of thousands of fortune seekers to mines accessible via the mid-Columbia and Snake rivers and their tributaries—areas that are now part of eastern Oregon, eastern Washington, Idaho, and western Montana. This 1864 map by George Woodman (published in San Francisco by A. Gensoul) depicts notations of "gold" near Auburn and Canyon City, Oregon, and circles in pink the Idaho mining areas.

Source: Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

The increased settler population in eastern Oregon and the improved roads enabled Willamette Valley stockmen to seek rangeland in central Oregon.[824] According to historians Ward Tonsfeldt and Paul G. Claeyssens,

> In the late 1860s, stockmen from the Willamette Valley began moving eastwards across the Cascades to find seasonal grazing on the central Oregon bunchgrass. They typically drove their stock across the Cascades in the spring and grazed their stock until the first winter snowstorms threatened to block the passes. They were not interested in remaining in central Oregon during the winter months, but if they did contemplate settlement, they chose the creek bottoms on the western flanks of the Blue Mountains and the Crooked River Basin.[825]

These settlers could transport their livestock by steamships on the Columbia River, if they had funds to do so. In 1866, the Dalles *Daily Mountaineer* reported, "The steamer *Idaho* arrived from below at an early hour last evening, carryin[g] seventy passengers and about fifty heads of animals."[826] A few months later, the paper reported additional movement of ranchers up the Columbia River, into central and northern Washington:

> A band of 1,200 sheep was ferried over the river at this point, this week. They started this morning for Fort Okinagon [*sic*]. They are to supply the Big Bend country the coming season. Several families are here from the Willamette, intending to take up ranches on Crab Creek, twelve miles out, and go into agriculture the coming summer.[827]

By the time that Hines passed through in 1868, he noted significant White settlements in northeastern Oregon. Hines described the sudden boom of Baker County:

> This county has come into existence in its political organic character very suddenly, and mainly through the discovery of valuable gold and silver mines, which already yielded large amounts of money, and are being rapidly developed. Auburn is the county seat, and is located three hundred miles from Salem, the capital of the state, by the usual route, and two hundred and fifty miles from Portland. Baker City, another important point, is delightfully situated in the Powder River Valley, ten miles southeast of Auburn. This valley comprehends a vast amount of excellent and beautiful country, as also inexhaustible stores of mineral wealth. Religiously and morally, it is purely a missionary field. Its religious and literary institutions—its churches and school-houses—are yet to be established.[828]

Baker City, which eclipsed nearby Auburn in size and commercial importance following the gold rush, had a significant Chinese population near the main commercial district of White-run

[824] Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise*, 145.

[825] Tonsfeldt and Claeyssens, "Central Oregon: Adaptation and Compromise."

[826] [no title], *Daily Mountaineer*, March 9, 1866, 2.

[827] "Emigration," *Daily Mountaineer*, June 6, 1866, 2.

[828] Hines, *Oregon and its Institutions*, 114–15.

businesses.[829] Umatilla County (established 1862), Grant County (1864), and Union County (1864) all had significant ranching by the late 1860s, as well as a small amount of farming.[830] Though southeastern Oregon lacked the mineral deposits of southwestern and northeastern Oregon, stockmen began moving to the region for rangeland by the late 1860s—from other parts of Oregon, Nevada, and northern California.[831]

Finding a Home

Philip Foster's farm remained an initial stopping point for new arrivals in the mid-1860s. William David Fenton, who was born in 1853 in Missouri, came with his family to Oregon in the spring of 1865. He recalled,

> We came in by way of Foster's place, not far from the present town of Cazadero in Clackamas county. After teaching school at Belpossi in Marion county during the winter of 1865 my father moved to Yamhill County where our family was raised.[832]

Benjamin Cauthorn obtained information about where to settle when he stayed at Foster's farm:

> We met at Foster's a lot of Methodists of the M.E. Church South, going to a camp meeting. Among them was the Rev. A.E. Sykes, formerly of Mo. It was well we met him for he gave us a good description of the country farther up the valley. So after going to meeting Sunday, I got on the mule and started ahead to Corvallis in Benton County.
>
> My route lay through Clackamas County, which was the starting point through Marion, Polk and Benton counties. Arrived at Corvallis, Wednesday. Met R.S. Straham and Dr. Canterberry, who treated me very kindly, rendering all the assistance in their power toward getting suitable locations for us.[833]

Figure 66. Overlanders with means could construct or purchase homes and farmsteads. Pictured here, the house of an attorney, G. Copely, near the Columbia River. Photograph by Carleton E. Watkins, 1867.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

[829] Gary Dielman, "Baker City Chinatown," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed May 12, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/baker_city_chinatown.

[830] Hines, *Oregon and its Institutions*, 115–19.

[831] LaLande, "High Desert History: Southeastern Oregon."

[832] Fenton is referencing the now-abandoned Oregon town of Belpassi, or Belle Passi. Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, February 17, 1914, 6.

[833] Cauthorn, "Trip to Montana by wagon train, 1865 April 14 – November 9," 150–56.

With more settlers having been in Oregon longer, overlanders with means could easily buy existing houses or improved claims (see Figure 66). Settlers with enough wealth could purchase multiple houses and rent them out. For instance, James and Mary Jenks, who arrived with four children in 1866, purchased a farm with an existing house on it soon after their arrival.[834] In Jacksonville, a settler and merchant named P. J. Ryan financed construction of or purchased several brick commercial and residential buildings, which he rented out to settlers.[835]

As in prior decades, new arrivals rarely built homes within their first year in Oregon, generally waiting until they had been there several years. George C. Marshall, the steamboat captain referenced in Chapter 4, built a house in Oregon City around 1862 on a land claim. It was constructed of wood, with clapboard siding and stud frames.[836] Daniel Walker built a stock barn during his first year in Jackson County, 1867, but he had first arrived in Oregon via the overland trail in 1848. Walker operated a wheat farm and stock ranch on the 160 acres, and his barn is still standing.[837] Overall, only an estimated 5 percent of the houses built on homesteads before 1866 are still standing, due to fires, poor building materials, or shoddily built structures that were rebuilt when settlers had enough money to do so.[838]

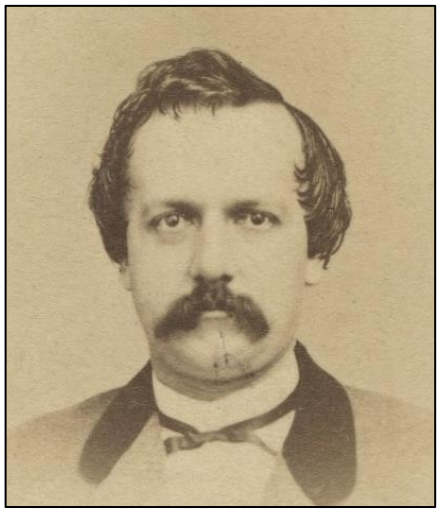

Figure 67. Previously arrived overlanders opened hotels and boarding houses that new arrivals could stay at. Pictured here, Charles W. Knowles (ca. 1868), who traveled overland to Oregon in 1852 and later served as a hotel and saloon manager.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

Overlander-run hotels were common by the 1860s, provided a good lodging option for those who could afford it (see Figure 67). Larger towns like Portland, Oregon City, and The Dalles had established hotels in the late 1860s, and even smaller towns such as Auburn had hotels for travelers.[839] Overlanders began to build hotels for tourism, such as when an Ashland dentist built a hotel on top of natural springs.[840] When Vice President Schuyler Colfax Jr. visited the Willamette Valley in 1869, he stayed at the Overland Hotel in Albany.[841]

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[834] Elaine C. Smith, "Jenks House," Linn County Inventory of Historic Resources, May 24, 1984.

[835] Stephen Dow Beckham, "Kubli (Kasper) House," Oregon Inventory of Historic Sites and Buildings, August 28, 1976.

[836] Patricia Erigero, "George Marshall House," Oregon Historic Resource Inventory Form, 1983.

[837] L. Scott Clay, "Walker (Daniel) Stock Barn," Oregon Inventory of Historic Sites and Buildings, April 11, 1979.

[838] Paul M. Falsetto, and Venerable Group, Inc., for Restore Oregon, "Resolving Functional Obsolescence: Securing the Future of Oregon's Pioneer-Era Properties," March 2015; Trexler, "Behind the Scenes: Investigating Processes Shaping Willamette Valley Architecture," 98.

[839] Kay Atwood, "Rock Point Hotel," National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form, July 12, 1979; Martha Ferguson McKeown, "Historic Umatilla House at the Dalles," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (March 1930): 37–38; Hines, *Oregon and its Institutions*, 78–79; Allen, "Auburn, Oregon, c. 1861."

[840] Stephen Dow Beckham, "Colwell (Dr. ?) Hotel & Spring," Oregon Inventory of Historic Sites and Buildings, August 27, 1976.

[841] "Colfax and Party," *Albany Register*, September 18, 1869, 3.

Economic Realities

New arrivals to Oregon in the mid-1860s could find work in gold mining areas or in supporting businesses in towns across Oregon, although most available work opportunities were for men. Mexican immigrants often worked as packers in goldfields, as did Black settlers. Some free Black people worked in mines, such as Columbus Sewell, a miner and freight hauler in Canyon City.[842] Chinese immigrants arrived in large numbers in the late 1860s, often working in areas that White miners had left for more lucrative spots, and receiving lower wages than their White counterparts.[843] The Dalles *Daily Mountaineer* noted in 1866, "An increase of laboring population is required in the Boise and Owyhee mines," but many White residents continued to support legislation that made it difficult for Chinese people to fill those needs.[844]

Chinese workers contributed significantly to making mines and mining towns profitable. Merchants in towns across Oregon made profits selling Chinese goods to Chinese miners.[845] Some of these businesses were Chinese-owned and operated. In the town of John Day, the Kam Wah Chung and Company—a trading post, medical clinic, and store—became a gathering place for the local Chinese community.[846] The circa 1866 Kam Wah Chung building, a National Historic Landmark, is now a museum and state heritage site.[847]

While far more men than women lived in gold rush towns, women in these towns often ran successful businesses and played a key role in the local economy. In Auburn, women ran boardinghouses and hotels (often with their husbands), and many provided laundry, sewing, cooking, and other domestic services for single miners. Women also ran brothels and worked as prostitutes.[848] In Portland, there were twelve Chinese brothels in 1860, in addition to many non-Chinese brothels; women worked as prostitutes in smaller gold rush towns as well.[849]

While many Chinese men in Oregon worked in mining, others found work in commercial agriculture, canneries, shops, and domestic service.[850] Railroad companies were just beginning to hire in Oregon in the late 1860s, and Oregon newspapers predictably expressed their preference for White workers:

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[842] Tyler, "Unwanted Sailor," 528.

[843] "Letter from Canyon City," *Daily Mountaineer*, May 21, 1866, 2; Peterson del Mar, "World Rushed In: Northeastern Oregon"; Allen, "Auburn, Oregon, c. 1861."

[844] "Population Wanted," *Daily Mountaineer*, January 6, 1866, 3.

[845] Rose and Johnson, "Rising from the Ashes," 16–17.

[846] LaLande, "Chinese Mining in Oregon"; Jodi Varon, "Kam Wah Chung and Co.," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed May 12, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/kam_wah_chung.

[847] Oregon State Parks, "Kam Wah Chung State Heritage State," accessed July 7, 2021, https://stateparks.oregon.gov/index.cfm?do=park.profile&parkId=5.

[848] Allen, "Auburn, Oregon, c. 1861."

[849] Peggy Nagae, "Asian Women: Immigration and Citizenship in Oregon," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 113, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 334–59, esp. 336–37.

[850] An *Oregon Sentinel* article read, "We see Chinese employed in nearly every capacity, from bootblacks and scullions, cooks and nurses, miners and farm hands, to clerks in stores . . ." "Chinese Labor," *Oregon Sentinel*, May 25, 1867, 2. See also Lee, "Chinese Americans in Oregon." One 1869 article noted, "The Chinese are employed generally in hotels." [no title], *Weekly Enterprise*, June 19, 1869, 2.

> They have said they prefer white labor to the Chinese, if they could get it. The companies already at work have undoubtedly tried in vain to obtain the former, but it has never offered in sufficient quantities, for the reason, chiefly, that the mining experience of our white laboring population has made them averse to receiving such wages as railroads pay, and has inspired them with an indisposition to work for others when they may possibly 'strike a fortune' by perseverance in the diggings. But the plans suggested white labor enough to build all our railroads can be obtained, at reasonable prices . . . .[851]

Mail-carrying and shipping businesses were other places for newcomers to find employment. Charles T. Blake came to Oregon as an agent of Wells Fargo, which was active in shipping gold dust from mines in eastern Oregon to Portland to San Francisco, and from there to other markets.[852] He explained the process of starting a new station in Oregon in an 1863 letter to his mother:

> I knew that Wells Fargo and Co. were about to open a new Express route through a new and rich mining country in Oregon, so I went to the Superintendent, Mr. McLane, and told him that I had thought of starting a gold dust buying and assaying office in the principal town on the route and would like the prestige and endorsement which their agency would give me. He told me at once that I should have the agency in any place I might choose to locate. Now the reputation of this firm is very high on this coast, so that to be an agent of theirs in any place gives one position at once, and the profits of an agency in any important place amount often to two hundred and fifty dollars a month and seldom fall lower than one hundred, so that if I make nothing from my other business I am at least safe from loss. I expect to leave Folsom therefore in a month or so, and go to Auburn City, Powder River, Oregon. It is about a thousand miles from San Francisco and it takes about ten days to make the trip under the most favorable conditions.[853]

He continued in other letters,

> . . . the new mines on Powder and Boise Rivers in Oregon are in a well wooded and watered country very much like California only of course colder. The mines are extensive and rich like California in an early day. Wells Fargo and Co. are going to extend their express there this summer, giving me an opportunity to go into the gold dust business by furnishing a safe and reliable means of transmitting treasure. If however the mines are half as rich and extensive as is now supposed, I am confident that I can get into as good a business as I can desire in a very short time. So after considerable deliberation I have concluded to start for the North as soon as the season opens, so as to cause no delay in travelling.[854]

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[851] "A Practical Immigration Scheme," *Oregon City Enterprise*, June 15, 1867, 1.

[852] Jackson, "Portland: Wells Fargo's Hub," 249.

[853] Charles T. Blake to his mother, March 10, 1863, in Anson S. Blake and Charles T. Blake, "Working for Wells Fargo-1860–1863: Letters of Charles T. Blake," *California Historical Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (March 1937): 30–42, esp. 40–41.

[854] Charles T. Blake to his parents, March 11, 1863, in Blake and Blake, "Working for Wells Fargo," 41.

> It is not yet decided which place I am to go to, but it will be somewhere on the Boise or Powder Rivers in the S. E. part of Oregon.[855]

In larger cities, settlers set up all sorts of businesses, which provided abundant work opportunities for new arrivals. As of 1867, Oregon City had dry goods stores, food markets, a dentist, a brewery, hardware stores, clothing stores, masonic lodges, saloons, attorneys, physicians, and even a music teacher.[856] In 1869, Albany's businesses included a millinery, a dress-maker, sellers of butter churners, renters of "job office" space, attorneys, dentists, "fashionable barber and hair dresser," physicians, surgeons, an "occultist and aurist," an undertaker, and a watch seller.[857] As the array of businesses suggests, those with professional training had ample opportunity for employment or to set up their own businesses. Mary Anna Cooke Thompson, a physician, arrived in Portland via the Isthmus of Panama route late in 1866, with her husband and four children (see Figure 68). Soon thereafter, she put an ad in a Portland paper for her services as an "Electrician & Eclectic Physician" "with special attention given to female complaints."[858] Later called the "first woman physician in Portland," she practiced in the city for over forty years.[859]

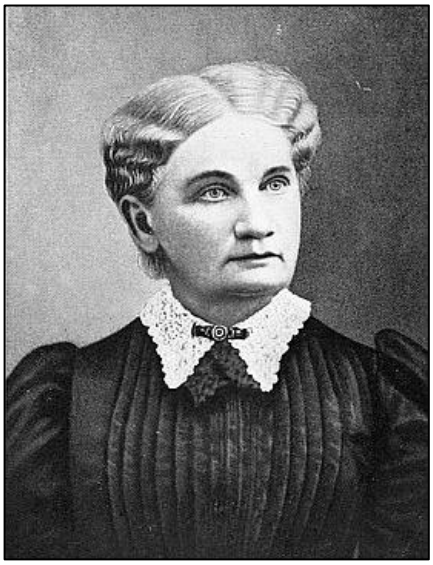

Figure 68. Mary Anna Cooke Thompson, who arrived in Oregon in 1866 by sea, was an early physician in Portland.

Source: Joseph Gaston, *Portland: Its History and Builders*, Volume II, p. 734.

New arrivals often started with informal work and then found more permanent jobs or acquired farms. Tom Hislop, who came to Portland around 1866 after being discharged from the Army, recalled,

> As I walked up from the river front I saw some workmen digging a basement on the corner of First and Stark streets. I stopped and asked one of them what building it was. He told me it was to be the Ladd & Tilton bank. Just across the street workmen were digging tor the foundation of another building. I went over and struck the foreman for a Job, He put me to work at $2 a day, and on the strength or having a job, I got credit at a boarding house. At my boarding house I heard they wanted men at the Oregon foundry, so I went there the next day and landed a job.[860]

The development of transportation networks facilitated the growth of manufacturing, which provided job opportunities for newcomers. The Oregon Iron Company opened the first iron

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[855] Charles T. Blake to his mother, April 5, 1863, in Blake and Blake, "Working for Wells Fargo," 42.

[856] Advertisements, *Oregon City Enterprise*, February 23, 1867, 1.

[857] Advertisements*, States-Rights Democrat*, June 26, 1869, 1.

[858] Jean M. Ward, "'The Noble Representative Woman from Oregon': Dr. Mary Anna Cooke Thompson," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 113, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 408–29, esp. 412–13.

[859] Jean M. Ward, "Mary Anna Cooke Thompson," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed July 7, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/thompson_mary_anna_1825_1919_.

[860] Fred Lockley, "In Earlier Days," *Oregon Journal*, May 12, 1913, 7.

furnace west of the Rocky Mountains in Lake Oswego in 1866, near the site of natural iron deposits discovered in 1861 (see Figure 69). Workers mined the iron ore and carted it to the furnace to produce pig iron.[861] Its owners—whom Hines called "some of the wealthiest men in the state"—sold the pig iron to foundries in Oregon and California, reducing the need to import it from eastern states.[862] Foundries opened in cities like Oregon City, Portland, and Albany. The Albany foundry manufactured steam engines, grist and sawmills, reapers and threshers, wood working machinery, pumps, and more.[863]

Figure 69. The Oregon Iron Company opened its Oswego Iron Works in 1866. Pictured here, 1867. Photograph by Carleton E. Watkins.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

[861] Paul Hartwig, "Oregon Iron Company Furnace," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, October 1973; A. Gregoor Passchie, "Rock Quarry," Oregon Historic Resource Inventory Form, Clackamas County, April 11, 2008.

[862] Hines, *Oregon and its Institutions*, 30; Susanna Kuo, "Oswego Iron Furnace," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed May 12, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/oswego_iron_furnace.

[863] Advertisements*, States-Rights Democrat*, June 26, 1869, 1.

Agriculture

While some overlanders operated subsistence farms, farming products to sell commercially increased in importance during this decade, since roads and steamships made it easier to get produce to markets.[864] In other parts of the state, the promise of railroads encouraged newcomers to establish farms in places farther from Portland, such as in Douglas County in southwestern Oregon.[865] As commercial agriculture began to dominate the more fertile valleys, newcomers farmed more marginal lands that had not attracted earlier settlers. This included bottomlands on the valley floor, which previous settlers had used primarily for grazing due to their susceptibility to flooding, and which needed to be drained to make them useful for farming.[866]

Wheat continued to grow in importance as a cash crop, with statewide yields increasing from 660,081 bushels in 1860 to 2,086,826 bushels in 1870, an increase of 216 percent. Better technology to harvest the wheat—mowers, threshers, and separators—and navigational improvements to the Willamette and Columbia rivers contributed to the increased output. During the 1860s, merchants found ever more distant markets for Oregon-grown wheat.[867] The *Oregon Enterprise* reported in 1866,

> There is now a large quantity of grain coming down the Willamette River, besides which so much merchandise is going up that it has been found necessary to keep all the boats employed that are able to make the trip in low water. . . . A friend at Albany writes to us that every farmer in that vicinity has his granary literally full of grain awaiting shipment. A vast amount of the products of Oregon this year ought to find a market in China and Europe. The bulk of wheat being sold is for home consumption, or stored for speculative purposes.[868]

In fact, Oregon farmers grew so much wheat that concerns arose about availability of workers to harvest it.[869] Newcomers to Oregon may have found temporary work assisting with the wheat harvest. The *Oregon City Enterprise* reported in 1868,

> Farm laborers can earn from $30 to $40 per month—the latter sum is paid to good hands during harvest time. A young man hires out for a year, say at $35 per month. This includes board. A year's wages amount to $420.[870]

Alfred Sawtell, an English immigrant who arrived in Clackamas County in 1860, employed "approximately 100 Chinese laborers who resided in about 30 dwellings adjacent to the farm complex. . . ."[871]

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[864] Hines, *Oregon and its Institutions*, 31–32.

[865] Lois Eagleton, "Baimbridge-Kanipe Farmstead Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, March 1, 2007.

[866] Boag, "Calapooian Matrix," 252; Mary Kathryn Weber, "Irrigation Ditch," Benton County Cultural Resources Survey II, March 30, 1986.

[867] Abbott, *Portland in Three Centuries*, 100; Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise*, 85, 99–101; Robbins, "Willamette Valley."

[868] "Grain Shipments," *Oregon City Enterprise*, October 27, 1866, 3.

[869] "Oregon Crops—A Ship's Crew Murdered by the Indians," *New York Times*, May 22, 1868, 1.

[870] "Facts to Circulate," *Oregon City Enterprise*, June 6, 1868, 1.

[871] Altier/Hayden, "Sawtell Teasel Barn," Cultural Resources Survey Form, Clackamas County, July 1984.

Agricultural workers were also needed to assist with the harvest of other commercial crops. In 1867, Oregon farmers started the state's first commercial hop yard and the first commercial flax venture.[872] Counties began holding fairs to show off their commercial crops as early as 1854, with many holding fairs regularly by the 1860s.[873]

Selling their crops for cash allowed Oregon farmers to improve their farms. When the price of wheat rose during the growing season of 1867, Willamette Valley papers reported that farmers and the valley overall would reap the financial benefits.[874] When passing through the Willamette Valley in 1865, Cauthorn remarked on the well-kept farms:

> Marion County, in which Salem, the state capital is, is probably the finest county I passed through. This land is rich and well improved and ranges from six to twenty dollars per acre.
>
> One remarkable feature of all the farms in this country is the good barns they have. As lumber is no object, they put up most excellent barns with apartments for everything.[875]

Unfortunately, no amount of money could prevent weather events from wreaking havoc on farmers and ranchers, such as when colder than usual temperatures during the winter of 1861–1862 led to the death of thousands of cows and pigs, raising the price of meat for some time after.[876]

Commercial agriculture, irrigation of lowlands and the surge in wheat production left little room in the Willamette Valley for grazing cattle, so ranchers moved east.[877] In eastern Oregon, the arid landscape prevented farming on the scale of that in the Willamette Valley.[878] However, beginning in the 1860s, farmers realized that wheat could grow wherever bunchgrass did. By 1869, Willamette Valley papers reported that the John Day Valley was home to "some very fine looking farms," at which farmers harvested "from sixty to seventy bushels of oats and from thirty-five to forty-five bushels of wheat per acre."[879] The hope of such productivity provided further impetus for White settlement in central and eastern Oregon.[880]

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[872] Kopp, "'Hop Fever' in the Willamette Valley," 406–33; Nancy Hoskins, "Flax and Linen Industry of Oregon," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, accessed May 18, 2021, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/flax_and_linen_industry_of_oregon.

[873] "County Fair," *Albany Register*, September 18, 1969, 3; J. R. Cardwell, "The First Fruits of the Land. A Brief History of Early Horticulture in Oregon. II," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 7, no. 2 (June 1906): 151–62; Russ Karow and Gloria Lutz, "Yamhill County Crop History Project: Community-Involved Historical Discovery," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 118, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 420–25, esp. 420.

[874] "Oregon," *Oregon City Enterprise*, October 26, 1867, 2.

[875] Cauthorn, "Trip to Montana by wagon train, 1865 April 14 – November 9," 150–56.

[876] Williams, "Much Depends on Dinner," 71.

[877] Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise*, 106.

[878] Hines, *Oregon and its Institutions*, 62–68, 70, 72–73, 75–78, 81, 97, 103, 109, 113–22, 124–26.

[879] "A Farming Region," *Oregon City Enterprise*, October 5, 1867, 2.

[880] Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise*, 146.

Schools, Churches, and Cemeteries

Settlers who had made the overland journey constructed many churches in the 1860s, thanks to the availability of sawn lumber and additional wealth in the region.[881] Religious schools opened in greater numbers in the 1860s for the same reason, such as Philomath College built by the United Brethren in Christ in 1865.[882] Corvallis College, which would become Oregon State University, started as Corvallis Academy with assistance from Freemasons, before members of the Columbia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church purchased it in 1860 (see Figure 70).[883] Settlers established many other educational institutions during this period, which meant newly arrived families could send their children to school if they could afford it (see Figure 71).

Figure 70. Professor Oliver Frambes and Sarah Elizabeth Frambes (née Stephens) arrived in Oregon in 1862. Oliver Frambes taught school upon his arrival. From 1863 to 1866, he was Principal of the Portland Academy and Female Seminary.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

Settlers continued to establish new cemeteries, whether through municipal governments, county governments, churches, fraternal organizations, or independent associations. The town of Jacksonville's board of trustees passed an ordinance to regulate its public cemetery (the creation of which is discussed in Chapter 4):

> It provided for the annual appointment of a Sexton—defining his duties, requiring him to be qualified before entering upon them, and authorizing him to sell and dispose of lots, at not less than five nor more than twenty dollars, at his discretion. The proceeds of the sale of lots to be paid into the treasury, as a separate fund, to be expended for the improvement of the Cemetery grounds. The ordinance requires the Sexton to superintend the digging of all graces, and all other matters pertaining to the cemetery; to keep a record-book of all burials, name age and time and death of every person buried . . .[884]

By the following year, the town had hired a sexton, who then kept track of all deaths.[885] Citizens of Albany organized the Albany Cemetery Association sometime before 1869 to fund burials there.[886] In other places, fraternal organizations established cemeteries, one of many ways to pool resources to raise funds for caring for the dead.[887]

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[881] Mary Kathryn Weber, "Simpson Chapel Site," Benton County Cultural Resources Survey II, January 5, 1986.

[882] Paul Hartwig, "Philomath College," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, November 1972.

[883] William G. Robbins, "From Church to State: The Sectarian Roots of Oregon State University, 1868–1888," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 117, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 76–99, esp. 76–78.

[884] "Meeting of the Board of Trustees, June 18, 1867," *Oregon Sentinel*, June 22, 1867, 3.

[885] "Board of Trustees, February 14, 1868," *Oregon Sentinel*, February 22, 1868, 3.

[886] "Cemetery Notice," *Albany Register*, January 30, 1869, 3.

[887] "Deaths in Salem," *Oregon Sentinel*, April 3, 1869, 2; "Odd Fellows' Rural Cemetery," advertisement, *Willamette Farmer*, June 28, 1869, 6.

Figure 71. Schools for the children of overlanders proliferated in the 1860s. Here, an 1867 photograph of a school near the Columbia River in Skamania County, Washington. Photograph by Carleton E. Watkins.

Source: Oregon Historical Society.

Conclusion

Overlanders who arrived in Oregon in the 1860s found established towns filled with businesses run by earlier overlanders. Roads, steamboats, and the beginnings of a few railroads connected far-flung towns like Portland, Jacksonville, and The Dalles. New arrivals in Oregon therefore had opportunities to work, settle, or mine in areas outside the Willamette Valley. Overlanders who had arrived in the Willamette Valley earlier also took advantage of the opportunities in other regions. In contrast, state laws and discriminatory practices limited opportunities for non-White people in Oregon. Black people faced continued—if not always enforced—Black exclusion laws; Black, Hawaiian, Chinese, and "mulatto" people had to pay poll taxes; and Chinese laborers had to pay taxes simply because they were Chinese. Yet, Chinese, Hawaiian, and Black people remained in Oregon and participated in its growth alongside Indigenous people and White settlers.

Conclusion

Tens of thousands of people traveled overland to Oregon between 1840 and 1869. Those who arrived in the Willamette Valley in the early 1840s encountered Kalapuyan and Chinookan people, HBC employees, and retired fur trade employees and their families in Métis communities in French Prairie. There was little in the way of American infrastructure, and newcomers relied on HBC employees or Kalapuyan and Chinookan people to survive their first winter. Overlanders chose Oregon City as the seat of Oregon's provisional government, and it quickly became Oregon's most populous non-Indigenous community.

By the early 1850s, overlanders increasingly opted to settle in the southern parts of the Willamette Valley, as claimants eligible under the DLCA took much of the land in the northern valley. Portland overtook Oregon City in regional importance, becoming prominent because of its busy ports and central location near the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia rivers. By the late 1850s and 1860s, roads and steamships opened up settlement in other parts of Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. Gold rushes brought overlanders to southwestern Oregon and up the Columbia and Snake rivers and tributaries, to northeastern Oregon, southeastern Washington, northwestern Idaho, and the far western reaches of Montana. California and the Puget Sound region boomed and drew overlanders there instead of Oregon.

Most overlanders found temporary lodging for their first winter in Oregon in the 1840s, staying in tents or in buildings built by missionaries or HBC employees. The following spring, many men staked a land claim and built a makeshift house. As more Americans populated the valley during the 1850s, overlanders often spent their first winter with friends or family who had already established themselves in the area, before heading out on their own in the drier spring weather. By the 1860s, some newcomers to Oregon came with significant wealth and could hire someone to construct a relatively extravagant house for them. Others stayed in boarding houses or with relatives.

In the early 1840s, new arrivals could find short-term work with the HBC. As more overlanders set up their own farms in the late 1840s and throughout the 1850s, newcomers made money helping established settlers with tasks around their house or their farm. Business opportunities expanded with the increased settler population. Newcomers opened mills, stores, transportation companies, newspapers, and more. By the 1860s, Willamette Valley settler-run towns had abundant business and employment opportunities, including mills, foundries, and a pig iron-producing furnace.

Overlanders settling in Oregon were overwhelmingly White, in part because White male Oregonians passed discriminatory legislation as they formed a territorial and then state government. These laws made it especially difficult for Black and Chinese people to settle in Oregon. White men arriving in Oregon joined militias to fight and kill Indigenous people, often in areas of gold discoveries. Starting in the 1850s, the U.S. government negotiated treaties with Indigenous people who had lived in Oregon from time immemorial, which forced those individuals and families to move to reservations that were far from or only a fragment of their homelands. As the first year in Oregon became easier for White overlanders, they made it harder and harder for individuals of color to live in the state.

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