

## Waiilatpu Grounds Tape Recordings

### 3. Alice Clarissa

It was a Sunday in June. Little Alice joined her parents and an Indian congregation in singing the hymn 'Rock of Ages' at morning worship. Later in the day Alice, unnoticed, slipped away from the dinner table with two cups to get water. When her anxious parents came here looking for her, they saw only the cups floating in the river. Fear became sorrow when an old Indian retrieved Alice's body from the river bottom. She was two years and three months old. Her mother's grief was tempered by this prayer:

Lord, it must be right. She is not mine, but thine. She has been left to me but a brief season and now, dearest Savior, thou hast the best right to her. Thy will be done, not mine.

### 5. Grist Mill

In what was then the wilderness of old Oregon,

Marcus Whitman knew that survival depended on self-sufficiency. Here at the grist mill, he could grind his own flour and meal. Whitman also believed that by teaching the Indians to use the mill, he could help them adjust to the culture that was enveloping them—a way of life that even then depended on machines. They could harvest wheat or corn and let the water-powered stones grind it into flour or meal instead of grinding by hand with the mortar and pestle. The mill remained popular with the Cayuse even when the Whitmans didn't. When some Indians burned the mission building in 1848, only the grist mill was left standing.

## 6. Emigrant House

During the last five years of the mission, the number of emigrants living here during the winter ranged from thirty to nearly sixty. It is not hard to imagine the anxiety of the Indians as they watched growing numbers of the settlers coming to the mission. Yet the Whitmans could not refuse the hungry, the orphans, the sick who came to them from months of hardship on the trail. Nor could

they turn down the labor and goods they sometimes offered as payment for food and shelter. It became increasingly obvious that the mission was becoming a way station. Understandably, the Cayuse blamed Dr. Whitman when the measles brought by the emigrants swept through the territory in 1847. The epidemic killed half the tribe.

## 7. Blacksmith Shop

The white man's way of life depended on metal. Here the blacksmith could both make and repair metal articles needed for taming the wilderness: ploughs, hoes, parts for the grist mill and sawmill, horse shoes, harness buckles, nails and hinges. The blacksmith also helped to keep the wagons of the immigrants rolling by repairing and replacing parts made of iron like their wheel rims. This two-roomed shack was built from the adobe bricks used at the first house. During the mission's crowded last year, a family of seven lived here.

## 8B. Mission House

On the morning of November 29, 1847 Dr.

Marcus Whitman attended the burial of three Indian children, victims of the measles epidemic that was decimating the Cayuse tribe. He was in danger of death too, but not from the measles. The doctor knew that the Cayuse custom called for death of a medicine man who could not cure his patients. Although the Indians around the mission house seemed peaceful, their blankets were hiding tomahawks and guns. Later in the day two Indian men, Tiloukaikt and Tomahas entered the kitchen with Whitman under the pretense of asking for medicine. While Tiloukaikt distracted Whitman with an argument, Tomahas approached him from behind and struck him with a tomahawk. Alarm and confusion swept through the mission as Indians outside joined the attack. Mrs. Whitman, after dragging her dying husband into the living room, suffered a gunshot wound in the breast. The attackers later had her carried outside to a spot just in front of you where several of them killed her with a volley of bullets. Eleven other were also killed in the attack that ended the eleven year history of the Wailatpu mission.

## 10. Whitman Memorial

If you had stood here in the summer of 1847, you may have been impressed with the progress Marcus and Narcissa Whitman had made: the buildings, the bountiful crops, the irrigation ditches and millpond, the herds of cattle. Their progress in teaching the Indians was harder to measure. In these excerpts from their later letters, the Whitmans comment on their work with the Cayuse:

‘I do not think I could be induced to come to such a people were it to be done again with the present circumstances. But it is quite different when the question is of continuance or abandonment. We look upon our situation here as having done enough for the cause of Christianity and civilization to more than compensate for all the labors and expense incurred.’

Narcissa:

Narcissa – ‘I feel greatly worn out, both physically and mentally, for the poor Indians’ sake and the relief of future travelers to this country. I could wish

to stay here longer if we could do it in peace. We fear sometimes as if our quietness is past for this country.'

## 11. Great Grave

Marcus Whitman: in the history books he is noted pioneer missionary, a key in the establishment of the old Northwest as the United States Territory. Narcissa, his wife, was among the first white women to cross the Rocky Mountains. The Whitmans remind us of the adventure and romance of the frontier, but their days were often made of simple labors: teaching, making bricks, attending to the sick, ploughing. Praying, and raising orphans. It was not an easy life, but they had chosen it freely. After living and working here for eleven years, they were killed by some of the Indians they had come to save.