

*** Date: February 7, 1843 ***

*** Author: Mrs. Narcissa Whitman ***

*** Recipients: Mrs. Clarissa Prentiss

Honorable Stephen Prentiss ***

*** Source for this document: Transactions – 19th reunion, 1891, p. 170 ***

*** The original document starts below this line ***

Waskopum, Oregon Ter., Feb. 7, 1843.

Honored and Beloved Parents: – It is with peculiar feelings of interest that I think of the home of my childhood now. And why should I not, since *every* object I hold most dear on earth is there.

Last evening was monthly concert. Being too feeble to meet with the brethren and sisters here, I spent most of the evening in my room.

How can I describe the hallowed influence that seemed to be shed around me, the inward peace and sacred sense of the presence of God in my soul? I could think of nothing else but that surely beloved friends must be praying for me. This cannot be in answer to my own individual prayer that I receive all this. I felt as if in spirit I was in the midst of that loved circle, feeling the influence and enjoying its heavenly sweets with you, my father, my mother, my sisters and brothers and my beloved husband, too – what earthly objects can I name dearer to me than these. They are my all, yet widely separated from me. I speak as if you were enjoying the society of my dear husband at this time. If the Lord has spared his life and prospered him according to his and my expectations, you

are. Beloved parents, what do you think of your lonely child in this lonely world? You pray for her, I know you must, or she would not feel the support – the almost constant support of the Saviour's presence – which is graciously granted under the trying circumstances in which I am placed. How do you like to see your son? How do you enjoy his society after so long an absence? Did you ever dream of seeing him there without me? I flatter myself that it would add a little to the happiness of you all if I was there with him. I am sure it would to mine. But if you enjoy his and make him happy I shall be satisfied.

I never have felt much as though I would see my friends again in the flesh. Since my husband has gone to see them without me I feel it less doubtful than ever. But we know not in what way the Lord will lead us. It is a great satisfaction to me to think that he will see them and be able to give me information concerning them which I could get in no other way and from no other source, should the Lord spare him to return to me.

You must feel some anxiety to know how I have endured and been situated since being left alone in our lonely house among a savage people. I wrote a full letter to Dr. Whitman and sent it by ship which I hope he will receive before he leaves you to return. That will give an account of what transpired immediately after he left and of my leaving Wioletpoo. The express boats that took the letter to the ship brought me to this place where I have been ever since. I was unable to ride to either of the stations of our mission and had determined to remain at Wioletpoo for the winter, it being the only place where I could remain the most comfortably. I was obliged to leave, very much against my feelings, because others judged it unsafe for me to remain – particularly the gentlemen in charge at Walla Walla.

Mr. Perkins sent me an invitation to come here. The unexpected delay of Mr. Littlejohn's arrival, and the more than probability that I should be obliged to spend the winter at Walla Walla or at Wioletpoo, without the society of a female friend, were reasons that determined me to come.

March 6th. – I have concluded to finish this letter and send it by the express which goes by way of Montreal, for it will reach its destination sooner than if sent by the mountains. I see my writing is very poor and I fear father and mother will not be able to read it. My eyes are almost gone – my poor health affects them materially and writing is very injurious to me. I can neither read, write or sew without spectacles, the most of the time, and sometimes with them I suffer considerable pain.

As I commenced giving some account of what has transpired since my dear husband left, I will go on. Waskopum is one of the stations of the Methodist Mission situated on the Columbia river just below the Dalles. The Dalles is the place, if you recollect, where I fought such a battle with the fleas on my first arrival in the country (see my journal). There are three families here, Revs. Lee and Perkins, and their wives, and Mr. and Mrs. Brewer, farmer. I am spending a very happy winter here and I trust it has been and will be for my spiritual good, for truly the society and prayers of such a company of living and growing Christians is very refreshing to me, after having lived so much alone, immersed in care and toil.

Soon after I came here Mr. McKinlay of Walla Walla, wrote that the mill at our station was burnt and it was supposed to be set on fire by Indians. This was very afflicting news to me, for all our living came out of our mill principally, and not only ours at the station, but multitudes in the country, in different ways, were benefited by it.

Probably there was more than two hundred bushels of wheat and corn burnt and some flour. The mill bolt and threshing mill, even to a part of the wheel, was burnt. My poor husband will feel this sadly – so much lost, and so much, too, that will save labor. I think, sometimes, if I had not left perhaps it would not have been burnt. But it will all work for the best to us and the poor Indians, too, I hope. As my health has been and is, I do not think it would have been best for me to remain there. I left a good man there, but he could do nothing alone as it was set on fire in the night and not discovered until it had made considerable progress. It is pretty difficult to ascertain whether it was the work of design or carelessness. It is said that two boys, and we know them to be “of malicious habits,” were fishing and threw fire down on the bank of the river that communicated with the straw. The sensible part of the Cayuses feel the loss deeply, and they will feel it still more when they want their wheat ground next fall. We hope it will be a good lesson to them and be one means of making them a better people.

Husband had prepared adobes to surround the mill before he left, but being called away so suddenly Mr. Spalding engaged to see them put up. He had arrived at Wioletpoo when I left for Walla Walla and commenced the work, but was sent for in great haste as Mrs. S. was taken very sick and was unable to take care of herself or children. This left the mill unfinished or unprotected.

When I came here I felt anxious to meet Mr. and Mrs. Littlejohn on the way, or hoped he would arrive shortly after, but Mr. Gray was detained in going down, and he in coming up. Cold weather commenced much earlier than usual, and they were wind-bound on the river several days and did not reach this place until the middle of November, and as the mill and grain was burnt it was concluded best for Mrs. L. and

myself to remain here until Mr. L and Mr. Geiger should go up and see how things were. They were accompanied by Dr. White, the government agent for this country, and a small party who went up to visit the Indians, settle difficulties, to recommend the appointment of chiefs, and the institution of a code of laws among the different tribes. As our station was vacated by all its inhabitants, the Indians had all left for their wintering quarters, and some of them from indignation on account of the burning of the mill. A meeting was appointed, a few came, but could do nothing but make a few inquiries and appoint another meeting which is to be the 10th of May.

At Lapwai they had more successful meetings, appointed a high chief and other small chiefs of the different bands, framed laws which were translated and printed in the Nez Perces language.

Mr. Littlejohn, when he left the lower country, sold his property with a view to go to the States over the mountains this spring. While attending that meeting he became so interested in the Indians as to change his mind about going home and pledged himself to stay in the country and aid in teaching them. Mr. S. immediately invited him to come there and spend the winter and go to teaching; and because it was easier work than to stay and teach at our station, he consented to go and has gone, with his wife, there. Left our station with only Brother Geiger alone.

I intended to return and spend two or three months there this spring, but the same difficulty is in the way – no female companion at the station. Dr. White, however, insists upon my going up to be there at the meeting appointed, as there is no one in this part of the country, now husband is gone, and Mr. Gray likewise, that is much acquainted with the Cayuses. I expect to go up in about two weeks, and hope to return and make a visit at

Vancouver and the Willamette, as I am very cordially invited. We made application to Mr. Rogers, who was in the Willamette and had just married, to come and take charge of the station during husband's absence, and had he got the intelligence soon enough he would have been happy to come, for he had just then entered into an engagement of another kind for a milling company to build a flour mill. This was a great disappointment to me and a trial to him that he did not know of it soon enough to come; his wife was very young and inexperienced in housewifery and on this account, as well as many others, he would have rejoiced to come. He came up with Dr. White as interpreter, and was of essential service; indeed, there is not another individual in Oregon that acquires the native languages with so much facility and readiness, and no one more universally beloved by all who knew him, and especially the native inhabitants.

I have now come to the most trying and melancholy part of my intelligence, and how shall I write it? Brother Rogers, in his return from the upper country, spent several days here. I had an interesting visit with him, little thinking it would be what it has proved to be – the last we shall have in this world together. I was much encouraged to hope he would be able to make arrangements so that he could leave and go up this spring and take charge of the people and teach them, for no one in the country was more capable than he was. But such as he was and such as we valued him, the Lord took him as if he would say unto us, "Put not your trust in an arm of flesh." Before I heard of his death I had been thinking and feeling considerably about the result of the meeting in May with the Cayuses. Much talk has been going on among them since the meeting at Lapwai, which leads us to expect a very exciting time. Brother Rogers' wisdom and prudence as an interpreter, and his knowledge of Indian character, has led us to feel that his presence

was absolutely necessary for a peaceful meeting, and without it we had better not have a meeting. But, “the Lord’s thoughts are not ours, neither are his ways our ways.”

As I have said before, he has taken him from us, and what renders the affliction more aggravated, he was not alone in his departure from this vale of tears. He was drowned with five others at the same time in the Willamette river. Of this number was his beloved wife, her youngest sister aged two years and a half, Squire Crocker, recently from the Sates, and two Clatsop Indians. The circumstances of the melancholy disaster were these: Dr. White, Mr. Raymond of the Methodist mission, and the above named individuals, left the Butte for the falls in the mission’s large canoe, on Wednesday, Feb. 1st. This was just a month from the time Brother Rogers left us at this place. They had made one portage on foot just above the main fall as far as the trail will admit, and got into the canoe, as is usually done, and the canoe was dropped down to the landing place with a strong rope. The landing place is within two rods of the main falls. All got in except Mr. Raymond and four Indians who had the management of the rope; they dropped down to the landing place in safety, and Dr. White stepped on a log and instantly the canoe took a sheer out into the current. Doctor had a paddle in his hand which Squire Crocker took hold of to haul the canoe back; at the same time they called to Mr. Raymond to haul, which he did, and it shot the canoe into the suction of the falls, which got such a possession of it at once as to sweep them over the frightful precipice in an instant, notwithstanding all their efforts at paddling to make the island on the other side. Two Indians were saved by plunging into the current and got an impetus which carried them through, and they reached the island and were saved. What an awful scene! They were seen by individuals below the falls just as the canoe made the fatal plunge, who

instantly came in boats to their relief. Four were seen swimming at first for a time, but three of them sank almost immediately; one of them continued swimming until the boat came within thirty yards of him when he sunk in a swirl “to rise no more.” This was Brother Rogers. The letter giving us the intelligence that was written four days after the dreadful disaster took place. At that time neither of the bodies had been found.

The river was very high, the current frightfully rapid, boiling and whirling in its course. The bow of canoe was broken off at the row-locks, and a piece split out of the bottom half the length of canoe. O, how fatal to them was their security, for they had no setting poles out, neither had they fastened the canoe – a precaution which ought always to be taken upon these frightful rivers of Oregon.

Mrs. Rogers was the eldest of five daughters of Mr. Leslie, who has gone to the States with the two next eldest, their mother having died in the Willamette two years ago. The two youngest were in Mr. Rogers’ family. Mrs. Rogers spent the time of her husband’s absence in Mrs. Gray’s family, with her two daughters. It seems they were in the act of returning to the falls when they were drowned, and providentially one of the sisters was left to be spared so melancholy a fate.

As an individual I feel that I have lost a friend – a brother. I had never seen Mrs. R., but was fondly anticipating an acquaintance in a few months. We are so few in number in this country that real friends are valuable, and their loss deeply felt; but to the country, to the missionary cause, the loss is very great.

My beloved parents, if the Lord has permitted you to enjoy a visit with my dear husband, you doubtless know more about us as a mission and our missionary work than you formerly have. I hope he will bring me full long letters from both dear fathers and

mothers' own hand, and each of my sisters and brothers now living. I have not received a single letter yet giving any of the particulars of the dear one that is dead.

September, 1840, is my last date from home. I am expecting to hear soon when the ship comes in. I shall write again in about two months if my health permits. It is very trying to the feelings of the natural heart to be here in this desolate land without my husband, and were it not for sustaining grace I should sink under it. But the favors of the Lord are many and great in giving me so many friends to cheer and comfort me. My health is very poor; this increases the trial, because, in consequence I have too many gloomy and depressing hours, and evil forebodings, in which I have not strength of mind to rise above. The Lord gives me much of his gracious presence, and increased spiritual enjoyment in communion with him, for which I desire to be thankful.

My paper will not contain all that a full heart pants to pour forth into the bosom of dear, long-absent parents – a privilege which doubtless would be too much for my weak nature to endure. With pleasing delight do I look forward to that happy time when we may meet in yonder happy world and enjoy in full fruition what eye hath not seen nor ear heard – of things prepared for us.

I hope all will remember my most earnest request to write to me. I love you all increasingly and shall till I die. Dear Brother G., I feel and sympathize with him more than I can express. O, that he would write me, and Sister Clarissa likewise, and all of you. Brother Judson, the Lord has broken his heart, but he can bind it up. Shall I ever hear him speak to me again. My heart yearns over you all while I write farewell. May we all meet in heaven, forever, prays your unworthy, your lonely but ever loving daughter,

Narcissa.

Believe me, dear friends, I am happy in making the sacrifice for Christ – it is for Him. We have made it and I rejoice in it, yea, and will rejoice, however trying to the flesh. I see no reason to regret my husband's going home without me; nor shall I, if I suffer loss in all things.

Hon. Stephen Prentiss,

Cuba, Alleghany Co., N. Y.

*** End of the original document from February 7, 1843 ***

*** Date: March 11, 1843 ***

*** Author: Mrs. Narcissa Whitman ***

*** Recipient: Mrs. Harriet Jackson ***

*** Source for this document: Transactions – 21st reunion, 1893, p. 154 ***

*** The original document starts below this line ***

Waskopum, March 11th, 1843.

My Dear Harriet: – I have just been reading your letter, written more than two years ago. I have been thinking all day of writing you, but can scarcely find courage enough; even now, I feel more like taking my bed rather than writing, much as I long to commune with you.

From a letter I received last fall from Mr. Dixon, I learn that my dear Harriet is now both a wife and a mother. Tender and endearing relations! May you ever prove worthy of the confidence and affection of your husband, and a tender, wise and judicious mother, and never forget that you are training immortal spirits for an eternal world. If you have never read “Alcott’s Young Wife and Young Mother,” I beg you will procure and read them. You will derive great benefit from them. You cannot begin too soon to study your duty as a mother. It is a responsible station, and doubtless you feel it to be so. Be sure and make it your business to train them for the Lord, and hold them not as yours, but His, to be called away at His bidding. This is an interesting theme to me.

When you write, please tell me about your maternal association. I want to know all about them, and how the cause prospers. We have an association here consisting of the missionary mothers and two native mothers, who are the wives of the gentlemen of this country. We find it a great comfort to meet together, to pray and sympathise with and for each other in this desert land where we have so few privileges. Please remember me to your association, and solicit an interest in the prayers of those praying mothers for the missionary mothers of Oregon.

I hope by this time you have had a good visit with your brother Marcus. I presume it has been a short one. Tell me, you that have enjoyed the sweets of connubial bliss long enough to know the happiness it affords, how would you like to be so widely separated and for so long a time. Think you, it is no trial, no sacrifice of feeling? For what would you be willing to make such a sacrifice? Is there anything in this lower world that would tempt you to it? I presume not; at least I can see no earthly inducement sufficiently paramount to cause me voluntarily to take upon myself such a painful trial. Painful, I say? yes, painful in the extreme to the natural heart. But there is one object, our blessed Saviour, for whose sake, I trust, both you as well as we are willing if called to it, to suffer all things. It was for Him, for the advancement of His cause, that I could say to my beloved husband, "Go; take all the time necessary to accomplish His work; and the Lord go with and bless you." Sacrifice made for Him will not go unrewarded. Believe me, this same Heavenly Friend so manifests himself to me, sustains, upholds, and comforts me, and that, too, almost continually as to enable me to "glory in tribulation," yea to rejoice that I am counted worthy to suffer for His sake. He has been preparing me for the self-denial for some time past, and no time more effectually than when he was

pleased to take my beloved child from me. Once I could not have borne it without the same measure of grace I now enjoy. But blessed be His Holy Name, it is from Him I receive all things, and I desire to be wholly consecrated to Him. I feel that I am nothing – Jesus is my all, His righteousness alone I plead; in Him my guilty soul expects to find a full and free salvation.

I hope the hand and the heart that has got possession of my beloved Harriet's will please accept of a sister's love, although we have never been privileged with an acquaintance, and may never meet in this world. May I not hope to receive letters from you both, and frequently, too? Can such a thing be under the sun that my husband will prevail on you to come to Oregon to spend your days? I know you would say, I cannot leave pa and ma to go so far.

Give much love to sister C. and her husband; tell her to please consider this as written to her, if I am unable to write her by this opportunity. I think of sister Mary Ann as being a guardian angel to me sometimes. When shall I be one to you? I think sometimes it will not be long. Again I send love to J. G. and all the family. Many kisses for all the babies.

Your affectionate sister,

Narcissa.

Mrs. John W. Jackson,

Cuba, Allegheny Co.,

New York, U. S. A.

*** End of the original document from March 11, 1843 ***

*** Date: March 31, 1843 ***

*** Author: Mrs. Narcissa Whitman ***

*** Recipient: ? ***

*** Source for this document: Transactions – 21st reunion, 1893, p. 158 ***

*** Comments: Dr. Drury believed that Mr. Jonas Prentiss was the recipient of this letter. However, Dr. Drury lists Wailatpu as the place where that document was written and the text in the “Transactions” says it was written at Waskopum. So, I therefore felt it was preferable to list the recipient as being unknown even though Mr. Prentiss probably was the recipient (Drury, Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, Vol. 2, p. 370). ***

*** The original document starts below this line ***

Waskopum, March 31st, 1843.

My Dear Brother: – Why is it that I never receive a letter from you? Have you no time to write, or have you forgotten me? I will not think it; not that you do not love me, for this would make me unhappy. Could you see my heart and know how much I love and think of you and sympathize with you, should I not receive a communication from you and thus be assured of your love and remembrance of me? It is not for the want of a heart that I do not write more and oftener to all my brothers and sisters, but for the want of health and strength to do it. Now I am deprived of the society of my beloved husband, I realize more than ever your situation; yet not its keenest pang, for ourselves is a voluntary and temporary separation, while yours is – I hardly know what to call it – an

unwilling and unnecessary separation, at least on your part; yet I hope not a perpetual one. O that I could hear that you were once more united and happy in all the sweets of domestic bliss, for they are many, and when given us from the Lord, how we should prize them. Those are tender ties to be separated and hang bleeding all our life, but the Lord permits us thus to be afflicted. We should lean on Him for support. And may you, dear brother, realize as much of the blessed Saviour's gracious presence as I do in my lonely situation, and have it continued to you constantly. I, too, know the blessed effects of affliction to purify the heart and sanctify the soul; and, notwithstanding their keen smart and writhing pang, yet it is good to be afflicted; they are choice mercies to us, for when He has tried us, my brother, we shall come forth as gold. Our greatest care should be, not to murmur or complain of His trying dispensations towards us, but feel always more anxious to have them sanctified to us than to be delivered from them – for then “patience will have her perfect work.”

O what would I give could I see you, for then I could pour a full heart into your bosom; but you have seen my better self, I hope, and enjoyed a sweet visit with him, for me as well as for him. You will write me, I know, by him. You will doubtless see my letter to father and mother. I have given the particulars of the past to them.

Recently, intelligence has come to us from above that the Indians are talking and making preparations for war. The visit of the government's agent last fall has caused considerable excitement. All decisive measures and language used to them they construe into threats, and say war is declared and they intend to be prepared. They have heard many unwise remarks which have been made by designing persons, especially a half-breed that came up with the agent last fall. Such as troops are coming into the river this

spring and are coming up with Dr. White to fight them. It is the Kaiuses that cause all trouble. There are no tribes in all the country but what are more quiet and peaceable to live with than they are. If any mischief is going ahead they originate and carry forward. They are more difficult to labour among than the Nez Perces. They are rich, especially in horses, and consequently haughty and insolent. A large assemblage is expected in less than a month to meet in the valley of Walla Walla. What the result of it will be, time will determine. From the excitement and talk that has been going on all winter we have reason to fear that it will not be a very quiet time. The Indians of the Buffalo country have been sent for by the high chief of the Nez Perces, Ellis.

*** End of the original document from March 31, 1843 ***

*** Date: April 14, 1843 ***

*** Author: Mrs. Narcissa Whitman ***

*** Recipient: Mr. Jonas Prentiss ***

*** Source for this document: Transactions – 21st reunion, 1893, p. 160 ***

*** The original document starts below this line ***

Walla Walla, April 14th, 1843.

My Dear Brother: – I arrived here last Saturday. Left Wascopum Monday early April 3rd, and came with Mr. Grant, who was in charge of the Company's boats, three in number; had a pleasant and safe voyage; arrived greatly exhausted with fatigue but feel much benefited by the trip. Two days after I received a letter from Sister Littlejohn at Lapwai (Mrs. Spalding's), giving the afflicting news of the death of her only son by drowning. He fell into the mill floom and floated down out of sight into a deep pit and was not found until it was too late to bring him to life.

This makes the sixth person that has been drowned since November in this infant country; four adults and two children. Mr. Olley, of the Methodist mission, was drowned in the Wallamette about two months before Brother Rogers, and those with him.

What the Lord means by the removal of so many, we know not, but feel admonished to be also ready. Brother and Sister Littlejohn feel their affliction deeply, but are mercifully supported under it.

The excitement among the Kaiuses has abated considerable from what it was when I commenced this letter. Mr. McKinlay of this fort has been to Vancouver and

brought back word to them from Dr. McLoughlin that they, the British, do not, neither have they intended to make war upon them. This relieves them considerably. Now their fear is the Americans. They have been led to believe that deceitful measures are being taken to rob them of their land, to kill them off. Language like this has been told them, and at the meeting last fall, "that if you do not make laws and protect the whites and their property, we will put you in the way of doing it." They consider this a declaration to fight and they have prepared accordingly. We hope no depredations will be committed upon us or the mission property, and think the difficulties can be removed and adjusted to their minds, but not without the most prudent and wise measures. The agent is quite ignorant of Indian character and especially of the character of the Kaiuses. Husband's presence is needed very much at this juncture. A great loss is sustained by his going to the States, I mean a present loss to the station and Indians, but hope and expect a greater good will be accomplished by it. There was no other way for us to do. We felt that we could not remain as we was without more help, and we are so far off that to send by letter and get returns was too slow a way for the present emergency.

I intend to go up to Waiilatpu as soon as the water falls; it is so high now and is rising so that I cannot cross the rivers. I shall write some of the family by the mountain route; this I send by the express to Montreal.

Would it be a strange thing if I should see you coming to this country with my husband? You will write me to pay for this I hope. Remember I have not heard a word about the death of that sister yet, and perhaps still greater inroads have been made in the dear circle that I have yet to be informed of. It will not be many years before we shall all be transplanted, and O may it be into the paradise above, and not one of us be missing.

I want very much to hear about your little daughter, yourself and all your affairs, and how you feel and live from day to day, and what you are doing for the cause of Christ. How does the doctor appear to you? How have you enjoyed your visit with him? Living alone in the midst of a savage people, without seeing much company, we lose our polish and doubtless would appear quite uncouth to the civilized world. This is one of the missionary's trials, because he is apt to be despised for it.

Love to all. Pray for your loving sister,

Narcissa

Your spectacles are of great use to me. I should not know how to do without them. My eyes have failed me almost entirely. I think sometimes I have reason to think of you pretty often. I should like a pair of green double plain glasses. Hope doctor will bring some. Farewell,

N.

Jonas Galusha Prentiss, Esq.,

Angelica, Allegheny County,

New York,

U. S. A.

*** End of the original document from April 14, 1843 ***

*** Date: June 8, 1843 ***

*** Author: Mrs. Narcissa Whitman ***

*** Recipient: Mrs. Elvira Perkins

Reverend Henry Perkins ***

*** Source for this document: Transactions – 21st reunion, 1893, p. 169 ***

*** The original document starts below this line ***

Vancouver, June 8th, 1843.

My Beloved Brother and Sister Perkins: – I have but a moment's notice of an opportunity of sending to you. Your trunk was forgotten by us all and brought on. I would send it now if I could, but Iatin says his boat is too small for that and his sheep. I felt very sad after leaving you, particularly as my visit had been so marred with what transpired while passing. I was grieved to see it affect you, as it was very natural it should. But there is this consolation to comfort you, and in this case it is yours to rejoice when you are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

I had a very fatiguing journey down; came near drowning in the portage once. One of the boats upset, but no lives lost The boat I was in just escaped capsizing. We arrived here just before sunset, Sabbath; displeased with myself and every one around me because of the profanation of the holy day of the Lord.

Brother Hinds left this Tuesday morning. Dr. Barclay advises that I remain here nearly a month that he may be able to satisfy himself respecting my case.

This is but a poor return for the two good long letters I have received from Brother P. and the one from sister, yet I have a heart filled with gratitude and Christian sympathy and love for you and those little ones associated with you.

Do write as often as you can, both of you.

Ever yours,

Narcissa Whitman.

Do not pay for these letters.

*** End of the original document from June 8, 1843 ***

*** Date: July 11, 1843 ***

*** Author: Mrs. Narcissa Whitman ***

*** Recipient: Ms. Jane Prentiss ***

*** Source for this document: Transactions – 21st reunion, 1893, p. 53 ***

*** The original document starts below this line ***

Vancouver, July 11th, 1843.

My Beloved Sister Jane: – Your letters of March and April, '42, I received about three weeks since, and can assure you I was not a little rejoiced in hearing from you, they being the first I have received from you since March, '40, by Mrs. Littlejohn. I have written you and Edward several times since – indeed, I always write you every opportunity, whether you get them or not. I heard of the death of dear sister Judson last September through Lawyer Divin, but no particulars until your letters came. About the same time one came from poor brother Judson, the only one I have received from him or Mary Ann since '39. My last from dear parents and Harriet was in September, '40; so you see I have not the means of knowing but little about you all, yet I trust that I am truly thankful for that little. It is a great cordial to me. I love you all with an undying love, and every fresh breeze I receive fans it into a burning flame. I feel not the least disposition to shed a tear on dear sister Judson's account, but rather to rejoice that she is so safely harbored in the bosom of her and our Saviour's love; but for the sake of those who still live and whom she might be the means of leading to Christ, I could mourn and weep in bitterness of soul. I rejoice, too, that the sustaining grace of God was so manifest

to her beloved bereaved husband, and our dear parents, as well as you all, under the afflictive dispensation. My first thought when I heard of her death was that I should be the next to go; but it may be otherwise, the Lord only knows. This I do know, His time will be the best time, and my chief concern is, and shall be, to be ready and have my work done and well done. But O, what a poor weak creature I am; how little I can do to glorify His great Name. What poor returns I make daily for His unbounded goodness to me. If I am saved I am sure it will not, it cannot, be because of any intrinsic worth in me, or any of my friends, but solely and alone for His sake who gave His own life a ransom to save a lost world.

Dear Jane, I have the privilege of once more addressing you from Vancouver where I am spending a little time very pleasantly, and where I am favored with the medical advice and treatment of two very able physicians, Doctors Barclay and Tolmie. It will soon be seven years since I first saw this place. I should not be here now if my husband had not gone home and left me, or, I should have said, if my health had been sufficient for me to have continued at my post of labor among the Indians. Doctor White, the government Indian agent of this country, advised me to avail myself of this opportunity to rid myself from care and labor, come here and attend to the advice of Doctor Barclay for the perfect restoration of my health, and I have no reason to regret it so far. I feel that my health is improving, I hope, permanently.

You speak of Mr. and Mrs. Abernethy. I have seen your letter to them and have only seen him a short time since I have been here. I hope to see them both in a few days, for I am waiting a convenient opportunity to go to the Willamette, where I expect to visit the different members of the Mission and spend a pleasant season among them. The two

Missions are three hundred miles apart and it is not easy to visit back and forth, especially where all hands are full of business each in his own field of labor.

You almost make me feel, from your letters, that you will accept of my invitation and come over and live with me and help me teach the poor Indians. Indeed! are you not now almost here with my beloved husband? The time draws near when I hope to see his dear face again, and O! am I to greet a beloved sister with him, and, perhaps, a dear brother, too? I know not what inexpressible joys or sorrows are before this frail, trembling heart of mine; I feel that I could not survive an excess of either, my nervous system is so much impaired. But I know assuredly that the same grace that has sustained me hitherto under fiery trials, is able and will sustain in time to come. I am in His hand. The nine months past that I have been separated from my precious husband, have been months of His special favors to me in this dreary land of heathenish darkness. The sacrifice, if I may call it so, has been a very great one – much more so than I at first thought it could be, even to exceed that of leaving my native land and beloved friends, and coming to dwell among the heathen. But the precious promises have been fulfilled in my case leaving all for Christ's sake, as I trust I did in coming to this country, and freely consenting to be left so feeble and lonely in such a lonely situation, by my earthly protector, my husband. I feel that I have indeed received manifold more in this present time with an assured hope of receiving in the world to come life everlasting.

I am pleased to hear so good an account of dear E.'s progress in study and piety, and sincerely hope he will be a useful and devoted Christian minister. I wish he would write me more, for his own sake as well as mine.

Miss Jane A. Prentiss,

Cuba, Alleghany County,

New York, U. S. A.

*** End of the original document from July 11, 1843 ***

*** Date: August 11, 1843 ***

*** Author: Mrs. Narcissa Whitman ***

*** Recipients: Mrs. Clarissa Prentiss

Honorable Stephen Prentiss ***

*** Source for this document: Transactions – 21st reunion, 1893, p. 156 ***

*** The original document starts below this line ***

Fort George, August 11th, 1843.

My Dear Parents: – I am now at the mouth of the Columbia river. I came down with Rev. Daniel Lee of Waskopum, where I spent the last winter, and Mr. Leslie. He and his family are expecting to leave in the ship, that is now on its way down the river, for the States. Doctor Babcock and his family of the same mission are going on the same vessel to the Islands, also Mr. Frost and family are leaving the missionary field, by the same opportunity and going home. Thus one after another of our Methodist brethren leave the country and go to the States. This is very discouraging to those who remain. Some of our number have done the same; – Mr. Smith and Mr. Gray and their families. Ministerial and missionary work is increasing in the country, and the labourers are decreasing.

My beloved parents may think it strange that I should wander about the country so much when my dear husband is absent. The Lord is very merciful and of great kindness to me in showing me so many favours in my lonely situation. It serves to occupy my mind and keeps me from undue anxiety concerning him; and besides this, journeying is

beneficial to my health. I have come down to enjoy the benefit of a sea breeze, and visit the mission station at Clatsop on the Pacific coast. I am now enjoying a friendly visit in the family of Mr. Birnie at this fort. When the ship leaves I shall accompany Rev. Jason Lee to Clatsop, where I expect to spend a few days and return with Mr. Lee and Mr. Leslie to the Willamette and finish my visit there. Everywhere I go I find attention and kindness far more than I deserve. I believe I wrote to pa and ma while I was at Wascopum. I left them and went up the river in the company's boats in charge of Mr. Grant, the first of April, and arrived in safety after a voyage of five days. I went home and arranged affairs, attended upon the company of Doctor White and his party, which consisted of Revs. Hinds and Perkins, who came up to hold a meeting with the Indians. When the meeting closed I accompanied them to Walla Walla, and on the first day of June left there in the brigade for Vancouver, Mrs. McKinlay accompanying me. In coming, Dr. White recommended me to the attention of Dr. Barclay, an eminent physician of the fort. I remained there about two months and attended faithfully to his directions; feeling it is a great favour to have so good an opportunity to attend to my health, and to be so free from care and labour. I left two of the children in the care of Mrs. Littlejohn and Mrs. Eells. Helen I have with me. About the last of July, I went to the Willamette Falls and spent most of my time in the families of Mr. Abernethy and Mr. Waller. The latter one says he knew Pa well; his circuit was in that region and he resided in Friendship. Last Monday, at sundown, I left them to come down the river to see the mission families leave.

It is very trying to part with dear Brother and Sister Lee. I have enjoyed such sweet social religious privileges with them the past winter that I feel very much endeared

to them. I cannot feel very willing to have them go. It is but very recently that they have talked and made up their minds to go, and it was very surprising to us. They are pious, devoted missionaries, but Mrs. Lee's health has failed, and they feel it their duty to go home. They were from the New England states and very probably pa and ma will not see them. Brother Lee says he will write to pa when he gets home for me. I send this by him. Doctor Babcock goes to the Islands to return again; it is possible he may not. He is from Avoca. I do not know when I shall see my dear husband again. I hope in a few weeks to receive letters from him and then I shall know when to expect him. The Lord be merciful to me and return him to my arms again in peace. I forbear to think much of the future, but rest it with the Lord. I have written this very poorly. The house is full of company and it is difficult to keep my thoughts. My most dearly beloved and excellent parents, please accept of my heartfelt thanks for all your love and kindness to me, and be assured of the sincere, devoted love of your unworthy daughter,

Narcissa.

Hon. Stephen Prentiss,

Cuba, Allegheny Co.,

New York, U. S. A.

*** End of the original document from August 11, 1843 ***

*** Date: October 31, 1843 ***

*** Author: Mrs. Narcissa Whitman ***

*** Recipients: Mr. George Abernathy

Mrs. Ann Abernathy ***

*** Source for this document: NPS binders ***

*** Comments: I was unable to find any photostats for this document. In addition, the typed copy from the NPS binders does not give a listing in the American Board's archives. So, I therefore used the typed copy. ***

*** The original document starts below this line ***

Walla Walla, Oct. 31st 1843

Mr. George Abernathy

Mrs. Ann Abernathy

My Dear Friends,

It is with no ordinary feelings of pleasure I seat myself to pen a few lines for the perusal of friends I esteem so highly as my dear brother and sister Abernathy. Often do I find myself in imagination seated in the midst of your happy family circle – and enjoying a sweet repast with you mentally as in days gone by – Never shall I forget the precious seasons of social and religeous enjoyment I have been blessed with in your society.

Withdrawing my mind from these pleasing reminescences what sounds fall upon my ear and what savage sights do I behold every day around me. Never was I more keenly

sensible to the self denials of a missionary life. Even now while I am writing the drum and the savage yell are sounding in my ears every sound, of which is as far as the east from the west, from vibrating in unison with my feelings. What a contrast with the heavenly music of the Camp Meeting. Dear friends will you not sometimes think of me almost alone in the midst of savage darkness, and will you not pray for me too. You have doubtless heard through Mr. Lee the particulars of our voyage up the river and of Husbands visit to the States. I am sure he can entertain you better than I can by writing. I recollect that I was not well pleased with myself for some time after leaving the falls – and the reason was this. I neglected to shake hands and bid my young friend William goodby. It was a sad mistake in me for which I beg his pardon. I value his friendship too highly to treat him intentionally with such neglect. Please give my love to both William and Anna. I should like to send a kiss but do not know who to employ as proxy, unless William will kiss Anna for me and Anna William. I hope they both still love to pray – and love Jesus too. William must write me and tell me all about himself. I shall not forget him nor Anna either. If they would like the youths love passion to read I will send it to them. I have just taken two very interesting English girls – one twelve and the other seven years old – Ann and Emma Hodson. They have no mother – their sister Mary I have given a letter to take to you. I hope you will feel disposed to interest yourself in her and either employ her or recommend her to some good place. Sister Hinds would like her I should think if she has no help.

We arrived here last Saturday so late in the day that I did not go to Waiilatpu. Husband was obliged to go on Mrs. Littlejohns account. Tomorrow I expect he will come for me. We shall have Americans enough about us to eat us out of provisions this

winter to say nothing of the Indians. Fremont the scientific explorer's party have just arrived to day with ten carts. He has gone below to explore the mouth of the river and is to return and cross the mountains this winter. I shall write your brother and send by him. Many families of the emigrants linger very much – some are just starting and others are to start down the river soon. It can not be otherwise there will be suffering in the Willamette among this emigration and with us too doubtless. But what will it be next year, it is said that a much greater party is coming next year. Dear Sister A. if you stay one or two years more you will scarcely need to go home for the want of work – and missionary work too.

Please remember me to Brother and Sister Waller and Mr. and Mrs. Pettygrove, and Mr. and Mrs. Prinatinger and all inquiring friends. I shall visit Sister Waller as soon as I can. Please write me both of you. Remember that in so doing you will greatly strengthen and encourage the heart of a lonely missionary. I am anxious to learn how the revival progresses. Has there been any more conversions and are the young converts living and growing in grace. Please accept of my grateful acknowledgements for your kindness and sympathy and believe me your affectionate sister in Christ.

N. Whitman

*** End of the original document from October 31, 1843 ***